



Advancing the Educational Preparation and Professional  
Development of Alberta's Early Learning and Care Workforce

A Record of Stakeholder Discussions  
Grande Prairie Regional Discussion  
April 14, 2015



The Muttart Foundation

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## Introduction

In April 2015, the Muttart Foundation sponsored four regional stakeholder consultations to consider how best to advance the educational preparation and professional learning of Alberta's early learning and care workforce. The regional consultations discussed the growing body of research that looks at the formal educational preparation and professional learning of the early childhood education and care workforce, considered the implications of this research for certified early childhood educators and certificated teachers in Alberta and explored possible options to increase the capacity of those staff who work with young children to respond to the growing educational and social demands placed upon them.

The stakeholders invited to participate in the four regional consultations included senior staff from early learning and care organizations, senior staff from schools and school divisions that offer Early Childhood Services (ECS) under the Ministry of Education, academic staff from post-secondary institutions as well as staff from infrastructure organizations that support service delivery. In addition, staff from the Ministries of Human Services, Education and Health also participated in the discussions.

To support the stakeholder discussions, the Foundation commissioned a discussion paper on the educational preparation and professional learning of early childhood education and care workforces (['Advancing the Educational Preparation and Professional Development of Alberta's Early Learning and Care Workforce'](#)). The discussion paper reviewed the research on staff educational preparation and professional learning and examined the links between staff's formal education, access to ongoing professional learning and program delivery and child and family outcomes. It concluded with the identification of proposed changes to increase the educational preparation and professional learning of the Alberta early learning and care workforce.

Each of the regional stakeholder consultations followed a similar discussion format. Participants engaged in a series of facilitated discussions which considered the drivers for change and key contextual factors shaping the Alberta early learning and care workforce; the core competencies early childhood educators and certificated teachers require to work with children below the mandatory school age and their families; the formal educational preparation and professional learning that is associated with high-quality early learning and care workforce; and proposed changes in how Alberta approaches the formal educational requirements and professional learning for early childhood educators and certificated teachers.

The consultation participants recorded their individual responses to the discussion questions on worksheets which then formed the basis for group discussions. Completed participant worksheets were collected at the end of the consultation and transcribed to provide a record of the discussions. Participants were not required to identify themselves on their worksheets and none of the comments presented in the consultation reports are attributed to individual participants.

This report presents the stakeholder comments from the Grande Prairie regional consultation held on April 14<sup>th</sup> at the Holiday Inn & Suites Hotel, Grande Prairie. Seventeen stakeholders from the Grande Prairie, High Prairie, High Level and surrounding regions participated in the discussions.

A consolidated consultation report, prepared by the Muttart Foundation, summarizes the major findings from the four regional meetings.

The Muttart Foundation greatly appreciates the many insights the stakeholders brought to the discussions as well as their generous allocation of time both in preparing for and participating in the consultations.

## The Results of Stakeholder Discussions

### The Alberta Early Learning and Care Workforce – Demands and Realities

In their opening discussions, the participants considered two related dimensions of the current demands and realities confronting the early learning and care workforce. First, they identified the key drivers for change in the workforce’s educational preparation and professional learning. Second, they identified the contextual factors to consider in thinking about possible changes to the workforce’s educational preparation and professional learning requirements.

The arguments participants advanced in these two related areas are presented below under summary headings.

#### *The key drivers for change in the educational preparation and professional learning of the ELC workforce*

##### The complex situations and needs of children and families

- support for individuals with exceptionalities
- number of children experiencing difficulty in one or more areas of ECD
- ESL parents
- change in family structure- economic time

##### The increasing demand for early learning and care

- large population of infants/ toddlers
- increase in # of younger children
- increase in number of children in early learning and care programs
- increased pressure on child care costs, availability, special needs
- need for parents to enter workforce- increase demand for quality childcare

- demand for services

#### Affordability, accessibility and inclusivity

- affordability
- deliver education in affordable accessible way
- universal -inclusive
- accessible-affordable
- universal child care back on the table?
- cost factor
- affordable quality childcare

#### Higher educational levels for the workforce

- quality-trained ECE, regulations, practice
- levels of educational qualifications in the early learning & care field of practice
- provide well educated/supported educators
- provide education re: special needs
- advance training of educators

#### The importance of high-quality in early learning and care

- quality and affordability
- "QUAD"
- developmental-age appropriate programs, focus 5 domains
- quality environments
- quality child care
- high quality environment
- for the children and the quality of care they receive

#### Research on the importance of the early years

- new data ECD
- recognition of the importance of early childhood; research that supports that importance
- importance of early years in the spotlight
- importance of early years in the spotlight

#### Political and public support for early learning and care

- education of public
- ministry support
- public awareness of the importance in Early learning experiences and opportunity

#### The demands placed on the ELC workforce

- expectations of student achievement prior to regular school enrolment
- parents expectation of what students/ children need to learn while away from home

### Staff opportunities for education or professional learning

- ability to train while working
- ongoing learning
- affordability-not all individuals have monies to secure training

### Workforce remuneration

- wages for qualified staff?
- financial remuneration for qualified staff -whose pocket does it come from 1. parent fees 2. gov.
- adequate pay for quality care givers

### Recruitment and retention of early learning and care staff

- staff retention in licensed child care centres
- shortage of highly educated staff

### Change process

- you need a vision and PAID people to execute it
- coordination-follow through
- need a clear vision for change

### Supporting the field as a profession

- respect for profession
- professionalism needs recognition
- respect for ECEs
- to give staff the recognition and show them the value of what they do

### Financing for services

- funding & delivery
- operational funds for program

### Provincial infrastructure

- provincial structure
- foundational provincial wide structures

### Other drivers

- private organization
- rural diversity vs urban
- provincial standard for post-secondary ECE program
- differences among provision in various settings (preschool, licensed centres, ECS providers)
- practice in facilitated discussion; working collaboratively
- main stream curriculum

## *The contextual factors to consider in thinking about changes to the educational preparation and professional learning of the ELC workforce*

### The organization, financing and delivery of services

#### Financing early learning and care

- cost of individual, lack of P.D. \$
- additional support for infant toddler program
- how programs are funded -to keep it affordable for parents
- funding in order to achieve these required reforms and to develop and maintain new and improved structures
- funding to maintain a sustainable service
- retributions for daycares while staff are in classes

#### Service delivery, linking early learning and care and education

- # of children, licensed spaces, # of centres/DH's/OSC
- collaboration across Ministries and important networks to make foundational changes and establish greater consistencies
- different streams daycare/day home/preschool -do not lump them all together!
- there is no requirement to provide preschool programming in school even though PUF is funded space is not, e.g. GPPSD has over 200 preschools
- there is no continuity between care- preschools
- FDH-somehow different

### Political context and political support

- common understanding amongst ministries
- government privatization
- need for common understanding and commitment amongst ministries(vision and legislation)

### Public awareness and support for early learning and care

- how to get educators and public on board
- public perception of EL as babysitting as opposed to a valued profession
- public education

### Families access to early learning and child care

- # of families with both parents working
- need for support of inclusive care
- need demand
- availability
- location to access

- infrastructure- spaces for kids; access

### Geographic considerations

- urban vs. rural- diff challenges
- options in rural areas
- when we think of change we need to understand that change looks very different in small rural communities vs large urban communities
- consider location (Alberta-urban, rural, northern/remote locations) when looking at attracting and retaining staff
- consider location when analyzing the need/demand for early learning and care in various regions across the province
- how to reach rural areas
- rural vs. urban

### The educational level of the ELC workforce and professional learning

- need to get rid of the equivalency certification it leads to less than stellar programs
- cost of tuition, in comparison to wage in the workforce
- workshops need a certain level of understanding- diploma
- accessibility to training! (not just in major centres)
- opportunities for professional development

### Workforce remuneration (and education)

- support for staff, funding
- salary increase
- how funding will work to pay better wages
- continuity between provinces- pay & education
- secondary income

### Workforce supports and timelines for making changes

- present ELCC workforce and how they will fit into future plans
- how will present ELC workforce work into future
- testing out the field to see if they like it
- present workforce and how they will fit in
- present ELC workforce and how they will fit into future plans
- fit schedule
- manageable commitment
- give childcare workers time to upgrade
- length of time to prepare

### Other comments

- raising families
- sustainability of program

- consider location when customizing a framework for Alberta by examining reforms and structures in other parts of Canada and the world (not one size fits all approach)
- research showing importance of quality care in EC for brain development, social & emotional

*Participant thoughts and ideas arising from their discussion of the key drivers for change and the contextual factors to consider in advancing change*

The diverse and growing needs of children and families

- huge increase in number of children
- increase # of children requiring
- more children requiring specialized care - need a workforce that can speak and address their needs - educated
- changes to population and culture
- change in population (immigrants) changes in inclusive daycare
- ESL
- along with the increase in number our little ones need specialized services- speech, OT, PT, Psych etc. and our workers need to be supported with tools it foster their learning and development

Ministerial oversight

- common understandings amongst ministries
- ministries need to work collaboratively
- common understanding among ministries
- there needs to be a common understanding & commitment to early learning by the ministries i.e. education/health/children services

Geographic considerations

- cost associated with ELCC professional development in rural areas needs to be addressed-mileage-accommodations
- sharing of training-provide workshops for FDH ie. rural areas

Research on early learning and early childhood development

- focus on investment in early years for later reward
- investing in our young population leads to gains later
- coalition's and the EDI Mapping study showed the need for stronger support for under 6

The early learning and care workforce

- access to professional learning for all workers regardless of whether the staff fall under education or human services
- level 3's get low pay and no respect as compared to ECS teachers

- PUF aid had no education but was being paid \$10- \$15 more than lead preschool teacher
- financial remuneration for our qualified staff

#### Introducing changes in early learning and care

- caution that "expectations" do not push staff away and provide private care/services
- is it a reality to meet the educational standards
- present workforce- how they would fit into this future
- system will drive more 'privates'

#### Service delivery considerations

- how will family day homes fit into the model?
- family day home education needs to be out of the mix and have a separate focus
- FDH has to be dealt with separately
- specialized programs (dayhomes + headstart) need own vision

#### Other considerations

- priority needs to be placed on early learning
- AB ed. won't count them in their allotted spaces
- what about doing something?

## **Core Competencies for Early Childhood Educators and Certificated Teachers**

In their second round of discussions, participants considered the core competencies early childhood educators and certificated teachers require to support high-quality early learning and care for young children and their families. Their discussions explored three related themes. First, the argument advanced in the discussion paper that early childhood educators should be supported and approached as professionals. Second, the seven areas for competence identified based on a review of the research literature. And third, the current capacity of early learning and care workplaces to support the work of early childhood educators as competent professionals.

The ideas and arguments participants presented in these three discussions are presented below under summary headings.

### *Supporting and approaching early childhood educators as professionals*

The majority of participants either strongly agreed (15 – 94 percent) or agreed (1 – 6 percent) with the argument that early childhood educators should be supported and approached as professionals in their work with young children and their families.

*Participants identified the following reasons for supporting early childhood educators as professionals.*

#### Research on the importance of the early years

- early childhood development sets the foundation for life-long learning, behaviour and health
- our understanding of the importance of the first five years of development
- 'brain development'

#### The complex and demanding nature of work with young children and their families

- complex situation
- complex/layered field
- ELCC is a very layered and complex field and deserves a workforce that is qualified and equipped for the field/profession
- specialized field
- early childhood education and care is a complex and layered field and requires a workforce that is respected and supported as professionals
- lack of understanding of complexity of early learning requirements

#### Arguments in support of professionalizing or about professionalizing the field

- ideally it would be a profession
- professional attitude could lead to professional workers
- pls better supported as a profession (educational program-ABC's ELS readiness)
- colleagues & co-workers view early childhood educators as professionals
- this would bring a greater interest to the field of ECE- more competitive wages, more opportunities for growth, PD
- as a profession, ECE's would receive more support to develop a broader skill set, giving them more abilities to address children's needs
- higher education
- educators need adequate training to ensure high quality care during this critical period
- preparing little children to be ready for their educational careers- more quality care
- profession would need regulation, standardization and union potentially
- educators as professionals are able to develop positive relationships with children & families
- when trust is developed the child is able to explore his environment with confidence & has security that the educator will support his development by providing educational rich environments
- with more professional attitude from all parties including , government ,public, parents and staff themselves greater advances and care can be provided for our children

#### A closer integration of services – education and care

- ELCC=caught between health services and educational services

- it should be on the same continuum, why are they separate?
- it is all on a developmental continuum
- currently ECS educators and teachers (degree) have a very awkward relationship, each feels the other is not their level

#### Limited public views or understandings of ECEs and their work

- demanding nature is not recognized by public and private sector
- parents don't necessarily realize the learning that take place-education needed to showcase value
- competent staff need to educate parents
- as outline the way we/culture think about ELC needs to change
- that changes comes as the expectation for higher qualification is deemed necessary to practice in that field
- the community see ELCC as a service not a profession with a competent work force
- day care, family child care is 'viewed' or understood as a care centre not educational centre for children
- expectations by parents - provide social skills, etc.- they don't even know what service they are receiving
- professional attitude and recognition by users of services & community. Generally community needs to understand what early childcare offers children.
- community views need to change-not just service
- what about the gender bias in the profession- it's about prof. not valued or paid
- ECE's are marginalized and underpaid because the view is they are currently sub-par to teaching profession
- there is lack of understanding of the service children are currently receiving
- public attitude: Peer attitude
- care is seen as a service

#### Other considerations

- there needs to be an overarching vision and system that supports ECE, critical for life-long learning
- day care 'worker'/'educator' not even consistent through the field

### *Participant additions, deletions or changes to the seven areas for competence outlined in the discussion paper*

#### Agreement with the seven main areas of competence

- all seven areas are important
- support is needed for the seven area of competence to be aspired to
- seven areas to be included in the teachings at colleges/university
- these areas should be included when the education levels are moved up

- the seven areas included a great deal of positive information and show the need for strengthening these areas

### Areas of competence participants highlighted

#### Communicating in a democratic community

- democratic community-this is part of professional practice
- communicating within a democratic community

#### Working with families and accommodating diversity

- working with families
- supporting children with disabilities -need for additional \$ to support
- cultural competence

#### The importance of care and caring

- care ethically-agree that care is foundational component
- care is first and foremost important and critical
- care ethically

#### A knowledge and understanding of how young children develop and/or learn

- knowledge of how children learn & develop for an early years pedagogy-agree that this is integral for high quality early learning and care
- using knowledge of how children learn and develop for an early years pedagogy

#### Work with curricular resources

- curricular resources-the new framework is certainly a step in the right direction. It is important for educators to have a foundation to build on and a framework to guide the work of staff new to the profession.
- working with curricular resources

#### Linking research and practice

- link research to practice and policy
- linking research to practice and policy

### Additional areas of competence for consideration

- often our professionals are working in isolation and they need the opportunity for networking, reflection and mentorship
- would add computer, financial training
- would add more on mentorship, team building and working collectively as a staff
- competencies need to be supported through mentorship
- need mentorship/role modeling

## Competence areas for further development

### Working with Families

- working with families-a firm understanding of a child's family and cultural background helps educators better understand the context of that child's earliest experiences and helps to put pieces together when examining children's strengths, interests, traits and characteristics, behaviors, vulnerabilities and areas of difficulty or delay.
- ongoing inclusion of family as an important part of the home-school care relationship helps nurture family involvement and consistency in supports

### Curricular Resources

- emergent curriculum for those in field
- working with curricular resources may have to be specialized for FDH
- AB curriculum-might be overwhelming for some, is it possible to offer/deliver in "series"-start with basics and build from there -"emergent" curriculum for the educator
- inclusion-data shows higher number of children with delays we need to have access for funding of support staff or reduce adult/child ratio (these staff need to have knowledge/skill set to work with special needs)
- within the curriculum needs definition of the expectations that need to be met

### Caring Ethically

- caring ethically is all about creating a sense of belonging
- self-care support to retire or move on
- caring-educators need to be responsive to their own health & well-being, poor physical/mental health affects the quality of care and education...they need to understand when it is time to leave the field
- expand care to more clearly include the safety and well- being characteristics
- be intentional about including safe environments- children learn best in safe and caring environments

### Critical Thinking

- a professional understands that a challenging situation can be turned into a teachable moment (with a little patience, thought and understanding)

## Linking early learning and care services

- needs to continuum of support, no divide between education and human services
- ECD has to be linked to education

## Additional education or training required to strengthen competency

- inclusive-currently have section of the province (north) that don't have inclusive care  
inclusive care needs to be supported with additional knowledgeable staff

- supporting children with disabilities-there is a need for greater training and support for educators
- additional skilled staff to support
- special professional development
- professional growth plan- personal learning plan
- inclusive settings- need training for staff to address children with special needs
- degree has to be specialized in ECD
- need ECE training, Practicums in established daycares for teachers

#### Considerations in thinking about competencies

- cultural and linguistic diversity not necessarily respected in the educators
- families should be entitled to ELC services
- children cannot learn if they are not safe & healthy & secure
- specialize within education system
- cultural diversity of staff is not comparable to that of children
- clarity in these areas would be helpful

#### *Participant assessment and discussion of the current capacity of early learning and care workplaces to support staff in the delivery of high-quality services*

Participants offered the following assessments of the current capacity of early learning and care workplaces to support staff in the delivery of high-quality services. For Early Childhood Services (ECS) funded through the Ministry of Education 2 participants (13 percent) assessed their current capacity as 'weak'. 8 participants (50 percent) assessed their current capacity as 'strong' and 1 participant (6 percent) as 'very strong'. The remaining 5 participants (31 percent) who provided a response assessed the capacity as 'neither strong nor weak'.

For early learning and care services supported through the Ministry of Human Services, 11 participants (69 percent) assessed the capacity as 'weak' and 2 participants (12.5 percent) as 'very weak'. 2 participants (12.5 percent) assessed the capacity as 'neither strong nor weak', while 1 participant (6 percent) provided a 'don't know' response.

#### *Participants highlighted the following factors that contribute to the current limited capacity of early learning and care workplaces to support staff in the delivery of high-quality services.*

#### Staff educational preparation and educational requirements

- can no longer major in ECS at U of A
- lack of understanding of play based learning
- ECS has more qualified staff -support systems in place
- level of education
- not all ECS teachers have ECEC training

### Opportunities for professional learning in education supported services

- ECS-greater government accountability -specialize PD
- the school division provide training and support to teachers and receive remuneration for the training
- accountability for professional growth & learning
- paid professional development
- ECS PD, accountability, funding - the opposite is true of community based childcare
- ECS providers fall under TQS requirements, which is a very thorough and rigorous framework to ensure that educators are consistently working to improve their practice
- ongoing professional learning and development is crucial component for teachers following TQS and this serves as a valuable opportunity for ECS providers to receive PD and training specialized in ECD & research based practices
- teachers are entitled to regular PD opportunities and this helps to ensure that educators are continually growing their professional knowledge and skills
- professional growth plan which outlines professional learning goals
- ECS tend to have more funding and opportunity for PD
- ECS have backing from the school system, professionalism, money and access to workshops through larger school divisions and it is possible that they could use more direct support in early years training directed at the 6 and under age
- TQS applies to kindergarten certificated teachers
- educators attend over time + travel cost etc.
- access to Pd
- accountability is present
- more access to funding
- potential there for ECS for support

### Limited professional development opportunities for child care staff

- community based childcare educators are currently not supported by such a framework and there is inconsistency in PD opportunities available to childcare staff
- community based childcare - professionals have to primarily seek this out at their own cost
- CC there is not a lot of professionalism in the sense that staff don't feel they are valued or see the need for ongoing support and upgraded training on a regular bases
- limited access to funds for professional development
- big challenges exist trying to get PD to child care workers
- need for further PD re: play based learning vs. academic programing
- marginalizing of people, expectations for PD is limited by money

### Differences in the organization and support for child care and early childhood services

- kindergarten-more consistency & funding-required ed. Standards, paid prof. development. Specialized development is offered & required. Recognized professionals.

- preschool-funding is less-professional development not specialized or available. Caregivers are not recognized as professionals and are not compensated as such.
- because ECS is in the education ministry it is looked at differently
- jurisdiction are more aware of the need for common practices and standardized tools for assessment
- there is no formal funding system that supports high quality ECD
- teaming up with other funding sources
- education ministry support staff with recognition, P. dev., salaries, etc.
- publicly funded vs parent fees/subsidies
- human services-lack of support/recognition of educators as professionals -still seen as "child minding", lack of training as requirements-pay is still low
- lack of recognition for staff (child care)

### General comments

- wish we had mandated Jr. and Sr. ECS full time options
- inclusive childcare seems like a great support for our preschool
- continuity of ECD to KG needs
- importance of ethical caring -important
- location, more public awareness of the field
- need for a set of competencies
- based on wages= needs to be based on passion and respect for the field
- need more continuity for support for students with challenge in between preschool and school division

### *Participant thoughts and ideas arising from the their discussions of competencies and workplace capacity*

### The closer integration of services

- integration of fields (ECS & community based) and ministries
- have kindergarten teachers work with early Learning educators to make transitions to school smooth
- amalgamating boards for kg/preschool/dc
- should ECE be in Ministry of Health? Maybe not

### Financing considerations

- funding needs for broad system and operational funding
- more access to wages in ECS compared to community based centres
- present community based child care does not have funding to support staff training
- ELCC-having to pay for our own travel, accommodation, work evenings and weekends
- money and access to cutting edge workshops for the community based

### Educational levels and professional learning for staff

- education level and equivalencies
- degree two base years then specialize into Financial/ HR management.
- educators need professional growth plan, evidence, accountability
- specialized PD to younger age

### Limited public perceptions of child care services

- need to change how communities see childcare
- because the community in general does not see ELCC as a profession
- lack of community viewing caregivers as professionals

### Challenges facing child care services (including supporting staff professional learning)

- expectations keep increasing
- school closures are accepted; childcare facilities closure not accepted
- have to attend on overtime
- school closure for PD is acceptable where as closing daycares is seen as problematic
- if community based programs were located in schools probably ok to close for PD
- school closure for PD is expected and accepted no so in ELCC
- a lot of barriers educational system does not face
- closure in ELCC is seen as problematic; parents need for care vs staff & need for PD
- PD occurring during personal time
- licensed care providers are unable to "close" centres for staff PD, whereas schools closing for PD is accepted by parents
- having to do PD on their own time, not able to close facility on a weekday due to parents needing the care

### General comment

- have not covered

## **The Educational Preparation and Professional Learning for Early Childhood Educators and Certificated Teachers**

The third round of participant discussions considered the formal educational preparation of early childhood educators and certificated teachers as well as their ongoing professional learning. Participants considered both the level (length of period of study) and the nature of formal educational preparation staff who work with young children require as well as the ongoing professional learning opportunities that have the potential to strengthen their practice.

Participant ideas and arguments in response to those two main questions are presented below.

## *The level and nature of formal educational preparation for staff in Early Childhood Services (including kindergarten)*

### ECE degree or degree with early learning specialization

- degree specialized in ECE or diploma working towards degree
- should have a degree or specialize in ELCC along with education degree
- specialists with a degree in ECE
- specialized degree in ECS (FOUR yr. degree)
- degree in early childhood, standard degree does not specialize in ECD
- specialized in ELC
- degree with specialized training in early learning and care

### B Ed. Degree with specialization

- B.Ed. with ECS focus major
- early childhood services (including kindergarten) Bed degree with ECS/child development specialization or a combined Bed/child studies degree
- B.Ed. in early learning specifically
- B.Ed. - with a focused program on ECE, ECE minor/ major

### B Ed. Degree (no ECE specialization)

- bachelor of ed

### Bachelor degree

- degree
- degree -based on numbers

### Requirement of a Diploma level qualification or certificate qualification

- child care services (including centre-based care, preschools, family day homes) - ECE diploma
- EA's in a classroom should be aspiring toward their 2 year diploma
- 2+ years to start (after degree in education) (specialized)
- min level 2

### A workforce with a range of credentials

- degree/diploma EC&LL w/education degree

### Other comments

- equivalency status needs to be reviewed!
- our smaller schools who average under 10/ yr. need not have a teacher with degree, although supported by a teacher
- need for continuous training, belong to college of ECE
- PD activities to follow -yearly

- staff certification should be reviewed as it currently stands
- should all be the same so that ECE people get paid the same as teachers
- their teaching is as important or more than the later years so let's recognize this to promote quality programming

*The level and nature of formal educational preparation for staff in child care services (including centre-based care, preschools and family day homes)*

Degree level qualification

- director- degree and five year min experience in the field
- degree for management staff and possible lead staff

Degree and/or diploma qualifications

- degree/diploma EL&CC-centre based care & preschool
- minimum of two year diploma for all staff but aspire to the earlier mentioned degree
- preschools- degree/ diploma

Diploma level qualification (2 years)

- diploma
- educational assistants also need an early childhood diploma
- diploma
- centre based childcare/preschool-degree @ min 2 yr. dip
- minimum 2 yr. diploma in ECD
- two year diploma minimum
- level 3- College Diploma for staff working in childcare centers and preschools
- diploma
- diploma- 2 yr. minimum related to childcare
- 2+ years to start

Certificate qualification (1 year)

- need a college of ECE -minimum 1 yr. certificate-ongoing training/education to retain status for all educators
- family min 1 yrs. - 2yrs
- family child care-not same level of training -possibly 1 year? certificate?
- level 2- college certificate as a starting point and review course taking in the certificate program to cover needed course work for day home setting
- day home- minimum of certificate

Orientation course and equivalency process

- eliminate orientation
- need to do away with equivalency qualification this 'dumbs down' the field of ELCC
- eliminate the orientation course

- elimination of orientation course
- dispose of the Level 1 course- often people who take this course are not interested in up-grading or making this a professional career

#### Specialized education or training

- advance yr. for admin
- directors of centre base to have leadership & admin training
- administrators-require additional training
- special training for educators working with infants and toddlers/inclusion

#### Professional learning

- need PD system to be in place with incentive or \$\$
- implement a "coaching" type of support
- college and ongoing learning to be employed in the field
- coaching of leaders
- PD activities to follow-yearly

#### Comments on educational requirements

- high level of education translates to higher level & quality of care and better outcome for children
- early childhood education should be viewed as specialized area of education and ECS staff should have specialized training in research-based practices and early years pedagogy

#### General comments

- need in common language and common understanding
- pre programs
- time to attain diploma
- base training for childcare is key
- but choice is also important
- some people want their children in a more "home environment" rather than an institutional feel
- we need clarity what is being offered at various levels
- diploma needs to be accessible- e.g. online delivery-phased in

### *Participant comments in support of changes to the level and nature of staff educational preparation*

#### Move away from equivalencies

- no more equivalencies- dumb down the profession
- eliminate equivalency for certification

### Higher qualification requirements

- need to review the "exemptions" to programs, need clear guidelines as to time for meeting next level of education
- child care services staff should hold a two-year diploma as the minimum educational qualification. This should be consistent across licensed centres, family day homes and preschools
- eliminate orientation course (to gain level 1)
- want to have professionally viewed staff, thus we need to have some kind of credentials to fall back on
- the professionalism showing in Child Care centres would go up dramatically with higher education
- we need to close the gap between what research is telling us and what is currently practiced
- early learning educators with access to more & enhanced early learning opportunities will deliver better programs
- little ones deserve to be understood by a "educated" educator
- research has clearly indicated quality of care & education needs to be delivered/facilitated by ECE professionals who have formal education & specialized practice

### Supporting the field as a profession

- to promote professional culture & practices
- ECE are not babysitters, need education and experience to be treated as a professional

### The specialized nature of early learning and care

- specialized training in child development would be an asset for the kindergarten room as well as the primary classrooms
- practicum in appropriate supported setting

### Professional learning

- gov't needs to support the implementation of change to our regulations and the process for prof. development

### Other comments

- accessible education
- accessible training
- openly encourage males
- families need to learn and develop an understanding of the value of purposeful early learning environment
- move early learning and child care to a better fit
- standards of education would promote common language, common understanding
- higher supported programs
- better family communications/ bands

## *The forms of professional learning and requirements for professional learning for early childhood services staff*

### Education levels

- T.A. -minimum ECE diploma
- lead-degree is ECE-not science/nursing etc.
- on-going education to obtain diploma
- degree
- need more university level courses

### Mandatory requirement for professional learning

- license to practice with mandated professional dev
- ongoing prof. development req'd
- maintain certification
- having to submit completed work to maintain certificate
- ongoing PD to maintain certification

### Ongoing professional learning

- life long learning
- ongoing professional development

### Types of professional learning, content and delivery models

- professional learning needs to be directly tied to curriculum
- specialized care for inf/tod-inclusion
- continuous availability for courses, via online, face to face
- ECS-while there is a professional learning provision in place for certified teachers, the PD that they undertake should be specific to early learning, rather than education PD that is too broad in nature
- conference and workshop yearly
- PD days that already happen within school but also require training that has an Early Learning bases
- more practicum, PD days to continue education
- online learning; correspondence; onsite opportunities
- webinars
- more ECE workshops to be included in in-service/teacher convention
- EA's included

### Other comments

- both-belong to college of ECE, all staff to continue training via workshop series/courses
- if ECE people were linked to schools the possibilities of PD are much greater and broader

## *The forms of professional learning and requirements for professional learning for child care staff (including centre-based care, preschools, family day homes)*

### Coaching and/or mentoring approaches

- mentorship programming

### Communities of learning

- opportunity to meet with caregivers/ ECEs that are in similar situations

### Mandatory requirement for professional learning

- license to practice with mandated professional dev
- Centre based and preschool-all belong to college of ECE, need to attend 'X' number of hours to maintain status
- mandatory-professional & personal learning plan!
- 3 d/yr. attached to goals
- mandated # of hours or types of PD that is received
- maintain certification
- through an association have mandatory hours of updated training required
- ongoing PD to maintain certification

### Planned and/or goal setting around professional learning

- professional growth plans to reflect continuous learning both personal/profession able

### Support to participate in professional learning

- everyone should be entitled to same PD
- PD days where staff have time to attend learning opportunity during work hours
- supports to early learning and child care programs
- child care services - all staff regardless of their level should be entitled to quality PD focused on early learning and care
- ongoing professional development too
- formalize more opportunities to collaborate with schools
- access/ share PD resources
- funding to cover mandatory PD and conferences
- more practicum, PD days to continue education

### Professional learning content and/or models of delivery

- need more university level courses
- specialization for special needs infant/toddler care
- workshops and conferences yearly
- more regional training like a school division would hold
- online learning; correspondence; onsite opportunities

- webinars

#### Educational requirements for early childhood educators

- centre based and preschool-ideally all staff would have minimum ECE diploma with coaching from a member with ECE degree
- FDH minimum 1 year certificate plus ongoing training to reach diploma level
- on-going education to obtain diploma-continuous education
- diploma minimum- (directors- degree)

#### Reflection following professional development

- be able to reflect on training etc. -how they have complemented training & grown from it needs to be evident
- are we experiencing what we learn

#### Other comments

- understanding that we are life-long learners
- breakdown point system in a certification model
- integration of services is important

### *Participant comments in support of professional learning approaches and the requirement for ongoing professional learning*

#### Support for professional learning

- all staff should have equal funding for ongoing training & PD!
- include kindergarten to receive support from early learning consultants as listed above

#### Life-long learning

- promote life-long learning
- early childhood professionals need to be life-long learners
- realization that not everyone is motivated to be a life-long learners and that we are constantly having new research showing us new things to so, try accomplish with different ages

#### The benefits of professional learning

- we need to take a stand on the importance of the early years, educators spend numerous hours with children, they need to understand, interact, implement, evaluate, programs to enhance all areas of development
- to learn about new research to maintain quality professional development =better outcomes for children
- knowledgeable, responsive educators are necessary for quality programs- educators who understand development and the pedagogy of play. Who are trained to use observation to extend children's learning

### Approaches to professional development and delivery options

- greater consistency in professional learning provision for staff is required in order to better align professional learning requirements
- it would be nice to see all child care programs including kindergarten work together to bring in training as the more numbers the easier to split costs
- professional learning plan (and personal)

### Education of ECEs

- formal training is required to fully understand the influence educators have with children during these early years
- there is a big gap between a 50 hour course and a degree
- has become very easy to recognize
- found the course extremely easy, did the 2 years in 9 months, then completed 500 hrs practicum after course load, some of the courses were "too simple", only university level course was English

### Other comments

- do not compensate differently for different levels of training (more \$ for level 1&2)
- most centres do not mandate training, a push for some training would be great for promoting quality
- these services are all supporting families, lets coordinate services so families didn't have to be scattered from one years to another

## *Participant thoughts and ideas arising from their discussions of professional learning*

### Approaches to professional learning

- a teacher and EA need to do PD together
- all staff regarding their qualifications should have the same opportunities for P.D.
- ongoing PD for all staff regardless of their level of certification (entitled to PD every year to keep up-to-date with research-based practice)
- encourage mentorship in all programs
- identify a professional learning plan as a personal growth plan
- 3 days a year would be ideal for professional development
- similarities in development of professional learning plans across all childcare settings
- promote life-long learning
- mentorship program
- same PD funding across all levels
- online courses for ongoing learning

### Oversight of professional learning

- staff qual's dept. and ACCA need to work together to develop college of educators
- a college of ECE'S driven by the field professionals
- college of ECE
- regulation through one entity

### Regulations and standards

- overview and regulation of ECS- kindergarten to child care services
- the field of ECE sets the standards vs ministries
- no more equivalencies in training-early childhood is a speciality field!
- kindergarten assistances have level II
- need to maintain certification

### Other comments

- do not compensate differently for different levels of training (more \$ for level 1&2)
- self care

## **Advancing Change in the Educational Preparation and Professional Learning of Alberta's ELC Workforce – A consideration of possible options for change**

The final round of participant discussions considered the proposed changes outlined in the final section of the discussion paper to advance the formal educational preparation and professional learning of the early learning and care workforce. As noted in the discussion paper, the proposed changes provide a starting point for stakeholder discussions.

Participants considered the overall direction and content of the proposed changes, the specific changes they considered most important to implement as well as the key considerations to take into account in advancing change. The discussions explored these three related areas both for the proposed changes outlined to advance the educational preparation of the workforce as well as those to approach and support the early childhood educator as a competent professional.

The results of participant discussions of these two related areas are presented below.

### *Advancing the educational preparation of the early learning and care workforce*

Participants either 'strongly agreed' (8 – 53 percent) or 'agreed' (6 – 40 percent) with the proposed changes to strengthen the educational capacity of the early learning and care work. One participant (7 percent) 'neither agreed nor disagreed' with the proposed changes.

## *The specific changes most important for strengthening the educational preparation of the ELC workforce*

### A two-year diploma as the minimum qualification for staff in child care settings

- minimum 2 yr. diploma for all centre based staff
- they are all important however, the two year diploma as the minimum for staff in licensed early learning and care programs and family day homes would have a great impact
- min 2 yr. diploma
- moving to diploma for all
- to encourage Level 3 education
- minimal requirement diploma

### Removal of the orientation course

- to dispose of the level 1 course

### Need for leadership and management education or training

- leadership & admin for management
- degree program & new qualifications for staff in management/leadership role
- to require a degree program for Directors/ management

### Educational requirements for family day home providers

- 1 yr. certificate for family child care
- min 1 yr. diploma FCC

### Post-secondary program delivery and standards

- develop provincial standards
- provide standards for post-secondary EC programs
- provincial standards for early childhood educators - university & early childhood college programs
- educate your educators
- provincial standards for post-secondary so we all use common language

### Requirements for professional learning

- ongoing professionalism/training

### Increases in staff remuneration

- re-numeration who pays? parents or gov't?
- funding framework- education, remuneration, \$ to the field, subsidies for families
- recognition of importance of ELC with appropriate remuneration
- who pays: public or private?
- salary increase

### Planning to support new educational requirements for the workforce

- plan for existing workforce- timeline
- process and time for advancement
- plan for existing workforce (what would that look like?)
- require a plan for how to support existing workforce to meet new educational requirements; how would this roll out?
- plan for existing workforce-put timelines into place
- plan for workforce-grandfathering in and motivating current worker to increase training & education

### Professionalization of the field

- regulatory model on how profession is governed
- to form a college of the profession

### Supports to assist staff in upgrading education

- incentives to achieve higher levels of education
- funding, bursary opportunities to support PD
- funding a model

### Raising awareness

- public awareness/ education (higher level)
- common understanding from stakeholders
- Public awareness
- parent education

### Other comments

- we are the front lines and need to be prepared for any and all situations
- gov't levels working together
- other provinces on Board

## *Considerations (opportunities/challenges/or cautions) in strengthening the early learning and care workforce's educational preparation*

### Staff remuneration

- salaries to be consistent across prov. with grid
- staff remuneration is a crucial piece because if the expectation for education and training is increased, then remuneration should also be aligned to suit professional qualifications
- funding provided for educators
- provincial pay grid
- wages- who pays

### Financial support for staff education

- operational funding \$ - so programs can provide professional development etc.
- operational funding -for professional development!
- if they are paid to take course that centre must be fully compensated
- to provide grants and compensate to those wishing to up-grade

### Potential loss of staff – challenges finding or retaining staff

- to work closely with rural communities so they don't experience massive shortages of educators
- challenge will be to find people to join the field - still a hard sell!

### Financing early learning and care – higher service costs

- parent fees-will they have to pay? how much?
- parent fees consideration to Quebec system?
- operational funding for programs
- operational program funding, including allowances for remote/rural areas (in some remote areas centres have closed due to lack of funding)
- provincial salary guidelines? private & not for profit (how?)
- finance costs? who's pocket?
- daycare funding standardized
- provincial pay grid for staff and parents fees
- who is going to pay?

### Family Day Home providers

- caution on minimum qualification for Day Home Providers that we could potentially lose a lot of spaces because some people "only take kids in because of necessity to stay at home with their own kids.
- FDH- could force more people in privatization

### Building post-secondary infrastructure or capacity

- to get degree programs out as soon as possible for those already on board for change and growth in professionalism
- availability of courses (on-line, video based, self study)
- sustain opportunities to offer programs at our colleges and universities to standardize diploma and degree

### Supporting the move towards an ELC profession

- mandatory membership in association.
- how to best promote as a profession?
- people in the field must see themselves as professionals first
- mandating membership to a professional organization
- shift to a more professional field

- current staff to view themselves as professional
- discussions with staff on professionalism team building/support/mentoring

#### Planning for and implementing change

- how it is 'introduced' to the community at large?
- to move at a cautious pace with upgrading for educators already in the field
- education of current working staff
- will 0-3 yrs. be under education-pros/cons
- pre schools included in school system
- creating new spaces for childcare while implementing this change
- create more private day homes- yikes!
- increase in private care
- consideration to those currently in the field
- timeframe- to obtain qualified staff
- time frame in what to obtain the additional qualifications

#### Urban and rural considerations

- rural vs. urban
- difference between urban and rural funding framework has to address the changes
- rural access vs city
- urban vs. rural
- caution-rural communities not having individuals to take training

#### Other comments

- discussions with parents as stakeholders on high quality
- managers should know how to manage! Quite often they have no little education in this part of their job
- universal standards

### *Supporting the early childhood educator as a competent professional*

Participants either 'strongly agreed' (9 – 64 percent) or 'agreed' (5 – 36 percent) with the proposed changes to support the early childhood educator as a competent professional.

### *The specific changes most important for supporting the early childhood educator as a competent professional*

#### Educational level and specialization

- raising the bar of qualifications
- raising the expectation for minimum education

### Staff remuneration

- to follow that a pay grid similar to the framework of the ATA
- wages
- realignment of remuneration
- higher salary

### Professional development and learning

- increase opportunities for all to attain training & educational opportunities, remuneration for increased education, bursaries!
- funding reflect barriers ex. Travel expense
- equal PD funding and opportunity
- equal opportunity for training & PD
- higher education - professional learning
- professional learning requirements
- raising on higher degree level (professional learning requirements)
- funding for professional learning that takes into account rural vs urban educators (e.g. travel allowance)
- equal funding plus opportunities across the province

### Professional standards of practice and or a code of ethics

- develop code of ethics and standard of practice
- standards of practice
- all of these factors are important however a standard practice and code of ethics (similar to TQS), ongoing entitlement to professional learning and realigning education, remuneration and working environments for educators is key
- standard of practice & code of ethics need updating
- developing Standards of Practices and Code of Ethics
- regulatory model to govern the profession
- commitment to profession

### Post-secondary institutions

- colleges & universities to have same curriculum & standards (universal)

### Government and public support for change

- increase public awareness
- education of general public and promotion of the importance of ELC
- public awareness
- recognition from government, parents and communities
- public awareness- education
- recognition from ministries, communities, parents

### Financing early learning and care

- program funding-needs to reflect remoteness!

- Funding (2)
- funding- operational frameworks

#### Other comments

- what other provinces are on board?

### *Considerations (opportunities/challenges/or cautions) in supporting the early childhood educator as a competent professional*

#### Financing for early learning and care

- framework for funding is important`
- funding (4)
- provision of funding with note to rural limitations regarding distance & opportunities
- affordable childcare
- affordable childcare- caution against pricing out of the market
- people need affordable childcare, are we going to become inaccessible to families- who will pay?

#### Ministerial oversight - Service design and delivery

- how are the ministries going to work together?
- learning the definition of a child across ministries
- establish ministry of Early Learning and Childcare
- better alignment between ministry of education and human services -avoid duplication of services
- collaboration across ministries in order to establish and maintain these proposed changes and modified funding to support and maintain these reforms
- shared vision between education & human services ministries
- consider a minister of early childhood education!
- new ministry of combined education & ECE dept.
- collaboration across the ministries include. aboriginal (federal)
- consideration to the implementation process may need to be varied slightly for urban vs rural communities? (i.e. time allocations, delivery format of training, etc.)
- big picture to consider in and off reserve
- FNMI children and how federal gov't initiatives & support
- difficulty with getting non- profit on the same page

#### Professionalization of the workforce

- educators should belong to ACCA or college of educators with certain requirements attached
- would caution against recognizing this field

### Workforce considerations and needs

- value of current staff are respected
- value of current ELC staff and levels of education
- getting staff to see the benefits of up-grading may lose seasoned staff
- getting staff already in the field to see the benefits of Professional Development
- create new spaces/will more staff come?? Will be end up with enough staff for spaces
- important to be able to access the same opportunities
- even wages across the board would be great to see

### The change process

- timelines (5)
- phasing in of new educational requirement

### Other comments

- clarification of terms
- find ways of involving parents in this discussion