Modernizing the early years
Findings from research & practice

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Conceptualizing the early years

- What leads - learning or care?
- Who leads – public or private delivery?

Answering these questions makes a difference – for equity, for quality

- What others are doing
## The starting point: Early education or child care

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ECER 2014
“Quality” child care

• Note how “child care” is often prefaced by “quality”
• There is not an expectation of quality in child care
• We don’t say “quality kindergarten”, the expectation is that quality is embedded in kindergarten
Equity depends on access & quality

- Benefits from early learning programs accrue when children attend consistently for at least 15 hours/week for one or more years before kindergarten.
- For positive population health outcomes enough children must attend.
- In OECD and middle income countries universal preschool is now the norm at age 3.
- High quality early learning (play-based learning environments with other children, guided by educators and coherent pedagogy).
SES a barrier to access

- Program access linked to parent labour force participation penalizes vulnerable populations.
- 21% of children whose mother have high school or less attend regulated child care compared to 52% of those whose mother have graduate degrees.
- In Quebec, children in low SES less likely to access low-cost child care than those from more affluent families.
- Universal early learning programs are more likely to include the majority of children (4 year olds in Ontario’s Full Day Kindergarten)
Child care and quality assessment

While child care generally provides good levels of physical environment organization and emotional support for children, the average level of instructional support* when rated across a range of child care settings is low.

* Quality of back & forth exchanges, introduction of concepts, feedback to children, responses that expand children’s language repertoire (cognitive responsiveness)
Quality linked to better outcomes

Preschool quality and self-regulation and pro-social behaviour (age 11)

Family engagement

...a parenting focus can augment the effects of preschool only if it provides parents with modeling of positive interactions or opportunities for practice with feedback. Providing information through classes, home visits, or workshops is not associated with further improvements in children’s skills. (Yoshikawa & Weiland, 2013)
Start with early learning - add care: The impact of public delivery

Ontario: Ministry of Education has lead for child care, family support programs and kindergarten

- Full day kindergarten (2010-2014) – 250,000 4 & 5 year olds
- Kindergarten educator teams – 1 teacher, 1 ECE approximately 26 children/class
- Play-based kindergarten curriculum
- Schools responsible for before and after school programs (extended day) have choice of direct delivery or contracting with community providers
Public delivery produces

• Created 10,000 new professional ECE positions in schools

• Where school boards directly operate extended day programs
  – Enrolment jumped 600%
  – No waitlists for 4-12 year old programming
  – Parent fees declined
  – Flexible enrolment/centralized fee collection
  – Community-offered preschool (0-3 years) expanded
Other findings

- Ministry of Education revising Grades 1-3 curriculum in response to FDK cohorts
- Mothers with youngest child who is 4 year olds now in workforce at the same rate as mothers with youngest children who is 6 years old
- 25% of families on child care waitlist credit FDK/EDP with being able to enter the workforce
- Parents find family life less stressful
- Want additional supports and programs for younger children through the school – particularly families with higher needs
- EDI data suggests decreased vulnerabilities
ECE provision through schools

4 year old ECE:

- NS: Pilot full day preschool in 8 boards as part of Early Years Centres
- QC: Pre-Maternelle in low income neighbourhoods
- ON: universal full day/ 172 Parent & Family Literacy Centres
- MB: Nursery school delivered by boards in some districts
- SK: 3 & 4 year olds, 12 hours week in 230 schools (expanding)
- AB: publicly funded in schools and child care, 2.5 - 4.5 years depending on need
- BC: Strong Start in 326 schools plus outreach programs
- NT: 4 year old kindergarten, 3 year phase in (pending)
- PE: 2-4 years receive 15 hours a week in 4 Early Years Centres
Learnings from demonstration initiatives in Atlantic Canada and Ontario

- A stable platform with a school base and a regular early learning anchor with core funding allows an integrated early childhood program that can serve more families more effectively in ways that they want to served
- Scale up requires provincial framework and regional mandates
Standardized tests ON Grade 6 results reading (% of students at or above provincial standards)

![Bar chart showing the percentage of students at or above provincial standards in reading for Grade 6 from 2007 to 2013. The chart compares French Language Schools (blue) and English Language Schools (red). The percentages range from 66% in 2007 to 79% in 2013 for English Language Schools, and from 68% in 2008 to 75% in 2013 for French Language Schools.](chart.png)
Standardized tests ON Grade 6 results writing (% of students at or above provincial standards)
Standardized tests ON 6 results mathematics (% of students at or above provincial standards)

- French Language Schools
- English language schools


Results:
- 2007: 78%
- 2008: 80%
- 2009: 81%
- 2010: 80%
- 2011: 82%
- 2012: 81%
- 2013: 83%

Note: The graph shows the percentage of students at or above provincial standards for mathematics in French and English language schools from 2007 to 2013.
Planning tables

• Types:
  – Interministerial
  – Regional planning
  – Community planning

• Function
  – Planning/Coordination/Problem solving
  – Funding allocation

• Limitations
  – Mandated vs Voluntary
  – Standing vs project oriented
Shift to Education Ministries/Departments
Full day Kindergarten (5 year olds)
Early Learning Curriculum Frameworks

• The 13th Annual Summer Institute on Early Childhood Development
  Growing ECE Access and Quality: Opportunities and Challenges Across
  Canada and around the Globe policymakers are looking to expand
  children’s access to early childhood education.

• Join Rowena Phair of the OECD Education and Skills Directorate and Tove Mogstad Slinde of the OECD Network on Early Childhood Education and Care as they discuss
  – how states are expanding ECE access while maintaining quality
  – Balancing the needs of 0 – 3 year olds with programs for 4 – 6 year olds
  – Addressing children’s right to ECE with parents need for child care

June 2 – 3, 2015
George Brown College, Waterfront Campus, 51 Dockside Drive, Toronto, Ontario
See more at
http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/atkinson/Events/2016_Events/Summer_Institute_2016.html#sthash.nA6KZHqg.dpuf
Early Childhood in Canada
Open Letter
http://ecincanada.ca/en/petition/signatures/

Smart Investment in the Future
ECD Funders Working Group
http://ecdfwg.ca/en/

Schools at the Centre videos and presentations
http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/atkinson/