

Presentation to the TRU Board of Governors

April 1, 2022

Dr. Laura K. Doan



ECEBC | early childhood
educators of BC

Peer
Mentoring
PROGRAM

for **Early Childhood Educators**
in British Columbia



LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

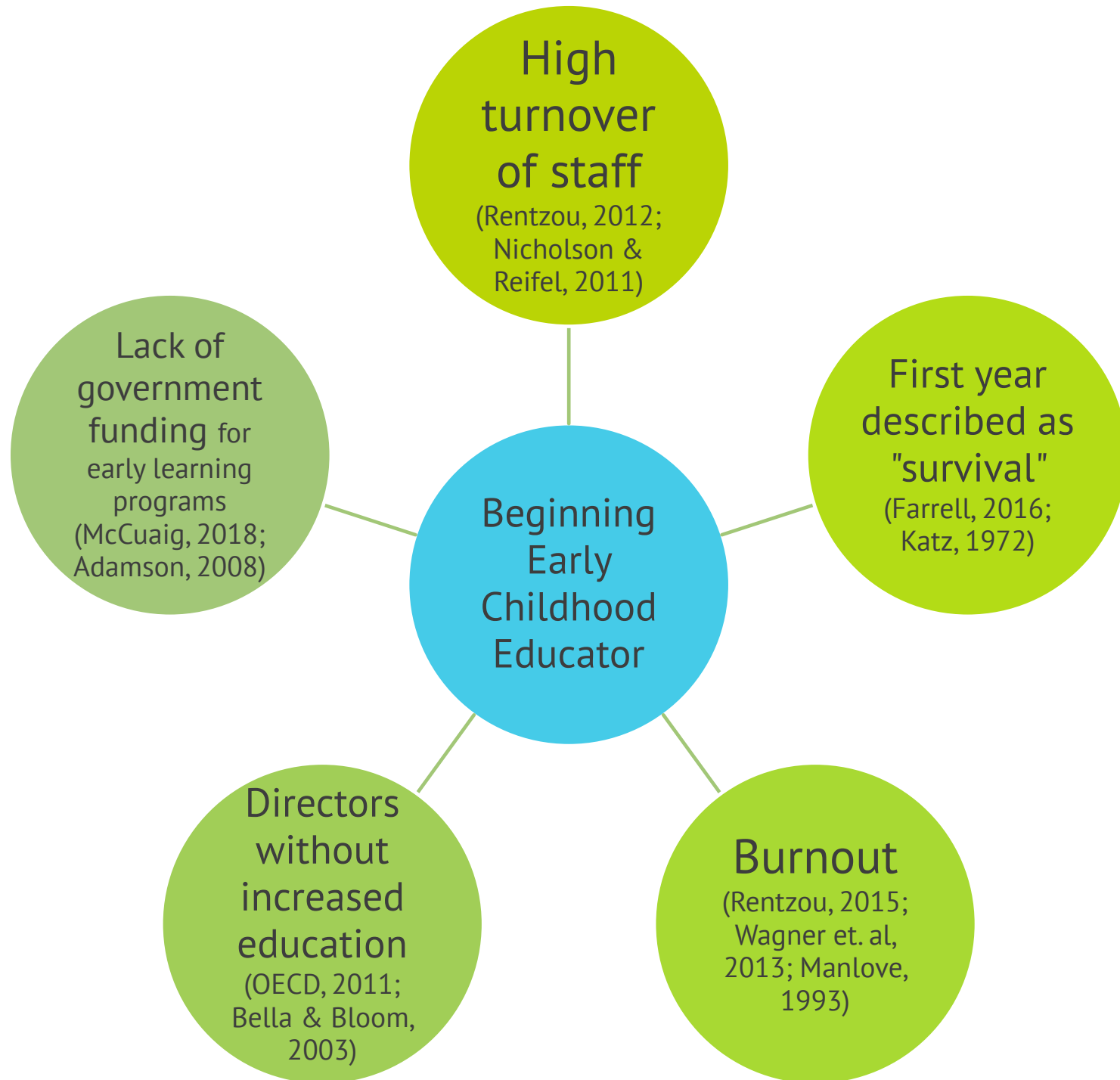
- Thompson Rivers University campuses are on the traditional lands of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc (Kamloops campus) and the T'exelc (Williams Lake campus) within Secwépemc'ulucw, the traditional and unceded territory of the Secwépemc. Our region also extends into the territories of the St'át'imc, Nlaka'pamux, Nuxalk, T̓silhqot'in, Dakelh, and Syilx peoples. I recognize that this homeland has always been a place of teaching, learning, and research.



MY MOTIVATION

50%

of Early Childhood Educators leave the field within the first five years of work



PREVIOUS RESEARCH WITH BEGINNING ECES (DOAN, 2014)

Key Findings:

- The work is overwhelming, yet deeply satisfying;
- Induction support is haphazard;
- New educators want an induction program that would include mentoring or peer-support, observations, feedback, and professional development.



PROGRAM PURPOSE

The project paired up beginning and experienced **Early Childhood Educators** so they could...

share their experiences

learn from each other

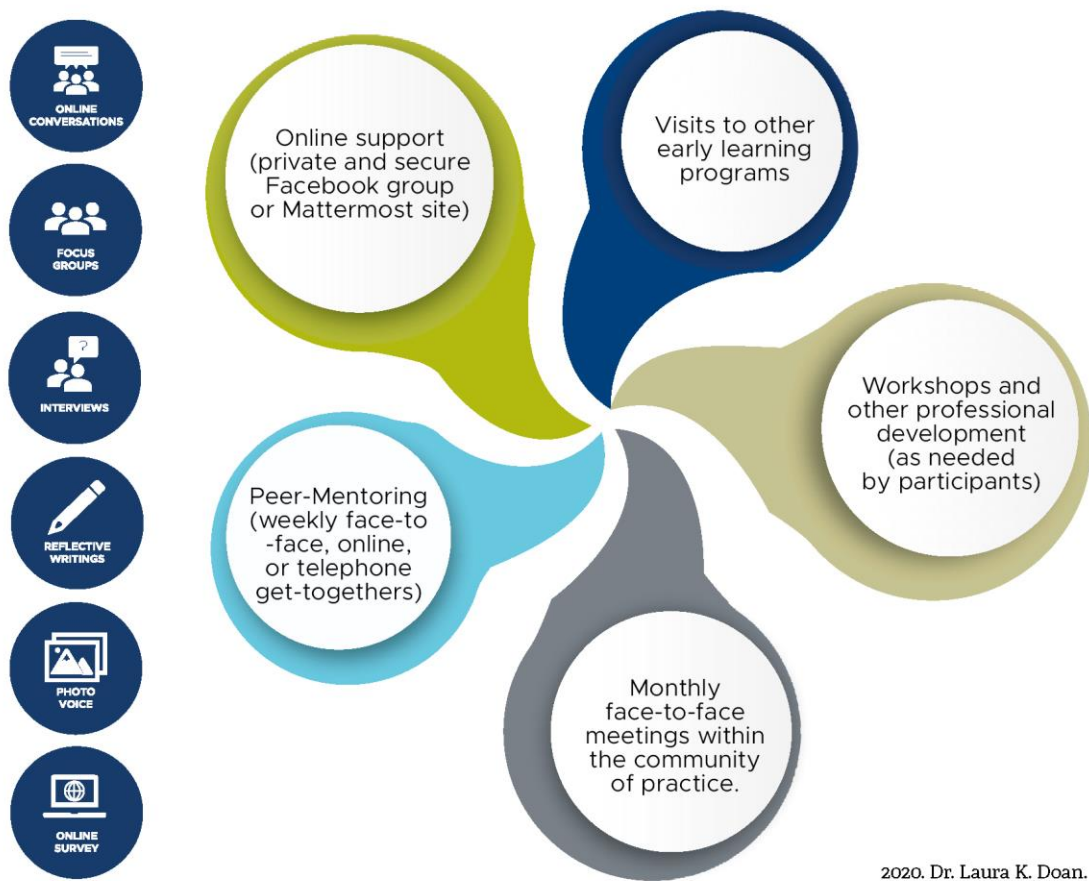
become part of a respected collective voice

build an effective network of support

- “We kind of created a safe environment, I think, that we both share our vulnerability, you know, throughout our day and our daily practice. And then, having that space to bounce off some ideas was very supportive for me.”
- ECE, Central Okanagan (Focus Group)

2020. Dr. Laura K. Doan.

Project Methods of Communication



2020. Dr. Laura K. Doan.





2020. Dr. Laura K. Doan.

“Our voices have connected over the distance, furnishing a safe place to grow together.”

ECE, Prince George

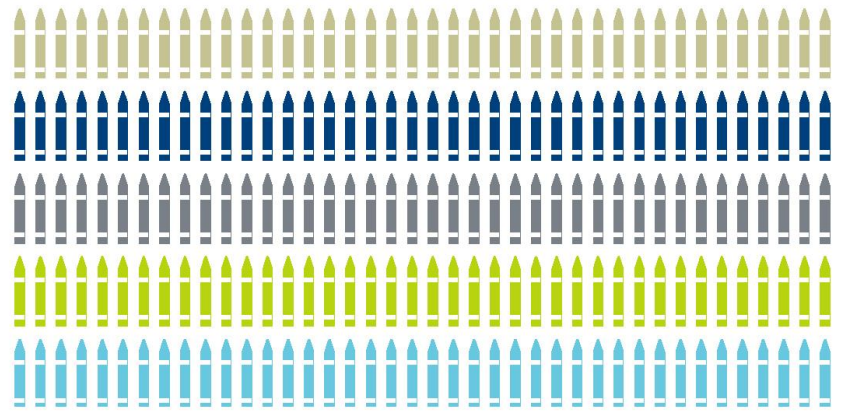
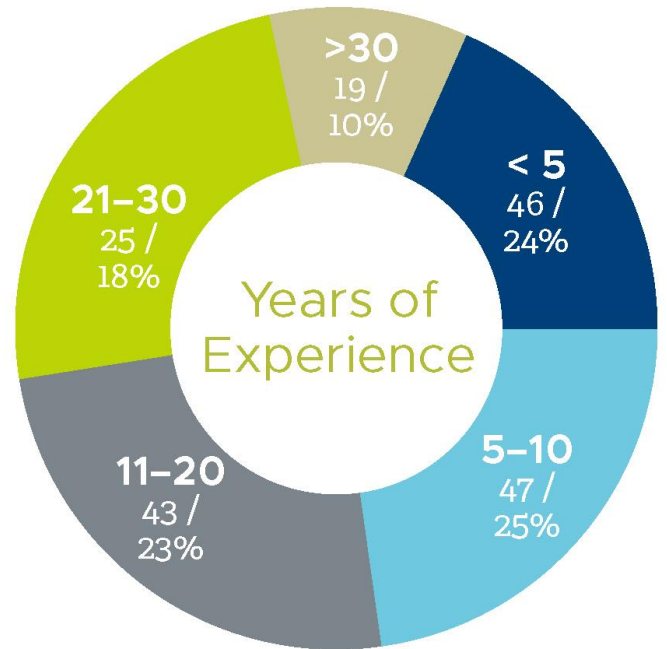
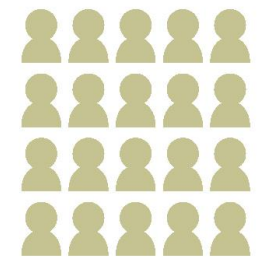
35
Municipalities

7
Unincorporated communities

45
Participants were in villages, districts, or unincorporated communities

77
Participants were working as ECEs, on the floor

58
ECE—
Leadership Role



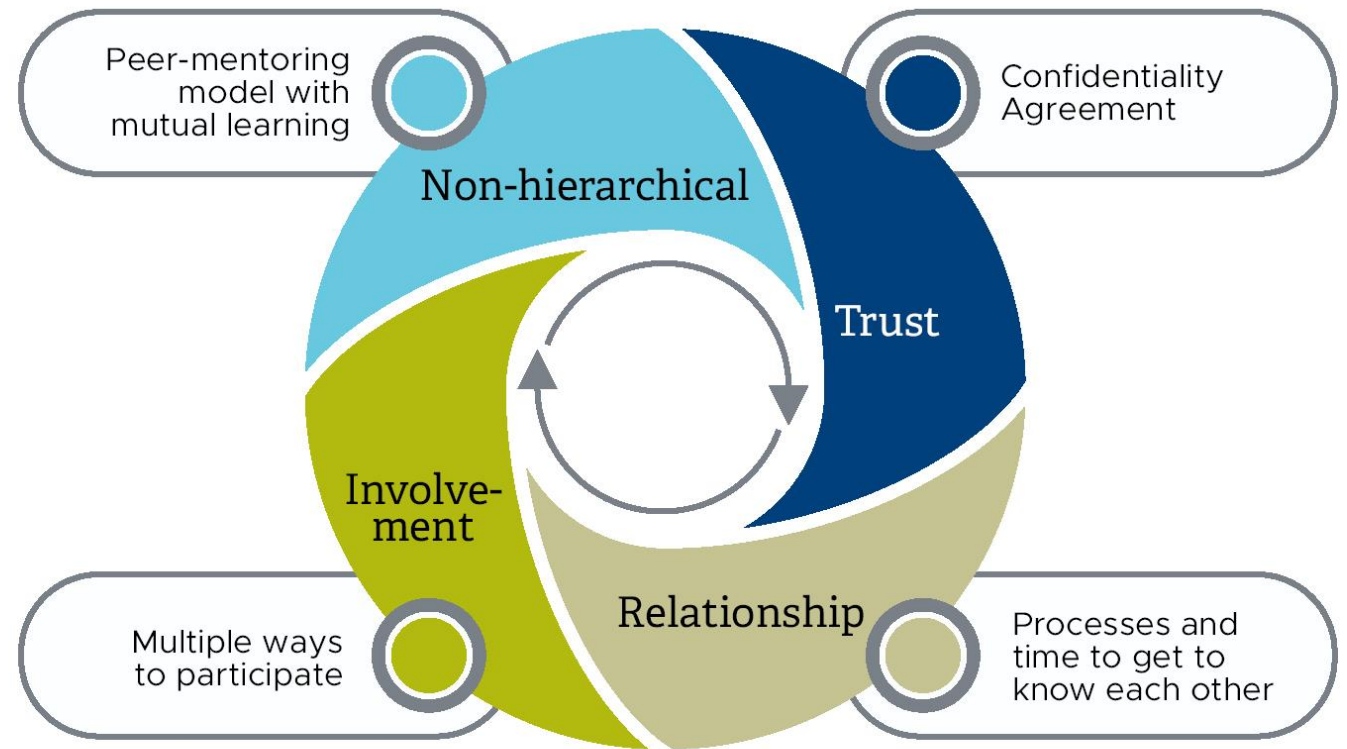
2020. Dr. Laura K. Doan.

“I was comfortable sharing things that I wouldn’t share with anyone else...so having that **confidentiality was huge.**”
ECE, Bulkley Valley



FINDINGS:

What helped build this community of practice?





Feeling valued and heard:
wanting the program to continue

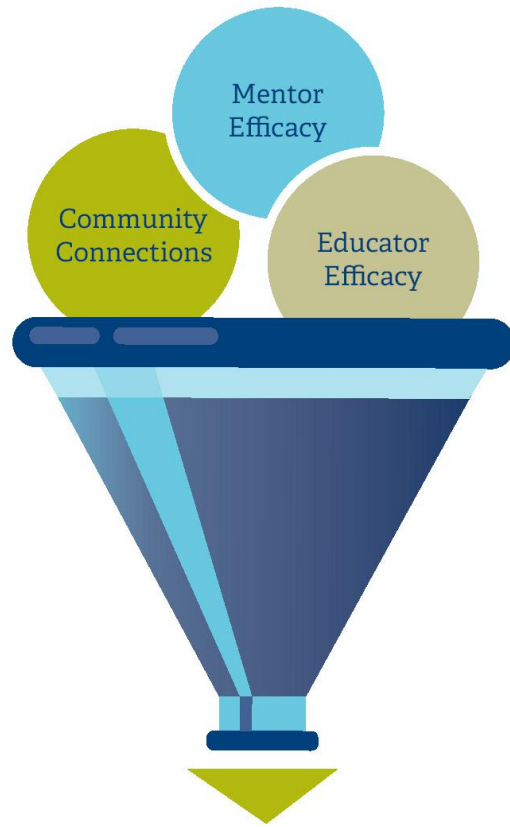
Supporting each other:
pedagogies and guidance strategies

Learning from and reflecting together:
learning about different programs
and sharing different perspectives

Developing professional relationships
and peer-mentoring as self-care

Complexity of working with families;
Education and wages of ECEs and ECEAs:
Low wages, high turnover, short staffing,
burnout and self-care





Sustain
practice
and avoid
burnout

2020. Dr. Laura K. Doan.

“...I was beginning to feel the effects of burnout...I didn’t realize how much I needed another educator to connect with...”

ECE, Vancouver

Gratitude is a word I would use to describe my feelings about the peer mentoring project, and my peer partner.

Arna

Opened Space

One strong reflective essence I felt during our connection was that we both showed up fully as we were in the moment. We opened space for each other to share what we were going through. It felt like two Warriors of Light coming together to support each other. We shared similar feelings of how challenges in the field were consuming themselves and provided suggestions and insights to each other for possible solutions. It was a heartfelt and genuinely beautiful time shared together, sharing the journey with compassionate understanding and playfulness.

Arna



This photo represents community and communication; and the collective noise we can make when we stick together—there's room for more on those branches. :)

Arna

Building Early Childhood can trigger both positive and negative emotions from our own childhoods and parenting. We realized how support from groups such as peer mentoring can help us work through our reactions to difficult situations we are wanting about, such as foster care, domestic violence, addiction.



Coming Full Circle

I'm grateful for the opportunity and an thoughts arising in the 100 days calendar about it a long year and want to continue to make a difference. I am grateful for the experience and I thank you for allowing me to "practice" to share my voice and my life's journey. I am grateful for the connections through the project which inspire and continue to flourish.

I shared this reflection as "Coming Full Circle" for a variety of reasons. The heart reason is for the journey of my career. Starting out as a young practitioner at 19 and how I was able to make a 20-year career out of it. I did become discouraged and quit the way for a bit but when a brief break and continuing to follow my heart I'm back. I came full circle through my experiences, support of my team and my guidance. That is the beautiful coming full circle. I am grateful to my team who was my support and my role during the work I have spent my career. My heart now is with my family and my role, being with my young family care of her as the top one at her life for all. Again, coming full circle.

I look at my role as an early childhood educator with a renewed sense of passion and commitment knowing that need for continuing education and support of the importance of the early years for my grandchildren and all the children out to come. As long as I have a purpose, my passion for making a difference will continue. It's been a joy and a blessing for my heart and soul to come full circle. :)

Arna

Dear Early Childhood Educator

I see you.
Your heart is the author of your teaching practice.

I hear you.
You bring your heart to the children in your care even when you are tired, stressed or overwhelmed. You show up because you love what you do.

I feel you.
You honour children as full human beings right now. They are not becoming someone. They are someone now in your eyes.

You are enough.

You are enough in the chaos.
You are enough in the joy.
You are enough in the mystery.

I felt a great sense of connection to the profession and to my peers. I needed that as a newbie.

Arna



Always feels positive to be present with other ECEs. I am coming away from this meeting bringing with me pieces of information and inspiration for projects and ideas for use in the community and my own early learning center.

Arna

A huge topic that popped up was self-care and burnout. I was surprised after only being in the field a full year, this was already a topic my partner wanted to chat about—which made me question, why?

Arna



Life Preserver

Together we founder in a wide sea—struggling to keep our heads above water. But then, through connection, someone throws us a life preserver and we hang on for dear life. After a while a boat comes along and we all climb aboard. And soon we are all rowing together—stronger and more purposeful.

That is what the peer mentoring project has done for me—connecting me with a partner who was my life preserver, then integrating me into a group of inspiring educators, who support

each other without question. And that is a gift. Imagine the possibilities of pods of educators around the Province, gaining strength with each new group member. Realizing that we are not alone and that we share the same struggles. Wouldn't it be wonderful if every educator had this opportunity—and imagine the effect this would have on recruitment and retention. I certainly hope this is the case.

Arna

My peer-mentor talked about her feeling of [being] "armed" after leaving the group meeting... I mentioned how I felt the same way. What a great feeling to have after professional development.

Arna



Professional Development

We sat outside on my peer's front porch. It was a beautiful fall day outside that we both wanted to enjoy. I had just finished at an all-day sign language workshop that was put on from my work. We talked about how important it is to have professional development. However, it is also very hard to find time and energy for it. My work is fortunate enough to have two Pro-D days a year where we shut down for the day. Most places don't and as an ECE you are required to have Professional Development Days. It's hard to find time outside of work to be able to do this.

Arna

I've really been struggling at my current job. Without these weekly meetings with my peer-mentor, I never would have had such a reliable, professional and tactful resource to work through things. She has helped me find a calmness and confidence in myself as an educator. I really didn't realize I was lacking.

Arna

We were able to talk about why we do what we do and how we do it. There were great conversations which allowed us to each reflect and share our views. I loved this conversation as it allowed me to really think about why I really get up every day and go to work. It drove me to appreciate the fact that I have a job that allows me to care for these amazing children. It also allows me to really rock at my core values not only as an educator, but also as a wife and mother.

Arna

Dealing with parents—it can be hard to approach them when we have difficult things to discuss, and how early intervention is so important for children who need a little extra help.

Arna



Walking in the Forest

I am excited about being part of this project and happy with the way the facilitators paired us up. To me, walking in the forest is a metaphor for the development of this initiative. On one hand, it is beautiful and comforting and understood, and on the other hand, there are many paths with unknown and possibly challenging twists and turns! I am hopeful that it will stretch all of us.

Arna

I loved it when one of my peers said, "We are here for you." That was a gift of opening and connection for us all.

Arna

Value

We talked about how it can be frustrating... we felt there needs to be a shift in society perception on how it views early care and learning...

Arna



How to make stress your friend | Kelly McGonigal
youtube.com

Learn by watching

This is the video I said u guys should watch!

Thu 6:47 PM

Hannah

Thanks Sheena! Great message. I love the idea caring creates resilience, and stress/anxiety comes from caring. So easy to forget that.

It's amazing how different you feel when you have someone you can talk to outside of work.



The benefit of working with a new, energetic, idealistic and unjaded ECE is seeing the profession through fresh, hopeful, forward-thinking eyes.

Linda



I Need You

I need you so I can be your neighbor
I need you so I can be your friend
I need you so I can be who I am
Who I am, I am your friend

You need me so you can be your neighbor
You need me so you can be my friend
You need me so you can be who you are
Who you are, you are my friend

A bird needs air for its wings to fly
A boat needs water to float
A teacher needs students who want to know why
An election needs a vote
Or a lining needs a coat...just as

I need you so I can be who I am
You need me so you can be yourself
We both need each other
so we can be who we are

Who we are, we are friends
We both need each other,
so we can be each other's
We can be each other's friend

Erin Rogers



After conversations with my peer-mentor, I always feel invigorated, and inspired to walk into my workday with an openness—to see beyond what I saw before. I am so grateful to be working with her!

Yana

When another educator listens, I feel validated and supported.

Yana



Start Small

We spoke of trying not to take on others' dramas and difficulties and focus on caring for ourselves. Recognizing that being a role model of self-care is difficult as we (in this field) tend to be better at meeting the needs of others rather than for ourselves.

I shared, for myself at my workplace we celebrate caring for each other in small ways—bring coffee, tea to work for coworkers, sharing baking, encouraging others to book massages, posting encouraging messages in our common area. My hope was that it would gain momentum the longer and we would all benefit. It has worked. I have received this care from others.

April A. Collins

I am not alone and I know there are some people out there that I can call and are ready to meet me.

Olivia





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Our time together 'filled my cup', each sip of tea warming my insides.
When my tea mug was physically empty, I felt refreshed mentally.

—Chelsea



The goal of this project is to both
“build capacity and leave a legacy.”

Pam Preston, Executive Director of Westcoast Child Care
Resource Centre



Funded by the Government of Canada
through the Canada – British Columbia
Early Learning and Child Care Agreement



Thank you.

www.ecepeermentoring.trubox.ca



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