

HANSARD

NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

COMMITTEE

ON

HUMAN RESOURCES

Tuesday, June 26, 2018

COMMITTEE ROOM

**Mount Saint Vincent University, Department of Child and Youth Study
Early Childhood Education regarding Pre-Primary
&
Appointments to Agencies, Boards and Commissions**

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES

Mr. Ben Jessome (Chairman)
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[Mr. Hugh MacKay replaced Ms. Suzanne Lohnes-Croft]
[Ms. Barbara Adams replaced Mr. Brad Johns]
[Ms. Susan Leblanc replaced Ms. Claudia Chender]

WITNESSES

Mount Saint Vincent University, Department of Child & Youth Study

Dr. Fernando Nunes, Department Chair and Associate Professor
Dr. Christine McLean, Assistant Professor
Dr. Jessie-Lee McIsaac, Tier II Canada Research Chair & Assistant Professor

In Attendance:

Ms. Judy Kavanagh
Legislative Committee Clerk

Mr. Gordon Hebb
Chief Legislative Counsel



House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, TUESDAY, JUNE 26, 2018

STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES

10:00 A.M.

CHAIRMAN
Mr. Ben Jessome

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order, please. Good morning everybody, welcome to the Tuesday, June 26th meeting of the Human Resources Committee. My name is Ben Jessome, I represent Hammonds Plains-Lucasville, and I'll be your Chair for this morning's proceedings.

I would invite some introductions of our members.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you everyone. To my right, we have Mr. Gordon Hebb, our Legislative Counsel. To my left, we have Ms. Judy Kavanagh, she's our committee clerk for today.

For those of you who haven't been here before, there's coffee, water, and I think probably some tea out there, just in the anteroom next door. Washrooms are a little further, to your left, once you go out there. In case of a reason to evacuate the building, we'll ask that you jump out the Granville side of the building and head up to Grand Parade Square.

We're here today to bear witness to a presentation on Early Childhood Education regarding pre-Primary and any increase in applications/students in that field. We have representatives from Mount Saint Vincent here today, who will introduce themselves shortly.

I would like to begin by doing some brief committee business. We'll kick things off with our agency, board and commission appointments. We have only two on the agenda so I would invite a motion from the floor, please and thank you. Mr. Porter.

MR. CHUCK PORTER: Mr. Chairman, for the Department of Agriculture, Nova Scotia Farm Loan Board, I move that the appointments of Dianne Kelderman and Caleb Wood as directors be approved.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there any discussion on that motion? Would all those in favour of the motion please say Aye. Contrary minded, Nay.

The motion is carried. Thank you everybody. Mr. Porter.

MR. PORTER: I'm just thinking about summer - July and August - by way of appointments and I'm curious if the clerk could indicate how many are on for July and August. I know that we come in and meet for only a few minutes to do appointments. It doesn't have to be this very minute, she may know or may not know, but if she could let us know in advance around whether there were appointments and only for two minutes.

I'm just trying to make it more efficient, I guess, for people coming in, breaking up their day. Summer is a busy time with events and graduations and all such things. I just want to ensure that we have something worth coming for. I mean if there's an urgent appointment that needs to be done, although the process is lengthy, that's fine. I would like to maybe take that into consideration and even though the rules, Mr. Hebb may tell me you've got to meet every month to make it so, I think that there's . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Porter, as you would be well aware, it is a requirement of the committee to meet at least monthly and the list of appointments goes out a week in advance. Mr. Porter.

MR. PORTER: I do know that and I guess I'll refer to Mr. Hebb for just a wee bit of clarity on it. Is that legislated, Gordon, or do we have to make that change within committee?

MR. GORDON HEBB: That's in the Rules of the House.

MR. PORTER: I guess we'll look at that at a future date. Again, it just seems a shame when you're meeting, and I'm sure that anyone here would agree that the efficiency around this needs to be considered for one or two. But we'll carry on as planned, I guess.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I didn't mean to take up your time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Not at all. Thank you, Mr. Porter. Appreciate your comments.

Today, we're going to move on to our witnesses. We'll do some introductions from my right to left, and then you'll be able to make some opening comments. I would remind members and our witnesses that when we get into the question and answer portion of the meeting, for the purposes of our staff in the Hansard department, we ask that you wait to be recognized by the Chair so that we can keep things a little more orderly and a little easier on the folks recording today's meeting.

Dr. McLean.

DR. CHRISTINE MCLEAN: My name is Christine McLean. I teach in the Faculty of Child and Youth Study at Mount Saint Vincent University. I have been there for two years now after spending 28 years in Newfoundland and then moving back to Nova Scotia.

DR. FERNANDO NUNES: My name is Fernando Nunes. I am the interim Department Chair of the Child and Youth Study Department at Mount Saint Vincent University, and associate professor. I've been at the Mount since 2004. My field of expertise and research is immigrant children and the integration of minority and immigrant children.

DR. JESSIE-LEE MCISAAC: I'm Jessie-Lee McIsaac, and I am new faculty at Mount Saint Vincent. I started in January as a Tier II Canada Research Chair and assistant professor. I'm cross appointed with the Faculty of Education and the Department of Child and Youth Study. I have a degree from the University of Alberta in public health. I'm from Nova Scotia, and I'm pretty pleased to be here in the province now in a faculty position.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Welcome back, folks. Dr. McIsaac, Dr. Nunes, Dr. McLean - who would like to begin with opening remarks? Dr. Nunes.

DR. NUNES: I'm going to be reading from a prepared text.

Dear Mr. Jessome and committee members, thank you for this opportunity to speak to the committee. I'm going to start my presentation with a short introduction to the history of Mount Saint Vincent University, followed by a description of the structure of our school and our department. I'll follow this up with demographic information about our incoming and graduating students, followed then by a few comments on the impact of the pre-Primary program on our department.

To begin with the institutional history, Mount Saint Vincent was established by the Sisters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul in 1873, at which time, it was one of the only institutions of higher education for women in Canada. This institution's main mandate was to train novices and young sisters to become teachers, but it also opened its doors to young women from the City of Halifax.

In 1925, Mount Saint Vincent College, as it was known at the time, was granted a charter by the Nova Scotia Legislature to grant degrees in education, nursing, and the arts. In this way, it became the only independent women's college in the British Commonwealth. In 1951, the first layperson was hired as a faculty member, and the institution began offering degrees in arts, secretarial science, music, home economics, library science, nursing, and education. In 1966, the Nova Scotia Legislature granted a charter to Mount Saint Vincent College allowing it to become a university. The Mount has thus been operating in its present capacity of a predominantly undergraduate public university for 52 years.

The institution first began admitting men as students in 1967 and, consequently, began experiencing enrolment increases, new construction, and new agreements. Several new fields of study were initiated in the 1970s, including child study, public relations, gerontology, and tourism and hospitality management, as well as new modes of learning introduced, including co-operative education and distance education.

Ownership of the Mount was officially transferred from the Sisters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul to a board of governors in July 1988.

Presently the university is administered under a Dean of Arts and Science, a Dean of Professional and Graduate Studies, and a Dean of Education. The Mount offers undergraduate programs in Arts, Science, Education, as well as professional programs in Applied Human Nutrition, Business Administration, Child and Youth Study, Public Relations, and Tourism and Hospitality Management. It also offers 13 graduate degrees in various professional and academic areas, including a Ph.D. in Educational Studies, in conjunction with St. Francis Xavier and Acadia Universities.

Our institution enrolls approximately 4,000 students and employs 300 full-time and part-time faculty. It is home to a number of research chairs, including three Canada Research Chairs in such fields as Early Childhood, Diversity and Transitions, Social Innovation and Global Aging. As well, the only chair in Canada in Learning Disabilities, and also the Atlantic NSERC Chair for Women in Science and Engineering.

Of note, Dr. Jessie-Lee McIsaac is the Mount's newest Canada Research Chair and studies the implementation of policy initiatives that support child health and well-being in Nova Scotia.

Our university is also distinguished by having one of the lowest average class sizes of any university in Canada, an average of about 23 students, and a faculty to student ratio of one to 20. The Mount is also a leader in distance education with more than 275 undergraduate and graduate courses being offered at a distance. Finally, it was also the first university in Canada to offer co-operative education where students alternate semesters in class with paid work terms in positions related to their field of study.

A little bit about our department. The Department of Child and Youth Study is located within the Faculty of Professional Studies and it houses the only university level child and youth study program in Atlantic Canada. We offer a Bachelor of Arts in Child and Youth Study or BA(CYS), an Honours Bachelor of Arts in Child and Youth Study or BA(CYS) Honours, and an Honours Certificate in Child and Youth Study - this is for those students who have completed a BA(CYS) and wish to upgrade to an honours. We also offer a thesis-based Master of Child and Youth Study for those students who wish to work in research, policy or administration, pertaining to children and youth.

In addition to our on-campus courses, the department also offers its BA(CYS) program entirely online or its undergraduate program, which means that students in another part of the province and/or other provinces or even in other countries were able to complete our BA(CYS) degree in its entirety.

One important component of our BA(CYS) program is the four supervised practicum placements which enable our students to apply the knowledge they've learned in the classroom within four supervised, on-site work experiences in settings with children and their families. The department also partners with the MSVU Child Study Centre, which is an on-campus early learning education centre which provides a model training and research facility for students in the CYS degree program, as well as being a resource for the surrounding communities where they drop off their kids and have them in the early learning centre.

Another important facet of our department is the establishment of articulation agreements with a number of colleges and universities in the region. These agreements enable students from those institutions to enter our program with transfer credits, earning them an advance standing of up to a maximum of half of the credits that are required for the BA(CYS).

Our department also offers ongoing professional development workshops and training for people working in the field of early childhood education, through funding from the federal-provincial/territorial agreement on early childhood development that is coordinated by the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

Finally, our department faculty is composed of seven full-time faculty members, plus an additional emeritus faculty who is retired. The dean is also a member of our department, but normally is not counted as a teaching faculty. Our part-time faculty complement ranges from eight to 15 members per term, depending on the need.

[10:15 a.m.]

In terms of student demographics, our department has been home to about 310 students a year - that's an average. On average, 98 new students are admitted each year to the department - a number which has varied in the last five years between a high of 118 in 2015-16 and a low of 82 in 2016-17. The numbers are listed in the last page on the accompanying charts that we've made available to you.

Approximately 40 per cent of our incoming BA(CYS) students have been transferring from other institutions, primarily from Nova Scotia college programs offering one and two-year early childhood education or youth care programs. We've also graduated an average of 60 students yearly from the BA(CYS).

The graduates from our BA(CYS) emerge from our program with a Level 3 classification in early childhood education, thus each of our graduates is credentialed as an early childhood educator. However, they do not all enter this occupation. In fact, many of our BA(CYS) students complete our degree and enter the Bachelor of Education degree, going on to become licensed primary and secondary school teachers. Others enter the youth care field - both residential youth carers as well as being youth workers in other settings, for example, school-based child and youth care, youth recreation and in other areas.

Still others apply to such programs as speech language pathology, occupational therapy, nursing, social work and graduate child and youth study. We also know that a number of our graduates are currently working in the Early Learning Branch of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. Thus, each of our BA(CYS) graduates have the option of venturing into any one of these areas of employment and/or entering further academic study.

In fact, the fields of child and youth study encompass a number of different disciplines and theoretical approaches such as early childhood education - which we're talking about here today - child and youth care, early intervention or working with children with disabilities and their families, youth care and youth residential care, child life, working with children in hospitals and in hospital settings, as well as youth recreation and civic engagement.

Because of the field being this way, our faculty research interests also reflect this diversity. For example, my own field of research is in the integration of immigrant and minority children with a focus on education. The research of my departmental colleagues is similarly diverse, ranging from inclusive to cross-cultural education, children's rights and children's concepts of health and illness.

As you can see, our courses and our faculty prepare our students for a wide variety of occupations. They're also free to switch between these different areas of expertise once they're out in the workforce.

Now I'll talk a little bit about our department and the pre-Primary program. In the past decade, our enrolment in the BA(CYS) has increased approximately 46 per cent from about 222 in 2008 - so approximately 325 students today. However, over the past five years, our enrolments have been fairly consistent, as you can see in the attached tables.

We anticipate that there will be an increase in our enrolment as a result of the new pre-Primary program in Nova Scotia, but we still do not know either how much this will be or how soon this will occur. We also do not yet know if these new students will come in the form of an increase in applicants from high school, from students transferring from Level 2 programs in community college, from other university programs or from some combination of the three.

We also do not know how many of these incoming students will eventually enter the field of early childhood education. Since we do not currently track the occupational trajectories of the graduates from our program, we must subsequently rely on anecdotal and imperfect accounts.

We have faculty who are starting to do research in this area. Dr. Joan Turner, Dr. Christine McLean, and Dr. Jessie-Lee McIsaac have begun to survey students in our program, as well as those attending other early childhood programs and colleges across the province in an effort to understand the expectations for employment opportunities and the career path options of post-graduation. However, the results of this research are not yet available.

Ultimately the number of our graduates who eventually remain in the early childhood education system is also an unknown. Not only are our students qualified to work in other segments of child and youth care, but once in the EC workforce, they are also affected by the same three systemic factors that have for a long time affected the entrance and retention of early child care educators. These are low wages, stressful working conditions, and the lack of recognition that's afforded to early childhood educators as being highly-trained professionals. These combined factors have historically served to limit the number of applicants in this field, both in this province as well as across Canada.

These factors have also negatively affected the retention of established workers in early learning centres. More than anything else, addressing these three limitations will serve to bring more students into this field and will also serve to keep them in the field longer.

That ends my written presentation. Thank you for the opportunity to present to your committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Dr. Nunes. Dr. McLean or Dr. McIsaac, would you like to add anything at this point? Okay, do we have some questions from the floor, please and thank you? Mr. Dunn would like to kick us off here.

HON. PAT DUNN: Just one quick question dealing with the employment opportunities for people who are coming out of the program into the workforce. Do you have an idea, what is the percentage, how successful are they in obtaining employment?

DR. NUNES: Just a clarification, is your question specifically about early childhood or about any other field?

MR. DUNN: Early childhood.

DR. MCLEAN: We don't track employment rates for our graduates, not necessarily from our department. Anecdotally, we know that there's a huge demand for our graduates, so they are finding employment in early childhood education, plus the other fields as well, as Dr. Nunes stated. I'm not sure if that answers your question.

MR. DUNN: That's fine.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All set, okay, moving on to Ms. DiCostanzo.

MS. RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I'm not sure who this question goes to but probably to Dr. McIsaac. I'm just wondering if you have any evaluation, the results of an evaluation that you've learned over the years from the pre-Primary programs. Actually, my two daughters went to the pre-Primary program at the Mount 20 years ago and I remember how wonderful it was and how difficult for my first child. It was expensive at the time so I remember putting in three days a week. Three years after, with my second, we were able to afford a bit more and how much more my second daughter has learned, it set them off. I just think of the value they received from the pre-Primary at the Mount and that now this is available for everybody, for all the children, is something that is a dream for a lot of families. I'm hoping you have some system of evaluating what you've done in the past.

DR. MCISAAC: I can tell you about some research and evaluation that I've been involved with, in partnership with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. We know it can be really tough for families to access support they need for their young child, especially child care can be difficult.

A few years ago, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development launched Early Years Centres across Nova Scotia in eight school communities across the province. Some of you probably know a little bit about this. The Early Years Centres were really looking at trying to provide an integrated platform for families with young children. One element of that was an early learning program - which is now what we call pre-Primary - and other parts around the early learning program were trying to find linkages to child

care in the community and also trying to make it easier for families to access other programs and services.

Sometimes it can be really tough for families to navigate the system, where they need to find support for their young child, so the Early Years Centres across the province were trying to figure out a better way to do that and using the schools as a location to offer this platform.

I've been involved with an evaluation that started in 2014, and we just want to recognize the generous funding support through the Margaret and Wallace McCain Family Foundation. This evaluation is done in partnership with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development; Dr. Sara Kirk at Dalhousie University is the evaluation lead. At Mount Saint Vincent, Dr. McLean, Dr. Joan Turner, and I have been involved with the evaluation.

In the first few years of the evaluation, we were really trying to understand how you do that - how you do this integrated platform of service delivery in schools, how you build partnerships in the community, and how you implement a play-based program for children at the location of the schools. The evaluation in the first while was just trying to figure out how you do it. It was a lot of process measures and talking to stakeholders involved with bringing people together. Each of the schools established a site management committee where they provided the leadership of how to implement this type of approach in schools, including the early learning program. What we heard in the first few years of the evaluation was the great success of the early learning program, the great platform it provided for families in the community.

In the second year of the evaluation, we spoke to families, we did focus groups, and we did a survey with families in these eight schools. They told us how much they valued the program, how much they felt that their input was recognized and welcomed, and how comfortable they felt reaching out to the early childhood educators in those schools to express any concerns that they had.

We learned about the success. We also heard from some teachers in the early elementary grades, what they saw in the children who attended these early learning programs once they got to Grade Primary and how much more ready they felt they were - these students who attended the early learning program. That transition into Grade Primary seemed to be really helped by the play-based program that was offered in these centres.

The evaluation that I'm speaking about is actually a five-year evaluation, and we're in year four right now. When the mandate for pre-Primary was announced last year, we were really pleased to see the evaluation results being used to help inform policy decision in the province around trying to make this accessible program be offered in all schools in

the province. Our evaluation has actually shifted to look not only at these eight schools, but look at the pre-Primary program broadly across the province.

Dr. McLean and I actually just finished doing some data collection this year with schools across the province. We did a family survey. We also had the pleasure of going to a few of the schools with pre-Primary to talk to families, talk to the educators, talk to the school staff, and also talk to some folks in more of the Regional Centres for Education level and consultants with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. We have just wrapped up data collection as of last week, so unfortunately, we're not able to share those results at this point, but we're going to be working with the department over the summer on the data analysis and working on our report to disseminate in the early Fall.

MS. DICOSTANZO: I know that one is in Halifax at the Mount. Can you give me the eight locations?

DR. MCISAAC: The child studies centre at the Mount is a child care centre.

The eight Early Years Centres: the one in Halifax is Rockingstone; Jubilee, in Cape Breton; Yarmouth Central, in Yarmouth; New Germany Elementary; Clark Rutherford, in the Annapolis Valley; West Highlands school; East Antigonish; and the francophone school is École Beau-Port, in Arichat. Those were the eight centres.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Leblanc, please.

MS. SUSAN LEBLANC: Thank you for your presentation. I'm wondering about getting ready for the new additions to the pre-Primary rollout. The government has said that they'll need to hire about 700 additional ECEs for the full implementation of pre-Primary by 2020. Based on your knowledge of the existing labour force, do you think that that is a reasonable or achievable goal, 700 new early childhood educators by 2020?

[10:30 a.m.]

DR. MCLEAN: I think the introduction of the pre-Primary program has really highlighted the importance of the early childhood education sector and the need for early childhood educators. We're very aware of that at Mount Saint Vincent.

In terms of the numbers, we do know that there are 2,700 classified early childhood educators in the province, and 1,700 are currently working in the field. I think the numbers are something like that. It's not just recruitment, but it's also re-attraction to the field that's going to have to be something that is considered.

In terms of whether it's practical or not, I don't think I can speak to that necessarily, but I can speak to the importance of having well qualified early childhood educators in all these early learning settings - not just in pre-Primary, but in regulated child care. That is

the pillar and the backbone of the system of early childhood education, so we need to be looking at how we attract people and keep people in the field, looking at wages, working conditions, and looking at such things as the length of their day - do they have time for planning and programming? Do they have a pension? Do they have benefits? These are things that need to be considered. Dr. Nunes mentioned that as being the systemic factors that are being experienced in the sector across the country.

It is definitely a highlighted need, and Mount Saint Vincent is certainly willing to do its part. We're hoping that our enrolment will increase and we're able to accommodate more students than what we already have. Dr. Nunes may be able to speak to that. It has certainly shone a bright light on the importance of this field.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Dr. McLean, if I can clarify, are you saying that should they choose to do so, there are about 1,000 people that are qualified to jump into this field?

DR. MCLEAN: That's my understanding, but I think those numbers would be with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development because classification happens through that department. They have an understanding of how many people in the province are actually classified as Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3. They also know how many people are working as Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3.

My understanding is that the number of people who have actually become classified - for example, I'm classified as a Level 3 early childhood educator, but I'm not working directly in the field right now. There may be people who are working in other parts of the sector or there may be people who have left the sector and are looking for ways to come back.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you for clarifying. Ms. Leblanc.

MS. LEBLANC: This is not my supplementary, but a further clarification. One could assume that those classified people could have left the province, correct? Am I using my supplementary question?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think we're okay, keep going. Dr. McLean.

DR. MCLEAN: That's a question that would be better answered by departmental staff, but my understanding is that you have to reapply for classification. If you're living outside the province, you wouldn't necessarily - so there is an expiration date on your classification.

MS. LEBLANC: I guess then my official supplementary question would be, you spoke a little bit about the difficulties for re-attracting people or, in fact, attracting new people to the sector. Can you talk a little bit more specifically about that? We know about

the wage gap between early childhood educators and Primary school teachers - also just generally the low wages and the lack of benefits and those kinds of issues. Can you talk about what supports or programs would be very useful, in your view, to solving this issue of attraction - if in fact it is an issue - possibly anticipated issue of attraction so we can fill that anticipated need?

DR. MCLEAN: My understanding is that the province is now working on an early childhood education workforce strategy, that it's in development, and so that will likely address some of these issues. Basically, it's pretty straightforward. The wages need to be competitive with other fields in a similar level of training and responsibility. We need to look at the long-term needs of the workforce, so if you want people to stay in the field, you need to be looking at benefits and pension.

We expect early childhood educators - and I don't know if everybody understands how complex a field this is. Often, it's not until you get into the field that you understand how complex it is, but we require early childhood educators to be intentional in their practice, to have curriculum which is emergent, which means it's based on children's interest. It's different from teacher-directed types of curriculum that you have in school where you have your curriculum that you're going to teach over the year. It's very individualized and personalized in early childhood education.

We expect early childhood educators to be reflective practitioners, so when we have these high expectations, we need to have the appropriate qualifications in place as well. It's really important that people have ECE-specific post-secondary training, so the work that the province is doing with its ECE workforce strategy are some things I would be looking for as supporting people in either upgrading their training and also looking at things like wages and benefits.

DR. MCISAAC: To follow up, I think as well as the supports for individuals, Christine mentioned that this is really shining a bright light on the field of early childhood education. I think an initiative like this and the more we talk about what it means to be an early childhood educator, we might be able to educate the public a bit about the importance these educators play in a child's life, that being part of that broader system of influence.

DR. NUNES: By now you probably realize that early childhood education is not my field so I'm not commenting a lot on it. What I can say is that I think there also needs to be a change in the mindset of society in general, that early childhood educators are highly-trained professionals and they need to receive the respect and recognition that is due of other similarly highly-trained professionals.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think we can all agree on that. Ms. Adams.

MS. BARBARA ADAMS: I was wondering if the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development consulted with your department and program before rolling

out the new pre-Primary program, with respect to the increased demands for the graduates that you're going to need to have?

DR. NUNES: I am an interim Chair, so if any consultation had been made it would have been made with the previous Chair, who was on sabbatical last year. I cannot answer that question without contacting the previous Chair.

MS. ADAMS: One of the things I have heard from parents is - well two concerns about the pre-Primary. There's certainly lots who love it and I'm happy to acknowledge that. But one is that the time frame for it doesn't cover the full workday so they're stuck trying to get before and after care. The other is they're aware that in other provinces there's free daycare for all age groups, from zero to five. They would prefer to have it extend across all the age groups.

I'm wondering how you guys feel about the preference that families have for free daycare that will cover the whole workday, compared to what's offered at pre-Primary. I'm wondering if you're able to tell me what the difference is in cost for a year of daycare for someone's child versus a year of the cost for pre-Primary for that same child. For example, could you get three years of daycare for one year of pre-Primary?

DR. MCISAAC: I can answer the first question. Just to respond to the before- and after-school care issue, it was something we heard with the evaluation of the Early Years Centres, so they were similarly formed with the sort of school day feel.

What we saw though is eventually these schools started to partner with community providers, non-profit centres, the Boys and Girls Clubs, other regulated care settings as well, to figure out how to provide that wraparound care.

While we might not yet be there for some of the pre-Primary sites, I'm hoping that that might eventually be figured out through partnership with community. Did you want to respond to the other one?

DR. MCLEAN: I'm not sure about your statement about other provinces having free child care for children zero to five. My understanding is the Province of Quebec has a universal system but there is a fee for parents. It's up to \$7 a day now and in some cases higher than that.

When we talk about things like a universal system of child care - accessible, affordable child care - there generally is still some type of parent fee attached to that. There may be a cap on fees and I understand in the province there was a type of cap put on fees in the province. I think it's just looking at how the system is going to be delivered and developed, whether it's going to be a publicly-funded system, which is part of the infrastructure - like hospitals, schools, and so on - or whether it's privately delivered. Even

in provinces where there's not a lot of not-for-profit delivery, that's still private delivery. It's still a type of private delivery.

So I'm not aware of provinces that have free child care. I don't know if I'm missing something or if you can clarify that.

MS. ADAMS: Quebec is certainly one of the ones that I was referencing. What parents are wondering is, what is the cost of pre-Primary for one child for one year versus the cost of daycare for one child for one year? Daycare extends the full length of the workday, and pre-Primary doesn't. Not a lot of communities have - certainly my community doesn't have that wraparound option the way you were talking about. It's the cost of one versus the other.

DR. MCLEAN: I wouldn't have the budget costs or a breakdown of that. I'm not sure if those numbers are available. I definitely agree that there is the need for the full day of care. That's why regulated child care is always going to be an important part of an early learning and child care system. Pre-Primary is one type of early learning program, but play-based programming also happens in regulated child care and is an important part of the system.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Dr. McLean, can I just clarify - you're speaking about a cap on parent fees in Nova Scotia versus Quebec.

DR. MCLEAN: Yes, I thought that part of the 2016 plan was looking at a cap on parent fees, certainly not to the level of Quebec, where it's \$7 a day. But other provinces are also looking at putting - Ontario had talked about child care being more affordable with a cap on fees. B.C. is looking at that as well. That is something that other provinces are looking at. My understanding is that there was a cap on fees in Nova Scotia as well.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Mr. Porter.

MR. PORTER: I have just a quick question or two. Dr. Nunes, in your opening statement, you talked about the school correspondence, I'll call it - you can do education from afar. I believe you are the only school in the province that teaches the ECE program. How does that work? If wanted to be an ECE, can I do that online or through correspondence?

DR. NUNES: We are not the only school that teaches early childhood education. There are a number of colleges and small universities that have that program. We offer online courses for our program in its entirety. A student in another province or another country can take the same courses essentially as the on-campus students but completely online. Those would include early childhood education, and they can do our program and get their certification exactly like an on-campus student.

MR. PORTER: I should have been more clear on the ECE portion of that. Understanding that the NSCCs do Level 1, Level 2, et cetera, I guess there's nothing that prevents them following their Level 2, being employed, getting a job, and working somewhere if their goal was to move on to do ECE whether it was to do pre-Primary or to stay in another regulated centre or whatever it is they're doing by way of child care. They could do that.

My question would be - and maybe it's based on the learner - I may know the answer before I ask it, but I'll ask anyway for clarity - how long and do you have a limit on that? If I was at Level 2 and I wanted to be Level 3, do I have a year to complete that program online, or six months, or as long as it takes me?

DR. MCLEAN: It could take you as long as it takes. We have some students who take one course per semester, and we have some students who decided to do a full-time course load per semester with four or five courses.

I just wanted to mention as well, as Dr. Nunes said, there are four practicum placements in the program. Online or distance students are still able to their practicum placements, but they're able to do them in their home communities. You don't have to travel in to Halifax, for example, if you're in Cape Breton and you're doing the program or in Ontario and doing the program. We would arrange for practicum placements in your own home community as well, supervised by qualified supervisors.

MR. PORTER: Just quickly, as a follow-up, I appreciate that. That certainly makes it very convenient, knowing daycare like I do, having had four daughters go through that process. That's very good, and it will also be beneficial.

Just to close my part, could you tell me if any or how many may do this either new through your program from correspondence or upgrading from a Level 1 to a Level 2 or 3 on an annual basis? Is there any data - it may not be available - to support that?

[10:45 a.m.]

DR. NUNES: It's difficult because we have students who also take a mix of online and on-campus courses. We'd have to tease out exactly which ones are purely online. By online, we don't mean correspondence. Online means through the Internet, through face-to-face real time video - almost like video chats. That's using a program called Collaborate. That's what we use. They have to be there at that time and participate in the classroom just as they would in the on-campus course. Some departments have online through video that a student can look at at their leisure, but in our department, it's strictly through Collaborate - real time, right then and there.

It's hard to know how many of our students - we have a lot of students who are doing online learning, so let's say in any given semester, a third of our courses might be online.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Wilson.

HON. DAVID WILSON: I know our province, like many others, are turning to immigration to try to increase our population, and for that program to be successful, first we need people to choose Nova Scotia to come to, but also hopefully have them stay here. Having communities that are welcoming and having access to services that reflect where they come from and feeling comfortable - and I would assume that would be similar to child care.

In your enrolment, are you seeing a diverse population of students who might be new immigrants who can come to Nova Scotia, educate themselves, and work in a workforce that would hopefully allow them to get employment and allow us to be more welcoming and more open and reflective of our communities across the province? Do you keep track of that or have you noticed any shift in the last couple of years where I know the province has really been trying to get newcomers to come to our province?

DR. NUNES: Our department of institutional information tracks that and the number of international students. We have been receiving large numbers and increasing numbers of international students. I believe the Mount as a whole, 30 per cent of our students are international.

In terms of our department, we're also seeing students particularly from Saudi Arabia, places like Lebanon, Asia, Korea, and China. We are seeing increasing numbers of these students.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're going to move to Mr. Dunn.

MR. DUNN: My question is dealing with pre-Primary. There have certainly been some growing pains with facility requirements. There have been renovations, and in some cases lost space where they're using it for other purposes within the school facility. I guess my question is dealing with the pre-Primary students that are needing special needs assistance. Your educators coming out of the university, do they have training to deal with and assist students with special needs?

DR. NUNES: We have a number of courses that deal specifically with children and families of children with disabilities. The training would be from there. One of our practicum placements is also specifically with children with special needs - so yes. Through our professional development courses, students can get further training in these areas.

MR. DUNN: The students that are in the program, how much time or what is the percentage that they actually spend on-site in a school, as opposed to university?

DR. NUNES: Our practicum is a total of 560 hours, so they're pretty comprehensive. It's one of the strengths of our program, that our students do have that hands-on practicum component. When they are at their practicum, they are evaluated by both the practicum supervisor who meets with them on a regular basis, as well as by the on-site person who might be running the centre, who also evaluates them. They have a lot of hands-on experience and that is one of the strengths of our program.

MR. DUNN: At each site in the province do they have to have a Level 3 at every site? A follow-up question would be - and you touched on it - what's the difference between the Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3? What's the criteria that qualifies you for one of those licences?

DR. MCLEAN: I think Level 1 is three post-secondary courses in child development, in child guidance and then also some professional development hours, like an orientation course, so 40 or 50 hours - I'm not exactly sure of the number of hours. A Level 1 would not be a complete certificate or a complete diploma in early childhood education. It's like the beginning level.

A Level 2 would be a completed diploma specific to early childhood education, so that would be the credentials that most people would get when they graduate from the college system here in the province.

A Level 3 is a degree in early childhood education or a diploma in early childhood education, plus related degree. Because it's a degree specific to child and youth studies, they get a Level 3. Our student graduates get the highest level there is in the province. College graduates get a Level 2 and then the Level 1 is through a combination or orientation course and I think three post-secondary courses.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Dr. McLean, is there a way for someone to succeed from one to the next without taking the additional course load?

DR. MCLEAN: Absolutely. Level 1 students, because they would have three post-secondary credits, they could move into a college diploma program and those credits would be recognized and they could get their Level 2 from a college program, or they could come directly to Mount Saint Vincent and we'd look at the transfer credits as well. Then we have a lot of college graduates who decide to come to Mount Saint Vincent - we have the articulation agreements in place. Some people refer to it as the two plus two, so the two years of college education and then two more years at Mount Saint Vincent, to end up with a full degree Level 3.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So there is a requirement to take additional studies to succeed to the next level up.

DR. MCLEAN: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I guess what I'm saying is that there's no way for you to base it on years of experience.

DR. MCLEAN: No, it all has to do with your post-secondary qualifications. There's also a requirement for anybody who is classified in Nova Scotia as an early childhood educator to complete, I think it's 30 hours of professional development every three years. You have to also participate in conferences and workshops and so on.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, cool, I appreciate the committee's indulgence for my injection into this conversation a little bit here. Dr. Nunes, please.

DR. NUNES: To add one other thing, our program is structured in such a way that a lot of our students also take part-time studies, so they might be working full-time and then take distance courses at night. So at the same time they are working, they can also be upgrading their credentials to a Level 3.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Dr. Nunes. We'll move across the table to Mr. Horne, please.

MR. BILL HORNE: I'm enjoying these discussions, quite interesting. A couple of weeks ago we had some witnesses from the Mount come in and talk to our Economic Development Committee about the benefits of early development. We were trying to see how that would affect your department in improving the rural communities of Nova Scotia in that area - I guess the development of the early childhood program would have on the rural community. I'm not sure who should be speaking about it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Horne, would you please clarify your question for the witnesses.

MR. HORNE: There was a presentation to the Economic Development Committee to discuss the economic benefits of childhood education and its importance to rural Nova Scotians. Does your department reach out to our rural youth and highlight the academic evaluation of that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do you have an interest in reaching out to rural communities around the importance of early childhood development?

DR. NUNES: Our university reaches out as a whole, including our department, to all of the communities in Nova Scotia and beyond because we do have the online option. Students who are not able to physically come and settle in Halifax are still able to take our program, and a lot of them do. In that sense yes, we do reach out in that way. We reach out in forums, for example, where we are interviewed in the media and talk about our program, and forums like this.

Also, because we have a lot of Mount alumnae, the alumnae themselves talk about our programs. The word of mouth spreads that you can take this program without necessarily having to relocate to Halifax. We're hearing a lot of people. We were just talking with Ms. DiCostanzo about previous students who have taken our program. They are often our best ambassadors. As I mentioned before, we have people even within the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development who are graduates from our program. In that way yes, we do reach out.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Dare I say that, as members, we can play a role in mentioning in our rural communities that there is a program available at a distance that they can take if they are interested in this field of work?

We'll move across the table again to Ms. Leblanc.

MS. LEBLANC: I just wanted to give a shout-out. You were talking about early childhood educators. A couple of the folks at the daycare where my family is involved have sweatshirts that say, I am an ECE, what's your superpower? I think it's really true.

I think about what you were saying about how the educator needs to be responsive to the child. My children are being brought up in a bilingual household, but it's an anglophone daycare. The teachers will go out and find books to read specifically to my children so they are getting a little bit of French reading in the daytime. It's really amazing.

My children are so different from each other, so their experience at that daycare - there's only one of them in there now - has been so different because the teachers are so responsive and centre around the children. I just love that. My kids have been there since they were one each, so they have spent a significant amount of time with these people, more time than they spend with me, which is sad but true. Yet we know that people who are caring for our beautiful, vulnerable children experience wages that are basically - it's very difficult to survive on \$17 an hour at 35 hours a week. There is this wage gap between kindergarten teachers and early childhood educators. They basically make about half, on average.

I'm wondering if you could comment on that. I know that you have already, but could you talk about what you think the reasons for the wage gap are? We know it's there, and we know something has to change. Why do you think it's there in the first place?

DR. MCLEAN: That's a lesson in history, in terms of it being a primarily female-oriented field. Traditionally it has been a very low-paid profession. As we spoke about, people don't always understand the importance and the complexity of that field, so it hasn't been lifted to the recognition that is needed. It has really been only the last 30-some years that there has been any type of training requirement for the field. The field of early childhood education is undergoing right now an evolution that we have seen already in the

teaching profession and in the nursing profession. We're looking at what qualifications are required and looking at the need for a more qualified workforce.

It's a real chicken and egg thing too. Do you increase the salary before you have the same qualifications or do you require the same qualifications as teachers, for example, and then increase the salary? It's a complex thing and I think it's a matter of priorities as well. It's a matter of priorities of where funding needs to go.

[11:00 a.m.]

If a strong early childhood education system is seen as a priority, then the workforce also needs to be seen as a priority. You can't have one without the other. You can't have a system of early childhood education if you don't have a strong, well-supported workforce.

Our role from Mount Saint Vincent, from our perspective, is to make sure that we do our part in making sure the qualifications are there and that we are training people to a Level 3 capacity. I think it's the role of the province itself in terms of all the citizens of the province and the policy-makers of the province to decide - is this a priority, is this where money should be going in order to shore up the system of early childhood education?

We're not the only province dealing with this and there are certainly worthy wage campaigns happening across the country at any given time, but it is something that we'll need to address.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. MacKay.

MR. HUGH MACKAY: Firstly, I must say that I'm very proud that our government has taken steps to recognize and implement early childhood education as part of our social fabric. It has been proven in other jurisdictions that this is something that is good for society. I'm glad that we've moved forward on this quickly.

I'm certainly glad, as has been mentioned, that early childhood educators will be recognized as highly trained professionals - recognized not just by government, but within society as such. I'm proud that our government has made adjustments in wages for these folks. Further adjustments may be necessary, but I am glad that we have increased wages for early childhood educators.

I have a question that perhaps the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development might answer more fully, but I'm hoping you might because it's something that just came up to me this week. I was contacted by a delightful young lady from British Columbia who was trained in early childhood education out in the British Columbia college system. She has seen the light and wants to move to the East Coast, and was wondering about opportunities and such. I said there are certainly opportunities for ECEs, but I wasn't sure about what she might need to do for recertification or something if she was coming from another jurisdiction. I was wondering if you might be able to comment on that.

DR. MCLEAN: It's a very easy application form and it's actually on the website of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. It would just be looking under the tab for early childhood educators and the tab for classification. It's a really straightforward process of just filling out the application forms, and submitting it with transcripts to the staff within Early Childhood Development. The contact information is there. It just takes a matter of weeks to get classified in Nova Scotia.

MR. MACKAY: If she was coming, say, with Level 2, would Mount Saint Vincent University accept her into Level 3 training?

DR. MCLEAN: The university itself doesn't look at the level of classification - we would look at transcripts from the university or college that she attended, and we would do a system of transfer credit to see which of her credits would be acceptable. We have some articulation agreements in place with some colleges, mostly Nova Scotia colleges, so the registrar's office knows if somebody is coming from Nova Scotia Community College, for example, they get X number of transfer credits. It would be an individual line-by-line analysis of her transcript with our course requirements.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Adams.

MS. ADAMS: On Page 5 of the document - and I do love a man who brings in a word-for-word what he's going to say because it really helps my memory. You were talking about the three major stresses: the low wages, the stressful working conditions, and the lack of recognition. As a health professional, often the lack of recognition comes in whatever your salary is. The higher your salary, the more you feel that you're valued as an employee. I do appreciate that Nova Scotia has - I'm not sure if we have the lowest wages, but according to other years, we have been at the bottom of the wage scale. I'm not sure how we compare now, so maybe you can comment on that.

You did deliberately mention the stressful working conditions. I'm wondering if you can comment on that, as to what those are and what the government can do to help address those. We want to retain our ECEs and not lose them. I'm wondering if you could comment on that for me.

DR. MCLEAN: In terms of Nova Scotia being the lowest, I don't think it is any more. As you correctly say, it used to be the lowest.

Coming from Newfoundland, I'm familiar with the Newfoundland system as well and our wages. In Newfoundland, early childhood educators get a wage supplement that is sent directly to them. It doesn't go through the centre. They get a cheque cut through the government payroll every quarter. It's a different system.

In terms of working conditions, I think any of us who have spent time with young children can imagine what it would be like to be with young children for eight hours a day - some of us are shaking our heads - and in mixed-age groups. We're talking about real basics in terms of the physical nature of the job - it's a very physical job - in terms of appropriate breaks and lunches, and especially in terms of being given time for program planning.

If you are going to have a responsive program with intentional teaching that emerges throughout the week, you don't do up your teaching plans for a month in advance in early childhood education. You do your teaching plans as you are observing the children in a play-based program, so you need to have time to do that. A lot of early childhood educators need to do that after hours, or they'll need to do it on their lunch breaks. Those are the types of working conditions we're talking about.

It's really having a good look at what the expectations are for early childhood educators and also making sure that they have appropriate health benefits, dental benefits, and all the benefits that would be required for anybody, but especially in such a physically demanding job as well as an emotionally and cognitively demanding position.

DR. NUNES: I would like to add one other thing about the early childhood context, which is that it's very common for early childhood educators to be sick because of the environment that they're dealing with. (Laughter) You all know this, I'm sure. That's another major stress. I don't know how the government would be able to address that. In terms of a stressor, that's a major one.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Wash your hands, folks. Ms. Adams.

MS. ADAMS: These sound very similar to what teachers in the classroom would say. The sickness thing, I'm wondering what the rate might be. Do you have casual staff who are called in? That's what you do for health care professionals and for teachers. You have the casual staff who can be called in. Do you have that?

DR. MCLEAN: Most centres would have a list of substitutes, but again, that list is diminishing as more jobs are becoming available. It's not unheard of for the director of a centre to have to go on the floor to take the place of a staff member who is sick. Then the administrative work becomes something that she or he needs to do after hours. Those are some of the realities.

You're right, Dr. Nunes. Certainly there is illness, but there are also really good immune systems that are developed as well. (Laughter)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Leblanc.

MS. LEBLANC: In the report on the government's 2017 consultation on child care needs, there was a statement that over half of the respondents from the child care sector

anticipated they would be losing staff because of the rollout of pre-Primary. I'm just wondering if you have heard of that now happening as we enter the summer before a big rollout. Are you hearing that from the sector?

DR. MCLEAN: I can't answer that. I'm just saying that I haven't heard a lot of that, but also I am new to the province, so I'm not on the ground talking with people individually. I think some of the associations in the province would be able to speak to that more than we could. We don't necessarily have people calling the university or talking about that.

DR. MCISAAC: I can't speak to that specifically either, but one thing to mention is that we do know that the child care sector is changing in response to the pre-Primary. Recently, there was a grant that the department put forward for space conversion, to convert spaces to increase infant care, for example, which is very difficult to acquire for families. We know there are changes happening within the sector. To what degree - they wouldn't come to us if they were having issues.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Dunn.

MR. DUNN: What does a typical day look like in a pre-Primary setting, in 20 words or less?

DR. MCISAAC: The Twitter response, eh? Maybe the first thing is that it looks different in each school because the program is designed to be responsive to the children. Drop-off happens. It depends on the school and the community - sometimes it happens outside, and sometimes it happens right in the classroom. There is a morning snack that is provided by the pre-Primary program. That is part of the model, which coming from a nutrition side of things, is a really great thing. They try to provide it in an open-snack format so that children can come and sit and enjoy their snack following their own hunger cues, when they are ready for that.

It is play-based, so it really is designed to be child-directed, in terms of what that day looks like. Every day likely looks different. There is lots of outdoor time that is kind of centred in the morning and the afternoon. Lunch is usually in the classroom, although that might differ. They do family-style lunch, so they all sit together and enjoy their lunch, sometimes with the educator. There is an afternoon snack as well that is provided by the pre-Primary program that, again, is offered through an open-snack model. Then there is likely more outdoor time as well.

DR. MCLEAN: There's also a quiet rest time in the afternoon. Some of the rooms are equipped with mats or sleeping blankets and pillows, so the children can have a rest. It's very much not like what some people might think of as a school-based program. It is

very much the same type of thing that you would see in a regulated child care centre as well.

I just wanted to speak quickly on the play-based part of it because that is my area of research, and my background is in early childhood education. I did a session on May 18th for over 150 pre-Primary educators from around the province. That was jointly sponsored by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the Halifax Regional Centre for Education. Educators are continually wanting to know how we facilitate play and play-based programming in a school-based setting.

What you would see when you went into a program is children playing and, very much like regulated child care, a well-equipped program that was very intentionally designed by the educators. You would see the educators moving in and out of the play situations and also observing and documenting what they see the children doing so they can talk with parents afterwards about what the child was learning while they were playing. I think that's a really important component of all early childhood settings.

The Nova Scotia early learning framework, which is going to be released some time this month or in early July, is a play-based early learning framework. We have been able to incorporate that framework into one of the courses that we're teaching at Mount Saint Vincent, and we're looking at incorporating it in a couple of others as well. Our graduates will be coming out of the program with a sound understanding of the early learning framework, which is going to be used in both pre-Primary and regulated child care settings, family child care settings, family resource programs, and so on.

When you think about play, and I'll just say five words, play is problem-based learning. Whenever you watch children play, you see them trying to seek to solve a problem, so whether it's, how do I make this block tower stand up without falling down, how do I get little Johnny to be the dog again in the play area, how do I talk somebody into giving me a turn on the swing - those are all important skills that children are learning through play.

[11:15 a.m.]

I think sometimes it's more helpful to think about play-based learning as problem-based learning. I think it's more accessible to us as adults and as educators, and that's what is happening in the Early Years programs.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I heard someone frame an inspirational quote the other day. You always hear people ask, what do you want to be when you grow up? She said she'd rather hear people ask, what problem do you want to solve when you grow up? I'd just add that little anecdote. Dr. McIsaac.

DR. MCISAAC: The one difference of what happens in pre-Primary from regulated care is that it's at the school. We did learn from the past evaluation of the early learning

program through the Early Years Centres that some integration was happening of that program into the school environment.

We saw those children go to school-wide assembly so they were part of the school. We also saw older children coming down to the early learning program class to kind of see what was happening, help out, and also other staff kind of popping in and saying hi and welcoming them to the school. That's one of the other distinct things about what a school day looks like - that they are in the school as a part of the school, which is really great to see and helps with that transition into the school.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you for that thorough response. Mr. Dunn.

MR. DUNN: If I was to drop into three different settings across the province, would there be some sort of standardization as far as what I would see, or perhaps they would all be different? What, in your opinion, is the best ratio as far as educators to the number of students in a setting?

DR. MCISAAC: I will speak to the first part. No, they would look quite different depending on the time of day. It's child-directed so it really is meant to be that. If the same person went at the same point of day, they'd likely be doing something different and there would be different things happening in the room. Did you want to comment on the ratio?

DR. MCLEAN: The ratio in regulated child care settings for four-year-olds is 1 to 8, and the ratio in the pre-Primary programs is 1 to 10. Generally, higher quality care has lower ratios, but 1 to 8 and 1 to 10 is about what you would see across the country in terms of the ratio for four-year-olds. In terms of the best ratio, I think the best ratio is the lowest ratio you can get, but practically speaking, you also have to look at what is practical.

DR. MCISAAC: Just to mention, the 1 to 10 ratio is, in fact, pre-Primary. There is also a cap size, I've heard, at 24, so if there are 24 children in pre-Primary, there would actually be three educators in the room because of the ratio of 1 to 10, so it would actually be 1 to 8 if it did reach the max.

Also, just to comment, certainly what we learned through the evaluation of the early learning program was that the program was in high demand, so just to meet the demand of a community. There were often families from other catchments that weren't in that school catchment that wanted to go. Hopefully now with increased availability, that will help to serve more families that are wanting it.

DR. NUNES: Just a general comment that hasn't been mentioned yet. One of the aspects that links a lot of the different disparate branches of child and youth study is the relational aspect. Whereas, if you study medicine, you can treat a patient without really

getting to know them personally, and if you're a teacher - maybe a middle school teacher - you can transmit material without becoming relationally involved with your students.

Child and youth study and child and youth care places a great deal of emphasis on the relational aspect. Having a relationship with the student, consciously building a relationship with the child or the youth, being mindful of your reactions when the child or youth does something, so that you can then give the appropriate reaction. It is particularly important in youth care but it's also very important in early childhood education.

Because it is so important and it's more important actually than in even the classroom context, that's one of the reasons to have a low ratio. It isn't just to supervise them. It's to be able to have that one-to-one contact to understand the child. To know the child so intimately that you know why they are crying or you can anticipate what they are going to say or you know how you respond to this child differently than to the other child. That's the important aspect or difference of child and youth care.

MR. CHAIRMAN: For sure. Respectfully, Dr. Nunes, I would suggest that beyond the early years we have teachers and doctors who do take pride in that relationship-building as a means of - Dr. Nunes.

DR. NUNES: It would be that the best teachers and the best doctors, the best health care professionals incorporate that into their practice. But that's not something that is consciously taught in many of these other professional programs whereas we consciously teach that.

Part of the practicum experience is keeping a journal, for example. It's self-reflection and you are graded or you are evaluated on the level of your self-reflection and the level of your commitment to establishing a relationship with the children you are dealing with.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. DiCostanzo, please.

MS. DICOSTANZO: My question is in the same line as Mr. Wilson's but it is quite different. I'm really interested that you are doing your studies on the integration as immigration is increasing and how we are adapting the early days. I'm thinking of my husband who came to Canada as a five-year-old from Italy who spoke zero English and his first day at school in Primary, as soon as the bell rang for 10:00 o'clock, he ran home because he didn't understand, he was so lost.

With language, I know that most families when they come to Canada they will teach their kids their own language up to age four or five because they are so afraid they will never learn it, so most of them will go to school with very little English.

How are the teachers relating to those children and how much emphasis are we putting in educating or including people from different cultures? If we had a majority of

Chinese or Arabic, how many of those are we targeting to enter into the ECEs or educators in order to fulfill, to be able to adjust to these changes that are happening with immigration?

DR. MCLEAN: I can speak to some of it. In terms of how would early childhood educators accommodate children who perhaps speak a different language and so on, that's the beauty of having a child-centred, responsive, play-based environment because you're going to have open-ended materials that children can approach, no matter what level they are at. It is also our educators who are going to connect with the families on a lot of levels as well and to encourage families to speak their home language at home, recognizing that children will learn English in the settings where they are there and also to have the family's input into the programming - to ask the family, how do you do things at home and how can we incorporate that here?

You'll see that a lot in high-quality, early learning programs, that they work very closely with families and make sure that the children aren't expected to all be doing the same thing at the same time and where children can then be lost. That's why, like I said, that open-ended type of activities and a play-based environment is well suited to incorporate children from all different cultures and to make sure that they see themselves reflected in the program, that we work with families or that early childhood educators work with families to make sure the books they choose, the materials they have in the dress-up-and-play area, the food they serve and so on, is familiar and part of that community.

In terms of any targets that we have, maybe I can ask Dr. Nunes to speak to that.

DR. NUNES: We don't have targets per se. Speaking from an institutional perspective of people, we train students to be culturally sensitive, culturally appropriate. We have courses on cultural perspectives. We incorporate in our different courses cultural issues within the EC and youth care environments.

We talk a lot, for example, about having appropriate materials, books in other languages, having food in the centre that's from other cultures, celebrating other cultures through song and dance. Children love music. Even if they don't understand the language, they love it. You might have music that comes from different languages, different backgrounds, and different cultures in the centre. Having EC educators who are representative of the community - we do have a lot now, particularly because of our incoming international students and immigrant students.

Ultimately, it's really the responsibility of the individual centre. Depending on how much they will choose to implement, the centre can be very culturally open and celebrate diversity or it cannot. We unfortunately don't have any control over that besides the training that we give the students and the importance that we place on it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. DiCostanzo, do you have a supplementary?

MS. DICOSTANZO: I had a question, but it's gone. If it comes back, I will.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Adams.

MS. ADAMS: I had a meeting with one of the principals in my constituency just a couple of weeks ago, and I happened to see a list of a whole series of children's names and I asked what the list is for. They said that was the number of children on the wait-list to speak with a speech therapist, to have care provided by a speech therapist. I asked what percentage of the students were on that list for the school and they said 20 per cent. I said, I understand children with autism and learning difficulties would need that, but you can't possibly have that many in that school. She said, no, those are just students who came to us who can't speak.

We're all familiar with the reading, writing, and arithmetic approach - it never really occurred to me that our children were not coming prepared to talk. As a health professional, that was kind of an eye-opener for me.

That's a trend that's going backwards. If we've got kids that are coming not able to talk - I don't know how much their cellphones and texting is to blame for that. Certainly, if I want to talk to my children on the phone, I have to text them and tell them to pick up the phone.

I'm wondering how we as a province and you as the educators measure the success of pre-Primary. I'm an outcome measures kind of person so if we're going to spend all this money on pre-Primary for one year, how are our children better off going into Primary than they were if they hadn't attended? Clearly, it's too soon to do research - although I'm assuming we'll be heading that way - but how do you set the standard for what is a successful year versus an unsuccessful year?

The other is, I realize that because you're the first ones to see the children in an organized way, you're often the ones who will identify issues that need to be referred on for mental health services or DCS intervention. I guess I'm wondering, how do you measure a successful year, because we're coming up to the end of this year? How are you going to measure the success of this year and what would you present to us as a government? The kids came in this way, they ended up this way, and how are you measuring it? If it's a play-based program and each one is different across the province, how are we going to compare Yarmouth to Truro?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Adams, if I can clarify, you want to know how this year will be measured and how the program will be measured on a go-forward basis, as well as how it will be measured from one end of the province to the next.

MS. ADAMS: Yes. That's just three questions. (Laughter) I've learned from Susan how to do this.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's okay. I just wanted to be clear for our witnesses.

DR. MCISAAC: I can start. We are doing an evaluation this year on the pre-Primary program. What we've done this year is we've done case studies with schools across the province to understand more around the implementation - how is it working, what does it look like, what resources were involved in making it happen, what were some of the successes, what were some of the challenges, and what are some of the things that we need to think about going forward? That's one big measure that we're using in the evaluation.

The other aspect is looking at enrolment, so how many children are accessing the program - how often they come. How often they come just means do they attend every day, or do they drop in? It's not a requirement that they have to attend, but how frequently are they getting the program?

Another aspect that we're using around measurement this year in the evaluation is a survey with families to try to understand what their experiences have been like. Unfortunately, I don't have those results to share, but those are some of the metrics that we're using this year to comment on where we have gotten this far with one year of the pre-Primary.

[11:30 a.m.]

One other aspect to your question that I wanted to mention is that we actually have a resource in the province that looks at developmental outcomes for young children. It's called the Early Development Instrument. That measure is done in Grade Primary. The Primary teacher actually does the instrument on each of the children in their class. That has been done in Nova Scotia in 2013 and 2015, and this past year in 2018, it was done in almost every school. That developmental measure is actually a really great marker of where we're at in the province around the developmental outcomes of children.

I'm speaking from a research lens, not a tracking from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development lens, because that is their domain. As a researcher, I'm really interested in tracking these developmental changes over time and trying to understand what difference it is making if a child attended pre-Primary or if they attended regulated care or if there was another early education experience that they had.

I have partnered with other health researchers as well to think about how we might be able to link this really rich resource of where we're at with respect to developmental progress in children and also linking that to health care data. We have actually just submitted a research grant to the Canadian Institutes of Health Research to actually track these children retrospectively, so looking at the children who had their EDI completed and tracking them retrospectively to when they were born - maternal outcomes and all those

types of things - and also prospectively, looking at the literacy and mathematics assessments.

We have a grant that's under review, so fingers crossed. We'll hear in a few weeks. We have really great data in the province, and as a researcher, I'm interested in trying to leverage that data to better understand where we're at in the province and where some of those outcomes came from with respect to some of the policy initiatives.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm going to move to Mr. Dunn now.

MR. DUNN: If I were a Level 3 educator in that setting, and I decided after a couple of years that I would like to become an elementary teacher, what requirements would I have to fulfill? What overlap is there? How long would it take for me to get to that point where I can go into the school system as an elementary teacher?

DR. MCLEAN: That is quite a common scenario actually. Our graduates of the Bachelor of Arts in Child and Youth Study often go on to do a Bachelor of Education. They can either enter a Bachelor of Education directly as a graduate, or they can go out and work for a couple of years, as you're describing, and then apply to go back to Mount Saint Vincent or wherever is offering a Bachelor of Education.

It's actually a really good undergrad program in preparation for the education because you are getting to learn about the play-based programming. You are getting to learn about the relationship building that Dr. Nunes is talking about. That provides an excellent foundation to go on and get your Bachelor of Education.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm going to take the liberty of wrapping us up here, but I would just like to ask one quick question.

Nova Scotia, not unlike other provinces, is home to a number of recreation programs or summer programs that would provide child care. Is it appropriate, and does the Mount do any type of targeted recruiting with respect to the program that we're here to discuss today with teenagers who are coming up in that world of child care? Is there any targeted recruiting that goes on to different child care operations throughout the province? Dr. Nunes.

DR. NUNES: I know that our recruitment office does targeted recruitment. I have contacted them and talked about the fact that the pre-Primary was starting now and that we expect an increase in enrolment. We're still in the process now of looking at where they may be going to recruit.

Their recruitment is done in high schools, I know. It's done in the community at large also, their recruitment efforts. Your question was specifically, is it geared towards early childhood? Only if the particular event would merit it - there might be some events

where they would say we should focus on either the business program, the early childhood program, or on education. Then they would do the targeted recruitment.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I understand that the program does graduate professionals who do not necessarily gravitate to early childhood.

DR. NUNES: Right.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, I think that's a wrap for questions here from the committee. Dr. McIsaac, Dr. Nunes, and Dr. McLean, thank you for being here today. Would any of you like to make some closing remarks before we skedaddle? Dr. Nunes.

DR. NUNES: I would just like to thank the committee members for listening to us. If you have any further questions or you want to get in touch with us, please feel free to get in touch with my department.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you for the time you have afforded us today.

Ms. DiCostanzo.

MS. DICOSTANZO: If I may add, if there is a shortage, maybe we can help you. If you let us know, maybe we can publicize the need for ECEs within our communities. If you could let us know, we would be more than happy.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Of course. Is there any further committee business in this last committee meeting before July?

We will see you all in July. Thank you very much, folks.

This meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 11:37 a.m.]