

Team Dynamics

The team approach defined by the Early Learning Kindergarten Program (ELKP) will be new for many Kindergarten teachers in Ontario. While teachers and other educational professionals regularly work together on projects, school activities and extra-curricular events, it is rare that a teacher and a non-teacher are required to collaborate all day, every day, on program delivery.

Teamwork and professionalism

The Ministry expects that teachers and ECEs will work together, as a team, to deliver the ELKP, and that the teacher will be the leader. The success of this relationship will depend on the professionalism of both the teacher and ECE. Each will contribute unique and different expertise to the collaborative program delivery model.

The Ministry indicates that in-servicing to prepare teachers to work as teams in this new environment will be provided in the spring. Because OECTA believes the most effective way for teachers to learn is from other teachers, it has recommended that the government provide funding to OECTA to in-service Kindergarten teachers in Catholic schools.

While their new relationship is evolving, teachers and ECEs may experience role confusion, overlap and even personality clashes. The potential for conflict is real and is likely to test teachers' professionalism

and conflict resolution abilities. Teachers are often challenged by difficult situations, but as trained professionals we are able to apply our interpersonal and communication skills to resolve matters.

When necessary, members call upon OECTA to help resolve conflict. Experience shows that it is always best to resolve differences directly between the people directly immediately involved, by identifying and focusing on the central issues. When other individuals, unions or management get involved, the issues can become clouded and positions entrenched. Situations that escalate this way are more difficult to resolve and can have employment related consequences.

The best foundation

To minimize conflict and build the best possible foundation for harmonious relations, OECTA has recommended that the government define distinct roles and responsibilities for teachers and ECEs when it introduces the proposed legislative changes. OECTA takes the position that the roles and responsibilities of the teacher and ECE must be delineated without ambiguity to give teachers and ECEs a clear understanding on which to build their working relationship. This approach will ensure a smoother transition from the current kindergarten model to the new ELKP.