

ETFO celebrates 15 years of DECE members' countless contributions

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TORONTO, ON – On this Child Care Worker and Early Childhood Educator Appreciation Day, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) marks 15 years of Ontario's Full-Day Kindergarten (FDK) program and celebrates the vital role designated early childhood educators (DECEs) play in supporting and inspiring our youngest learners.

"This year, we celebrate the 15th anniversary of ETFO's representation of DECEs and an FDK program that has transformed early learning in Ontario," says ETFO President David Mastin. "By bringing DECEs and teachers together in collaborative kindergarten teams, they provide the strongest possible start for our youngest learners. Today, we honour the expertise, care, and countless contributions of our DECE members, who create inclusive, play-based classrooms that nurture every aspect of a child's development."

Since the implementation of FDK, DECEs have played a crucial role in ensuring children receive a strong foundation for lifelong learning. Kindergarten provides lasting benefits for children's reading, writing, numeracy, self-regulation, and social skill development. This is, in large part, due to the play-based learning expertise and leadership of DECEs. Their commitment to nurturing curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking in young learners has been instrumental in the success of the program.

Adds Mastin, "While we celebrate this milestone, we also recognize the ongoing challenges faced by DECEs. To continue providing high-quality Kindergarten education, the province must maintain the current staffing model of a teacher and DECE, ensure that play-based learning remains central to Kindergarten, and cap Kindergarten classes at 26 students."

[ETFO](#) represents approximately 84,000 members, including 80,000 public elementary teachers and occasional teachers, and 4,000 designated early childhood educators, education support personnel, and professional support personnel. Visit BuildingBetterSchools.ca.

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