



Toward a Provincial Framework for Early Learning and Care in Alberta

A Record of Participant Discussions

Grande Prairie

November 9, 2012

Fort McMurray • Grande Prairie • Edmonton • Red Deer • Calgary • Medicine Hat • Lethbridge



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1. Introduction

In November 2012, The Muttart Foundation, Success By 6 and Calgary UpStart hosted consultations in 7 Alberta cities to consider the design of a new provincial framework for early learning and care. The consultations, funded in part with support from the Government of Alberta Ministries of Human Services and Education, explored how Alberta might, over time, more closely integrate early learning and care and how a potential framework could be structured to guide and support this process of integration.

The stakeholders invited to attend the consultations included senior staff and volunteers from early learning and care organizations, senior staff who oversee or work in school-based early learning programs, academic staff from post-secondary institutions as well as staff from infrastructure organizations that support service delivery.

To support the consultation discussions, the project partners contracted a team of early education and care researchers to prepare background papers that were circulated to the participants in advance of the consultations. The background papers provided an overview of the main idea of integrating early learning and care and considered the potential features or nature of this integration across the key domains of service design, funding and delivery. The papers summarized the research literature on integration, and provided examples of how individual jurisdictions have approached integration (copies of these background reports can be downloaded from the Muttart Foundation website at www.muttart.org/reports).

The consultations followed a similar format. At each meeting, the participants engaged in a series of facilitated discussions that initially explored the main idea of more closely integrating early learning and care followed by a series of more detailed discussions on the main design features or elements of a more integrated approach and their expression in a new provincial framework.

Throughout the discussions, participants recorded their own responses to the various questions they considered on individual feedback sheets. These sheets were then collected at the end of the consultations, transcribed and analyzed to provide a record of the discussions. The participant comments were organized according to the main questions they considered and sorted to reflect the key themes and ideas they expressed. The comments made were not attributed to individual participants.

This report presents the participant comments from the Grande Prairie consultation held on November 9th, 2012 at the Holiday Inn & Suites. Twenty-five participants took part in the discussions. The project partners greatly appreciate the time and energy the participants contributed to the discussions and thank them all individually for their insights and commitment to this work.

A final consultation summary report prepared by the Muttart Foundation, Success By 6 and Calgary UpStart for the Ministries of Human Services and Education presents the findings from across the seven consultations. Copies of this report can also be requested from the three project partners.

2. An Integrated Approach

What key themes, ideas and questions emerge for you when you consider more closely integrating ELC in AB?

Theme: The Case for Support

- The EDI results show low to poor social/emotional development globally in this province. How do the two areas work together for children's success?
- The importance that early learning and child care all one and the same – you can't have one without other. How do we get the message across?
- Best to fund and support integrated services to ensure quality programming.
- Not forgetting about the why (little people).
- Ensure positive outcomes for children and families.
- Building a solid foundation for children will lead to improved learner outcomes.

Theme: Areas for Questions

- If there is a split 0-4 and 5-8, this makes more sense to me.
- There needs to be a very good understanding of what is “developmentally appropriate” for all age groups before decisions about what to do are made.
- Is full integration of ELC (0-6-8) even possible in a province like AB?
- 100% integration – how would that work with all ELC programs
- What ages 3-11 or 3-7 etc.?
- What would or could happen with age group 0-4?

Theme: Integrating Other Elements

Subtheme: Governance

- A new ministry? A fresh start for education maybe?
- How much paperwork are programs going to have to do for the gov't – already too much to do?
- One area of gov't needs to take charge.
- Two ministries coming together.

Subtheme: Financing

- All parents need a subsidized fee.

Subtheme: Service Delivery

- Where's the infrastructure? Facility?
- The importance of having a clear picture of what it will look like and how it will be delivered.
- Why are there such radically different regulations between daycares, preschools and schools? If private integrated daycares etc., can make a go of it why can't we get it together publically to provide it for all? Spaces in

facilities in growing communities are essential – infrastructure needs to care though! There needs to be better standard of training. Why do ECD people make so much less than teachers?

- Many children in “full day” kindergarten still need childcare before and after.

Subtheme: Human Resource

- An important piece of early childhood development that is currently missing
- Education of early learning and care “teachers” – colleges able to support.
- How to find, attract, and retain qualified staffing? Providers?
- Personnel – make sure that ELC is not lost in an “education” system.
- The education of educators and/or caregivers is important.
- University level educated.
- Will qualifications be re-considered?
- I thought kindergarten for 5 years worked in the field of ELC for many more and I am so excited about the idea of “doing and understanding early learning in a whole new way. I feel we are finally on the right track.
- Educational options for staff must be better
- Educated/and if so/must be paid a lot better at least twice the amount now for ECE, and more money for kindergarten teachers. Maybe Gr. 1 as well.
- Will it be as you work training? Will there be entry level training?
- More standardized systems, particularly the education of facilitators.

Subtheme: Curriculum Frameworks

- I don’t want to see young children being “pushed” into formal education before they are developmentally ready.
- More school (earlier) school doesn’t mean smarter kids
- Defining pedagogical approaches between ELC and education in school system seamless/equitable access for all children eventual.
- How to “re-educate” or change pre-existing notions?
- The idea that the education system focuses on change and preparing for all children as opposed to focus on families and having them prepare children to fit a mold
- What will happen to play?
- Curriculum framework is an excellent idea – needs a goal – mission
- School themed day care?? Yikes

Theme: Other Features

Subtheme: Family Perspectives

- Connections with adults remain consistent,
- Having the parents involved and ensuring individual family values and traditions, culture be respected and honored.
- Simplifying/easing some of the stress on parents.

Subtheme: Inclusion, Diversity & Access

- How to celebrate diversity and not make a huge melting pot.
- Needs to be equal for all children – very difficult (ESL, FNMI, populations)
- One entry point for everyone.
- Reserves & Natives – the trust of people there in schools is lacking.
- A seamless approach for everyone.
- Availability in rural/remote locations even if fully funded and managed by the Government of Alberta.
- Rural setting – ages, facility, transportation, space, etc.
- No choice available in northern Alberta.

Theme: Moving Forward

Subtheme: Build on What Exists

- Looking at integration options that can incorporate the most successful ELC elements which are already in place in AB
- Looking closely at what is already in place: What is working well, what isn't working well, what parents' value and need for their children.

Subtheme: Feasibility of Change

- It will be difficult, but it is possible.
- Being realistic as well as idealistic; prioritizing aspects of a new ELC framework that seems most likely to succeed. In part because they have a proven track record of success elsewhere in Canada or abroad.
- How realistic is integration and what kind of timeframe before we see change?
- How financially feasible to provide facilities that would be required.
- How will it be financed to ensure feasible and financially available to all families?

Subtheme: Evidence-Based

- Needs to be researched.
- What models work best for Alberta?
- Separate field of study. 0-8 yrs. – what examples can we talk about?

Subtheme: Transitions & Ripple Effects

- The Family Day Home program will have to change so that training is mandatory
- How will that affect ELC workforce, i.e. level of education and training?
- Current programs lose their identity.
- What would the response be from teachers and school system?
- Is formal childcare sustainable on its own if 3-5 year olds are in school/after school programs?

Theme: Other Considerations

- The key is to ensure that whatever developments are planned and incorporated into an integrated ELC system for AB and that they provide a substantial improvement to the existing system.
- What will that look like?
- Who governs? Who finances? Who decides on delivery model and monitors such? Who qualifies for funding? Who delivers? How do we meet rural needs? Aboriginals?
- What will be the outcome measures that we use in a longitudinal way to measure success/improvement?

What level or type of integration do you see as valuable in Alberta?

Theme: The Case for Integration

- We need to start thinking about the little people in our world and work with each other in open, honest, heartfelt ways for them. From civil servants, early childhood educators, to the janitor at the programs, we all play a very important part in their well-being.
- Better access to all families
- Better educational options for teachers/child/care educators.
- Better pay scale and benefits for those working with children.
- Children will benefit by having access to quality child care, no more substandard programs.
- Better buildings/equipment for the children with government funding.

Theme: The Type of Integration

Subtheme: Scope of Change

- Preschool age +.
- Smooth transitions for 3 years old to ECS.
- Minimally ages 2-6, but ideally 0-8.
- Valuable to not create an ELC system that has criteria, that it be truly open to all.
- I am not sure about level of integration – do we have an age – or no age restrictions?
- Do we advocate for more support to have staging (home with your children for the first 2 years – subsidies/allowance for this model)?
- I would like a 0-4 and 5-6 split. 4 year olds could have the option of 1 or 2 day Pre-K programs. Or the split comes at 3 years, I see parents wanting either 3 year olds “getting a head start on school” and pushing them.

Subtheme: Financial

- Not a competition. In the past, funding determines outcomes (i.e.: more funding available for birth-2yr programs and develop opportunities for programming for 0-2 year olds).
- Discover what will provide the best outcomes for children and families first and figure out the funding after.
- Money a key factor but should not drive which children access services.
- Finance – both funded with base funding.
- School age care in all schools publicly funded.

Subtheme: Governance

- Governance to oversee 0-8 years. This has to be a “new” governance: not built based on the Education model. From one governance – bridge down to 2 age group (0-4, 5-8).
- Cross ministry collaborations with common mandates and funding.
- Health must be linked to education. More integration is needed

Subtheme: Curriculum & Pedagogy

- For years the education system has influenced the ELC field. For the first time I feel like the ELC field could greatly influence the education system.
- Also becoming a learning time in a play orientation.
- Programs are designed with what is developmentally appropriate and advantageous first.

Subtheme: Organizing Delivery

- It would be fantastic for families to start child care if needed in the same place as schools so that families could have all their children at the same facilities. It could be a community facility open to artists and provide after school.
- Seamless approach for families to access services for their children 0-6.
- Seamless integration of services between childcare centers, schools and early interventions (AHS).
- Rehab/health, ELC and education fully integrated
- Health must be linked to education more integration is needed
- Eliminating or decreasing bussing within cities.

Subtheme: Human Resources

- Management – supports required for professional development... “license” by ECD trained individuals.
- Delivery – core delivery via trained staff in Early childhood

Theme: Level of Integration

- Full integration would be the most valuable and would increase quality of ELC. This would be the most valuable for our children and families
- Full integration.
- I support full integration that delivers equitable services to every Alberta child. It's difficult to conceive that this may be possible. It is already all too evident that northern Albertan children and youth do not achieve at the same level as the rest of Albertans: because they do not have access to equitable services.
- Full integration would be optimum.
- A move to develop a fully integrated system would provide maximum benefit to Alberta's children; however, at this time we may not be able to achieve this at once. It would possibly be the most complex and involved system to implement and find funding for. A gradual or partial approach may be a better start.
- Partial integration with the idea of partnerships.
- We need to begin with partial integration and our most vulnerable populations - use ECD mapping.

Theme: The Process of Integration

- I support integration but we would need to proceed slowly with respect to building a framework, for integration, education of teachers and curriculum
- Maybe start small and work down...
- Start slow.
- I ask myself how realistic is full integration in the province of Alberta?

Theme: Other Considerations

- How do we ensure that happens provincially – equitably?
- Getting folks on the same page; One where early intervention is key; Looking at the needs of children.
- The care times lunch/recess etc. be delivered by persons not just supervised
- Care centers located within school area.

How would you characterize the state of readiness in Alberta for more closely integrating ELC?

Theme: General Support

- Change is needed – lots of uncertainty and nervousness around it. However, change brings growth.
- Services need to be redesigned to fit families and communities.
- AB is very much in need of an overhaul of its approach to Kindergarten, pre-school education and childcare.
- Alberta is ready for progress. We are in a position where we can closely examine other models and methods adopted elsewhere and learn from them.

- It makes sense to have a whole new approach. A new system.
- I do believe that high quality childcare for our youngest children (0-3) is highly valued and sought after already; however it isn't easily accessible for all parents.
- People are more than willing to address the barriers of infrastructure e.g. space, financing, licensing. We need to make training more integrated. We need to move to full integrated supports in health/parent links centers/PVF services to get more bang for buck. I didn't want my kids in "separate rooms" – wanted more like family care.
- In the field of Education, Alberta is one of the leaders in Canada – Why can't we be the same with integrating ELC? We have the resources. We just need to get going – need some strong leaders – supported by government funding.
- There will be resistance from some, excitement from some, but neither group is educated. But Alberta needs to do something different.
- Alberta seems to always be behind in early childhood education.
- There is an appetite for change.
- Think that all stakeholders know there is need for change
- I suspect there is interest and it is building. The early childhood mapping is bringing building interest in the early learning preschool years.
- It needs to start happening.
- People are ready to talk about the early learning and care and are aware of the gaps.

Theme: Stakeholder Support

Subtheme: Political Leaders

- Clear direction from the premier has set the discussion on a positive note.
- The Province is in a position to hear from stakeholders, parents etc., Yahoo!!
- Shouldn't take a young family orientated premier to get this higher up in the Agenda

Subtheme: ELC Professionals

- Leaders in the field are feeling a growing readiness but fear being swallowed by Education.
- Research on "early years" is finally on the for-front and being acknowledged by "mostly" all levels.
- I think different stakeholders are more ready than teachers. On a scale of 1-10, parents 4, public schools/teachers – 4, early childhood educators 7, health care professionals involved in ELC? Not sure, but probably more ready than teachers, less ready than ELC professionals.
- Professional/frontline//ready with possible trepidation and resistance
- The ELC field is ready for a change and some manner of integration

Subtheme: Parents/Families

- The “stress” most parents experience in trying to secure quality childcare and work around part time kindergarten is taking its toll and taking people out of the workforce.
- Alberta is ready for change in the system. Most parents have been aware for a long time that what we have is too splintered and does not work.
- The desire is there for integration from family perspective.
- The majority of parents are ready to pay for high quality programming
- Families are ready for change.
- I worry when I hear so many parents in favour of integration based on cost to them. Daycare is expensive – school is free (nearly).
- Parents need some integration.

Subtheme: The Public

- There seems to be an underlying misconception among the general public that education starts with kindergarten, without adequate value being placed on high quality pre-school education.
- Alberta is ready – shown by elections of current gov’t, young population in AB.
- Tax payers are ready as long as cost is minimal.
- I don’t believe the public is ready for change or integration.

Subtheme: Regions & Communities

- The state of readiness varies between communities
- Some of our rural communities are further ahead: e.g. they may have house playschools, etc. within the school.
- In northern AB (rural and urban) there aren’t even enough spaces in private/public/regulated/non-regulated centers/homes to simply care for children. This needs to be addressed to build capacity to then offer actual programming in an integrated system
- I sense that communities and organization are desperate for something

Theme: Other Considerations

- “High Quality care” is “educational” – this is true from prenatal to seniors
- Educational change is here – good time to introduce and implement the concept.
- If available – it would be welcome – needs to be available to all/everyone/everywhere.
- Cannot just put together pre-existing models all stakeholders needed to be educated about the possibilities – increase our readiness for this.
- I am anxious to begin but I am not ready.
- Mixed messages regarding what is important to child development.
- Let’s come together to redesign the system.
- Must keep current.

- Ensure that we use the data we have.
- Some top down administration to set up open dialogue and trust
- The traditional community school idea – serve all needs of family
- It would be an attainable goal.
- The education sector will have to do more training?
- Great – but we need to move now.

What do we need to keep in mind as we consider integrating ELC in Alberta?

Theme: General Principles

Subtheme: Child & Family Centered

- Child development first and foremost. What is in the children's best interests should be the focus. No hidden agendas!
- What do we see as a successful and positive outcome?
- Children come first.
- Early Learning and Care must have focus on family support and resources
- The little people who will fit into this model.
- If we move forward a model that integrates ELC with education system must agree/commit to a pedagogical approach that best suits the needs of this age group.
- Best interest of the child and workable ELC solutions for families

Subtheme: Features of Services

- Quality care and learning.
- How it affects care programs for children 0-6 years of age.
- Comfort for families accessibility for all.
- Consistency among delivery.
- Affordability, ease of access, consistent standards in level of service provided
- Stay at home moms, how does this include them and their children?

Subtheme: Regional Variation

- Lack of service, professionals in certain areas. (quality – speed of ELC teaching and care workers)
- Differences in economic areas
- Rural communities have additional challenges – recruitment issues
- Accessibility province wide (not just urban). May need a couple models from one “main” model
- The differing needs across the province and what is currently in place
- Equitable services from one end of the province to the other
- Know that it will have to look different in urban vs. rural and have funding formulas, framework that allows/promotes this not discourages

Subtheme: Demographic Needs

- We ensure the minorities have a voice and are represented in the decision making.
- The data available through ECMap is very valuable and can help to shape the direction of framework development – helping to identify where vulnerabilities exist.
- Planning for changing demographics: the workforce shrinking, 2 person family income, need for quality childcare will increase.

Theme: Integrative Elements

Subtheme: Curriculum Framework

- Beware of schoolification.
- Critical that play is central.
- Let's get schools ready for children.
- Important to value childhood: children have the right to play.

Subtheme: Organizing Services

- Make school community hubs
- Include concepts of schools as a community hub

Subtheme: Human Resources/Workforce

- Workers in the field right now/how to shift their thoughts about integration if they are unwilling/or worried about it.
- Having people leave their career field because of it?
- Need to have all the educators on board willing to work together to change their thought of integrating ELC.
- Need for educating service providers.
- Need similar education for both ELC and teachers. Teachers must have early learning specialization – not middle school or high school teachers in kindergarten.
- ELC is a “specialized” field. Need development of educational courses or dept. that keeps ELC as the main focus.
- More training is needed for employees in order to provide quality
- Early childhood professionals must be valued as professionals by the teachers.
- ELC professionals need to be committed to best practice, become professionals.
- In many cases, the ELC sector (in childcare) is seen more as “just care” because the individuals in the sector do not behave like professionals to not have the knowledge skills and attitudes necessary to provide high quality care and education.

Subtheme: Financing

- Common mandate/funding

- Costs must be reasonable

Theme: General Considerations

Subtheme: Public Education & Awareness

- AB must continue to promote the importance of the early years, to the general public so we can get people to understand the need for the ELC integration – other points:
- Public education – ELC
- The need for all stakeholders to understand that the pedagogy connected with 0-6 year olds differs from that for older children.

Subtheme: Education and Early Learning as Partners

- Not a win/lost situation: everyone needs to win.
- Current 2 ministries (and those working in both care and education) need to be seen as having equal value and opportunity to contribute.
- Respect for both sides in the field.
- Fairness for both education and services providers

Subtheme: Change Process

- How do we redesign what is working into an even better system?
- Grandfather types of movement for smaller communities who do not have easy/full/resources
- Redesign of existing services will be necessary e.g. kindergarten programs often follow the “factory” model of education rather than a more fluid approach to programming.

Subtheme: Service Delivery

- Transitions need to be smooth and seamless

Subtheme: Leadership

- The gov’t needs to guide and help remove barriers in order to integrate this. There also has to be service planning for infrastructure. If schools were built to accommodate care then finance and infrastructure would have to work together. Again, if private buildings can make a go of it, then it shouldn’t “cost” more for government to facilitate it. Take the lead in guiding improvement!

3. Purposes and Goals

What key themes, ideas and questions emerge for you when you consider the goals and purposes for ELC in Alberta?

Theme: The Case

- Positive beginning to lifelong learning outcomes measured in happy healthy engaged children.
- Healthy children, Healthy families, Healthy communities
- Working in the now to create a better stronger future for Alberta/Canada and the children we raise as a community
- This will be beneficial in terms of economics for the province/community/world
- Let's provide richer experiences and opportunities for all children.
- Providing this service adds to the well-being of families.

Theme: Building Public Awareness

- Lack of understanding of the importance of ECD to life-long learning
- We need to raise the level of understanding and importance of ECD with the general public.
- Good goals – how supportive is the general public and politicians?

Theme: ELC is Embedded in Families, Communities, and Society

Subtheme: Families & Parents

- Need to be careful not to approach ELC as parents on the one side and ELC on the other. Gap in the middle, goes back to the first point.
- Global understanding of importance of social inclusion of families
- Support families – parenting – opportunity to work, nurturing
- That ELC is always seen through the lenses of family. How do we support and teach families? ELC can be the family cheerleader, providing families with choices on how to balance their dynamics.
- To support child development, and support families by providing options that offer high quality care and early learning opportunities
- Let's support – not replace – families.

Subtheme: Schools

- ELC has to be the beginning of system that relooks at the role of the school in the community. Which brings families and the system into a more active participation and relationship not just from 9am -3pm. Schools become hub of community, more a community facility which includes ELC and schools as we know it.

Subtheme: Community

- It takes a village to raise a child concept. All stakeholders should be involved and involved for the betterment of children, not their own agendas
- Never-ending cycle of connectedness: parent-child; family-community; community-society
- Children are safe secure and well cared for in an environment that supports all children's optimal development
- That it is the responsibility of the village to raise healthy children
- Early learning needs to be accommodated in a variety of ways (ECS, family resources centers, community groups, etc.)

Theme: Integration with Other ELC Elements

Subtheme: Governance

- The leadership model – which Ministry(s) will drive this – will make a big difference.

Subtheme: Financing

- Sustainability of financial support beyond the early years if not considered, child likely to flounder when support removed.

Subtheme: Service Delivery

- Integration of existing services calls for a revisioning of how services are offered and delivered.
- Make sure to use community schools, parent link centers
- Expanded school buildings to house daycares and o/s programs
- Need to redesign existing programs
- Where do the federal Head Start funds fit into all this? In G.P. we wanted to put a Head Start in school but knew we wouldn't meet all the regulations.
- We need wide variety of programs.
- This is an opportunity to build community hubs.

Subtheme: Human Resources

- Will it encompass the provision of educating those that deliver
- Increase education of ELCs from 0-6.
- By required training for the field of ELCE you raise the respect and quality of programs, and the predominantly female workers, which then would carry over to children.
- Must have education of the educators.

Subtheme: Curriculum Framework

- We need to facilitate play with purpose across all ages.
- To create a framework that will cater to children's needs; child initiated, child led, developmentally appropriate early learning opportunities must form the basis of any developed "ELC curriculum".

- Can we come up with a framework that will provide children with a solid foundation in all areas of development to increase the opportunities to be successful in society?
- How will we ensure that this does not become too education/academic focused?
- Recognizing the unique individual needs in young children when developing a curriculum framework.
- Balance between programs (education/early learning)

Theme: Shaping Goals

Subtheme: Long term perspective

- Learning starts and never ends. What is started should continue and perhaps evolve over time as needed.
- ELC – creative and leadership, investment into ELC will make dividends in later years –socially.
- Supports need to be long-term not just for early years of 0-6... needs to be transitioned into elementary years – junior years. Etc.... So they become confident, resilient leaders and adults

Subtheme: Research & Evidence

- Get it right – use research and data and value education and outcomes for early childhood.

Subtheme: Holistic

- Broad- meet multiple needs
- Goals would need to be broken down into objectives/steps to meet goal
- Needs to be seen within a continuum/big picture.
- All 4 of these goals could be achieved when ELC and education integrate.
- Looking at all areas of development

Subtheme: Inclusion, Diversity, Equity

- Shifting the thinking for gender equity may finally be addressed
- Building equitable services for all Albertans

Theme: Other Considerations

- Critical period – must be recognized and addressed.
- Enriching the child
- Creates opportunities for parents/broader society
- Support early development
- Gives family choices
- Safe and care environment for our children
- This would be the commitment to this age group that has been missing

- Provisions of quality support for families with children to enhance child's development.
- A better learning model for young children developmentally ensuring that learning would be based on individuals' abilities.

Theme: Getting Agreement

- Difficulty of agreeing on a goal
- How do we get to a common way of thinking?
- Will it be possible for all stakeholders to agree on the goals and proposes for ELC
- I do believe that if we spend money now to ensure that all/most children receive high quality care and education, we will save money in remedial services later.

What are the main goals and purposes for ELC that you see as critical to include in a new provincial framework?

Theme: Goals & Purposes

Subtheme: Early Childhood Development/Life-Long Learning

- Integration of the "social" aspects of lifelong learning be in a cohesive approach and delivered by trained individuals "issues such as bullying, drugs, etc.
- We value supported development of early childhood domains
- To be able to evolve into higher learning effortlessly and without intimidation. A child that enjoys being in a learning environment will continue further education
- Success for all youth, giving every child the opportunity to succeed and become a responsible, caring, involved citizen.
- Critical to "get it right" at the early years to a child's development over the life span.
- Supporting children's well-being and development.
- Early learning foundation for lifelong learning. This would promote family well-being.
- Early learning is a foundation stage for lifelong success and social prosperity.
- That all areas of early childhood development are fostered and that a plan to help children achieve their best well-being and readiness to learn is at the heart of the new framework.

Subtheme: Family Support & Well Being

- Healthy families ultimately cost less and help society as a whole. We need to build community connectedness (community engagement)

- Support family well-being; ELC leads to positive outcomes for children, families, especially with children who are at risk, need affordable access to quality services/life-long learning!
- Meet the child's needs as a whole – this includes what the whole family needs
- Support families in doing the best job they can.
- Early learning foundation for lifelong learning. This would promote family well-being.
- Family inclusiveness and need.
- Family support and well-being.
- Health and wellness of our families, an ease on the stress of juggling work life and family life especially for families of children at risk.
- Improve family levels, e.g. confidence in quality, ease of access, decreased family stress, flexibility, sensitive to parental choice and value.
- Supportive of all types of families in all regions of AB.

Subtheme: Community Cohesion

- Community cohesion – social inclusion for whole family.
- Community connectedness.
- To grow a community may come from being child focused.
- Sharing the load with the “village”.
- Community cohesion.

Subtheme: Equitable Access

- We know these years are important – research has provided us with evidence – need to ensure – goal should be to ensure all children have equitable access to high quality care and education to increase possibility of success.
- Equity for diverse populations.
- Equitable services for all Albertans.
- Consider diversity of needs (parent and child).
- To reduce challenges for immigrants/low income.
- To meet the rights of the child.
- Equitability in general.

Subtheme: Other Goals & Purposes

- Have children's best interest at front of the framework – culturally sensitive
- Ideology vulnerable – high risk families and children to provide support.
- Caring/safe/engaging environment
- That the child development pieces be a true reflection of what we know as developmentally appropriate

Theme: Integration with Other ELC Elements

Sub-theme: Governance

- To have all parties understand what each is doing
- Will need to have commitment between ministries (and within ministries)

Sub-theme: Human Resources

- ECD training for teachers gr kg to 6.
- Training for 100% ELC workers
- Educated ECL Staff

Sub-theme: Organizing Services

- A new structure for family day homes is required.
- Integration of services as well as integration of learning and childcare.
- Consistent care (not being cared for by 3-4 workers per day who have varying approaches to 'well-being').
- Supports and services attached together.
- Supports and services should not stop just because a child has reached a certain age.
- A system that offers a smooth transition for children and families from early childcare, into pre-school education, and onto kindergarten education and primary school.

Sub-theme: Curriculum Framework

- To give children the opportunity to learn through play in a safe, creative and stimulating environment.
- High quality experiences with children given opportunities to learn via "hands on".
- Do the SETT process (students are the kid, environment is AB, task and tools).
- Experiences need to be developmentally age appropriate.

Theme: Public Support

- To ensure all stakeholders buy in to therefore have equality province wide – both urban and small community.
- Educate public about importance of early years. They need to be MORE aware – the majority of Albertans have no idea.

Theme: Other Considerations

Subtheme: Family Centered

- Family is the focal point. Strong families equal strong communities.
- Education of educators (Currently teachers and ELC to be congruent).

Around which goals and purposes do you anticipate ELC stakeholders are most likely to reach agreement and why?

Theme: Overall Direction

Sub-theme: Vision

- What's best for the child.
- The overall vision of better ELC.
- Commitment to the big picture.

Sub-theme: Case for Improvement

- Lots of new brain development research
- Agree with the science behind healthy development of all the children
- ECMapping – highlights need for community approach
- Early childhood development – easy to develop – use research based data.
- Value of early learning – Fraser Mustard.
- Agree there is need for change.
- Early learning experiences are important.
- Opportunities to be high quality.
- Early learning needs a change we need to invest now to see results later
- Understanding that building confidence and resiliency in children will help them as adults.
- Because we all want what is best for our children.

Sub-theme: Moving Forward

- Dealing with how to approach such a great change.
- We have to have companies seeing the importance of families in their business model.

Theme: Purpose & Goals

Sub-theme: Early Childhood Development and Lifelong Learning

- The broad goal of understanding that positive, enriched early childhood development will enhance lifelong learning. It will be easily agreed that an integrated ELC system will give our children a better start so that they will have greater success down the road.
- The need to provide equitable access to a wide variety of high quality services to children/families for this age group 0-6 as a way of supporting children's well-being.
- Quality ELC leading to citizen and lifelong learning.
- Agree that lifelong learning and family support is valuable.
- Positive child development and support.
- Early childhood development and life-long learning.

Sub-theme: Family Support

- Provide equitable services to families.
- Family well-being as priority.
- Families will have access to more equitable services.
- Communities starting to realize need to invest in supporting families ability to access service.
- More family need to enter workforce and need for childcare
- Agree that lifelong learning and family support is valuable
- Family support and well-being.

Sub-theme: Early Childhood Development and Family Support

- A system that can succeed to keep the needs of the children and families service in mind.
- These two goals are the most viable and ones that people feel confident speaking about or feel knowledgeable about. Is without having to invest a lot of time researching and gaining a detailed understanding people typically agree on the big picture.

Sub-theme: Social Inclusion and Equity

- May not agree on gender equity and social inclusion goals.
- Invest in most vulnerable population, will benefit all.
- Access to everyone.

Theme: Integration with Other Elements

Subtheme: Financing

- We'll need an increase of funding.

Subtheme: Service Delivery

- Ensuring adequate service delivery infrastructure will be in place.

Theme: Other Considerations

- Who are the stakeholders? Childcare/preschool/dayhome/schools
- Change is good for families and as result, for kids...
- Age group
- Curriculum

Around which goals and purposes will they find it more difficult to reach agreement? Why?

Theme: Goals & Purposes

Subtheme: Early Childhood Development

- Early childhood development – lifelong learning. We currently do not have a clear understanding of child development in early years because of current

differentiation between early years and school age. We need to educate parents about the importance and relevance, education corporations about importance and relevance

Subtheme: Supporting Families

- What does supporting families look like for different stakeholders?
- Family support – this is Alberta, everyone for himself.
- Family support – tricky.

Subtheme: Community Cohesion and Gender Equity

- Community cohesion – equity is difficult to deal with.
- Gender equity and social inclusion
- Equity for women and children – I think many people believe in survival of the fittest. Work hard – you will get what you deserve. This seems to be a general theme in Grand Prairie.
- Gender equity and parental roles/responsibilities: Schools of thought on why parents should/do use child care still varies.

Theme: Measures to Achieve Goals

Subtheme: Governance

- Freedom of Information Protection (FOIP) will make this difficult.
- Who does what? More specifically how to go about “meddling” or changing what has traditionally been alone in silos.
- Who defines quality – how will it be monitored?
- Tracking children from ECD three to school FOIP problems

Subtheme: Financing

- Cost – everything ends/begins with cost.
- Will public funding be appreciated and valued by all tax payers?
- Financial dollars and who responsibility it will fall upon. Big question.
- Got to have a funding formula.

Subtheme: Service Delivery

- Who is best to deliver the program education/ministry?
- Who is best to deliver the program?
- We need accessibility in all areas
- Who will deliver?
- Who is best to believe the services? Varying views
- Based on the previous meetings I heard from school officials a sense of ownership on the words “early learning” that was separate from “care”.

Subtheme: Human Resources/Workforce

- Challenge getting qualified staff, particular to rural or remote areas.

- As a support to the skilled workforce
- Education – enough qualified educators, facilitators
- Developing more skilled baseline for providers/educators will be challenging

Subtheme: Curriculum Framework

- Not about getting children ready for school – it's about getting the system ready for children.
- What will be the main focus?

Theme: Other Issues

Subtheme: Education & Awareness

- Education and building awareness for parents.
- Supporting the family as the primary teacher.
- Big issues like ATA rule the roost so including ECD will be challenging

Subtheme: Regional Equality

- Equality among the NW, NE, Central, southern.

4. Integrative Elements

4.1 Governance

What key themes, ideas and questions emerge when you consider the governance of early learning and care?

Theme: General Feedback

- The current system for childcare is splintered: e.g. licensing, health, accreditation.
- New field of study = a new governance model
- What early education, human services and health bring to the table.

Theme: Provincial Governance Models

Subtheme: Questions

- Determining the Governance model for an integrated system: New ministry? Or one of existing?
- Who would develop a body for all to work under?
- Who will be the governing body?

Subtheme: Single Ministry

- We need one boss, one direction.
- The governance needs to be under one ministry: i.e. education – with assistance of Human services and AB Health services.

- Again if education leads, we need to make them ready for our system/make system ready.
- Human Services might be the lead, but their capacity for taking something like this on is very limited.

Option: New Ministry

- New ministry for early learning and care
- Ideally a new ministry that includes both Human Services and Education.

Subtheme: Collaborative Arrangement

- Need better connections between the existing 2 ministries to develop one approach.
- With new governance for kids 0-8 yrs., it could have 2 pillars; 0-4 and 5-8.
- The two ministries, HS and Education have to have an equal partnership with one overall Boss: schoolification is an issue
- Need for ministries to work together – common mandate. Who monitors implementation of service?
- Working together with ministries
- Work together! Common goal
- Coordination encompasses: differing values/objectives, political agendas/priorities, outcome oriented.
- Respect for each component
- Value the components of the relationship

Theme: Features of Governance

Subtheme: Outcomes & Accountability

- Shared vision that is clear
- I believe there needs to be some non-negotiables and guidance from the people who will oversee success of outcomes.
- Need clear deliverables
- Clearer guidelines
- Results based funding

Subtheme: Community Voice

- Having input from community for need/type/quantity of services.
- Parents should have a say.
- What does the community think? How do they get their two bits in?
- How will the voice of community members/parents be considered?

Subtheme: Inclusion, Diversity & Equity

- Working with programs so that continuum between programs support the need for community diversity
- Equity

Theme: Provincial Model, Regional/Local Variation

- There needs to be a designated process for accountability – monitoring and reporting guidelines need to be flexible in order to meet local needs.
- Local goals are ok but there needs to be universal baseline of delivery not dependent on geography.

Theme: Other Considerations

- Both pillars publicly funded and supported with province wide salary scale – no parent fees or minimal fees
- Let's adopt the New Brunswick framework!
- We better ensure we have a deep understanding of the value of early learning.
- Barriers must be removed and clear from the beginning e.g. FSC/PVF pilot project.

What key guidelines or directions should a provincial framework include around governance?

Theme: Provincial Leadership

- What if we had community support not owned by Ed, Health or Human services but as a joint mandate and service?
- Consider the role of different ministries, the complexity of leading the framework from multiple ministries vs. only one.
- Greater public management

Theme: Community Voice

- Communities/regions should have input and participate in developing support practices.
- Local governance ability that reflects community needs
- Needs to also include local levels of management.
- Local levels be respected

Theme: Other Integrative Elements

Subtheme: Financing

- How will the funding be allocated? Should go to program vs. parents
- Developing a common framework with aligned resources
- Awareness of need to fund.
- Economics of a community (cost of living/job availability)

Subtheme: Curriculum/Pedagogy

- Ministries need to understand the value of play.

- What evidence is there that mere education or no type of ed. yields better results in education of community citizens?
- Importance of curriculum.
- Development of a program to serve all in areas of development

Subtheme: Human Resources/Workforce

- Need to have provincial development and educational grid e.g. ECD trained people melded within Ed. Degree. ECD needs to have recognition or some sort of scale.
- Further education of individuals working in the field, this must be promoted and valued. System to look at the results of higher ed. in the field

Subtheme: Service Delivery

- Accreditation model could be revamped to better meet the needs of programs. (based on relationships/interactions vs. paperwork)
- Role of municipal government.
- Supporting programs that already exists

Theme: Other Themes

- Ensure guidelines consider users first, not the political environment
- Level quality expectations
- Policies and guidelines

Which of these guidelines or directions do you anticipate ELC stakeholders will find most agreement on? Why? Least Agreement? Why?

Theme: Most Agreement

Subtheme: General Agreement

- Change needs to happen to support early childhood.
- The end value of collaboration... children value education at individuals

Subtheme: Public Management and Engagement

- Government involvement
- Greater public management
- Local community participation.
- Support for this to reflect the community
- Smarter regulations
- Gov't should be able to provide equitable services throughout province – not necessarily the case in private setting

Subtheme: Outcomes

- Better outcomes

- I think deliverables or outcomes and measures could be decided if there is shared vision. The need for more choice is universal. The need for quality is universal
- Have better skills to become active community members
- Gives appearance of better quality, effectiveness

Subtheme: Other

- What ministry it will fall under and move funding as needed. Then work on other.

Theme: Least Agreement

Subtheme: Ministerial & Domain Leadership

- Which Ministry?
- There will be resistance from the Ministries.
- It will be a tough sell to Education/schools unless there are infrastructures evident to support it.
- Collaboration among Ministries is critical.
- Letting ideas go that would hamper the process
- There will be resistance from different ministries until the funding is sorted out.
- Levels/responsibilities of gov't involvement: Different stakeholders will expect/want different outputs from governments.
- Building relationships between partners

Subtheme: Central & Local Tensions

- Managing of programming for 0-6 does not meet developmental needs if it's done from "head office"
- Governance from a model like the (named organization)/(named private operator)

Subtheme: Financing

- Willingness to fund families and education.
- There will be resistance from different ministries until the funding is sorted out
- Money always creates barriers
- Who pays?

Subtheme: Human Resources

- Staffing and education
- How to implement change and educational delivery baselines e.g. if it was mandated that 4 yr. ECD degrees were equal to a B. Ed, I anticipate ATA would have a fit or if you mandate that all ECS and preschool people have ECD training, people will revolt.

What do we need to keep in mind as we consider what a proposed provincial framework will include in respect to governance?

Theme: Political Leadership

- Position of current government.
- How the framework will benefit the current government.

Theme: Provincial Leadership

- The Ministries need to work together.
- Governance model needs to be sustainable.
- It will be a challenge for ELC to have its own Ministry.
- Well established partnership that work together because of shared philosophy.
- Relationship building between licensing regulations and the ministry of education rules and mandate.

Theme: Stakeholder Perspectives

- Involve the stakeholders and front line who work and deliver the programs.
- Consider role of local governments as well.
- The needs of children and families culture.

Theme: Gradual Change

- Phased in change.
- We need to roll out change in a gentle collaborative manner.
- Mandated collaboration with extremely short timelines is suicidal.

Theme: Other Considerations

- The success in schools initiative had a good pace. Yr. 1 –optimal participation, yr. 2 – more participants, year 3 – all in.
- Need to swallow.

4.2. Financing

What key themes, ideas and questions emerge for you when you consider financing for early learning and care?

Theme: Level of Funding

- The current funding levels in ELC are barely enough for ELC organizations and staff to survive: we need more investment in order to thrive!
- Build the programs and feed them so they are sustainable
- Challenges – day homes – not enough funding.
- Concern with provincial guidelines will cost of living of each area be considered?

- Who would take the challenge of increasing funding? Would both education/Human services combine their resources?

Theme: Public versus Private Funding

- More public funding – get it from the Heritage Trust Fund!
- 100% public funding – full day K, preschool – Junior K (demand/supply)(needs to be a combination of funding).
- Where to draw the line if using both
- Public/private
- Where does the \$ come from?
- 80% publicly funded, 20% income, higher provincial wage scale
- Private vs. public?
- Childcare – daycare, FDH – combination public and parent funding.

Theme: Supply Side Versus Demand Side

- More supply – funding is needed.
- Supply side funding.
- Supply based. i.e. Like schools.
- How is the \$ given out?

Theme: Ministerial Oversight

- New ministry which includes education and HS
- Building a bridge between child care/education.
- Mandate, mandate, mandate.
- Parents and teachers are engaged quite quickly. Moving under education might help build relationships with parents.

Theme: Other Ideas

- We don't know when children enter school.
- Must have controls and be revisited regularly to make sure accomplishing the intended outcome.
- How is this done daily in different communities?

What key guidelines or directions should a provincial framework include in respect to financing?

Theme: Levels of Funding

- Increase in public funding.
- Increases in level of public investment – possibility of increase in taxes.

Theme: Areas for Investment

- Consider the actual cost to deliver programs, but also the possibility of wage increases and new/improved infrastructure.

Subtheme: Affordability/Accessibility

- Equal access across AB
- #5 Maybe – per child – not how much \$ a community makes
- Again, look at the child's needs/special needs/cultural/ what the families in that community needs do we finance same programs for every community if only 1 family in a small community will be using that service?
- Equal for all.
- Set parent fees so that they are affordable.
- Fee thresholds and pay grids.

Subtheme: Quality

- Quality programs
- Will improve staff education.
- Better programming & reporting
- Moving forward it will affect how early development workers education levels sit. For instance in order to pay higher wages, the funding dollars need to be there.
- Include private and non-profit across the board. Staff pay grid

Which of these guidelines or directions do you anticipate ELC stakeholders will find most agreement on? Why?

Theme: Most Agreement

Subtheme: Outcomes

- The need to adopt change
- For the child's best interest
- Everyone wants to feel a sense of community where they live
- Staffing, education

Subtheme: Public Funding/Affordability

- Less stress on parents if more public funding is available
- Everyone needs more money to improve service
- Set parent fees.

Theme: Least Agreement

Subtheme: Amount & Sources of Financing

- Because this is a money issue, there will be lots of debate
- Amount of money/tax breaks/ inconsistent funds from different political leaders – Teams of politicians in house – Latest, greatest wave of “let's talk” series.

Subtheme: Distribution of Financing

- Where money will come from and how will it be divided? By region, per child?
- People will not want to share resources or may consider the way funding is distributed unfairly.

Subtheme: Other Areas

- What or who and how much would each group be responsible for, time period.
- Set staff wages: We will probably lose some of the lower educated staff

What do we need to keep in mind as we consider what a proposed provincial framework will include in respect to financing for early learning and care?

Theme: Child & Family Centered

- Children's/family's needs as a whole – this is not to have schools take over aged 0-18 yrs. This is to re-create the services altogether and to make sure no one falls into the gaps.
- Focus on the optimum best results for children and families

Theme: Inclusion, Diversity and Equity

- The need to provide equal access across AB
- #5 municipalities would not be a good partner because there is a big inequity between municipality's. There are haves and have not's.

Theme: Limitations of Financing

- That more money alone will not improve services
- The cost that may be passed on to parents – how much more can they afford? Will there be a new subsidy arrangement?
- Perhaps a budget should be developed alongside the framework
- \$ can be collected from business for future workforce at the foundation

Theme: Other Considerations

- Use current working networks and/or templates for money distribution, training, etc....
- Common goals and objectives that outcomes can be measured by.
- The network has beginning of a framework. Grand Prairie Alliance.

4.3 Service Delivery

What key themes, ideas and questions emerge for you when you consider how to organize early learning and care service delivery?

Theme: Goals & Purposes

- Figure out what we want and what it should look like before we start working on governance and financing.
- Outcome-based.
- Need clear goals.
- If you have no outcomes and no one measures them, then you will never improve your service delivery.

Theme: Service Delivery Considerations/models

- We need to build purpose sites, not repurpose yucky church basements and storage facilities.
- Every community should have a center for delivery. We need to elevate standards.
- Access to services e.g. transportation
- Engage new partners and convince whole community that we are responsible for all children – their well-being and families
- Wide variety of services interlinked.
- Access variety of expertise when setting up services.

Theme: Links to Other Integrative Elements

Subtheme: Governance

- Logistics for guidelines and common mandates
- Management consideration.
- Need to partner with other ministries.
- Split or one ministry.
- Measurement tools.
- Deciding what ministries would support programs.

Subtheme: Financing

- We need funding enhancements – quality staff and running an organization cost money.
- Like the idea of supply side funding.

Subtheme: Human Resources

- Education requirements for service providers.

Subtheme: Curriculum

- How will the curriculum be delivered? Who will provide it?

- You can have a great curriculum but you need consistent, high quality delivery.

Theme: Building Local Service Continuums

- Let's build on the service delivery providers and arrangements that already exist, but be ready to expand on this and try new approaches as well.
- More effective use of services.
- Build on networking that already exists.
- Connecting and building on a community level.
- Through the school building community center, build new or utilize existing.
- Local Network or CFSA.
- Network in NW region is an active supportive group from community – see them as being supportive with changes that come through provincial framework.
- Local ELC service networks “all easier” to connect and integrate services.
- What existing ELC options will remain available in the new framework? What isn't working well and needs to be changed or replaced with a different method/model?
- Continuum of services across the education years.
- Unity of services – simplified processes for parents to be able to access services.

Theme: Regional/Rural Considerations

- How do we mobilize this to rural AB?
- Ensure equitable services for communities and families.
- Provincial/municipal partnerships. May work for urban area, questionable for rural.
- Still need to keep in mind uniqueness of communities (i.e. Different needs rural vs. urban, remote areas vs. areas close to others).
- How will there be a continuity of the quality of childcare and education in different settings?

Theme: Other Considerations

- Based on research.
- Additional supports would begin a movement.
- Additional support for multi service providers.
- You can have a great curriculum, financing, etc., but if you have poor service delivery – nothing has changed.

What key guidelines or directions should a provincial framework include in respect to organizing service delivery?

Theme: Scope & Direction

- Need goals, outcomes, measurable.

- Support for families pre-birth onward.
- This area is a bit overwhelming.
- Rehab services, CFSA, day care... needs to collaborate with educator to deliver quality programs.
- Pull things together: health, school ECL.

Theme: Management and Planning

- Decisions for the delivery of service and standards of care must be data/research driven.
- Based on actual detailed need assessment.
- Full day kindergarten needs to be quality driven, not just more of the same twice as long.
- The idea that it must be fair – equal access to services all across Alberta.
- Respective of each particular community.

Theme: Link to Integrative Elements

Subtheme: Governance

- This can only be done through partnerships.
- First Nation communities and settlements need to be involved in conversation and partnerships with local government.
- Local being a key term.
- We need to receive direction - there are too many partners involved.

Subtheme: Human Resources/Workforce

- Required and ongoing training and qualifications.
- For successful service delivery, everyone needs to be on the same page. We need qualified, trained passionate professionals.
- Regional paid administrator.

Subtheme: Curriculum Framework

- I am excited to hear that there will be measures but hopefully we won't be teaching to some "test" like PATS. (I can envision preschoolers block towers being measured for height, stability and width – YIKES).

Subtheme: Financing

- Funding for Federally and Provincially funded children needs to be combined through common vision.
- This will only work if parents can afford this service.
- Will there be enough money to pay for quality staff AND the costs of running ELC programs and organizations?

Theme: Building on What Exists

- Ensuring that service delivery is built on strong networks and relationships in each community (whether it is a school-based delivery or a center based child care facility).
- Looking at existing ECS infrastructure and determining how it can be adapted to accommodate a new framework which may include the introduction of full-day kindergarten, and pre-k/junior-k. Looking at existing pre-school facilities and determine how space can be made to have an intake of 3 yr. olds who could receive publicly funded preschool.
- Encouraging networking between communities.

Which of these guidelines or directions do you anticipate ELC stakeholders will find most agreement on? Why? Least agreement? Why?

Theme: Most Agreement

- To expand on existing services to engage and support ELC – particularly to rural communities.
- Stronger connection between kindergarten and ELC care services – feel Kindergarten programs should be more ELC based.
- Trying to make best use of existing facilities. Perhaps looking at how they may become multi-function spaces.
- Need for service.
- Working together can reduce overlap of services and make the best of services, which are currently molded in place.
- Need for trained staff.

Theme: Least Agreement

- How this delivery of the new framework will be managed.
- Best to start small and make small progress towards a larger picture.
- Who should own it or govern it.
- Who will be most responsible.
- Turf wars.
- Resistance to changing service delivery model (i.e. this is the way it has always been done).

What do we need to keep in mind as we consider what a proposed provincial framework will include in respect to organizing services for early learning and care?

Theme: The Big Picture

- Stakeholders need to all thinking about the outcome and let go of turf-protecting.

Theme: Core Model plus Variation & Choice

- It has to still offer some flexibility.
- It has to take into account the needs of the local population i.e. cultural needs.
- Baseline service delivery but options for parents if they want more than baseline.
- Realistic choice.
- Provincial framework will need to develop a framework for service delivery and while recognizing that this framework needs to be flexible to the service needs of the community.
- Educational opportunities in all geographical areas is also essential to train.

Theme: Integrative Elements

- Partnering with other services is essential.
- There needs to be structures for paid administrative jobs. Volunteering is good but if you have to sit on a daycare board, playschool executive, hockey board, etc., you burn out if you also have to run the board “center”.

Theme: Other Considerations

- ‘Consider age grouping 0-4?
- Service delivery will be or can be messy and difficult.
- There should be a means of monitoring and assessing the quality of delivery built into the system.

4.4 Human Resources/Workforce

What key themes, ideas and questions emerge for you when you consider Human Resources in early learning and care?

Theme: Promotion of the ELC Profession

- Respect of ELC workers – how do we achieve this?
- Increase the status/recognition as professionals.
- Changing the culture/value for those who are doing our most important work, which is working with children.
- To give the same/similar recognition and acknowledgment to ELC educators as given to teachers.
- Respect for ELCC profession limited
- I think a standard of education for ELC staff that is common between care and education would be fantastic. It would be great to see a continuum of care and education that was not siloed from 0-3 then 3-5, 5+ it should be more fluid with a similar goals and outcomes.
- Separation that teachers and child care staff feel now. This may bridge the gap.

- Early learning professionals vs. teachers in the education system – great divide

Theme: Education, Training & Professional Development

- To extend upon the 2 year diploma.
- Ensuring that the curriculum framework will be delivered by appropriately qualified ECD staff.
- Early learning and care as a separate field of study. Degree opportunities – ah – your #4!
- Ideally min staff requirements would be a 2 yr. diploma.
- All educators to understand child development and age appropriateness when developing curriculum.
- Equity in education. Teachers and early learning staff be required to have similar amounts of education.
- Lack of trained educators.
- Mentorship program.
- ELC would be key component in education for kindergarten teachers
- Needs to be change. ELC workers need to be trained and compensated for their training.
- More specialization opportunities at the post secondary level.
- Public supported through education, information.

Theme: Recruitment, Pay/Benefits & Retention

- Will improve staff retention.
- Improved pay – province wide remuneration.
- Province wide wage scale.
- Retention and attraction.
- May need to put in affirmative action to attract more men.
- Minimum educational requirements necessitates greater salary compensation.
- Currently challenged to get people to apply for child care jobs.
- Recruitment of rehab specialists is challenging, costly and sometimes impossible.
- Maintaining individuals who do not/cannot upgrade creates a barrier (lower pay, possibly inferior service - some are very young (19 yrs).

Theme: Links to Other Integrative Elements

Subtheme: Financing

- We'll need to see investment in the ECE workforce to ensure that we have adequate staff to carry out the framework.

Subtheme: Governance

- LCC staff existing 5/8 accredited – meaning evaluated by an organized body. Education and prof dev. plan would be a component of the accreditation
- Accountability

Theme: Regional Variation

- How to attract and retain staff in remote and rural areas.
- Potential for equality regarding wages and funding throughout the province.
- How to attract and retain workers in the North.

Theme: Transitions & Ripple Effects

- Training for all service providers structured around a grand fathering model. i.e. Current staff required to continue education.
- How will we ensure that staff are grandfathered in, fit into this new framework?
- Upgrading needs and compensation, ease of access (VC, online), reasonable requirements and timelines.

Theme: Other Considerations

- Mentors/teachers to teach staff – must be long term, not 2 yrs. grant then poof gone.
- Comprehensive workforce strategy – how do we get there?
- Early childhood education for kindergarten teachers. Combined ELCC/B.Ed. forces.
- How will we measure true longitudinal improvement?
- Accreditation, training.
- Continue education with resources.

What key guidelines or directions should a provincial framework include in respect to human resources?

Theme: Recognition of Early Learning and Care

- The care of young children needs to be seen as educational not custodial. Training, licensing, funding should follow based on that.

Theme: ELC as a Profession

- Opportunity to ladder.
- Education to parents that ECE staff should be looked at as professionals this will bring more people into the field.
- Promotion of this as a profession is essential.
- Looking carefully at ELC professionals and kindergarten teachers as equally valuable, especially those individuals who are experienced practitioners
- Recognize this as profession.

Theme: Education, Training & Professional Development

- Mentorship programs in place, particularly in areas where difficulties in getting trained staff are experienced.
- Upgrading/formal educational and professional development is key to keep current.
- Minimum formal training be 2 yr. diploma.
- Continuing professional development.
- Training plan to be accessible in all areas of the province in a continuum format.
- The curriculum needs to be considerate to the credentials required – grandfather time frames.
- Develop a mentorship program to support the training/support of educators.
- Develop a new common early learning and care post-secondary credential
- ELC credential is an excellent step in the right direction.
- Place for ELE degrees in Care system.
- Considering the rights/needs of ECE workers: professional development opportunities.
- Training IPD for staff – in regards to learning development levels of children.
- \$ for ongoing learning that is mandatory to retain a higher level of training in development. Ages and stages. Brain development.
- Integrated knowledge ELE – Education – purposeful.
- Certification of person and program accreditation.
- Schooling for staff needs to be available and funding attainable.

Theme: Remuneration & Benefits

- Pension plans and benefit packages. This profession needs equity.
- Marketing the field as being as valuable as that in industry => pay equity. i.e. if early years are a priority, pay should be reflective.
- Looking ahead to determine how to attract young adults into the ECD career. i.e. provincial salary scale
- Pension
- Need – money/salary/benefits increase
- Attraction/retention
- If you make a minimum 2 year degree you'd have to set a reasonable compensation rate to get people to take this education
- The remuneration must be equitable to other related professions or you will never attract the best and brightest.
- Payscale – needs to be adjusted.
- Offer many opportunities for educational advancement, remunerations and recognition needed.
- Pensions.

Theme: Accreditation Model

- Funding accreditation to agencies (policies/standards – endless paperwork) rather than individual performance of staff has been a mistake.

Theme: Regional Variation

- I love the thought of all providers being educated in ECE principles but in rural areas the acquisition of this would have to be flexible to allow those waiting to acquire it and not lose wages.
- Consider greater compensation and flexibility of timelines for remote, rural communities.
- Considering capacity it will be important for all communities to have access to qualified workers with a variety of training and experience.

Which of these guidelines or directions do you anticipate ELC stakeholders will find most agreement on? Why? Least agreement? Why?

Theme: Most Agreement

Subtheme: ELC as a Profession

- Most invested staff in ECE, the ones who have made this a career, will be excited about this challenge and about finally being seen more of a professional

Subtheme: Education, Training & Professional Development

- Upgrading/training
- Comprehensive ELE training
- The need to strengthen the ECD workforce with professional development opportunities, opportunity for career development either from early childcare up to kindergarten, or from kindergarten down to early childcare
- Increase in quality of training and credentials and in turn increases in pay

Subtheme: Remuneration & Benefits

- Linkages of province wide salary scales.

Subtheme: Feasibility

- All of the Human resources directions are so valuable there should be agreement – shouldn't be a large issue but the reality of it causes problems
- Everyone will likely agree in principle, but who pays? Is cost increase absorbed by parents?
- They may agree to standards but might not reasonably be able to stick to them unless they can attract trained people.
- Acceptance of educational requirements but challenges with recruitment will impact this.

- Part time Green room staff – we may lose a lot of them and not have enough staff to run programs already in operation.

Subtheme: Other Issues

- Use models already developed! Similar to PEI.

Theme: Least Agreement

Subtheme: ELC Emphasis

- Concerns on where emphasis should be placed: ELC or Education
- Old school and train of thought.

Subtheme: Financing

- How to fund an investment in strengthening ECD workforce including ELC professionals, kindergarten teachers and child care facility administrators.
- Tax payers may resist if they are not personally using the system.
- Financial commitments

Subtheme: Education, Training & Professional Development

- Equivalency and qualifications don't currently make sense (i.e. anyone with a teaching certificate, maybe even high school math teacher qualifies for a level 3 in early learning programs).
- Maybe for professional development – we need learning coaches. Similar to what Alberta Ed is doing.
- Cross province qualifications
- ELCC training/education for teachers
- How to quantify accreditation? Levels of education required, preferred post-secondary institutions

Subtheme: Remuneration & Benefits

- A pay scale change will be very controversial

What do we need to keep in mind as we consider what a proposed provincial framework will include in respect to human resources for early learning and care?

Theme: Awareness & Support

- Educate the public.
- Campaign to raise awareness of the importance of ELC.

Theme: Level of Education

- Look at existing education/training requirements and determine whether these should be increased.
- Educate the teachers in school as well in ECE, it will have to go both ways.

- Training in ECD mandatory for working with young children
- Family child care will not fit easily into a framework – education more easily fits into HS.

Theme: Mechanisms for Education, Training & Professional Development

- Develop a mentorship program whereby experienced ECD professionals mentor new staff.
- Why not integrate ECD programs into the Faculties of Education or vice versa?
- If you make access of education and remuneration to re-train or get training they will do that.

Theme: Recruitment

- Too many vacancies already. These professionals already in high demand and not accessible in all parts of province. Need to consider this issue before mandating change.
- Recognize the workers/educators who stay in the field vs. the \$5000 incentive to have people come back.

Theme: Other Considerations

- Work with cross-border agencies to make sure barriers are addressed
- Time
- Money
- Continue to look at research based data

4.5 Curriculum Framework

What key themes, ideas and questions emerge for you when you consider a curriculum framework?

Theme: Focus on Young Children

- Curriculum must be based on the individual needs and interests of the child in AB.
- Values – guiding principle – children’s rights social emotional development
- Need to keep this developmentally appropriate
- Ensure infrastructure supports and is developmentally appropriate

Theme: Balancing ELC and Education Paradigms

- The word curriculum is misleading. It is too easily referenced to the school environment.
- Ensuring that the ELC curriculum framework that caters to children’s needs. That it is not a means of “schoolification in the early years.” It must promote

- early learning opportunities that allow for “child led/initiated” exploration and discovery based, developmentally appropriate and accessible learning.
- Fear of too much schoolification.
 - Schoolification – NO NO.
 - Maybe ECD needs to step it up and understand that we offer curriculum as well as school.
 - To be developed by key “early childhood” masters.
 - Learning through play/ centers/ child interest / socialization addressing individualism, skill development culture.
 - The necessity to use many formats of bringing learning to the child, music/drama/expression/doing restitution to reinforce knowledge learned.
 - There should play in order to achieve curriculum goals

Theme: Broad Child Development Focus

- “Curriculum” should have a strong emphasis on social –emotional development (i.e. learning is hampered without strong social skills – as shown in the EDI results).
- A curriculum framework must address the whole child – social, emotional, physical, cognitive, etc.
- Broad based – key areas of development - staff will embrace the direction.
- Developmental goals rather than outcomes for each child vs. for the group
- 0-3 years old require a social curriculum.
- Draw on the broad understanding that learning takes place in many different social contexts, understanding that learning starts from birth, the first moment and throughout life.

Theme: Content

- Incorporation of bringing learning outdoors to include an “outdoor education” element.
- Nature - being conscious of our outdoors.

Theme: Conditions for Success

- Relationships – interactions – lay – peer relations – socializing and preparation for life-long learners.
- Community based learning.
- Use research based data.
- Easy access to services/wrap around services fits nicely.
- If we continue to work under 2 separate ministries things won’t be cohesive. We need to be separate to other ministries, yet together.

Theme: Minimum Specifications & Variation

- Having a province wide curriculum framework would ensure consistency around the province – this is better for children and families.
- The richness of ELC may be lost in a standardized program.

- Great idea for substandard programs – these programs need to be shaped in a way to become valuable in their own community.
- Individual programs built for different communities (culturally – scared of school system).
- Provides continuity across the province (similar to Parent Link) yet each program has ability to reflect its uniqueness in programming.
- Flexibility.

Theme: Other Issues

- Who will deliver this program/education/ministry?
- Programs would deliver expected learning purposeful.
- Ensure that all cultures are represented.
- Embrace and encourage parental partnerships.

What key guidelines or directions should a provincial framework include in respect to a curriculum framework?

Theme: Clear Goals & Purposes

- Clear goals and objectives around curriculum. Needs to be based around relations, communication with family and children; child initiated learning and discovery.
- Should include all the bullets on page 40.

Theme: Sources of Data

Subtheme: Research/evidence-based

- Using research based data. Build on what is working.
- Research on brain development.
- Curriculum framework should be based on data.
- To look at the New Brunswick Model as a base and include the best of other curriculums.

Subtheme: Stakeholders

- Gathering of insight from all: family dayhome, daycare, kinder, preschool, parents.

Theme: Curriculum Content

Subtheme: Broad Child Development Focus

- Curriculum should consist of early learning goals that encompass all aspects of a child's development and include learning across all areas of early childhood development (using 5 areas of ECD outlined in ECMap)

- Early learning goals within the curriculum should help children achieve their full readiness to learn potential. (Not necessarily school readiness i.e. ABC's 123s).
- Focus on wellbeing, play and playfulness, communication and literacy.
- Broad understanding of children's learning.
- Curriculum has to address all areas of child's development.
- Understanding what is typical development for every age group and building a curriculum around what children need to be able to do/understand.

Subtheme: Responsive to Individual Children

- Value the difference in ways that children learn.
- Inclusion of individual with exceptionalities.

Theme: Links to Other Integrative Elements

Sub-theme: Governance

- Accountability for curriculum. Who will monitor?

Subtheme: Human Resources/Workforce

- Need to stand with making sure staff is trained.
- Accreditation of agencies not as valuable as certifying staff.
- Training/education will need to be accessible and financially viable to ensure effective delivery of the curriculum
- To be delivered by ECD trained Educators
- To have professional development training on going and offered via several mediums to provide rural people with access
- Education for teachers in ECE and education for child care staff in Child Centers (don't kick out who we already have – grow them as we want to grow the children).

Theme: Core Curriculum & Flexibility

Subtheme: Core Curriculum

- Should be broad guidelines for the early years.
- There should be a common “provincial” curriculum resource.

Subtheme: Regionally Responsive

- Must be at least regional (Edmonton agencies are not where our staff or programs want to be monitored by).
- Having consistency that allows flexibility so curriculum can be reflective of the community – regional needs.
- Social/cultural expectations of communities – urban vs. rural, aboriginal, immigrant.

Subtheme: Culturally Responsive

- Diversity – social responsibilities – all children (different cultures) need to be considered.
- Respect specialized programming needs special needs of children of Aboriginal and Newcomers to Canada: these families already fall through the gap especially in rural settings.
- Must be culturally respectful.
- Social/cultural expectations of communities – urban vs. rural, aboriginal, immigrant.

Theme: Smooth Transitions

- A framework curriculum should allow for a smooth transition from early childcare to preschool education and continue into kindergarten education

Theme: Support

- Education of parents to understand that advertisers shouldn't be the ones to dictate what is good for their child's development. i.e Baby Einstein marketed to make people think that their children will be smarter and therefore have an advantage).

Which of these guidelines or directions do you anticipate ELC stakeholders will find most agreement on? Why? Least agreement? Why?

Theme: Most Agreement

Subtheme: Raising Quality

- Picking up the standards in unlicensed programs.
- Professional development for all caregivers, service providers.

Subtheme: Consistency

- With a curriculum framework, programs would be recognizable by parents/families/children no matter where they live in the province.
- Broad common goals.
- Structure/similarities provincially.
- Common goals.
- Consistent delivery (i.e. Calgary same as Grande Prairie).
- Curriculum to be overall for 0-8yrs.

Subtheme: Greater Access

- Creating more spaces for children to have quality childcare available.

Subtheme: Evidence-based

- Based on current research.

- Build on models already working.

Subtheme: Funding

- This will be difficult, as we know they had a difficult time deciding on a set school entrance age in the different areas of the province.
- Funding to assist with cost of training will be required.

Theme: Least Agreement

Subtheme: Balancing Early Learning and Education

- The role of play-based learning.
- In what form: Emilio, play based, Montessori, etc.. Who is right? Can we do all if it is standardized?

Subtheme: Balancing Core Curriculum and Flexibility

- Drafting a curriculum that can be used efficiently and with maximum benefit to children wherever they are.
- Curriculum designed to work in different settings i.e. dayhome vs. daycare center vs. preschool.
- If the curriculum becomes too detailed, issues will arise over developmental appropriateness.
- Consistency.

Subtheme: Other Issues

- How to deliver programming.
- Parental expectations.

What do we need to keep in mind as we consider what a proposed provincial framework will include in respect to a curriculum framework for early learning and care?

Theme: Child-Focused and Family-Focused

- Keep child-centered focus intact.
- What is developmentally appropriate should always be a top priority.
- Options need to reflect values and interest of the children.
- Respect what different families/communities needs are.
- Everyone's needs are specific to their culture/etc.

Theme: Links to Other Integrative Elements

Subtheme: Governance & Delivery

- How and who will deliver?
- Who will license/monitor?

Subtheme: Financing

- Who provides resources?

Subtheme: Human Resource

- The level of education that will be required to provide the curriculum.
- Professional development.
- Provide supports, training.

Subtheme: Curriculum Framework Approach/Content

- Ensuring that our framework has a mandatory “outdoor education” element. i.e. every facility should have an ‘outdoor classroom’ or ‘garden’; Look at developing ‘nature kindergarten’ experiences that children can access. These can be shared by the entire community to maximize access. Closing the gap between us and nature. There is a huge disconnect.
- Framework needs to look at the whole child.
- Curriculum should be province-wide with opportunities for diversity/flexibility to include unique circumstances (i.e. culture, language, religion, location – remote, inner-city, etc.).
- Learning through play extended into school system and then phased out as children develop naturally to be able to sit for longer periods of time and concentrate at a more advanced level.
- Learning through play.
- Children are hands on experiential learners. Programming changes are made daily in our programs based on interests. This response by staff and the ability to respond like this is key.

Theme: Building on What Exists

- Let’s build on what’s working successfully already and innovate with new ways of doing things.
- Accreditation in AB does not encourage or support agencies in areas of curriculum development. They seem more focused on policy and paper work (diapering and napping even seems to be coming) – current model should be scrapped.

Theme: Other Considerations

- This is AB – focus on the people who live and work here.
- Articulate outcomes
- We need a long term commitment.
- A commitment to keeping this data driven – ongoing ECMapping
- Screening, training=> follow up.

5. Moving Forward: Individual Reflections

What is your level of support for trying to advance change that more closely integrates ELC in AB?

a. Goals and purposes for early learning and care.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly support trying to make change in this area	Support trying to make change, but some concerns about the proposed changes	Don't know more discussion needed of the proposed changes	Do not currently support change, but willing to continue to discuss the possibility of making changes	Strongly oppose trying to make change in this area
13	5			

- There is work to do to ensure that early childhood stays exactly that – we don't push them further than they are able.
- One way or another common ground has to be found between education and early learning and child care.
- Concerned about how the change will come about : i.e. “enhancement not fixing”.
- All great potential.
- Children must come first.
- Active involvement of community.
- Give voice to frontline workers.
- There is a lot of support because she has been in the system a long time and the research supports it. There is more awareness and understanding.
- Need continued active involvement from frontline workers
- We have to all champion the importance of EL.
- Building relationships between ministries to support the change as it happens.

b. Governance (management, planning, participation and ownership)

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly support trying to make change in this area	Support trying to make change, but some concerns about the proposed changes	Don't know more discussion needed of the proposed changes	Do not currently support change, but willing to continue to discuss the possibility of making changes	Strongly oppose trying to make change in this area
6	9	1		

Theme: A Third Way

- Up until today, I thought I had to pick between human services and education. The system will function better under its own ministry.
- New ministry made up from HS and Education.
- 2 ministries to make one sole ELC.

Theme: Transition

- Concerned about how it will roll out. People are attached to their work and initiatives and it's difficult to try to define the new structure.
- Concerns about being absorbed in existing ministries.

Theme: Process

- Keep the doors open and listen.
- Let's get it right based on the correct foundation.
- Need more information.
- Must have government leadership and be research-based.
- It could be challenging deciding which way to go.

c. Financing (level and nature of public and private investments)

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly support trying to make change in this area	Support trying to make change, but some concerns about the proposed changes	Don't know more discussion needed of the proposed changes	Do not currently support change, but willing to continue to discuss the possibility of making changes	Strongly oppose trying to make change in this area
10	2	4		

Theme: Source of Investments

- Private investments to include corporations.
- Many more public – less private non-profit.
- No more bake sales.
- More value put on services with increased public funding.
- More value on to service more public money needed.

Theme: Areas of Investment

- Underfinancing has recently held agencies like ACCA and ARCQE back.

Theme: Sustainability

- I would hate to start more great ideas and then not support financially their success.

Theme: Other

- There are more people scattered – lots is still regarded as child rearing not education.
- A cross-ministry model could work.
- Very, very important.

d. Organizing Early Learning & Care Service Delivery

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly support trying to make change in this area	Support trying to make change, but some concerns about the proposed changes	Don't know more discussion needed of the proposed changes	Do not currently support change, but willing to continue to discuss the possibility of making changes	Strongly oppose trying to make change in this area
9	4	3		

Theme: Build on What Exists

- Very fortunate that our region has a network system in place.
- Building on what programs we have to get things moving.

Theme: Other Comments

- Changes have to be structurally sound and well-articulated.
- Push back will come from the marketplace.
- Higher level – we need vision.

e. Human Resources/Workforce

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly support trying to make change in this area	Support trying to make change, but some concerns about the proposed changes	Don't know more discussion needed of the proposed changes	Do not currently support change, but willing to continue to discuss the possibility of making changes	Strongly oppose trying to make change in this area
14	1	2		

Theme: Education, Training & Professional Development

- Equity and equality between the two areas – similar training opportunities = similar professional status = similar pay, etc.
- Strongly support ELC training and upgrading.
- Changes to post-secondary opportunities to make ECD be a career
- People are ready to insist on better qualified workers.
- Higher level education.

Theme: Remuneration

- Staff retention rates.
- Properly pay workers and have adequate start to implement the program.

Theme: Public Awareness

- Start educating everyone.

f. An early learning and care curriculum framework

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly support trying to make change in this area	Support trying to make change, but some concerns about the proposed changes	Don't know more discussion needed of the proposed changes	Do not currently support change, but willing to continue to discuss the possibility of making changes	Strongly oppose trying to make change in this area
11	5	1		

Theme: General Comments

- This is much needed: it will provide direction and support to agencies.
- This is doable and people are ready.

Theme: Balancing Paradigms

- Keep child centered learning through play intact and merge into the school setting as developmentally appropriate.
- Get rid of the word curriculum – sounds like school - keep framework guidelines.
- The word curriculum gives an impression of schoolification.
- Has to be based on best practices and age appropriateness.
- Relationships interactions, play experiences and peer relationships.
- Play.
- Research driver – measurable, play-based – developmentally appropriate.
- Needs to be appropriate.
- Play based without limits.
- True play.

What do you see as the next critical steps to move the development of provincial ELC framework forward?

Theme: Awareness, Buy-in, Support

- Provincial, municipal, industry buy in – parental awareness. We all need to work together.
- We need Provincial buy in.
- How about a media blitz to educate people on the importance of the early years?
- Public relations to communities.
- Educating the public – community engagement.
- Political will to make positive changes toward a new provincial ELC framework.
- Educate public on the need for this change, it will add to the credibility
- To work quickly to take full advantage of the change in Gov't attitude.
- Assembling proposal and the response from the governing bodies.

Theme: Expanded Consultation

- Looking at community level input (i.e. parents, caregivers and educators) that was gathered by ECmap Coalitions from across the province to ensure that the new framework will be meeting the needs of parents.
- Keep the dialogue going provincially with frontline people.

Theme: Start with Tangible

- Start – gather info and feedback – start with the implementation of the curriculum framework.
- Less talk, more walk.
- Just gather info and feedback and start with the implementation of the curriculum framework.

- Just start!
- Just get going.
- Gather information to start own curriculum involving colleges.

Theme: Key Partnerships

- A cooperative relationship with the GOA (which it looks like is in place) to work together to implement the Framework.
- Getting the ministries together to being making decisions on a future funds.

Theme: Other Considerations

- Regulation of practice.
- Development of Provincial standard.
- Transition of education of staff.
- Truly integrated into education.
- Curriculum & HR staff.

What key ideas, themes or questions stand out for you as you leave the forum today?

- Learning continuum. No defined boundaries based on age (i.e. supports in place 0-6. End when child in school full time). Eliminate them!
- What a lively discussion of the important issues. Great conversations.
- The window for feedback is open – so let's talk!
- Let make/support change for children – positive outcomes.
- This needs to happen as soon as possible.
- It has to be play-based – without limits.
- The gov't in AB appears to be willing to join forces and support ELCC.
- Education of required to support ELCC.

What do you most want to say to your ELC colleagues about a potential new provincial framework for ELC?

Opportunities

- It's looking better and more positive than it started out to be. (You know what I mean!).
- That "the window is open".
- We have a chance to see some amazing advances in ELCC!
- Thank you for the opportunity.
- Get excited about it. Get going.
- Get 'er done.
- Look forward to positive changes for children and families in Alberta in terms of the education and care.

Considerations

- Educate the public about respecting the ECE staff first!
- That it would be useful for all children and parents if built and applied in an equitable fashion across the province.