



Quality and Affordable Early Childhood Education

Save the Children NZ calls for access to quality and affordable early childhood education (ECE) for all children up to 6 years of age.

To achieve affordability and quality, we call for:

- 1** A review of the ECE system with a focus on funding to ensure that is affordable for all whānau to access early childhood education and care for their children.
- 2** Improve the ratios of adults to children under the age of 3 years in teacher-led centre-based early learning services.
- 3** Expand the number of early childhood education services that facilitate wrap-around social services to support children and their whānau.
- 4** Commit to the progressive implementation of the Early Learning Action Plan.¹

Early Childhood Education Supports the
Rights and Wellbeing of our Children



Save the Children

Early Childhood Education supports the rights and wellbeing of our children.

Engagement in early childhood education is important in upholding the rights of children under six years of age, interalia, two key examples include:

- Article 29 accords all children with the right to a quality education that develops the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.²
- Article 23 accords all children with any kind of disability the right to be supported so they can lead full and independent lives.³

A child rights approach to ECE relates directly to the Early Learning Action Plan's expectation that high quality early learning settings support and include children with disabilities to participate, learn and achieve regardless of their individual needs or differences.⁴

Participating in Early Childhood Education is an important part of a child's life.

Save the Children recognises early childhood as a critical stage of the life course, beginning from birth up to 8 years of age. It is the foundation of a child's future health, growth, development, achievement at school and throughout life.

Experiences in these early years shape the brain architecture and have a direct impact on social, emotional and learning skills.

High-quality and accessible early childhood care and education is associated with a range of positive outcomes including reduced parental stress, decreased rates of child maltreatment and better social and cognitive outcomes for children.⁵

The important support provided by ECE for parents in caring for their children is affirmed by research published by Save the Children finding that ECE teachers are the most frequently used source of professional support for parents and their parenting practices.⁶ 87% of parents in the study reported engaging with ECE teachers for support on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis.



Early Childhood Education is an important support for whānau.

Engaging in ECE is important for parents and children. Increasing numbers of parents are in the paid workforce outside of the home. Returning to work or study was the main reason parents reported for accessing care for their children.⁷ Therefore, there is a high reliance on ECE to support working parents and creates a situation of sharing the roles and responsibilities of early learning and caring for a child between parents and their ECE provider.

For some whānau, ECE can provide a critical link to other supports they may need. ECE services that provide wrap around services play an important role in helping whānau to access additional services such as health, housing, or social supports. Further investment is needed to ensure ECE centres with wrap around services are well-resourced and are accessible to the families that need them.

Sources

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