



***Registration and Member Services 2015 Survey:  
Early Childhood Educator Entry to Practise and  
Early Career Transition***

## **Executive Summary**

### **Introduction**

The report, *Registration and Member Services 2015 Survey: Early Childhood Educator Entry to Practise and Early Career Transition*, provides an overview of the purpose, design and implementation processes developed by the College of Early Childhood Educators (the College) to gather information from the 3,174 graduates of Ontario early childhood education diploma and degree programs who obtained their credentials in 2015.

The report provides an analysis and synthesis of the feedback provided by the graduates and compares the information gathered through the 2014 and 2015 surveys. It also highlights a number of areas for future consideration and/or action on the part of the College.

### **Purposes of the Survey**

The purposes for the *Registration and Member Services 2015 Survey: Early Childhood Educator Entry to Practise and Early Career Transition* included:

1. Continuing the ongoing efforts of the College to understand and better serve the profession and the public
2. Showing the College's service goals and ethics as it strives to promote an increased understanding and level of transparency regarding its registration processes and the issues that affect the membership, the profession and the public
3. Obtaining feedback from the 2015 cohort of Ontario early childhood education program graduates in order to gain insight into their perceptions and challenges related to registering in the College, obtaining employment in the early childhood education sector, entry to practise experiences, career transitions and levels of professional confidence and satisfaction
4. Determining the level of knowledge and understanding of members who graduated from 2015 Ontario approved early childhood education programs regarding the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice*
5. Gaining an idea of the future career aspirations of the 2015 graduate cohort
6. Providing a fourth database from the 2015 cohort to be used for comparative purposes with the input provided by the 2011, 2013 and 2014 graduates. The data will be used in future studies about registration practices, human resource trends and member perceptions and insights in the Ontario early childhood education sector.

### **Implementing the Survey**

The College used its registration records to identify members who received a Certificate of Registration after graduating from an early childhood education program offered by an approved Ontario post-secondary institution between January 1, 2015 and December 31, 2015. The College's registration records showed that 3,024 graduates, who indicated that their preferred language was English and 150 graduates, who indicated that their preferred language was French, became registered members.

The survey was e-mailed to 2,878 English and 147 French-speaking 2015 program graduates on February 12, 2016.

A print copy of the survey was mailed to 146 English-speaking members and 3 French-speaking members who could not be contacted by e-mail. A postmarked return envelope was included with each print copy of survey form.

The deadline to return the survey was February 12, 2016. Two email reminders were sent on February 4 and 10, 2016.

The survey consisted of 16 items and included closed-ended questions, yes/no responses, multiple choice and rating scale options, as well as open-ended response options. Most questions included an option for respondents to add comments.

### **Collating and Reviewing the Survey Responses**

The information provided by respondents was collated through the use of the software program SurveyMonkey. College staff entered the information in the SurveyMonkey database for the 13 members who returned surveys by mail. Online responses to the survey were collated directly by the SurveyMonkey software program.

Comments added by respondents were tabulated by SurveyMonkey on a question-by-question basis. The comments were reviewed using qualitative data analysis techniques to identify patterns, trends and insights that expanded on the information provided through available quantitative response data.

### **Response Rate**

In total, 550 English-speaking and 43 French-speaking respondents began the survey by answering question one. The respondents were asked to answer “yes” or “no” to the following question: “Did you complete an early childhood education program at an approved post-secondary institution in Ontario between January 1, 2015 and December 31, 2015?”

Respondents who answered “no” to survey item one were not able to proceed to question two and were thanked for their willingness to contribute to the survey.

Five hundred and thirty-one English-speaking survey respondents identified themselves as having completed their early childhood education program between January 1, 2015 and December 31, 2015. Thirty-eight of the French-speaking respondents responded that they completed their programs during the same timeframe.

The overall survey response rate from the English-speaking respondents to question one was approximately 18%, while the response rate from the French-speaking respondents was approximately 26%.

The recognized acceptable response rates vary depending on how a survey is administered. If a survey is administered by mail, then a 50% return rate is considered adequate. If a survey is administered online, 30% is considered average.

The overall response rate for the English-speaking respondents would be considered low. The French-speaking response rate, although higher, also did not meet the average expectations for an online survey.

### **Feedback on the College's Membership Application Process**

Respondents indicated on a rating scale if they their experience in completing the College application process was “very easy, easy, somewhat challenging, challenging or frustrating”.

Of the members who completed this question, approximately 72% of the English-speaking respondents and 94% of the French-speaking respondents indicated that they found the process “very easy” or “easy”.

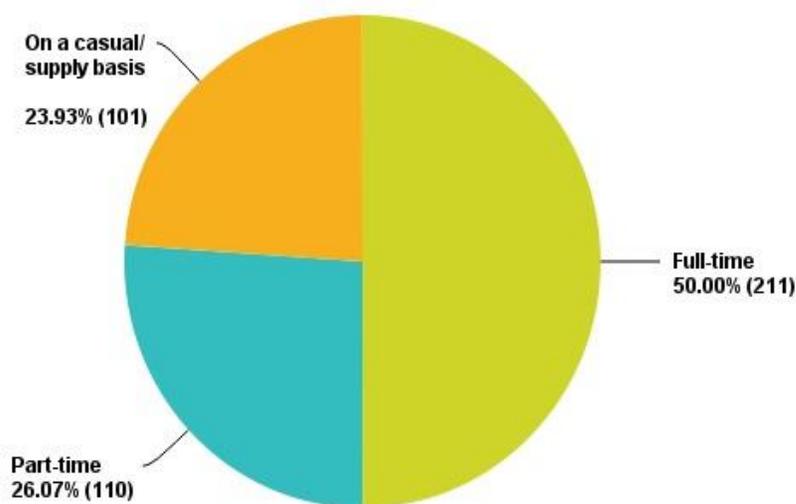
### **Current Employment and Workplace Environments**

Of these employed members, approximately 82% of the English-speaking members and 86% of the French-speaking members indicated they were able to obtain employment within two months or less.

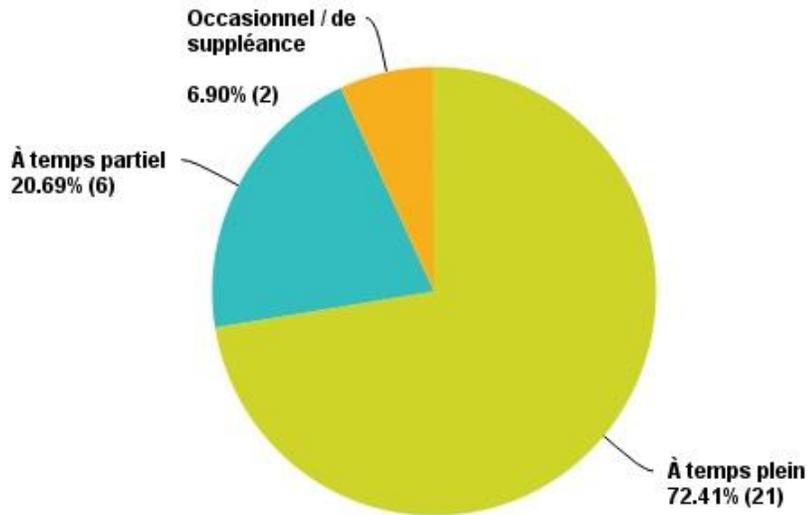
Over half of the English-speaking and 75% of the French-speaking respondents responded that they were employed or had found employment immediately upon receiving their College registration. Thirteen English-speaking members commented that they had been employed as early childhood education assistants and were moved into RECE roles once they were registered with the College. Several others reported they were hired following practicum placements. A few respondents added that they began employment in casual/supply positions and then were offered part-time or full-time work.

The following graphs illustrate the response rates for the distribution of full-time, part-time and casual/supply work.

**If you answered "yes" to question 4,  
please indicate if you are working**

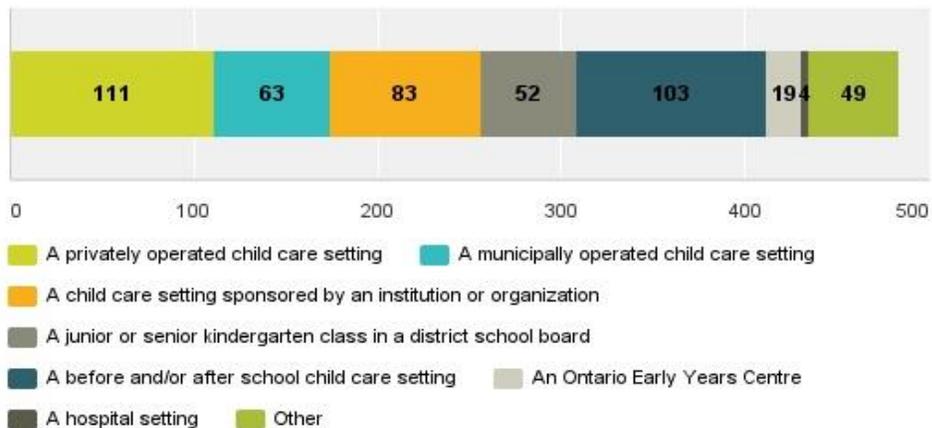


**Si vous avez répondu « Oui » à la question 4, veuillez indiquer si vous occupez un poste :**

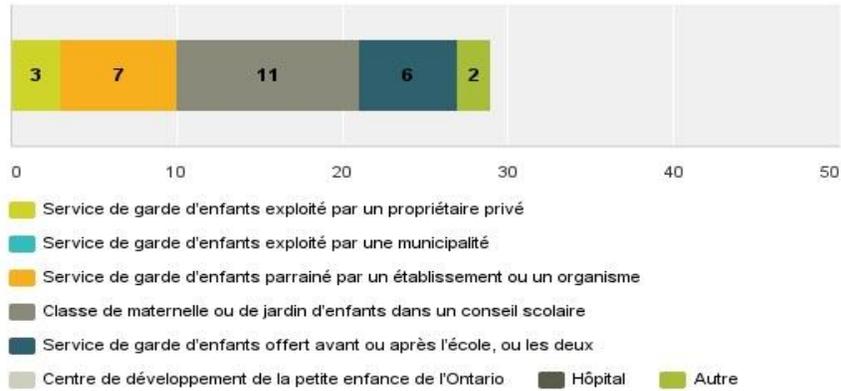


Survey respondents were employed in a range of workplace environments as shown in the following illustrations.

**If you are currently employed as an early childhood educator, which of these best describes your workplace environment?**



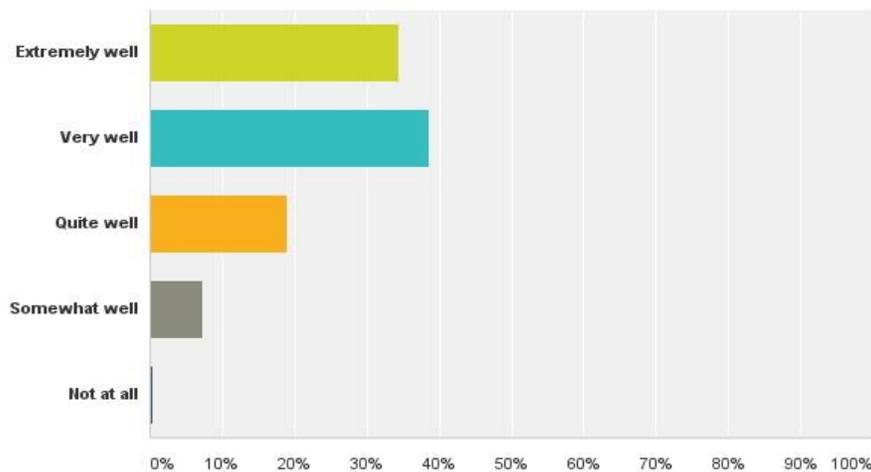
**Si vous occupez présentement un emploi d'éducatrice ou d'éducateur de la petite enfance, quelle réponse parmi les suivantes décrit le mieux votre milieu de travail?**



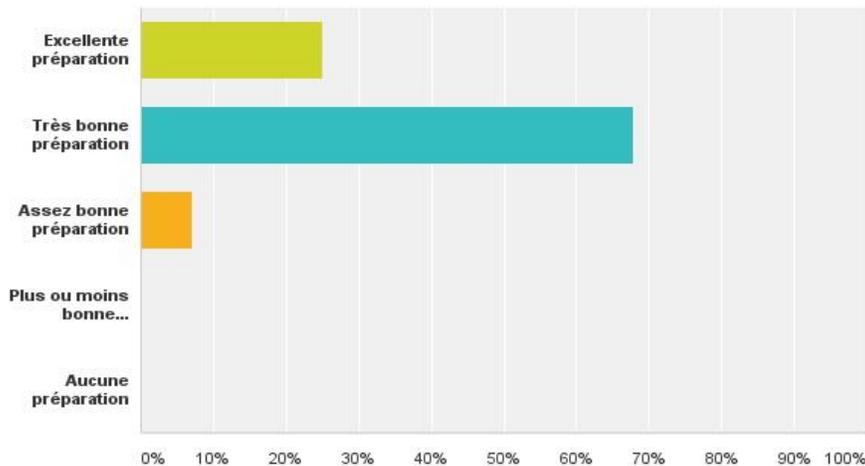
**Educational Program Preparation for Entry to Practise**

Respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they believed their early childhood education diploma or degree program prepared them for their responsibilities related to their early childhood education employment experience.

**To what extent do you believe that your early childhood education diploma or degree program prepared you for the responsibilities related to your early childhood education employment experience?**



**À votre avis, le programme collégial ou universitaire d'éducation de la petite enfance que vous avez suivi vous a-t-il donné une bonne préparation pour assumer les responsabilités de vos fonctions d'éducatrice ou d'éducateur de la petite enfance?**



**Orientation Programs, Professional Development and Mentoring Initiatives**

Approximately 65% of the English-speaking respondents and 54% of the French-speaking respondents indicated that they had participated in workplace orientation programs.

Forty-six members chose to add comments regarding their orientation experiences. The comments showed that the orientation initiatives varied in scope for the majority of these members.

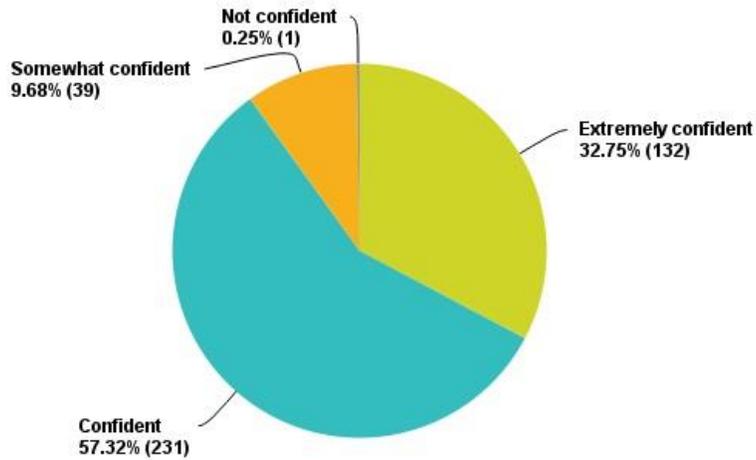
Approximately 84% of the English-speaking and 82% of the French-speaking respondents who answered this survey question stated that their employers provided ongoing professional development.

Fifty-three respondents added comments to this survey item. Over 50% of these respondents listed various forms of professional learning activities they were encouraged to attend and, in several instances, how their employers supported their involvement.

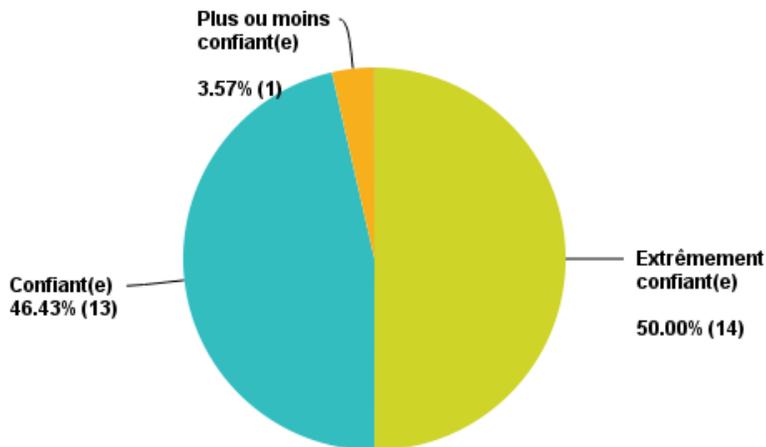
**Member Confidence and Satisfaction**

Survey respondents were invited to describe their level of confidence about their ability to meet the expectations of their current role as an ECE. Approximately 90% of both the English-speaking and the French-speaking respondents described themselves as being “extremely confident” or “confident”.

How would you describe your level of confidence with regard to your ability to meet the expectations of your current role as an early childhood educator?



Vous sentez-vous confiant(e) d'avoir la capacité de satisfaire aux exigences de votre emploi d'éducatrice ou d'éducateur de la petite enfance?



Approximately 90% of both the English-speaking and the French-speaking respondents reported being “extremely satisfied” or “satisfied” in their current role. Many of these respondents described how much they enjoy working with children and how rewarding their jobs were. However, a substantial number of these RECEs would like to move from supply/ casual or part-time work to a full-time position.

**Knowledge and Understanding of the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice***

Almost 99% of the English-speaking respondents and over 97% of the French-speaking respondents indicated that they had a basic, intermediate or advanced level of understanding about the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice*.

Seventy-four percent of the English-speaking and 94% of the French-speaking respondents felt that their level of understanding could best be described as either “advanced” or “intermediate”.

**Status of the 2015 Graduates and College Members Currently Not Employed as RECEs**

Survey respondents who were not currently employed as an RECE were asked to select an option that best described their current employment status.

Option	Number of English -speaking Respondents	Number of French -speaking Respondents
Employed outside the early childhood education sector	18	1
Currently seeking full-time employment in the early childhood education sector	79	12
Pursuing further education	52	5

**Future Career Aspirations**

Respondents described their future career plans in relation to the early childhood education sector. Respondents not planning to remain in the sector were asked to indicate this intent.

Career Plan Theme	Number (N) of English-speaking Responses (N=335)	Number (N) of French-speaking Responses (N=26)
Remain working with children in an early childhood education environment or seeking to move from a casual or part-time placement to a full-time position in an early childhood education environment	102	12
Remain working in a full-day kindergarten or obtain a position as an early childhood educator in a full-day kindergarten classroom	70	1

Enrolled in or planning to enrol in graduate or post-graduate university program	66	1
Plan to apply for a position of added responsibility (i.e. supervisor, manager at the Ministry of Education, professor at a college or university or a position at the College of Early Childhood Educators)	18	1
Establish own child care centre	16	6
Work in a related field (health care, social services, psychology, speech pathology)	11	2
Plan not to continue working or trying to find work as an early childhood educator	11	1
Indicated "n/a" or added other comments not related to career plans	41	2

### **Summarizing 2015 Cohort Respondent Feedback**

The feedback was summarized using the framework of the stated purposes for the 2015 survey.

### **Serving the Membership and the Public**

In total, 531 English-speaking and 38 French-speaking respondents returned surveys to the College.

The information gathered through the survey will be used to inform College decision-making specific to the Registration and Membership Service Department's policies and procedures. The College may also determine that the information should be shared with members, College stakeholder groups, post-secondary institutions, policy-makers and the public using a range of College communication initiatives.

Sharing the results of the survey in this way shows that the College is engaged in ongoing communication with its membership. The follow-up reporting process reassures members, stakeholder institutions and organizations, and the public that the regulatory body strives for continuous quality improvement.

Disseminating the information gathered from the 2015 graduating cohort shows that the College honours its duty to be accountable and to act in the public interest.

### **Level of Understanding and Transparency**

The information gathered through the survey demonstrates willingness on the part of members to provide feedback and the College's ability and willingness to be responsive to the needs of these members. The information gathered through the survey can be shared with members, stakeholder institutions and organizations and the public.

By making this information available to others interested in the early childhood education sector, the College establishes itself as a reliable source of information about trends, issues and challenges in the sector.

### **Feedback Regarding the Registration Process, Obtaining Employment, Entry to Practice Experiences, Career Transition and Levels of Confidence and Satisfaction**

The majority of respondents indicated that they found the registration process “very easy” or “easy”.

A significant number of respondents commented that both College staff and professors from their post-secondary programs had been readily available to assist them if they needed help during the registration process.

Most English-speaking (83%) and French-speaking respondents (86%) from the 2015 cohort reported that they were able to find sector related employment within two months or less.

One-half of these English-speaking respondents reported they were working full-time as were approximately 72% of the French-speaking respondents.

The English-speaking respondents primarily found employment in privately-operated child care settings, before- and/or after- school programs or institutional or municipal organizations. Approximately 13% found employment in junior or senior kindergarten settings with district school boards.

The majority of French-speaking graduates found employment in district school board kindergarten placements (39%), a child care setting sponsored by a municipal organization or institution (25%) or with a before- and/or after- school program (21%).

Twenty-six percent of the English and 21% of the French-speaking respondents indicated they were working in the sector part-time.

Comments by respondents suggested that previous work in the sector, such as an ECE assistant, educational assistant, school lunchroom supervisor, casual/supply staff, as well as apprenticeship experience and field placements assisted them in finding employment.

Less than 1% percent of the English-speaking respondents and none of the French-speaking respondents indicated that they were unable to find any type of work in the ECE sector after a 12 month period.

Approximately 73% of the English-speaking respondents and 93% of the French-speaking respondents felt that their program prepared them “extremely well” or “very well”.

Approximately 65% of the English-speaking respondents and 54% of the French-speaking respondents said that they had been involved in a workplace orientation program. Comments suggested that these orientation programs ranged from a site tour and introductions to a full-day program or series of workshops and, in one case, to a week-long orientation program

A significantly high percentage of respondents (84% English-speaking and 82% French-speaking) indicated that their employers provided access to workshops and training.

Sixty-seven percent of the English-speaking and 86% French-speaking said that they were engaged in mentoring relationships. Comments added by respondents indicated that most of these mentorship relationships were informal in nature.

The majority of 2015 cohort members (90% of both the English-speaking and the French-speaking) who responded to the survey reported feeling “extremely confident or confident” in their current roles as an early childhood educator.

The majority (91% of the English-speaking respondents and 90% of the French-speaking respondents) described themselves as feeling “extremely satisfied or satisfied” in their employment situation.

Of those respondents who indicated that they were not currently employed in the early childhood education sector, a significant number indicated they were currently still seeking employment in the sector. Others indicated that they were currently upgrading their educational qualifications or were employed in positions outside the ECE sector.

### **Knowledge and Understanding of the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice***

Almost 99% of the English-speaking and 97% of the French-speaking respondents felt that their level of knowledge and understanding of the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* was basic, intermediate or advanced.

A significant number of respondents commented that they had received excellent training in the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* during their post-secondary ECE program.

### **Future Career Aspirations**

Thirty percent of the English-speaking respondents and 46% of the French-speaking respondents indicated they planned to remain working with children in an early childhood education environment or were seeking to move to a full-time or part-time position from a casual/supply position in that capacity.

Twenty-five percent of the English-speaking and 4% of the French-speaking wanted to remain working in an FDK setting.

Twenty percent of the English-speaking and 4% of the French-speaking respondents were already enrolled or planning to enrol in advanced education.

Five percent of the English speaking respondents planned to move into a position of added responsibility, such as a supervisor, manager, professor at a post-secondary institution, or find employment with the Ministry of Education or the College of Early Childhood Educators.

Five percent of the English-speaking and 23% of the French-speaking respondents wanted to operate their own child care centre.

Three percent of the English-speaking and 8% of the French-speaking respondents were planning to enter other related roles, such as health care, social services, psychology or speech pathology.

### **Future Considerations**

Based on the survey response rate and the feedback provided by the 2015 graduates of the Ontario approved post-secondary early childhood education programs, who registered as members of the College and participated in the survey, the College may choose to consider the following:

1. Revising the current format, structure, content and branding of the *Registration and Member Services Survey: Early Childhood Educator Entry to Practise and Early Career*

*Transition* and the e-mail survey introduction to reflect the best practices for online survey characteristics to attract more - and high quality responses.

2. Continuing to review registration and membership service policies and processes as they apply to recent graduates and new members.
3. Enhancing communications initiatives targeting early childhood education program students prior to graduation.
4. Supporting the development and implementation of continuous professional learning initiatives.

**Revising the *Registration and Member Services Survey: Early Childhood Educator Entry to Practise and Early Career Transition* and survey introduction to reflect the best practices for online survey characteristics to attract more - and high quality responses**

The College may choose to consider using strategies by:

- Reviewing and revising survey items prior to distributing future Entry to Practise and Career Transition Surveys to ensure that the language used remains current and the information requested of respondents is of current value and remains a priority for the College.
- Reviewing the structure of the survey and assigning structured groupings to better ensure a more effective “flow” for the participant respondents.
- Assigning a heading to each grouping
- Reviewing the order of the survey items to ensure that item one serves as a screening question, the following questions are “easy answer” items and the more challenging or personal questions are in the final part of the survey.
- Reviewing and revising the survey introduction
- Including professional layout and design
- Pre-testing the survey to obtain feedback from respondents prior to full distribution to obtain feedback on the design, length of survey, survey “flow”, and question clarity.

**Reviewing Registration and Membership Services Policy and Processes**

The College may choose to consider developing strategies to:

- Review and revise, if necessary, the College research purposes for the survey
- Continue using College presentations to future ECE graduates to emphasize that applicants must arrange for a transcript to be sent directly to the College and that this transcript must state that the applicant has successfully completed the ECE program and has been awarded a diploma or degree
- Clarify survey Question 11 so that recent graduates understand that they are being asked if they are participating in a structured mentoring program and are mentored by an experienced RECE
- Clarify survey Question 7 to indicate that respondents should select only one employment workplace category where they spend most of their employment time.

### **Developing enhanced communications initiatives targeting early childhood education program students prior to graduation**

The College may choose to consider developing strategies to:

- Use ECE program post-secondary presentations by the College to highlight the information gathered through the *Registration and Member Services 2015 Survey: Entry to Practise and Early Career Transition*.
- Advise 2016 cohort students during College registration presentations and by sending a reminder with their Certificate of Registration that they will receive an updated online version of the 2016 survey in early 2017.
- Highlight the existence and variety of employment opportunities in the sector for graduates of approved post-secondary early childhood education programs.
- Share respondent feedback about levels of confidence and feelings related to job satisfaction.
- Continue to develop communication strategies to facilitate engagement with new members.
- Continue to acknowledge the commitment of recent graduates and new College members to the early learning and care sector.
- Highlight cohort acknowledgement about the extent to which the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* were emphasized in their post-secondary program and how competently they rated their understanding of the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice*.

### **Supporting the development and implementation of continuous professional learning initiatives targeting RECEs during their entry to practise and early career transition**

The College may consider developing strategies to:

- Obtain feedback from recent graduates about their knowledge and experiences with the Continuous Professional Learning program.
- Share respondent feedback regarding their perceived lack of access to effective workplace orientation and structured mentoring initiatives with ECE sector employers.
- Encourage and support the development of workplace entry-to-practise orientation and mentoring initiatives.
- Encourage workplace decision-makers to develop online and/or in-person professional learning opportunities for part-time and casual RECEs.
- Encourage and support the development of online professional learning initiatives focusing on entry-to-practise issues and challenges.
- Acknowledge and consider the implications of the fact that many respondents want to enhance their educational qualifications and specialized training.

- Recognize and value the fact that the majority of the 2015 cohort respondents hold clearly expressed career aspirations.

## **Conclusion**

The *Registration and Member Services 2015 Survey: Early Childhood Educator Entry to Practise and Early Career Transition* highlights valuable feedback from a cohort of members who received a Certificate of Registration following successful completion of an approved program in early childhood education at a post-secondary institution in 2015

The information shared by the respondents provided the 2015 graduate cohort provides insight about College registration processes and current issues and trends such as:

- Early childhood education sector employment options
- Early childhood education post-secondary program content
- Professional learning needs and opportunities available to new members
- The importance of ensuring that high quality professional learning opportunities are available to all RECEs
- Perceived gaps in available professional learning opportunities for part-time and casually employed RECEs
- Job satisfaction and professional confidence levels
- Career and academic aspirations.

The significant decrease in the survey response rate may indicate that the current design and administration of the online survey is not attracting the attention of recent graduates and new members of the College. The initial number of responses to the beginning of the survey far exceeded the number of responses added to the final survey item 16. The survey completion rate was approximately 65%. This low response rate and the high “drop-out” rate suggests that College of Early Childhood Educators may want to examine ways to increase response and minimize drop-out rates.

The 2011 Entry to Practise and Early Career Transition Survey was administered five years ago and has had minimal changes made to design, structure and content. In the same period of time, there have been significant changes in the early childhood education profession and in the capacity of the College to assume a leading role in early childhood education sector research.

If the input that recent graduates entering the profession can offer to the College, post-secondary institutions, stakeholders, employers and policy-makers remains vital to the profession perhaps it is time for the College to re-examine the research purposes for the survey and revise the survey design, format and content.

By valuing and recognizing the feedback provided by RECEs transitioning into the profession and profiling their input with post-secondary institutions, stakeholders, employers, policy-makers and experienced RECEs reaffirms that both the College and the recent early childhood education graduates are in a position to serve as levers of change for the profession as a whole.