Bringing Our Best to Full-Day Kindergarten:
Creating equitable & effective teaching teams

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Background

- Initial vision was 2 Early Childhood Educators and an Ontario Certified Teacher working as a team “to engage in respectful, reciprocal mentoring, always with their learners in mind.”


- Little previous research done on the interprofessional relationship between teachers and ECEs working in school classrooms.
2010/11 Ontario began offering “an engaging, play-based educational program during the regular school day”

Projected full implementation by September 2014

Certified Teacher & Registered Early Childhood Educators comprise the “teaching team”

“Work together to implement the program and maintain a safe and healthy environment”

Ontario Ministry of Education, 2011
Meta-Analysis of 1st & 2nd Years
Queen’s University, McMaster University, Ministry of Education, (2012)

- ECEs and OCTs are trained professionals, and are providing a program to meet learning & developmental needs, yet are “not fully leveraging the collective expertise of the two professions” (p. 13)
- Tensions are reported around “roles & responsibilities” within teams
- Teachers more often accessing professional development
Ontario’s New Inclusive Pedagogical Framework: How Does Learning Happen? (pg. 14)

Understanding of Children as Competent, Curious, Capable of Complex Thinking, Rich in Potential

Child & Family Programs

Child Care

Kindergarten

Elementary

Responsive Relationships

Learning through Exploration, Play, and Inquiry

Educators as Co-learners

Environment as Third Teacher

Pedagogical Documentation

Reflective Practice and Collaborative Inquiry

Belonging

Well-Being

Engagement

Expression

Foundations for Learning and Development

ELECT GUIDING PRINCIPLES
Research Question

- From the perspectives of pioneering teaching teams, what supports the process of creating equitable and effective teaching partnerships in Full-Day Kindergarten classrooms?
Survey & Interview

- On-line survey (10-minute) distributed through professional networks, Ministry of Education and School Boards (2012-2014)

- 302 responses

- Follow-up Interview (30-minute) with individuals or Teams

- Ten in-depth interviews
Findings
Survey Results

- Respondent employment position
  - 136 RECE (46.6%); 156 OCT (53.4%)

- 51% began in the 1st year, 16.7% in the 2nd year, 32.3% in the 3rd year
Degrees of Partnership

- A great variation along a continuum of integration:
  - 18.5% indicated they had separate and distinct roles
  - 39.9% indicated they did some planning and coordinating
  - 41.6% indicated they planned and implemented jointly
Q7 There are a variety of ways to balance roles and responsibilities in team teaching situations. When you reflect on your work in a Full-Day Early Learning Team which best describes your experience?

Answered: 290   Skipped: 13

- We are a 'Working Team': Side-by-side with separate, distinct roles.
- We are a 'Partnership Team': Roles are mostly integrated
- We are a 'Co-operative Team': Some co-ordination
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Roles in the Classroom

- Respondents view themselves as practicing similar roles in the areas where assistants have traditionally been highly involved
  - i.e., behaviour guidance, working with individuals or small groups, attending to children’s physical needs

- Respondents view themselves as practicing different roles in traditionally teacher-led areas
  - i.e., curriculum planning, assessment, and evaluation
Perceptions of Strengths

Knowledge of Child Development
RECEs (95.5%) & OCTs (69.5%)

Experience in Play-Based Learning
RECE (90.8) & OCT (36.8)
Perceptions of Strengths

Familiarity with Ministry Curriculum Documents

OCT (85.8%) & RECE (40.3)

Expertise in Teaching Literacy & Numeracy

OCTs (81.9%) than RECEs (60.5)
Perceptions of Strengths

Child Assessment-
OCT (72.7%) & RECE (63.8%)

Knowledge of Teaching Theory and Best Practices
OCT (84.5%) & RECE (51.2%)
Areas of Need

RECEs:

- Literacy and Numeracy (21.4 pt. spread)
- Ministry Documents (45.5 pt. spread)
- Child Assessment (8.9 pt. spread)
- Teaching Theory and Best Practices (33.3 pt. spread)
Areas of Need

OCTs:

- Knowledge of Child Development (26 pt. spread)
- Play-based Learning (54 pt. spread)
More Survey Results
Advice for new teams

- Communication is key
- Be flexible and willing to share ideas
- Common planning time
- Respect each other’s experience and contribution
- Visit other teams
- Know the curriculum, know the education act, know your union rep.
“It has been an extremely positive transition. A very rewarding and fulfilling job.” Year 1 RECE

“I feel we do not have a collaborative team. There is a lot of resistance on both sides (ECE/OCT) of each other’s role and what the program should look like.” Year 1 OCT

“We need to put our difference aside, and make it work for the children. We need to see the team as a partnership and share responsibilities equally.” Year 1 RECE
Interview Findings
Case Study of a Kindergarten Teaching Team

Background:

- ECE has 5 years experience working in a team in a childcare kindergarten program, 2 years in full-day K (ECE, B.A.)
- OCT has 24 years experience as a primary teacher, 11 years in half-day kindergarten, 2 years in full-day K (B.A., B.ED.)
Similarities and Differences from Previous Roles

RECE

- Similar - working as a team, observing children, focusing on what works for children

- Different - setting, rules and regulations, greater focus on cognitive assessment and less on development generally, less documentation of children’s work
Similarities and Differences from Previous Roles

OCT

• Similar - follow a self-made long-range plan and assessments, focus on curriculum

• Different - fewer children, fewer reports, more time to interact with individual children, has become more observant and “in tune” with children due to ECE’s influence
Supports for Successful Collaboration

- Previous teamwork
- Being considered equals by staff, admin, parents and each other
- Communication, respect, and consistency
- Shared responsibilities
Supports for successful Collaboration

- Experimenting to see what works
- Observing and learning from each other
- Discussing issues with other teams