



## StrongStart and early childhood educators share their challenges and want more understanding of their roles

StrongStart facilitators and early childhood educators (ECEs) help children get the best educational programming possible, to have social and emotional learning skills for an easier and familiar transition into Kindergarten. They work closely with families acting as counsellor, secretary, and educator, to name just a few of their roles.

Members shared pandemic experiences, listened to a presentation and asked questions about integrated child care, and identified bargaining priorities and concerns on the May 17 call.

Developing relationships with families is key for this classification. Strong relationships make it easier to talk with families about behavioural or developmental issues. For many on the call, the pandemic brought a change to their work with online sessions, greater workload, and new procedures.

Pandemic experiences and challenges include:

- increased technology required online through Teams or Zoom with live circle times
- decreased numbers of immigrant families participating likely due to technology issues and online registration required
- drop-in sessions no longer available
- job now requires constant emailing to families to fill spots
- extra time is needed to clean toys, etc. everyday

Many commented that pandemic changes brought some positives including:

- registering online means StrongStart workers know who will be in their group
- smaller group size and having the same group benefits children with diverse abilities that could be overwhelmed in drop-in StrongStart
- quality vs quantity was a positive for kids and parents as well as CUPE members

Many on the call noted that there is little understanding of their work, and correspondingly, a lack of recognition. Members shared that they want to see their work protected and expanded, with fair compensation applied for the important role they have in the education system.

Participants were joined on the call by K-12 Presidents Council executive members, local presidents and CUPE National staff.

### ADDITIONAL CALL ADDED

We have scheduled an additional meeting for **custodians, caretakers, building service workers, and similar classifications** in response to member requests. Please join us for the last call in this series.

**Saturday, June 5 at 10 am**

Your K-12 Presidents Council executive and CUPE National staff look forward to hearing from you.

### REGISTER HERE:

Members are able to register for the final classification call up to and including the day of the call, before the meeting starts.

**June 5 10:00 am – noon** **Custodians, Caretakers, Building Service Workers, and similar classifications**

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