Advocacy Assignment – A Call to Action

Advocacy – A Call to Action

When writing this post on advocacy, it was important to me to understand the 3 levels of advocacy and the meaning of “call to action”, “advocacy”, “advocate”, “ethics”, and “politics. In hope, that it might help me to discover and find my voice.

***Three Levels of Advocacy***

“Characteristics of advocacy include: “Being professional,” “acting like a professional,” and “professionalism”.

Micro (“silent”) advocacy:

Conducting oneself ethically and professionally in one’s day--‐to--‐day work (e.g.,

establishing positive and collaborative relationships with colleagues, children, and families) If you’re working in an ethical manner you are promoting quality in every decision that you make then you are advocating for quality.

Meso (“small a”) advocacy:

Actively speaking up for children and families at the centre level (e.g., helping families navigate the subsidy system, securing additional services, fundraising for the centre/program) “I would say, am I working within a code of ethics? Values? Do I advocate on behalf of the families and children that I work with?”

Macro (“big A”) advocacy:

Actively seeking out opportunities to challenge the prevailing social--‐political order that negates the value of ECEs and early childhood education (e.g., participating in / organizing rallies, writing to politicians)” (Canadian Children, 2015).

***Call to Action, Advocacy, Advocate, Ethics, and Politics***

Call to Action:

The Oxfords English Dictionary (2020) definition, “**call to action** - an exhortation or stimulus to do something in order to achieve an aim or deal with a problem. E.g. He ended his speech with a call to action".

The Wikipedia Encyclopedia (2020) explains “[Call to action (political)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Call_to_action_(political)), a call to activists to participate in a direct action or similar political activity”

Advocacy:

The Oxford English Dictionary (2020) states “**advocacy -** public support for or recommendation of a particular cause or policy. E.g. Their **advocacy of** traditional family values".

The Wikipedia Encyclopedia (2020) had a deeper meaning of advocacy. “**Advocacy** is an activity by an individual or group that aims to influence decisions within political, economic, and social institutions. Advocacy includes activities and publications to influence public policy, laws and budgets by using facts, their relationships, the media, and messaging to educate government officials and the public. Advocacy can include many activities that a person or organization undertakes including media campaigns, public speaking, commissioning and publishing research. Lobbying (often by lobby groups) is a form of advocacy where a direct approach is made to legislators on a specific issue or specific piece of legislation. Research has started to address how advocacy groups in the United States and Canada are using social media to facilitate civic engagement and collective action.

Advocate:

“**Advocate** is **-** a person who publicly supports or recommends a particular cause or policy”.

E.g. "He was an untiring **advocate of** economic reform", states the Oxford English Dictionary (2020).

The Wikipedia Encyclopedia (2020) says "**Advocate** also has the everyday meaning of speaking out to help someone else, such as [patient advocacy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patient_advocacy) or the support expected from an elected politician.

Ethics:

**Ethics** are moral principles that govern a person's behavior or the conducting of an activity. E.g. "medical ethics also enter into the question" the Oxford Dictionary (2020) says.

The Wikipedia Encyclopedia (2020) explains **“Ethics** or moral philosophy is a branch of [philosophy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy) that involves systematizing, defending, and recommending [concepts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Concept) of right and wrong [behavior](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Action_(philosophy))".

Politics:

The Oxford Dictionary (2020) definition of **politics** is “the activities associated with the governance of a country or other area, especially the debate or conflict among individuals or parties having or hoping to achieve power. E.g. “the president's relationship with Congress is vital to American politics".

“A variety of methods are deployed in **politics**, which include promoting one's own political views among people, [negotiation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Negotiation) with other political subjects, making [laws](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law), and exercising [force](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Force_(law)), including [warfare](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warfare) against adversaries. Politics is exercised on a wide range of social levels, from [clans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clans) and [tribes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tribes) of traditional societies, through modern [local governments](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Local_government), [companies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Company) and institutions up to [sovereign states](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sovereign_state), to the [international level](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_politics). In modern [nation states](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nation_states), people often form [political parties](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_parties) to represent their ideas. Members of a party often agree to take the same position on many issues and agree to support the same changes to law and the same leaders”, explanation of politics from the Wikipedia Encyclopedia (2020).

***Professionalism,*** ***Ethical Practice, and Advocacy Partnership***

“Ethical Practice: Practicing the rules and standards governing the conduct of members of a profession (Dietze, B., & Kashin, D. 2016. p.g 134).

“Members of ECEBC undertake, as a condition of membership in the association, to incorporate the Code of Ethics into their practice. ECEBC, advocates the voluntary acceptance of these principles and standards by all early childhood educators, both members and non-members” (ECEBC, 2008 p.g 2).

“ECEBC has been advancing early childhood care and education since 1969. They educate the sector and the broader community about the importance of early care and learning. They provide professional development opportunities to early childhood educators across the province” (ECEBC, 2008. p.g back cover).

“Within the early learning sector, being ethical means discussing and observing principles and behaviours, illustrating behaviours that are concurrent with ethical principles, and being able to justify one’s actions based on a code of ethics. And ethical practice involves listening beyond what is heard in the moment” (Dietze, B., & Kashin, D. 2016. p.g 135 & 156).

“An informant from Ontario said: You start thinking very small, you start thinking what you can do with the families in your program and the children in your program and how you can deliver the best program for them. Another informant from Manitoba reiterated the idea that behaving like a professional in one’s day-to-day work could be considered advocacy: Sometimes you can be a silent advocate in your work and it can be just as effective as somebody screaming from the rooftops, so it depends on the scenario” (Canadian Children, 2015).

***Reflection***

After reading all the above information on call to action, advocacy, advocate, ethics and politics, it made my head spin, an overwhelming feeling blanketed my body, and the thought of speaking publicly made my voice want to quiver and disappear. So how do I discover and find my voice to be able to advocate for my children and families in our centre and in our community?

What I do know is “my professional ethical values of care, respect, trust and integrity are the building blocks in devolving connection and strong relationships with my children and families. When my personal values align with my professional ethical values (which they do), I am able to give more to my children, families, and staff members. I feel these values will develop connections and relationships with my community, our province and government. Along with identifying and knowing my perceptions and bias beliefs, my balance of professional and personal values all together will be the key foundation into my advocacy journey (College of Early Childhood Educators, 2019, p. 3).

***How to Discover and find my voice.***

As I continued searching within me, trying to discover and find my voice supporting advocacy, I continuously hit a brick wall. How can I voice my concerns about affordable child care fees, all children deserving high quality daycare programs, programs to be licensed and governed, educators to be recognized as essential and professional members of our community, province, and country, continuing supported for our educators and to be paid according. Finding this task difficult to do I felt discouraged and frustrated as I know I have a voice, a voice that can somehow help in advocating for my children and families and staff. Then it hit me, like a ton of bricks, “The Stroller Brigades” October 2019. Right here in my own home community in the middle of many positive child care advocates, co-workers, college class mates, and friends I had a voice that whispered with a presence that was strong. Discovering my voice from this uplifting experience, I decided to reach out to Charlene Gray, who was involved in leading the stroller brigade in our valley. I briefly shook Charlene’s hand on that day, as she was busy. I remember now how I thought it be nice to meet her one day to learn more. So I decided to reach out to her.

On Friday, 14th of August, at 10am Charlene and I connected for the first time through zoom. With a click of a button I began a new relationship with another passionate educator. We meet for an hour and could have easily continued talking all day. I had many questions to ask Charlene about her own advocacy journey and how did she find her voice.

Charlene began her advocacy journey when she realized her voice was heard and valued through her ECE Course Practicum. Unable to be placed with and early childhood educator, due to a shortage, for her practicum, Charlene was placed with a kindergarten teacher at Miracle Beach Elementary School – 1989. As much as Charlene was nervous to work alongside a kindergarten teacher, the kindergarten teacher was extremely relieved to have Charlene join her. The kindergarten teacher asked Charlene about her knowledge and for her guidance on how to teach the young group of children as she expressed she did not know where to begin. “I teach through play learning” Charlene expressed. Her knowledge and child development understandings of the first 5 years of a child’s life were appreciated in the kindergarten class room. This amazing experience was a turning point for Charlene. Advocating her own values, beliefs, and ethical practice as an early childhood practicum student in the best interest of the children she found her voice.

When we talked more about advocating and having a voice, Charlene thought she needed to be this person who stood high on a box, understand the entire professional jargon; know every fact and figure involved in a discussion… I too thought the same about advocating traits. She learnt (and taught me) through talking and asking questions with others around her in the field of early childhood education, there were others asking similar questions. She could hear voices with similar values and beliefs of her own in regards to child care concerns. Learning quickly individually and together as a group there was a voice present among them. There was no box to stand on and the conversations and questions of concern where coming from the heart. Charlene discovered being her natural self - warm hearted, a great listener, sharing her love of working with children and families, her passion as an early childhood educator, her ethical and personal values and beliefs and a strong focus on the future was all she needed to carry on with her advocacy journey. She did not need to change who she was to be heard. So how did she move on from here? As time ticked by the same questions and concerns came up in conversations - affordable child care, not enough quality child care spaces, and educators needing support and a better wage to help encourage them to stay in the early childhood field. All strong questions and concerns I also have.

Six years in the making, Charlene together with a team of dedicated members, patience, through listening and learning, sharing real life stories through the lens of a parent, staying committed and being persistence with our community, province, and government the beginning of her advocating journey with the “Communities $10aDay Child Care Plan” unfolded and developed. “Together they made history. Affordable child care in BC is on its way” ($10aday.ca). Since 2011, supporters across the province have advanced the **Community’s $10aDay Child Care Plan** as the solution to BC’s child care chaos. [In February, 2018 the BC government introduced its Child Care BC Plan in response to this chaos](https://www.10aday.ca/track_progress). The 2 Plans have shared goals – reducing parent fees, increasing educator wages and education, and creating more licensed spaces that meet diverse family needs.  Now, Plan supporters are [**tracking progress**](https://www.10aday.ca/track_progress)and [**taking action**](https://www.10aday.ca/take_action) to ensure that every step leads us towards a universal, high quality, affordable child care system” ($10aday.ca. About the Plan: **Government’s Response, BC Government). Charlene today continues to be committed to this child care plan. And it all started from the hearts of educators, parents and our community discussing the question of affordable child care. I asked Charlene how can I learn more about this plan. Inside my mind this plan was checking off questions and concerns I have about** affordable child care fees, all children deserving high quality daycare programs, programs to be licensed and governed, educators to be recognized as essential and professional members of our community, province, and country, continuing supported for our educators and to be paid according. Charlene kindly gave me the website address: <https://www.10aday.ca>

**Charlene shared with me having connection, talking from the heart as an educator or a story from a parent, a love of children, positive relationships, knowing how to work with the government, having strong values and beliefs, know that you can disagree to agree respectfully, and through fails and achievements you can reach your goals in advocating.**

**After talking and sharing our early childhood education stories, Charlene could hear my advocacy journey had already begun. I just did not realize it. Participating in “**The Stroller Brigades” last year in our community, **within my centre, Linda and I set up the “child care fee reduction incentive program” to help our parents with child care fees, along with “wage enhancement program” for our staff, our centre is located on Huband Park Elementary school grounds providing before and after school care. Here we are advocating a strong and co-operative relationship with the school staff and Comox Valley school district 71. We have an intimate relationship with the kindergarten teachers with our preschool aged children that will be going to kindergarten soon. Having a seamless relationship between the centre, school, and SD71 is peaceful for the children and it creates safety and security on a greater level.**

**Looking forward to continuing my “voice” giving expression and being heard” (Dietze,B., & Kashin, D, 2016, p. 163), through my already day to day advocacy journey I am excited to expand my knowledge with the “$10aday Plan”. After my amazing, inspiring, encouraging, and supportive meeting with Charlene, I know now we have choices with our voice when advocacy is present. My voice can be the whisper when walking on the stroller brigade, quietly talking to parents who are in need and support for child care fees, to be as loud as I wish, to be heard that I believe all children deserve quality child care, along with sharing my experiences and my stories I am advocating.**

***$10 a Day Plan***

**When researching more and engaged in the $10aday Plan website, I became connected and invested in the plan as the topics of concerns are concerns I have too. Reflecting back on my meeting with Charlene I could hear her warm and passionate voice when we talked about the plan and her stories she would share with the government of true scenarios relating to children, families and educators. There was no pressure placed on me to get involved, I simply wanted to get involved I due to me own values and beliefs professionally and personally. I hope “you” will join me to support this plan in a way that best interests you. Together as a community we can be strong in reducing the child care chaos concerns around us. Together we can make history!**

***This is how we can continue to make history***

**I found and I know you will too, the following facts and benefits connectable to your own family within the $10aday plan supporting children, families, educators, and the community:**

“[Children](https://www.10aday.ca/who_benefits#children) good quality child care helps children to thrive.

[Families](https://www.10aday.ca/who_benefits#families) Today, the cost of regulated child care takes more out of the take home pay of employed parents than taxes. Many have no option but to leave the workforce or use unregulated care. Although women typically sacrifice their careers and financial stability when child care is not available or affordable, this stress takes a toll on the whole family.

[Women](https://www.10aday.ca/who_benefits#women) BC mothers will be able to enter or return to BC’s labour force, move from part-time or casual work to full time jobs, women will be better able to support their families, put their skills and talents to work and fully participate in their communities. Their pay cheques will go further and many will move out of poverty. The Plan will also provide particularly significant benefits to single mothers, helping many families to leave social assistance.

[Educators](https://www.10aday.ca/who_benefits#educators) provide new and better jobs for Early Childhood Educators, wages will increase over time to reflect the importance of their work, opportunities to improve their education with access to and funding support for Diploma and Bachelor of Early Childhood Education programs and professional development across BC. And, with greater public understanding of the significance of early care and learning, the work of Early Childhood Educators will be valued and respected - as it should be.

[Providers](https://www.10aday.ca/who_benefits#providers) [The Plan supports providers who want to move away from their often isolated situations to become part of local child care networks and a province-wide system.](https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/10aday/pages/86/attachments/original/1457243649/community_plan_faq.pdf?1457243649) Those who choose to opt-in to the Plan will receive additional operating funds to lower parent fees, so they can focus on enhancing the quality of early care and learning programs for young children without having to worry about affordability for families. Additional investments in the workforce also benefit providers who opt-in to the Plan because they will be able to recruit and retain enough well-qualified Early Childhood Educators to fully utilize their existing licensed capacity. The increased and stable public funding allows providers to better support children and families in their communities with high quality programming.

[Economy](https://www.10aday.ca/who_benefits#Economy) Several economists have studied the economic benefits of the $10aDay Plan. All of the studies used well-established research and BC data to show that the benefits of making high quality child care broadly available and affordable outweigh the costs.

[Two recent studies, led by economists Iglika Ivanova (2015) and Robert Fairholm (2017)](https://www.10aday.ca/resources), focus on the economic benefits in the near-term, and in particular the well-established link between affordable child care and mothers’ labour force participation.

On full implementation, Fairholm projects that the $10aDay Child Care Plan will add $5.8 billion to GDP, create 69,000 jobs across BC and raise enough government revenues to cover the estimated $1.5 billion incremental annual cost. The Plan will also provide higher economic returns than typical government investments, even in the short term.

[Employers](https://www.10aday.ca/who_benefits#employers) of BC workforce. Almost 40% of families report that a parent had to remain away from work following the end of parental leave because child care was unavailable. This finding reinforces the concerns raised by BC employers about retaining skilled, experienced mothers in the workforce.

[Communities](https://www.10aday.ca/who_benefits#communities) The Plan will build a neighbourhood network of child care programs that connect families and children to each other and to their neighborhoods.

This means a stronger, healthier, and safer community for all” ($10aday Plan).

I “ASK” you, as an educator, parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, community member to support this plan. Join me in, **‘a call to action’** to support our community child care needs!

Below I have listed the “website and take action links” to the $10aday Plan/Campaign. I have personally taken action with the last link I have listed. I hope you will too!

$10aday Plan - <https://www.10aday.ca>

Take action for $10aday in BC’s Recovery Plan - <https://www.10aday.ca/recovery>

Sign the Petition - <https://www.10aday.ca/add_your_name>

$10aday Campaign Updates - <https://www.10aday.ca/get_updates>

Volunteer your time - <https://www.10aday.ca/volunteer>

Donates are welcome - <https://www.10aday.ca/donate>

Spread the word about the $10aday campaign - <https://www.10aday.ca/spread_the_word>

Mail a letter to the Premier, John Horgan - <https://www.10aday.ca/writealetter>

**We are now**

**On our way to affordable child care!**

**More licensed spaces!**

**Better Early Childhood Educator wages!**

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