



# Canucks Family Education Centre Puts Families First By Reducing Barriers to Education and Employment

Programs, Schools & Students

Fabiola Barrientos has been looking for an opportunity to further her education for quite some time. However, lack of childcare opportunities always got in the way.

“It’s difficult to find a program where you can get an education and take care of your child at the same time,” says Barrientos, a mother of a 21-month-old who moved to Vancouver in 2009 from Mexico.

One challenge many single parents and low-income families face when it comes to pursuing their education is the high cost of childcare. On average, childcare fees can be as high as \$1,915 per month per child in Vancouver. A limited number of quality licensed spaces can lead to long waiting lists and a challenge for low-income mothers looking for work.

The [Canucks Family Education Centre](#) (CFEC), based out of [Britannia Secondary School](#), is meeting this challenge head on. This past October saw the launch of a new certificate in early childhood education (ECE) assistant programming. The pilot program is a partnership between Britannia Community Services Centre Society, the Canucks for Kids Fund, The Vancouver Sun Raise-a-Reader program and 40 program partners. This pilot builds upon current skills and education offered through the early learning partnership and Hastings Adult Education at Britannia.

Jean Rasmussen, Executive Director of CFEC, coordinates and provides a variety of resources, referrals and encouragement to the women in the program.

“Many parents who live within the Grandview-Woodlands-Strathcona catchment area lack the necessary certification to work in child care centres in their community and would benefit from training as assistants in early childhood development and care programming,” says Rasmussen. “Some of these parents do not have the resources or supports needed to go back to school full time, but need up grading courses that are

flexible and barrier free in order to gain the skills and knowledge needed to increase their chances for employment.”

Barrientos—a current student in the pilot program—couldn’t have been more thrilled for the opportunity.

“It was fantastic when I heard I could take a class to get a certificate as an early childhood educator assistant while my 21-month year old toddler is being taken care of. I was just thrilled.”

The B.C. ECE Assistant Certificate pilot program runs for twelve weeks for 3 hours each session. During the program the mothers have funded access to childcare training and free childcare services, which allows them to focus on their education and successful accomplishments. The program provides a stepping-stone to further education, employment, networking connections and individual support.

“The program empowers women and mothers to value and explore their talents, personal skills, self confidence and inspiration from each other. It is incredible to experience the atmosphere of the program— appreciation, kindness and openness to learn,” says Rasmussen.

The relaxed and supportive learning environment with in-kind child support allows for parents to experience success and increased self-confidence. Barrientos has plans to pursue further studies in this field and work in a daycare environment.

“As a mother, I felt I needed more tools,” says Barrientos. “It’s a great opportunity to be educated, have lunch provided while having support for my child.”

The adult-focused school based model meets a need that was not being addressed in the community. Rasmussen’s community-capacity building approach focuses on empowering parents and instilling a sense of safety and hope that will transpire to the family unit.

“You want to change the lives of children, then you need to start with the family,” says Rasmussen.

<https://www.vsb.bc.ca/district-news/britannia%E2%80%99s-canuck-family-education-centre-puts-families-first-reducing-barriers-educa>