



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

A Record of Stakeholder Discussions
Calgary Regional Discussion
April 16, 2015



The Muttart Foundation

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
The Results of Stakeholder Discussions.....	2
The Alberta Early Learning and Care Workforce – Demands and Realities	2
The key drivers for change in the educational preparation and professional learning of the ELC workforce	2
The contextual factors to consider in thinking about changes to the educational preparation and professional learning of the ELC workforce.....	6
Participant thoughts and ideas arising from their discussion of the key drivers for change and the contextual factors to consider in advancing change.....	10
Core Competencies for Early Childhood Educators and Certificated Teachers	12
Supporting and approaching early childhood educators as professionals.....	13
Participants identified the following reasons for supporting early childhood educators as professionals.	13
Participant additions, deletions or changes to the seven areas for competence outlined in the discussion paper	16
Participant assessment and discussion of the current capacity of early learning and care workplaces to support staff in the delivery of high-quality services.....	20
Participants highlighted the following factors that shape the current limited capacity of early learning and care workplaces to support staff in the delivery of high-quality services.	21
Participant thoughts and ideas arising from the their discussions of competencies and workplace capacity	24
Educational Preparation and Professional Learning for Early Childhood Educators and Certificated Teachers	25
The level and nature of formal educational preparation for staff in Early Childhood Services (including kindergarten).....	25
The level and nature of formal educational preparation for staff in child care services (including centre-based care, preschools, family day homes)	27
Participant comments in support of changes to the level and nature of formal educational preparation	30
The forms of professional learning and requirements for professional learning for Early Childhood Services staff.....	32
The forms of professional learning and requirements for professional learning for child care staff (including centre-based care, preschools, family day homes)	33
Participant comments in support of professional learning approaches and the requirement for ongoing professional learning.....	35
Participant thoughts and ideas arising from their discussions of professional learning.....	37
Advancing Change in the Educational Preparation and Professional Learning of Alberta’s ELC Workforce – A consideration of possible options for change	39
Advancing the educational preparation of the early learning and care workforce	39
The specific changes most important for strengthening the educational preparation of the early learning and care workforce	39

Considerations (opportunities/challenges/or cautions) in strengthening the early learning and care workforce’s educational preparation	41
Supporting the early childhood educator as a competent professional	43
The specific changes most important for supporting the early childhood educator as a competent professional.....	43
Considerations (opportunities/challenges/or cautions) in supporting the early childhood educator as a competent professional	45

Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

This report presents the stakeholder comments from the Calgary regional consultation held on April 16th at the Kahanoff Centre. Thirty-five stakeholders from the Calgary and Red Deer regions participated in the discussions.

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

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

The Results of Stakeholder Discussions

The Alberta Early Learning and Care Workforce – Demands and Realities

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

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

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

The increasing demand for early learning and care

- increase in both parents in the workforce - key both to family and economy thriving
- demand for service
- the increase in children in care and women in the workforce
- making it accessible, both location/financial
- demographics-majority of children spend time in early learning
- accessibility
- consumer is a key driver-? Pressures – ‘schoolification’ - babysitting
- The sheer volume of children in ECE setting is making the issue harder to ignore
- creating spaces for children
- our children deserve it, it is necessary

The complex situations and needs of children and their families

- parents looking for unique excellence

- increased complexity of young children
- complexity of the children increasing in terms of special needs - -change in best practice in the early years - teachers as co-constructors of learning, emergent curriculum, inquiry, etc. (Inspiring Education, new ECC curriculum framework) -increasing demand for programs
- caring and learning are inextricably linked -'education' needs to be from the perspective of what is best for the child in terms of fostering healthy brain and biological development
- children's rights - children have the right for safe, nurturing care & support for their learning

The importance of high-quality in early learning and care

- demand for more early learning care spots - but how do we ensure quality?
- a common vision in which all children have access to high-quality early learning & care that supports their growth in ways that understand, respect & value them as children
- quality standards
- clear vision of what quality is
- advancing the quality of care for children and families in the province
- early childhood educators central to high-quality services & experiences for early learning
- need for quality with early childcare providers due to impact on children & long term implications

The need for qualified staff and challenges around staff retention

- currently lack of trained professionals
- lack of qualified trained professionals in the field- quality needs to increase
- lack of trained professionals
- impact of not paying close attention to ECD-HS graduation, drop outs, untrained workforce
- stop looking at ELC as 'babysitting' and start looking at the long term impact of not mobilizing our educators knowledge
- inconsistency for ECE learners- mixed message
- need to attract & keep well-qualified staff
- attracting and keeping staff
- wage
- mismatch between who is in the field and who we know should be

Supporting the field as a profession

- mixed pressure with gain profession -philosophy/approach
- needs to be a "career" not a stepping stone
- professional not vocational
- seeing child care as a profession
- defining a profession

- having ELC workforce recognized as professionals
- Defining the professionalism of early years; looking at being in the field as a career choice (not something to fall into while working on a career, i.e. while having small children at home and then going back to 'real work')
- seen as professionals
- needs to be recognized as profession not vocation

Higher educational levels for the workforce

- educational preparation
- impact if no standard training for ECD
- the increased understanding in early childhood pedagogy and the related understanding that quality lies in the educational preparation of professionals
- research supports a well prepared & supported workforce
- early childhood educators are well qualified, competent professionals who are recognized and valued
- both current systems of educational preparation and ongoing development of staff are inadequate
- also that current statistics show the lack of educated staff and how that is ineffective
- currently the educational preparation is not sufficient -especially with what we currently know
- education
- mix matched of level 1-level 3 in the field
- percentage of ECE staff with level 1 certification is 41, yet many in the field have years, even decades of experience and that added with experience should count towards practicum hours to gain higher levels. While applicants with degrees can hold level three with no experience in the field

Professional learning for the workforce

- on the job mentoring
- Ongoing training, keeping in the discussion (equivalency or not it is important to stay engaged in the field and in the training)
- accessible training- evenings and weekends, online part- time, fulltime
- there is a disconnect between expectations of professional learning between 0-6 and school age and between licensed childcare and approved family day homes

The role of leaders and or leadership

- The cohesion of the leaders in the push for change (curriculum framework, ACCA, AFCCA, SAPTA, SACTA)
- being a leader
- leadership
- natural leaders in field
- Leaders (2)

The implementation of the Alberta Early Learning and Care Curriculum Framework

- new early learning framework may also prompt call for change in training
- curriculum framework
- ELCC curriculum framework is a driver
- curriculum project

Political (government) support for investments in early learning and care

- educate government
- ministry seems to be taking responsibility for opening up possibility for change
- gov't said it was a priority in 2012 – Muttart/Upstart conversations on ECE 2014-2015
- political and economic context changes
- political pressure for ? Child care ?
- political environment influences funding and also the status of ELC as a profession and need to get an ongoing commitment from our political leaders to support financially and socially
- Funding Alberta Education
- funding for post-secondary programs in Early Learning
- support of EL programs, facilities in communities
- funding for wages and education going forward

Public perceptions of early learning and care and the need for public education

- quality vs convenience - does the public understand the difference?
- educate general public
- public perception of importance of field = training/education not "expected"
- old notions needs to be expunged - child care is not babysitting; early education in school is not accomplished by children sitting quietly at desks
- perception within province community
- publicly making people aware of what ECE people do
- what public vs. private is
- making people aware of early brain development and the importance of professionals to work in that field
- public is becoming more aware of benefits of quality care
- most adults have less than adequate knowledge about child development and developmental needs (benchmark survey). It would be interesting to use that same survey with early childhood educators

Research on the importance of the early years and Alberta's EDI results

- research on brain development (3)
- research into brain development in the early years
- brain development
- importance of early years - early brain development setting foundation
- latest research on brain development & ACE studies

- importance of early years
- increased awareness of brain development research is a driver
- development, relationships, health and learning
- current research on impact and importance of the early years on setting the stage for lifelong learning, and healthy growth and development: this has resulted in a societal awareness and push for stronger programs and services
- ECD years are equally important if not more than other
- knowledge of neuroscience
- the increased knowledge about children's development and needs in the early years
- neuroscience evidence that these are critical years building foundation for lifelong research- framing- responsibility- translation
- ECMap project (2)
- stats from mapping project
- results of EDI & EYE assessments
- 1 in 4 kids not prepared for K (more understanding of brain development impact on the later years)
- research through EDI results
- related to this also the EcMap data
- Seeing the outcomes of the children (EcMap and EDI results)

Broader research findings and population data

- use stats to educate
- graduation rates from grade 12
- reports such as OECD & availability of training of ECE staff elsewhere in world places Canada behind
- literature/evidence review, international & national examples
- 20% baby boom in AB informed parents

Professional associations/infrastructure organizations

- ACCA (2)
- CCCF

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

Political context and political support

- federal government should be involved - fund before kindergarten
- political climate-in post-secondary, government budget, ministries changing leadership
- traditionally Alberta & Federal Govt under Harper has put money to families and not into early childhood centres
- current financial climate may be an excuse. We can't afford it...rather than we can't afford not to

- economy (2)
- political will swings
- collaboration/cooperation among ministries
- jurisdiction - this is an issue for our society as a whole. To confine the discussion to human services and education and to continue to frame it this way will mire this in old patterns. Needs a fresh multi-disciplinary approach inclining all appropriate sectors as well as business, community and most certainly families
- political view of the importance of ECEC of our party in power
- understanding the importance of EL, high-quality programs available
- strong belief province-wide that education must begin with EL
- government changes

Public awareness and support for early learning and care

- public awareness; of the importance
- providing consumers with information, research & importance of early years
- awareness
- awareness of early years role
- very slow increase in valuing young children & those who work with them
- outdated mindsets about the value of this work

Funding for services and the cost of child care for service providers or families

- Funding (4)
- Costs (2)
- financial support is crucial
- funding, regulations
- increase funding
- finances
- ability of parents to pay for quality
- ability for parents/society to pay
- how will the quality improvement be funded -parents
- ability for agencies to increase salary to reflect education
- K-12 receive public funds
- doing it without gov't is costly. Fees for parents already high
- cost of quality programs
- funding PSE in ECE

Developing post-secondary education capacity and the delivery of educational programs

- capacity of educational institutions to increase seats & program
- consistency in post-secondary for students
- # of workforce requirements & post secondary capacity to train
- budgets for post-secondary
- tuition expensive in today's economy

- in the school system, we have felt the cuts to post-secondary and the lack of programs with an ECE focus - teachers do not have the expertise in early learning (e.g. learning through centres, importance of language development, emergent curriculum)
- ability for institutions to manage #'s
- cut backs to post-secondary education
- more opportunities/courses for degree -universities
- access-blended learning opportunities must be part of the mix allowing people to learn in collaboration with others in a mix of online and face to face opportunities
- post-secondary counsellors- recommended standard
- well-prepared instructors with appropriate background in EL
- educational institutions having funding access
- location/access to courses

The educational level (preparation) of the early learning and care workforce

- K-12 have educators with degrees
- # of current staff without diplomas & degrees too high
- gradual growing recognition that ECEs need to be well prepared for their critical work
- expectation for education level for staff
- ECE programs in high school
- professionals have little incentive to increase their education currently and face enormous financial barriers
- equivalency or qualification
- equivalencies
- lack of educated ECEs wanting to work in the sector
- "training" vs "education" tensions
- the varying levels of education of the ELC workforce -not everyone has the same experience or background
- educational standardization based on children's right and acknowledgment of children being recognized as active learners
- standardized requirements of training

Approaching the workforce as a profession

- internal staff need to see themselves as professionals
- our profession-not babysitters
- having a professional body that unites the various bodies responsible for children
- ECD training seen as a stepping stone to a 'real' profession
- little incentive for staff to upgrade their professional status
- Reaffirming the level of professionalism and career choice within staff currently in the Field
- Divisions in the field itself (seeing Teaching as a reputable Profession and then Early Learning and childcare is seen as less)
- professional body (2)

- professional body – college

Level of support for change within the current early learning and care workforce

- buy-in of workforce
- readiness of ECEs for change and reform
- apathy within the profession...change needs to come from within
- lack of responsibility within the sector to own their own issues
- comes from within, continuity, unity

Workforce supports and timelines for making changes

- What are the realistic challenges to increasing the education in the field while simultaneously keeping the workforce?
- how to train current staff in the field
- working while learning, learning while working
- how to train up existing workforce
- how can change be implemented to move the educational requirements upward while maintaining the workforce?
- socio economic disparity within workforce & consumer
- salary scale

Broader system challenges or considerations

- we need to re-brand ourselves
- Change or consistency in the language and terminology (kindergarten, daycare, preschool, day home, babysitter = vs other countries where children leave home and go to kindergarten until they are ready to enter grade school) as well as terminology around curriculum, child led, inquiry, 'region inspired', what method do you follow the importance of the consistency of the language in the field
- rural vs urban
- need to distinguish? Contexts-education setting - existing workforce
- resistance/old structures
- closer relationship between ECE (education) and child care (human services)
- lack of a competent 'system'
- licensing /accreditation - don't offer much flexibility for programs to explore & experiment based on program needs/families
- different expectations across Canada and each province to provide child care for families
- Differences between provinces lead to frustrations and challenges in cohesion and difficulties in the workforce crossing borders and trying to stay in the field
- Time (2)
- extended support is also vital, Ex: agencies formation of a professional body, ministry
- feasibility

The Alberta early learning and care curriculum framework

- new curriculum framework (2)
- curriculum framework (2)

Child and family needs

- demand for space -pressure on programs
- 0-6 children are deserving of high qualified staff

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

The early learning and care workforce

Supporting early childhood education as a profession

- strong professional organization
- having a professional body that unites the various bodies responsible for children
- code of ethics- so we know what we are supposed to be
- college of ECE- governing body needed
- what is a profession? How would it be seen as a profession?
- driver -profession seen as a profession both externally & internally
- professional associations
- professional body-standards across sector
- define of what professional
- body for early childhood education preschool teachers union?
- compensation
- profession preparation

Educational preparation

- "equivalent" certified people supervising ELCC educated professionals
- movement of degree educated professionals away from the frontline of care
- career potential
- lack of trained professionals
- equivalencies - those given a level 3 but not performing more than a level 1 and vice versa. No need to recertify
- contextual factor for child care providers & how they will keep staff who think they are over educated to work in front line work

Supporting or engaging the workforce

- new immigrants-happy to work-don't want to 'rock' the boat
- current workforce needs a 'self esteem' builder- we need to be the change we to see

- How do you get the buy in for change from the front line workforce / especially those choosing to operating privately and not subscribe to being recognized (whether through participation in professional associations or through government recognition)

Public support for early learning and care or understanding of early learning and care

- need external drive - dollars create buy in - consumers, bursaries - need buy in from consumers to understand importance of early years
- if parents are not interested in research component, need to approach it "sell" it within a different context, potentially through an SROI lens to create that external investment & drive for change
- people are becoming more aware and demanding quality service
- educate the public-rebrand-show importance of child development
- apathy in general population...consumer not well informed
- general societal context seems to override the specific context for the higher prof learning of the ELC workforce
- public perception
- public valuing
- public needs more education/awareness
- need corporate 'buy in' to identify value of sector - and to encourage public investment
- driver-educating parent consumers on benefits of quality care & how can we get them
- more than public awareness -its valuing early years & knowledge mobilization of what happens in their early years & why we should all care

Child and family needs for service

- shift In demographics
- most children below school age now spend much of their early years in some form of non-parental care outside the family home-we need to rethink how they must be best supported-our youngest citizens & their families
- sheer volume of children
- affordability for people
- is quality tied to convenience for parents seeking care

Growing knowledge of the early years

- emerging knowledge of brain/neuroscience-we have to prepare our younger generation for whatever fortune brings. Skills needed to be successful in workforce
- increased awareness of brain research
- far reaching consequences to NOT addressing & acting on importance of early years
- brain development research added as well
- increased awareness of brain research is a key driver
- mobilizing the knowledge
- evidence-informed practice rather than evidence based

- how do we continue to use ECE philosophy & find ways to evaluate & find evidence of efficacy?

Closer integration of services – education and care

- we need one voice DC/FDH/OSC
- distinction between "child care" & education
- critical for ministries to take an integrated approach
- tension between education and early learning society misrepresented value between the two fields
- early learning framework
- coming from different hats-too many divisions
- contextual factor of bridging the gap between child care & kindergarten education
- fragmentation of the field

Government leadership

- political context both federal & provincial
- Federal Government needs to set standard country wide
- not only Alberta but Canada-wide
- ministries don' talk to each other

Learning from other jurisdictions

- success in other countries, vision that it can be done
- international examples
- successful in other countries

Financing for early learning and care

- funding
- public funding given to education sector

Curricular resources – post-secondary infrastructure

- do we want a national curriculum framework?
- curricular differences & philosophical differences between colleges & philosophies

Other considerations

- First 2000 days excellent example
- loved being part of this group
- shifting mindset "this is a starter position"

Core Competencies for Early Childhood Educators and Certificated Teachers

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

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

Supporting and approaching early childhood educators as professionals

The majority of participants strongly agreed (23 – 88 percent) with the argument that early childhood educators should be supported and approached as professionals in their work with young children and their families. 2 participants (8 percent) neither agreed nor disagreed and one participant (4 percent) strongly disagreed.

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

The benefits of approaching the field as a profession

- would professionalizing the practice of ECE make things better in the field, improve access, free society from its misconception of what early learning and care really is? Probably
- professional status supports, professional thinking supports professional behaviour
- children of all ages deserve this level of professionalism
- if we are hoping to influence public perception we must first of all embrace our perception of our field
- strongly believe that this level of standard for the field will attract a stronger type of person to the field
- will attract more qualified people
- this standard has the potential to build a collective voice to influence a policy research
- we need to 'raise the bar, so speak' about the importance of EL and the educators who work with young children; by referring it as a profession results in changing the perception of who the educators are and the imp of their role as a 'professional'
- we have to think and be professionals, we are not a trade and have training

- and specialization in this field; to move forward all ECEs need to be thought of as professional
- increases standing of the work, it's values, perception from wider community
- college of ECE could help get public awareness

Challenges or barriers to supporting the field as a profession

- students don't see childcare as a profession
- a large % seen as babysitters
- currently society does not see it as a profession
- educating families and community members to what caregivers do
- students in ELCC programs don't want to work in childcare because they talk about how unprofessional they see the field being-too many people working in childcare w/o education specific to ECE leads to added stress of those ECEs who do have ece education
- believe that the work of ECEs should be understood and supported as a profession rather than a vocational field however I do not believe that that is how ECEs are understood or supported in the province
- professionalizing will only get at a percentage of care givers...it still will not address the need of a society based on dual-income and single-parent families
- you will not be able to professionalize everyone. . so what is the strategy for the remaining 65-60% who realistically need to be involved in child care...grand parents, siblings, the neighbor?
- in Alberta there are many levels to the educational standard of ECE workers which makes it harder to be seen and treated as professionals
- pages 8-13 do not make the case for 'understanding' ECE as a profession, nor that it should be 'supported' as a profession
- what research seems to show or at least how the research is presented from the current author's perspective is that ECE's are apparently an omniscient group of individuals that any area of human service or for that matter society would benefit from
- they are knowledgeable, articulate, sensitive, they are ethical, they understand the subtle interplay of policy and practice and they are shapers of a democratic society . . in short they are perfect
- agrees with the question & disagrees with the question - suggests remove the analogy of 'teaching' as well as the feeling that 'vocation' is somehow 'lesser' to prevent the dichotomous argument that this set up

Areas of competence for early childhood educators

- caring ethically
- knowledge of how young children learn & develop
- working with curricular resources
- working with families
- support children with disabilities
- linking research to practice & policy

- comm. in early learning settings
- broad range of knowledge, skills & attitudes
- perspective - does not need to be told that ECE's require some knowledge of child development and sensitivity to the contexts in which development and learning might occur..that seems self-evident (we do not require similar argument for grade 1 teachers)

The long-term benefits of early learning and care

- long-term benefits to the child, family, community, society are proven. Also long-term economies
- long-term benefits

The importance of staff educational preparation

- long-term benefits to children/families when trained staff are present-research shows
- in building a strong foundation if we require teaching certification for 6-18 year olds then we definitely need professional in working with 0-5 year olds
- guided by belief that young children deserve/have the right to best education & care possible this requires well-educated early childhood staff
- distinct pedagogy & body of research
- the fact is now research confirms the vital importance of qualified professionals working with our youngest citizens
- through research we know there are long term benefits to having qualified professional education and the importance for the early years development

The importance of the early years (early childhood development)

- formative years, just as important, a framework sets the foundations to build on
- because children's learning and development does not start at five
- as preschool teachers we are laying the ground work for future success in education
- Our work sets the framework for lifelong learning / Formal grade school education should not be viewed as superior to education that is absolutely necessary in the Early Years (from birth)
- should break down division between teacher & early childhood educator that has been created? Partly through level laddering & minimal requirements for working with young children
- if k+> profession-pedagogy training, learning styles of kids development readiness of kids
- given what we know about the importance of the early years- first 2000 days- it only makes sense to invest in the people who care for these children - parents as well as others
- all children deserve the same level of quality & care regardless of age

The complex roles of early childhood educators

- the work is complex & requires rigour, ongoing learning & research. A large body of theory, practice & policy

- the complexity of the role and the wide diversity and range of competencies required to be an ECE would strongly suggest supporting the position as a profession
- has elements of a vocation but the complexity of the work requires professional judgement - about reflection, making decisions based on a number of factors, etc.
- complex, all children deserve that level of professionalism

The relationships between educational preparation and a profession

- to be viewed as a profession education needs to be required so there is a scope of practice understood & followed by all
- professionals should be educated to work with children however we are not there yet
- I believe that ECEs are strong professionals, the work is very complex and requires professional training and education
- ECEs should be understood and supported as a professional because I believe that those who work on the field should have training at a college or university level.
- "training" vs educating

Requirements for a more professional early learning and care workforce

- need benefits & security
- the need to remain current and actively pursue new knowledge and adopt new and innovative practices would require professionals support
- willingness & ability to engage in continuous learning
- a code of ethics, professional competencies accountability are needed to inform & guide practice

Demands placed on current workforce

- they are expected to 'train' level 1 certified, align with those who hold equivalencies, added stress, lack of professionalism leads to higher turnover
- additional role as mentors & supporters - sadly they burn out - are not treated as professionals

Other participant observations

- teachers-issue of accountability, unionization
- we are simply following our historical ideals
- most child care providers consider themselves to be professional at their job - this question feels leading
- suggest: the work of early childhood educators is best understood and supported as a profession. (full stop)

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

Agreement with the seven main areas of competence

- good categories -but go deeper

- agree with all
- competencies good
- agree with all seven areas
- nothing at this point
- support all 7 competencies
- all areas of significant importance and value

Additional areas of competence for consideration

Innovation and/or creativity

- innovation & creativity-competence
- need to add something in innovative practice
- creative & innovative thinking
- missing innovative/creative competencies
- add innovative & creative thinking into practice

Critical thinking and/or reflective practice

- critical thinking-reflective practice (4)
- competence in critically reflective thinking
- reflective-create climate teacher research, creative
- the competency (reflective thinking) require someone who can engage in deep reflection but ECEs need to know how to do this before embracing the competencies listed
- reflective practice (heading)

Communications

- communication - own category
- reflective practice and effective communication are important to add in, they are embedded within the core competencies but it doesn't stand out
- in the second competency add not only "using knowledge of how children learn..." but that we can communicate & demonstrate knowledge
- communication is core imbedded in all
- communication piece should be first and foremost

Early child development – including early biological brain development

- be specific-brain development?
- brain development
- specific on brain development, social development, psychological etc...
- more emphasis needs to be placed on brain development (perhaps under the competency of 'using knowledge of How Children Learn and Develop)
- importance of play

- expand on the areas or deepen the work. Especially in areas such as: knowledge of how children learn & develop, working with families, working w/ curriculum resources, assessment, understanding exceptionalities, brain development
- the value is in the micro- social moments within the adult child interactional, e.g. FIND
- social emotional learning

Building or developing relationships

- 'creating relationships may be its own category
- all about creating relationships
- deep conceptual understanding of relationships
- relationships-almost a broad heading
- relationships (building)

Knowledge of community resources and community

- ability to refer when needed
- knowledge/awareness of community resources (accreditation standard)
- stress in the community within a democratic community the need to be well informed on community resources to share with families
- understanding the importance of community- community of children, the greater community

Other areas of competence

- make sure there is a focus on understanding the staff's own background, experiences, culture & language -as it impacts their relationships with children & families
- statement of cultural diversity, awareness, sensitivity
- understanding change ability to work with change
- Is it imbedded or can it be highlighted that there should be a competency in working with peers /not just communicating with the democratic community and not just working with curricular resources and pedagogy; working with peers / teams/ fellows in the field / colleagues
- professional networking
- infant mental health -competency around recognizing & surrounding child with right supports
- life-long learners

Areas of competence participants highlighted

Caring ethically

- caring ethically
- caring ethically –critical
- hold an ethic of care

- caring ethically- clearly define ethics and standards needed
- need a strong focus on caring ethically, knowledge of how child learn & develop, curricular resources, working with families, supporting children with disabilities
- caring-needs to be emphasized but this could also be viewed as a detriment -do other professionals need to "care" as a requirement

Linking research to policy and practice

- linking research to practice and policy
- perhaps linking research to practice & policy is a competence required by the professional in a supervisor or leadership position as opposed to the professional working directly with children
- influencing policy vs policy-personal practice at the room, centre or agency level

Communications

- communicating within a democratic community
- communication

Working with families and/or diversity

- working with families
- working with diversity of families
- rework the competence related to diversity

Other areas highlighted

- using knowledge of how children learn and develop for an early years pedagogy - critical
- working with curricular resources
- supporting children with disabilities
- flexibility, nimble, responsive- in terms of continuous learning and adopting pedagogy as new emerges

Competence areas for further development (rewording) - inclusion

- supporting children with disabilities-emphasis on identifying & supporting children without specific diagnosis those with emotional & social challenges - often "off the radar" with regard to services
- caution about identifying 'disabilities'
- inclusive mindset -instead of disabilities
- omit the word "disability" celebrate diversity & creating inclusion any environment
- would change "Supporting children with disabilities" to read "supporting the needs of diverse learners" - more inclusive -I think the idea of working collaboratively is in there but could be more strongly stated -on-going assessment is critical in kindergarten - that notion of being a "kid-watcher" - understanding each child as a unique individual in critical

Standards and regulations

- working within regulations/standards, why they are in place (understanding that), valuing them, promoting their importance, believing in them, ethical
- this would be important if all areas were brought under regulations i.e. unregistered child care settings

Broader questions and/or comments around competencies

- can competencies, critical thinkers, examine prof judgement? With individuals or group- could be defined more clearly
- when one considers how it is that these paragons of professionalism would come into being one realizes that all of what is identified cannot come through a typical University or College based program, so the role of experience would seem to be important as well as the idea that working in this area might better be understood as a vocation
- how important is a common language? There is a common language with ELCC educated professionals but not with others
- comment - is to ensure all terms are defined/plain language used in all communications - this document is very well written and clear, but would benefit from trimming academic language if it is hoped to be widely read in a transparent process including all stakeholders
- do not put qualifiers like "comfortable" in competencies

Other comments on competencies

- competency 2 addresses above
- need to really educate parents around the importance of the KSA. PD, upgrades/training/qualifications
- skills
- provided the early childcare workers perceive themselves as professionals
- umbrella of early childhood programs -nursery school, play school, pre-school, learning centres, academies, preparatory schools - all essentially same but lack of clarity as to what titles mean
- again, question needs to be changed
- idea of principles vs competencies

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

Participants offered the following assessments of the current capacity of early learning and care workplaces to support staff in the delivery of high-quality services. For Early Childhood Services (ECS), funded through the Ministry of Education, 5 participants (19 percent) assessed their current capacity as 'weak' and 1 (3 percent) 'very weak'. 2 participants (8 percent) assessed the current capacity as 'strong'. 9 participants (35 percent) assessed the capacity as 'neither strong nor weak', and 9 participants (35 percent) provided an answer of 'don't know'.

For early learning and care services supported through the Ministry of Human Services, 8 participants (31 percent) assessed the capacity as 'weak' and 12 participants (46 percent) as 'very weak'. 2 participants (8 percent) assessed the capacity as 'neither strong nor weak', while 4 participants (15 percent) offered a 'don't know' response.

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

The educational requirements for early childhood educators

- no expectations for higher levels of education at govt levels
- lower education requirement - public perception & "buy in" not there
- community based childcare: high number of child development assistants 41%
- equivalencies for CDW and CDS
- no standard/ base to build capacity/ skills
- low qualified staff is 1/2 workforce
- most community based-child care have access to resources to provide high-quality services within close proximity to urban centres. Staff need to be supported in all areas as they interact with children and families that can be best done through formal education and training
- not enough training / education opportunities
- need standardized preparation standards, opportunities for ongoing learning

Lack of supports or resources for staff and/or service delivery

- lack of mentoring
- lack of ability to provide ongoing support and education to current providers
- so much time is spent on survival -no time for reflection or growth
- no supports for coaching/mentoring discussing new research/practices
- focus on putting out fires/recruitment because many working in field do not view it as a profession
- colleagues work hard but lack support, resources, political will
- we try to provide professional learning opportunities for teachers but short after-school sessions do not make up for a lack of university training - we also send out a monthly newsletter that is very well done by a member of our team and have a web presence for CBE teachers with lots of resources -most school based PD is focused on the school development plan rather than on what an individual teacher might need -there are some good provincial conferences, little for ECS teachers at our convention
- would guess it is a group that has limited opportunities for PD but not really sure
- time, compensation big inhibitors for workplace to support staff
- space

Differences in capacity between Early Childhood Services and child care services

- ECS seem to have more "structures" higher level of education for main staff & formalized curriculum
- There appears to be more cohesion / awareness for Kindergarten (the need to have a degree) / a provincial curriculum (it may be very open to framework and practice may vary greatly, but to parents and public the concrete evidence of a framework shows more system competence)
- school setting different
- kindergarten in school more than community ECS -kindergarten support system will have diminished
- where public funds & support is more available there tends to be much greater expectations, training, support & planning time dedicated to recruiting & supporting highly qualified staff
- K teachers require degrees
- ECS services and community based childcare seem to move in different circle, definitely ECS is moved as 'more professional'
- part of school system- strong, but within ECE (i.e. day care)-weak
- based on another study examining the state of ELC in Alberta most ECS providers are fairly competent...and the staff employed do have good levels of education..the feedback from those who provide services in community-based child care reveals that competency of staff and quality of services varies considerably
- most private/for profit operators do not value high-quality in the same sense as not-for-profit programs
- believe that workers in ECS are better supported in their roles as ECEs working to provide high quality services. They are often expected to have higher level education and treated more as a profession than other workers in the field.
- Community based seems more individual / can be private, can follow any model, method or curriculum they desire
- system is not consistent- resources/ funding available to educators and parents in centre based care is different than those in family day homes- need to be consistency
- ECS-more professional focus
- more systems with ECS, than family childcare programs
- more progress with ECS, than family childcare programs
- childcare -less cohesion - more isolated

Closer integration of early learning and care services and/or planning

- rather closed systems. Would advocate for a combined system -keeping human services and education is going to continue to foster a dichotomous system. Needs to be child at the centre, not the system
- multiple silo systems-school, for profit, not for profit, FNMI system etc. etc.
- isolation in the field (not being connected to other resources)
- need more alignment with the ministry, accreditation and curriculum framework

- the diversity of programs/funding models etc. make the environment extremely disjointed. Bringing these services together under a professional association or other model could help allow transferring of knowledge and resources to help support staff - no 'system'
- planning this

Financing challenges

- even when an agency commits to more staff with higher levels of training, the funds make it hard to have enough for enhanced ratios, through planning the sufficient resources, support, PD
- lack of funds
- more support systems need to be put into place (financial, educational, professional associations)

Limited leadership capacity within the field (workforce)

- leaders who lack required KSA and experience
- many leaders/eces do not have the skills or confidence to advocate for better systems- we contribute & perpetuate the problems that continue
- a lack of leadership at the program level (because of lower wages/less supports) in smaller programs contributes to this

Licensing standards, regulations

- licensing standards are minimal & do not focus on learning rather custodial care-many in licensing & gov't roles do not see childcare as a profession
- needs to be a regulated program
- with no formal regulation there are programs that are very strong where others are very weak

Perceptions of early learning and care

- perception of field
- outside perspective from families, wider community
- there to look after child while parents at work, community based not consistently viewed same. Valued, etc.

The absence of a professional body or voice

- no strong voice-one body
- lack of professional identity
- no governing body

Variations or differences between services

- weak as child care as a whole but varies when looking between centre based vs. preschools vs. family day homes; one sector is considered better than the other

- not everyone follows pedagogy of early years. I've seen this changing through - more of a 'system'
- rural urban metro settings

Requirements for professional learning

- pd needs to be embedded in work concept
- PD requirement

Level of commitment to high-quality services

- question intrinsic value within the current system and whether they have the willingness or the want to provide that level of high-quality
- not a government priority

Other observations

- staff needs ownership not done for or done to
- teacher as researcher - With children through discussion can learn part of this
- my present experience does not allow me to respond
- teacher evaluations
- curriculum framework. Communities of learning are ideal for supporting this
- translator of policy- application of change

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

Service access differences and/or challenges

- differences between access in urban & rural communities
- families have difficulty getting foot in the door to access supports

System comments and/or considerations

- it was interesting & telling that with the expertise & experience of those involved in the field around this table, there was near universal description of the capacity as "don't know" for at least one of the systems, may indicate how closed the systems are
- concern about the wellbeing of our children, should know whether these two systems are competently supporting their staff
- systems are so siloed many of us struggle evaluating the system we didn't work in
- we need a system-child care
- there is a need to encompass both elements and to have more definition around ELC as a complete sector
- a system needs to be created in order to support capacity
- systems need to be better joined
- at least ECS has a 'system' - it might not be ideal but it is one with higher expectations - education & curriculum

- Discussion around the hierarchy of system competency within the education system
- How the systems or lack of systems are perceived by parents /public and how they are perceived by those in the field
- The divide between education and childcare
- standardized system

Comments on professional approaches and/or professional supports

- if you are professional, you act professionally, behave professionally
- higher level of expectations . More opportunities for professional development
- concern that other professions do not value & see ECE as professionals of equal status as social workers, teachers

Other observations or comments

- "high quality services" -while it was felt that the education system is "strong" in terms of supporting staff, does this accurately presume that they are providing "high quality services"
- your support for this departmentization is needed both internally and externally
- torn capacity to meet conflicting administrative expectations
- learn from positive difference
- support - funding cuts
- transferability of credentials of ECE across country
- provincial mandate vs federal mandate
- ECS is not clear
- there are some great initiatives right now in the province that have helped move from 'very weak' category - so much more left to do
- how do we research & evaluate effectiveness when we fear losing programs (ECMap)

Educational Preparation and Professional Learning for Early Childhood Educators and Certificated Teachers

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

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

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

ECE degree or degree with early learning specialization

- degrees-specializing in ECD
- Child studies degree
- bachelor degree in the related field (BED, Bachelor of child studies, etc.)
- diploma or degree in ECE
- degree with specialization in early children or graduate certificate on top of more general degree
- 4 year degree with an understanding of the 0-5 years as well as a bridge to next steps
- degree with specialization
- four year degree + specialization in ECD
- degree plus specialization or post grad certificate
- Equivalencies are not helpful, the ideal minimum for me would be Degree ELCC or B.Ed. with a specialization in Div. 1 (to eliminate the ability for a general elementary degree or div 2 degree to be hired in Kindergarten)

B.Ed. with specialization or courses in ECE

- They should be able to do the job with a B.Ed. With a specialization in ECE
- B.Ed. with ECE specialization
- I don't think B.Ed. should be undermined for kindergarten. I do think that it should be added to, and that a specialization should be a combination of practice and theory and perhaps even a practicum under a seasoned practitioner and a recognized site
- ECS teachers would benefit from a specific route in their education program at university -CBE has a new position called an Early Childhood Practitioner that requires some ECE courses - we are placing people who have these qualifications in our EDC programs and our kindergartens when possible - the role also has some special ed requirements
- working with families within B.Ed. program

Degree with management or content specialization

- degree-management, pedagogical leader
- specializations infant/toddlers, business mgt

Bachelor degree (no specialization noted)

- 4 yr. degree program
- university degree
- degree program in post-secondary
- degree
- four year degree for lead educators

Diploma level qualification

- minimum of ELCC diploma
- 2 year minimum diploma
- a diploma in early learning and child care or similar program
- minimum ECE diploma to start
- 2 year level two -min ECE diploma
- at a minimum level 3 and/or Bed with a major in early childhood education (moving to)
- diploma program in post-secondary

Elimination of CDA or Level 1 (orientation course) or equivalencies

- getting rid of Level 1 (online course)
- no equivalencies

Combination of degree and diploma qualified staff

- if ECS remains under the education jurisdiction then teachers should have a degree - other staff diploma
- early childhood degree with support staff with certificate
- perhaps lead teachers have degree in ECE and team member has minimum diploma in ECE
- diploma/degree

Greater standardization of educational preparation

- level 1 in AB-45 hours, SK-120 hrs, AB is behind - no current requirements for a degree. Needs to be changed!!
- Post-secondary course standardization
- need formal standardization and levels of training systematic approach

Other comments

- could be taught
- specialized to what you teach
- extended practicum hours
- balance practice and theory more equally
- appropriate to level. Development stage for both
- consistent level - same expectations
- practical experience and training related to early childhood education with supervision of other pedagogical leaders

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

Degree level qualification (for senior staff)

- move towards leaders having degree with educational training, coaching, leadership and management (change management)
- manager/director - degree
- four year degree for lead educators
- higher level education such as degree for those working in supervisory roles

Degree level qualification

- university degree
- degree or part-degree specialize in early learning
- ECS teachers would benefit from a specific route in their education program at university -CBE has a new position called an Early Childhood Practitioner that requires some ECE courses - we are placing people who have these qualifications in our EDC programs and our kindergartens when possible - the role also has some special ed requirements

Diploma (two-year certificate qualification)

- at the minimum diploma in ECD
- possibly a 2 year certificate in ECE
- minimum of 2 year certification
- min of diploma
- diploma= support & front line staff
- a transition to a two year ECE diploma being a minimum
- two year diploma
- FCC 2 year diploma- infant specialization
- most areas minimum diploma with degree
- 2 year minimum diploma
- minimum diploma - working towards degree in early childhood
- minimum ECE diploma
- a minimum diploma in early learning and child care (or similar)
- 2 year level two -min ECE diploma

Certificate (one-year qualification)

- family day home is a certificate at minimum ideally
- day homes minimum level 2

Elimination of CDA or Level 1 (orientation course) or equivalencies

- getting rid of Level 1 (online course)
- no equivalencies (3)

- abolish the equivalencies
- no equivalencies without additional course work - day home included

Combination of formal qualifications (degree and/or diploma)

- main/lead staff should have degree in child studies - other staff minimum 2 yr.
- early childhood degree with support staff with certificate
- perhaps lead teachers have degree in ECE and team member has minimum diploma in ECE
- A mix between Degree and Diploma would be optimal (furthermore a program that consistently hosts practicum students working towards their degree and diploma is a huge asset to the field so having practicum participation mandatory for programs should also be mandatory
- diploma/degree
- diploma or degree in ECE
- they should be run with someone that has the above qualifications and staffed by individuals pursuing ongoing PD in areas that are needed

Formal educational preparation for staff in leadership positions

- leadership training
- pedagogical leader & set # of staff/centre
- management- management certificate
- expectation that manager/directors have admin
- pedagogical leadership

Comments on specializations

- no although more concentration on infant, toddler, preschool
- developmental, dispositions
- Infant/toddler specialization
- specialized to what you teach

Practicum or practice experiences

- variety of practicum experiences
- practical experience and training related to early childhood education with supervision of other pedagogical leaders

Standardization of educational preparation (assessments of education)

- equivalencies between provinces
- consistent level - same expectations
- all 3 levels are very important however, fairer assessments for those challenging their levels

Other comments

- preschool should be addressed in ECE ed

- should be much different
- appropriate to level. Development stage for both
- I think as long as there is still private care allowed by the province then this question needs to focus on what level of education must you have to operate privately, and then you can ask what level of education must you gain within working with your supported system and what would the timeline be
- factor in an inclusive environment - factor to include 1 back up staff member for emergency and an Ed assist to program
- family day home

Participant comments in support of changes to the level and nature of formal educational preparation

Complex nature of work with young children – the importance of the early years

- complexity of child development; 0-6 is the foundation
- the complexity of the role and the required competencies to be effective require more specialized formal education and ongoing learning than is currently required in AB
- childcare is much more than babysitting...directors are administrative, HR skills, family support/counsel/refer, program/curriculum development, management and more
- we require and expect similar qualifications and credentials for other areas of like that have less of an impact on use than this area
- don't understand why the ages of birth - 5 are seen as less important than 5-18 when they are in school when we have research that shows how important the early years experiences are for children it makes no sense to me

The value of all young children – child rights

- why do we value children less and feel its ok that they spend their days in front of TV's, unsafe environments, neglect at risk?
- every child deserves the same level/ quality of care/ curriculum no matter what, Non-negotiable
- children deserve the highest quality. If we look at rights based decision making we can simply say this is their right.

Educational preparation for child care staff – including specialization

- need to have a competent level of English so there is proper communication and learning
- all ECEs working with 0-6 should have a minimum 2 yr. diploma whether private or licensed care
- to make the most impact and set up for future success, ECE workers must have a strong foundation and understanding of children's needs on all levels-physical, developmental, social, educational, emotional and so on...
- the 50 hour orientation course is not in-depth enough to deal with the complexities of early childcare

- specialization within ECEE programs of an infant/toddler
- ECS teachers must have specialization in ECD/ECEC
- ensure areas of focus -infant/toddler, special needs, diversity of families, admin
- creating teacher research within school 'pedagista" support for communities of practice as teacher research
- within 2-3 years all need to be familiar w principles of Alberta curricular framework
- depending on the type of work that the ECS workers do a degree would be beneficial in supporting the work that they do (focused on leadership an supervisor roles, working directly with families in different environments, or a BED for kindergarten teachers)

The importance of ongoing professional learning

- expectations for ongoing professional learning 20/20
- allows for ECD professionals to attend daytime Professional Development
- get rid of the barriers - being able to do PD during the day while working
- re-certifications & PD

Similar educational preparation for ECS and child care staff

- the standard of degree & minimum diploma needs to be standard for both (with the mix tailored to the context & # of children)
- is there a way of combining the degrees?
- perhaps have some foundational courses in common
- believe that both groups of professionals need to have a base knowledge of a 2 year diploma that focuses on the early year's development, learning and play
- ECS & child care systems should be linked rather than separating them & include the same level of base knowledge
- 1 whole system that include both needs to happen
- breakdown barrier between educational institutions-look to educating children
- need to look at continuum of early learning not just ECS & child care
- status - workers in ECS often seen as a higher status profession, this often is to do with the qualifications required, how it is perceived from outside
- same expectations but not unrealistic, make it accessible
- the two categories should not be separated to indicate that one is more important than the others

The relationship between staff's educational preparation and high-quality early learning and care

- a better EC education can bring to only better programs appropriate for young children but also can bring a bunch of educators outside of ECC to their work with children
- demeaning to think young children do not require the same level of trained professionals that an elementary, middle or high school would need
- quality early childhood education across sectors due to training

Other comments

- challenge with MRU's CHST degree as grads are not choosing front line child care (doesn't pay enough or provide career path)
- regulatory body to enforce this

The forms of professional learning and requirements for professional learning for Early Childhood Services staff

Ongoing professional development/learning

- ongoing professional development
- ongoing
- ongoing PD in the specialized areas required.. ongoing PD
- minimum ongoing PD/learning to remain "licensed"
- ongoing - this should be a requirement
- continuous PD (credited)
- should always be opportunities for on-going professional learning - through professional organizations, conferences, after school sessions, newsletters, websites, etc.

Ongoing professional development/learning linked to licensing or recertification

- if the program is licensed it should already have a standard related to qualifications and if funding for this service come from Gov't there should be an expectation that all staff receive a minimal= of hours of PD in the areas they specialize in and perhaps some cross training for other areas being provided in the program
- a re-certification process of some sort
- re-certifications & PD
- yearly
- Systematic. Planned and accredited (and part of the job - i.e. time for paid for) with standard annual requirements
- 20 hrs. per areas- core areas, renewal certificate
- minimum required training hours
- yearly requirements
- recertification-every 5 years-PD, readings, assignments

Professional learning planning and/or evaluation

- PD plans
- When teaching I enjoyed the TPGP and I believe that this format of allowing the individual a say in their annual goal for professional growth and that this actually be monitored and mandated and that there are consequences to not actively working on your TPGP
- TPGP= teacher professional growth plan is an expectation in education
- performance and evaluation reviews

- each staff create own learning plan with activities to suit their needs & style of learning (as a function of evaluation/monitoring)
- also needs effective feedback & planned transfer to practice
- training plan with goals

Types of professional learning, approaches and delivery

- PD- in areas across the competencies
- school PD/conferences/conventions exist
- college, university, mentorship program, accredited training- not one-off workshop
- practicums, different levels that build on and build up, certificates, diplomas, degrees (experience in the field)
- specific/specialisations
- communities of practice
- opportunities to engage in communities of learning to support critical thinking -stay intentional & purposeful in what we do
- coaching
- staying up to date with current research
- set professional development and learning opportunities that do not take up personal time and are supported by the organization
- professional learning that is focused on not only everyday practice but skill based and is set up to develop a set of skills in continued learning with collaboration of learners and teachers
- Not isolated workshops
- Not happening in isolation / to allow for discussion / reflection / follow up
- frequent ongoing professional development opportunities to stay on top of best practice policies

Change strategies

- Are there not pieces of the education system that can be borrowed and implemented (the idea of a learning leader, a language arts specialist; an expert in a specific area that can lend themselves to a small team to support)?

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

Ongoing professional development/learning

- ongoing
- ongoing PD
- ongoing expectation to part
- ongoing - this should be a requirement
- continuous PD (credited)
- ongoing conference and training seminar opportunities that involve reflective thinking

Ongoing professional development/learning linked to licensing or recertification

- 2 year renewal process or upgrade
- established with and through licensing and accreditation
- recertification-every 5 years-PD, readings, assignments
- recertification should be an expectation
- minimum ongoing PD/learning to remain "licensed"
- systemic, planned and accredited (and part of the job - i.e. time for paid for) with standard annual requirements
- re-certification at a set number of years, recent is based on demonstrated professional development and learning in the seven core competency areas of ECEs
- minimum required training hours
- yearly requirements
- a minimum of 30 hours per year as requirement of ongoing professional learning
- a minimum number of hours per year

Professional learning planning and/or evaluation

- PD plans
- strong evaluation/performance plan to ensure this
- each staff create own learning plan with activities to suit their needs & style of learning (as a function of evaluation/monitoring)
- When teaching I enjoyed the TPGP and I believe that this format of allowing the individual a say in their annual goal for professional growth and that this actually be monitored and mandated and that there are consequences to not actively working on your TPGP
- develop a set of skills/ competencies- a plan developed to work towards this

Types of professional learning, approaches and delivery

Content areas

- leadership courses for directors/ managers
- specializations -infant/toddler, special needs, families, admin
- basics of early childhood curr framework - a minimum
- specific/specialisms

Professional learning to stay on top of current research

- childcare providers need to stay up to date with new research & approaches
- staying up to date with current research
- evidence should reflect staying current & up to date

Comprehensive approaches to (or levels of) professional learning

- college, university, mentorship program, accredited training- not one-off workshop

- professional learning that is set up to develop a set of skills where learners collaborate with teachers for a longer period of time
- Not isolated workshops

Communities of Practice/Learning and coaching

- communities of practice
- opportunities to engage in communities of learning to support critical thinking - stay intentional & purposeful in what we do
- involvement in learning communities is essential
- coaching

Staff supports for professional learning

- professional development and learning that is easily accessible and does not always take away from personal time (although a dedication to professional learning does mean some sacrifice)
- support by organization to attend professional learning either time off or financial support (set number of hours per year for PD/learning)

Change strategies

- Are there not pieces of the education system that can be borrowed and implemented (the idea of a learning leader, a language arts specialist; an expert in a specific area that can lend themselves to a small team to support?)

Other comments on professional learning

- something similar to the training here in that how do you 'control' or professionalize the informal setting that are providing child care?
- yearly
- PD may be an old model
- different # of hours for various positions
- strong lead for professional development - strategies put into place
- practicums, different levels that build on and build up, certificates, diplomas, degrees (experience in the field)

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

Remaining current with research and practice findings

- all professionals need to keep up with advances & knowledge in the field
- current updated research based
- ideas are continually changing due to advances in understanding and research
- it is important to stay current
- it is important to recognize learning is constant, along with reflection and revising and improving practice

- Giving back to the field and keeping current with the academic discussion is important (in regards to practicum involvement)
- ongoing, yearly training is important to keep up with best practices and upcoming practices- it keeps you current and connected in the community
- research is continually changing. Staff need to remain current

Learn from research or other models

- is there clear research that supports/demonstrates improved practice as a result of continuing PD? Numerical (i.e. # of hours? # of courses?/year)
- appropriate training -research based - approved - vetted
- build on systems that are already working

Approaches to professional learning

- competency based
- standard message of what is being taught
- opportunities to engage in conversation and deep discussion with peers is where learning happens - where we can make sense of why we do what we do, reflect on our work and adapt/change/teach others
- sharing/discussing/reading
- quality over quantity of learning opportunities
- supporting research
- how to best use technology -online coursework, learning conversations
- welcoming students in experimented research & community development activities

Supports for professional learning

- believe that educators should be supported in setting goals for professional learning to better their individual practice which essentially better the work which is done with children and families
- educators should have set times or time available for professional learning in order to benefit themselves and the organization with which they work

Requirements for professional learning

- accountability- creditability
- we require this in other human service etc., why not here?

Process of change/change considerations

- would need to handle a change gradually i.e. if made as sudden change that all day homes providers need a level 3, would lose a lot of providers immediately
- Connecting (or dissolving the current distinctions) all of 0-6
- Deadline
- cost effective model for PD

Other Comments

- Lifelong learning is important to me
- prof association

Participant thoughts and ideas arising from their discussions of professional learning

Professional learning and recertification process – oversight of workforce (professional association)

- recertification process should be essential
- recertification process built into the existing system
- recertification on regular basis
- continuous education (formal not workshops only) and work in the sector to keep your certification
- ongoing on at least a yearly basis-courses or hours
- more accountability-recertification to maintain credentials
- competency based learning objectives for certification
- relevant PD must be mandated by government when funding granted "x" number of hours per year
- write it into schedules A's

Professional learning approaches and or areas of focus

- coaching/mentoring
- enforce formalized curriculum framework
- on-line interactive opportunities web in air online dialogues
- should it be competency based? Sometimes there are very valuable learning/growth opportunities (that aren't specific to a "competency")
- we need to include growth in areas of attitudes/values/knowledge and not just "skills"
- leadership skills-mentoring, coaching, human resources, administration, community involvement
- specialization is expected in other professional sectors (dr., teacher, engineer) - infant/toddler, inclusion, school age
- pre- reading prior to PD opportunity
- appropriate facilitators -qualified, evidence/research based
- not one-off workshops
- research based & approved by group of professionals/governing body?
- look at peer mentors
- peer mentors
- early learning research

Learning communities or communities of practice

- online communities

- community of practice
- working in teams- communities of practice effective
- collaboration & field projects through research
- cross sharing opportunities

Professional learning and reflective practice

- reflection built in after PD
- some self-reflective or self-evaluative process should be incorporated
- reflective piece included in professional learning
- Discussions around hours related to ongoing training came up (I could not personally reconcile the importance of hours because I feel the quality and the reflection and accountability are vastly more important than the number of hours you devote to PD)

A professional body to oversee professional learning

- strong body of professional regulation
- a professional association that would have competency requirements that would need to be checked on annually for recertification
- we need a guiding force/ regulatory body to train this
- same entry requirements at post-secondary

Professional learning plans

- PD plan - individual
- planned -professional development plan
- profession development growth plan - set up by ECE & mentors
- professionals to take leadership over their professional learning
- professional learning plan, not quantity but quality (valid, relevant) not just "easy peasy" yoga & massage but brain development and real life issues and so on

Standards and requirements

- internal standards/accreditation
- better equivalency rationale between provinces
- pre-school teachers need to meet same educational requirements

Practicum experiences

- training needs to include practicum in appropriate settings
- I would like there to be practicums (various ways to deliver them)

Other Comments

- connections faculty
- there are a lot of agencies & associations taking on the leadership of professional learning
- question only addresses licenced care
- no space

- there was a question about the evidence of if/how continuing education improves practice
- better coordination between post-secondary
- challenges - \$\$, time
- system in place
- think outside the box

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

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

Participants considered the proposed changes identified to advance the educational preparation of the workforce and those to support the early childhood educator as a professional from three related perspectives. First, the overall direction and content of the proposed changes; second, the specific changes they considered most important to implement; and third, the key considerations to take into account in advancing change.

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

Advancing the educational preparation of the early learning and care workforce

Participants either ‘strongly agreed’ (18 – 95 percent) or ‘agreed’ (1 – 5 percent) with the proposed changes to strengthen the educational capacity of the early learning and care work. A number of participants did not provide a response.

The specific changes most important for strengthening the educational preparation of the early learning and care workforce

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

- introduction of degree, 2-year diploma
- min diploma (maybe a grandfathering clause)
- 2 yr. min.
- 2 yr. diploma minimum
- min diploma for ECEs
- move to two-year diploma as minimum qualification
- move to a two-year diploma as the minimum qualification

- increasing levels of education to a diploma minimum
- minimum 2-year diploma qualification for staff working in licenses ELC programs and day homes

Elimination of educational equivalencies

- eliminate equivalencies (3)
- eliminate/reduce equivalencies/exemptions
- educational levels of ECEs-get rid of equivalencies!
- Eliminating equivalencies (stop new ones from happening, but then review the ones that have been issued) – how do you do this? Can you individualize equivalencies and force individuals to challenge their diploma or equivalency
- eliminate the equivalencies or is there a possibility of conversion courses to be able to move around the profession into different fields

Higher educational requirements for Family Day home providers

- \$ for 5 - minimum qualifications for day homes
- increased exp for day homes
- minimum requirements for Family Day Homes
- increased educational qualification for family day home providers

Need for leadership and management education or training

- increased qualifications for those in leadership
- ECEs in leadership & mgmt. have no formal training - they are usually put into 'positions' because they were identified as 'strong' with children
- not prepared for leading/managing adults/operations, programs/coaching that is required for leaders/mgmt. in programs
- additional qualifications for staff in management or leadership positions

Supports for staff to meet higher educational requirements

- begin working on 3 and 4 right away, which will influence getting into place strategies 1 and 2 and may shed light on how to capture number 5 which is likely the most difficult area of this whole proposition
- support for upgrading including availability & access to credit courses to move from orient to cert to diploma to degree
- support for existing workforce to meet new requirements
- support for existing work-force to meet the new educational requirements
- Accessibility to the degree program (universities offering the degree, funding, remuneration, substitutes to cover their current role that they would need to leave in order to attain the degree)
- financial support and accessibility to access the diploma/ degree
- support for the upgrading

A professional association for the field

- an association that works with college
- oversight of the early childhood education and care profession
- set the standards/regulations, regulatory body

Professionalization of the field

- increasing status of profession through professional education, ongoing education, education before entering the workforce, income
- increase in society's perception regarding the professionalism in the field- increase wages increase feeling of professionalism by people in the field as well as by parents and public views of these professionals

Considerations in any change process

- realistically we cannot do these things well unless we are all on the same page
- plan on how to transition current system- to the minimum
- all ECED must have ECE coursework & qualifications
- \$

Post-secondary program standards across the province (high quality)

- standardization of quality & rigour across PSE

Other comments

- prof learning
- accessibilities
- sense of urgency to provide educational foundations in early years

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

Public or government support for changes

- need an awareness campaign of the importance of early years with general population
- awareness
- opportunity for a public campaign on the importance of the early years education
- opportunity to show public we are professionals with cohesion and organization
- push back from those with no kids regarding financial impact of implementing change
- provincial buy-in
- roll out/buy-in

Supports for staff to meet higher educational requirements

- supporting workforce that exists offering a variety of ways to upgrade that are affordable for people poorly paid
- time with work day to complete courses

- incentive to go back to school
- possibility of financial support for staff to meet education expectations needs to be considered
- financial impact of those needing to upgrade -will there be funding/grants? Other incentives?
- opportunities for staff to return to education while being supported by work to increase quality of care

Impacts of changes on staff and service delivery – financing changes

- transition time to new minimum requirements so as to create an even more critical staff shortage
- transitions for programs and consequences for children and families
- need to minimize interruption to children and families
- immigrant/ cultural differences in workforce- people on visas who may not want to 'rock boat'
- could lose people, experienced people, people who are very valuable in the workforce because the education requirements are 'upped'
- burden to student/employee
- disruption to children's care (short-term)
- how will demand for increased staff qualifications & therefore wages be supported?
- lack of qualified staff/increase of staff turnover in times of transitioning standards
- caution that there could be a backlash from educators in the field to leave the regulated system
- the government needs to abolish / majorly change the rules for private day homes or day home providers will go to the private sector instead of regulated if they have to increase their level
- \$
- who will share the cost?
- cost burden to organization/ staff
- costs
- P3 funding -public, private NP

Developing post-secondary infrastructure and/or educational capacity

- the quality of PSE programs -there is rigor in place and all programs meet a high standard to ensure we have a professional workforce
- spaces at educational institutions
- availability of courses to be part time (evenings) or online delivery

The process for change and timelines for change

- timelines and accountability if financial support is provided
- need to have a sense of urgency
- \$ and time for implementation- urgency created

- be sensitive to the various contexts in which ECS and ECE occurs: licensed settings, licenses and non-licensed day homes, kindergartens etc.
- practicalities-access, finance, time, flexibility of courses, how to implement
- more slow & thoughtful
- plan for transition-support those who are committed to growth & increasing their education
- grandfather in the minimum educational requirements
- start talking - setting goals
- support to achieve qualifications of those in the field -timelines & accountability to complete

Outstanding questions around raising educational requirements

- what are the opportunities?
- new curriculum framework is an opportunity
- accreditation for preschools?
- can we mobilize the knowledge we currently have? urgency?

Support for (or resistance from) from staff and organizations for higher educational requirements

- push back from for-profit providers
- resistance
- this discussion becomes quite value-laden and based on personal experience i.e. I'm an equivalency and I have value so we should keep equivalencies

Other comments

- ABED/ HUMAN SERVICES- create connections equivalency
- 40% level 1 who don't have it/ training
- private centres- making lots of \$ as a business- using level 1
- leadership management

Supporting the early childhood educator as a competent professional

Participants either 'strongly agreed' (17 – 81 percent) or 'agreed' (3– 14 percent) with the proposed changes to support the early childhood educator as a competent professional. One participant (1 - 5 percent) 'neither agreed nor disagreed' with the proposed changes. A number of participants did not offer a response.

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

Professional oversight of the early learning and care workforce

- oversight needs to change

- reimage-oversight of ECE profession to create a professional body consistency & oversight implies top down/surveillance model
- professional body suggestion governed by professionals
- model of oversight-"college of ECE"
- oversight for the profession - not necessary to wait for separate body; agencies can start to do some of these things on their own
- development of professional body that would encompass professional learning requirements and standards of practice and code of ethics
- oversight of ECE professional
- oversight for the profession
- less governance & drive from the top -government-more input & participation from the field - if we were a profession we could get ECEs involved
- create a strong professional association and then a college
- we determine requirements for field/profession - accountabilities
- overall umbrella of same terms as a profession
- oversight
- need to change word "oversight" to a professional body
- creating a regulatory model for the ELC field

Early learning and care staff remuneration and working conditions

- realignment of remuneration/envIRON. Oversight
- realignment of remuneration and working environments
- Realigning ECE Educators remunerations and working conditions
- realignment of remuneration-stop the bleeding first
- #10 then # 6 (#10 realigning the Education Requirements, Remuneration & Working Environments for ECEs & #6 Professional Learning Requirements for ECEs)
- realizing ECE formal education, remuneration and working conditions
- realigning education, remuneration & conditions

Financing models (including public investments)

- Government funding (4 responses)
- financial impact & incentives to upgrade
- government funding, higher wages so educated people want to be in and stay in field
- continual provincial investment

Professional learning or development

- professional learning
- requirements for PD to maintain certification
- professional learning req for ECD
- professional learning requirements for ECE
- access to ongoing professional development and those trained to deliver this and access (greater) to professional qualification courses, access includes financial

- professional learning requirements for early childhood educators

Professional standards of practice and or a code of ethics

- standard of practice/code of ethics -for regulation/disciplinary basis
- setting standards- build self-esteem of workforce- teach advocacy
- standards of practice & code of ethics
- ECE standards and code of ethics

Educational preparation of early learning and care staff

- learning requirements in individual. Agencies or organizations i.e./ min hiring level, required to work on achieving the minimum level required
- education needed
- specific leadership training for directors/ supervisors

Public and family support for changes

- get families on board
- multiple levels-multiple messages
- community buy in- workforce buy in
- Public buy in / parent education / recognition as a profession
- education to public/ parents regarding importance of EC development and professional practices
- education on quality childcare

Change process

- no changes - need to be strategic
- which is the best place to begin
- strategic timelines in place as the process will take time to assess the multi-level factor to bring everyone up to minimum level of certification

Other comments

- accreditation for preschools!
- more colleges/ universities that offer courses and opportunities for further education

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

Government and public support for change

- need to launch public awareness campaign to make it acceptable to spend public \$ on early learning
- having government support in keeping day homes regulated so that they don't go private

- need to use common terminology for consistency and to give the public common knowledge
- buy-in/roll out
- we need to get families & society on board to understand why birth-5 is an important as school age
- awareness campaigns
- public awareness is important re: the profession and the importance of Early Childcare
- sense of urgency to move forward with this and engage the ministry to take action

Change management process – impacts on service delivery (including unregulated care)

- care needs to be taken not to decimate the existing system before proposed changes are well in hand
- need to figure out incentive for private providers of day care and in some instances ECS
- concern about unlicensed care - underground
- If you phase out level one it will impact Day Homes the worst; need to have government change legislation with private day homes or providers will go private
- how will they control the unregulated centres??
- unregulated called babysitting
- concern-increase in private child care
- recognize that #s in field will likely drop initially

The educational preparation of early childhood educators

- phase out the 45 orientation
- remove 45 hour course process
- changes in education level have to be done by steps/ timelines
- phase out 45 hr course
- add standardized terminology to ECE programs
- challenge- that it takes time to get diploma or degree and childcare spaces are needed now- needs to be considered
- level of English is a challenge

Improved staff remuneration and working conditions

- create a wage grid
- have consistent wages in the sector possibly based on education and experience
- wages are low - difficult to support these who wish to further education - cost of education also prohibitive
- salaries need to be increased
- paid sick days!
- salary grids based on education
- other incentives

Closer integration of early learning and care

- Having all areas of Early Education on the same page-ECS, Preschool, Childcare and Day home
- cultures and respecting that while providing a standard curriculum
- process, different views/understanding as to purpose of childcare
- bring prep/ed systems into alignment
- ensure that different aspects of child care brought into alignment (preschool, day homes)
- legislation to get into place

Early childhood education – regulated profession

- protection of "title" in order to be an "early childhood educator" or "early learning care provider" or whatever we want to be called - you must have the minimum education. If you don't then you can be a "baby sitter" or "child minder". Then we need to educate the consumer!!
- increasing the value/status of the profession in the eyes of the wider community as well as dispelling hierarchies within the profession as a whole
- caution- making certain areas of the profession not appealing to access due to the educational requirements being increased i.e.. day homes
- professionalization
- cost of professional association
- cohesion in titles

Engaging early childhood educators in any change process

- current ECE need to be made aware of changes as they happen and their "next steps" to making improvements for themselves
- input needs to be considered from ECEs working in all levels of the ELC field so that changes fit all areas not just one group
- must be fair to current staff
- there may be some who don't want to see change-many in field don't want/respond to change well

Professional learning for early childhood educators

- paid time during regular work hours to attend PD
- profession learning communities and trained coaches and exp. Mentors to support the educators is the key

Financing for early learning and care

- costs to all stakeholders
- how does gov't support/investment add to private operator profit
- Funding

Other comments

- protect the 'educator'/ daycare home
- supports need to be put in place from agencies/ centres, ministry, colleges/universities, professional associations
- opportunity to research & provide evidence of impact long term
- access to curriculum framework across the board
- context will be everything