



Investing In Quality
Early Learning and Childcare Peterborough



Investing in Quality Peterborough Annual Report 2020



EARLY LEARNING
lasts a lifetime


peterborough

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Acknowledgements

Thank you to the Investing in Quality (IIQ) working group of the Early Years Planning Network (EYPN) for your guidance in our community this past year. Thank you also to our funder, the City of Peterborough, and Five Counties Children's Centre for the administration and leadership of the IIQ program.

2020 IIQ Working Group Members:

- Alex Cranfield, Co-Chair, Five Counties Children's Centre
- Shannon Cattoni, Co-Chair, City of Peterborough
- Moira Vance, Trent Child Care
- Delia Senra, Trent Child Care
- Mary-Ann Meagher, Peterborough Child and Family Centers
- Jen Lockington, Kinderschool
- Dannielle Blondin, Sunshine Day Care
- Jan Smith, Hucklebug Child Care
- Lorrie Baird, Compass Early Learning and Care
- Shelley Davis/Darlene Campbell, Wee Watch Home Child Care

Investing in Quality Staff:

- Ellen Mortlock, Quality Coordinator
- Beckie Evans, Quality Coordinator

Introduction

This report describes the progress made in 2020 with the strategic priorities identified in the operational plan (2015) for Investing in Quality, Peterborough (IIQ) working group. The four priorities identified are:

- 1) Champion professional learning that influences practice
- 2) Enhance learning through mentorship
- 3) Meaningful measurement for quality improvement
- 4) Organizational alignment to support transformation

Strategic Priority #1

Champion Professional Learning that Influences Practice

This year, the global Covid19 pandemic altered the original professional learning plans of the *Investing in Quality (IIQ)* program. When early learning program closures happened in March, many professional learning sessions planned were cancelled and others were facilitated virtually through Microsoft Teams. Due to government grants, some educators were being paid at least part of their wages during the closure. Many operators asked educators who were being paid to participate in a certain number of professional learning hours weekly. Listed below are the actions and highlights taken by Investing in Quality.

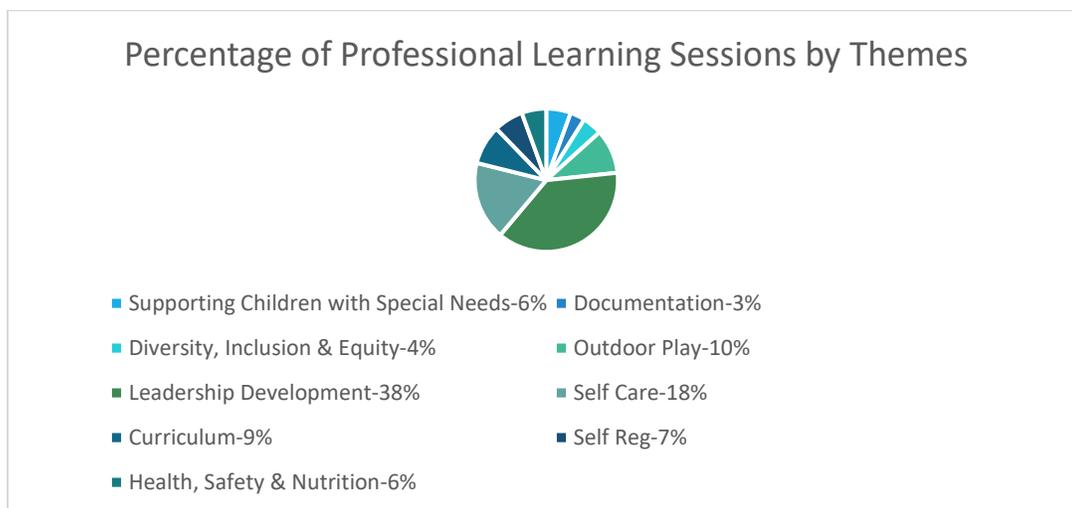
Highlights & Accomplishments:

1. Eighteen professional learning sessions and the annual Inspiring Early Learning Conference were cancelled due to the pandemic. One hundred and thirty-five hours of administrative time went into planning these sessions even though they were not implemented.
2. Professional learning sessions that could be facilitated in a virtual format and could be quickly adapted were offered to the community such as Lens on Outdoor Environments and Enhancing Work Through Playful Practice.
3. It was identified by supervisors that educators were feeling stressed and there was a need to offer professional learning that focused on resiliency skills. Virtual sessions on Choosing Your Umbrella, a Meditation series, and Educator Mental Health through the Canadian Mental Health Association were offered. The Choosing Your Umbrella and the Enhancing Work Through Playful Practice sessions were offered to both the broader early learning community and within individual teams as requested.
4. Bi-weekly supervisor network meetings were held to offer support to supervisors in navigating the continuously changing climate and ongoing regulatory changes. These meetings offered a space for supervisors to share questions, concerns, and advocacy strategies during this time.
5. One achievement that needs to be highlighted is the 75% increase (84 sessions) in professional learning offered compared to 2019 (48 sessions). This statistic demonstrates the commitment that educators showed to their profession during the pandemic and the need for us to gather as a community.

6. *Investing in Quality* partnered with the Old Millbrook School EarlyON Child and Family Centre to host a facilitated discussion with Linda Åkeson McGurk, author of *There is No Such Thing as Bad Weather*. This theme was important for our community as the *Early Childhood Development Instrument (EDI)* scores demonstrated that 23% of children in our county between 4-5 years old, are vulnerable in physical health and well-being. Sixty educators participated in this event.
7. The Appreciation committee was creative in finding alternative ways of celebrating the work of the early learning community that tied in appreciation and professional learning together. A highlight of this accomplishment was the partnership with the Fleming Early Childhood Education program and Beeline Design and Communications. This partnership allowed us to facilitate a lawn sign and poster campaign in our community, recognizing the value of the work of educators. The educational book bundles that were delivered to programs focused on outdoor play. One of the books chosen based on EDI scores, *Last Child in the Woods* by Richard Louv, will be used for a book study in the spring of 2021.
8. A sub-group from the *Investing in Quality* working group developed a *Professional Learning Framework* to align with the *Standards of Quality* developed in 2019. This committee outlined approaches to professional learning in our community. It was developed from the belief that all educators are competent, capable, and curious and can take responsibility for their own professional learning and that learning takes place every day in our practice through experience, observation, and reflection together. It is a way to view capacity by encouraging leadership opportunities for educators to share strengths and learn from each other. Once a draft of this framework was developed, it was shared at a supervisor's network meeting to get further input into the document. *The Professional Learning Framework* was finalized and distributed in November 2020. This document, along with the *Standards of Quality*, *How Does Learning Happen?* and our *Professional Code of Ethics*, guide educator's daily practice.

Professional Learning Stats

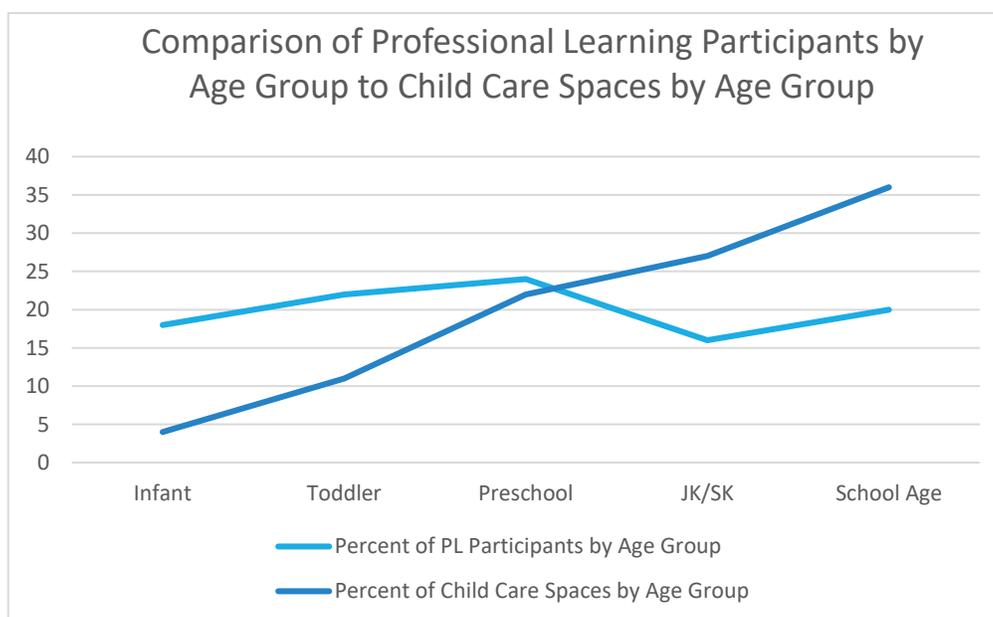
The pie graph below outlines the percentage of professional learning sessions offered through *Investing in Quality*, as categorized by themes. Identified in the accomplishments above and as a direct result of Covid19, there was a large emphasis put on leadership support for supervisors and self care for both supervisors and educators.



The chart below breaks down the single and multi session series, the total number of professional learning hours offered to the community, and the number of educators who participated in professional learning in our community.

Number of multi-session series	16
Number of single sessions	13
Number of sessions in total	84
Number of educators attending sessions *this signifies the total number of educators who attended professional learning (not 1422 different educators)	1422
Number of professional learning hours offered	177

The chart below compares professional learning participants by age group to the child care spaces by age group. This chart confirms the need for *Investing in Quality* to continue to work toward school age educator engagement. *See Strategic Direction #2- Mentorship-School Age working group, as this need is addressed there.



Snippets of Professional Learning Evaluation Feedback

“One thing that stood out for me was to start slow...be consistent and follow the child’s lead.”

“I learned to keep building positive relationships...it is worth the time.”

“Something that has been helpful for me was that listening to what other supervisors are doing during this time, helps me to know that I am not alone.”

“I need to think more about rescheduling time so I can interact more with children and be in the moment.”

Strategic Priority 2

Enhance Learning through Mentorship

The *Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)* template that had been developed for 2020, was revised to be more relevant as we managed change and learned from Covid19. The revised submission was more reflective in nature of the implications of Covid19 and had questions related to each of the *Standards of Quality*.

It asked questions such as: What lessons have we learned from Covid19 that we want to take with us moving forward? How did you engage with families during Covid19? What were your challenges, successes, and lessons learned? What were some strategies you used as an educator team to stay connected, to find joy, and support one another?

To learn and act on these lessons, we need to be active participants in our own reflection. What can we do as a community to process this unique era in our lives? What kinds of imaginings can we wonder based on the learning of this experience to create richer relationships and environments at home, at work and in our communities?

What did the *Quality Enhancement Plan* submissions tell us about what we learned as a community?



Highlights & Accomplishments

Standards of Quality #1 Relationships

During the lockdown and upon reopening, programs quickly learned ways to communicate and stay connected in relationships with families, children, and each other.

The questions asked under this standard, and some of the responses, were:

How did you engage with families during Covid19?

- Check-ins with phone calls, emails, and photos
- Videos of educator teams and programs
- Use of various technologies for communication, Sandbox, See Saw, HiMama, etc.
- Post mail to offer experiences such as scavenger hunts, art activities and recipes
- Sent parenting resources and materials
- Made name badges with pictures with PPE on and off
- Shared videos of our classroom so children knew what to expect when they returned
- Facilitated music time for families through Zoom
- Spirit weeks
- Zoom sing-a-longs
- Drive-by graduations
- Virtual book club about self-regulation

What were some strategies you used as an educator team to stay connected, to find joy, and support one another?

- Connected via Facebook Messenger, Facetime, Zoom and WhatsApp for check-ins and online games with prizes to boost morale
- Participated in daily professional learning during closures
- Facilitated dance parties with team members on lawns to support one another
- Began a Facebook group and shared self-care strategies
- Our wellness committee kept us connected and facilitated team activities and sent us resources
- Checking in more with staff daily. Asking how is your head, heart, and health?
- Connected with our Resource Consultant and Quality Coordinators virtually
- Implemented a fun maker at the start of our meetings which was a nice way to reconnect
- Nature walk and talks

- Wellness gift bags, fruit baskets
- Themed weekly trivia nights
- Flowers and cookies dropped off to staff offering Emergency Child Care

"We were very surprised with how the children quickly fell back into the routine. It made us and the parents so happy that the children adjusted so well. Even with PPE the children adapted to the masks and face shields very quickly and understood that their educators had to wear them. Even the new families that had never been in care before, these children surprised us by greeting us with smiles even while we were wearing our PPE. I know this made my heart full."
 CELC- Apsley

Standards of Quality #2: Diversity, Inclusion & Equity

During the closure and throughout the pandemic, we were reminded again of the important work we need to do to support anti-bias and anti-racism with each other, children, and families.

For this standard we asked what are some of the practices and conversations that your team has been exploring?

- Participated in professional learning (Communities of Practice) offered throughout our closure on this topic
- Creation and completion of a survey for teams to examine anti-oppression and anti-racism together
- Staff lead meeting with a manager to discuss ways to promote self-growth on this topic to develop an ongoing plan
- Songs we use have been adapted to non-gendered, where possible utilizing words they, them, child, and children
- Ongoing conversations about how to reduce barriers for equal participation in our programming due to the COVID changes (i.e., access to technology; limited locations), etc.
- Conducted an environment inventory to determine how diversity and belonging is demonstrated in our programs through equipment, toys, pictures, songs, food, celebrations, conversations, etc.
- Inviting families to share their traditions within the classroom-giving them a voice
- Reviewing our policies and procedures with an equity lens
- Exploring concepts of self-regulation

“Discussions around diversity, inclusion and equity were offered weekly to deepen our understanding, perspectives, and research. As we continue this work, we are thinking about what we need to unlearn vs. learn, our own comfortability and that we are each in our own journey of self-awareness. Together as a team, we will continue to have open and honest conversations about anti-bias education.” CELC-Millbrook

Standards of Quality #3: Making Learning Visible

For this standard we asked the question, what did you learn about children’s resilience and competencies during this time? How were you able to capture these observations?

- Reconsidered how we shared documentation and learning with families through virtual exploration of different strategies, Sandbox, HiMama, BaseCamp, Zoom, etc.
- Sent virtual communication and documentation more frequently
- Communicated to the children in intentional ways what the new routines of the program would be upon re-opening
- Shared with the children what educators would look like with masks on and off
- Children were resilient, they were happy to be back to routine and seeing their friends
- The children took an active role in setting up their environment and materials
- The children have demonstrated so much creativity with fewer materials in the room

“Throughout their time in Emergency Child Care, Sabrina Hemeryck and Breanna Tully explored how children used their play to work through their understandings and the complexities of what was happening in the work around them. Using a research board, they collected their observations and reflections, allowing them to help children build on their ideas and provoke thinking. They shared their journey in the community, revealing how this work helped them to see the competencies of children and their role in supporting these authentic experiences.” CELC-Janet Castle

Standards of Quality #4: Professional Growth and Reflection

The pandemic gave the world the opportunity to stop, pause and reflect.

We asked, during this opportunity for reflection, what have you learned about yourself, your team, and your community of educators and how has this caused you to re-imagine what your daily practice with children and families might look like?

- Educators, families, and children can be resilient
- We all need human connection to feel a sense of belonging
- When our team and community worked together to come up with creative solutions for programming, communication, and wellness, we were at our best
- There is value in slowing down and being in the moment with the children and each other
- To always look for gratitude
- Everyone handles stress differently and we need to be kind to one another
- Outdoor play is needed now more than ever to support children's self-regulation
- Sometimes less is more when we consider materials in environments

"As a childcare community, we are resilient, flexible, determined, creative, and faced the COVID-19 challenge head on. Being stronger collectively, we have been successful at keeping families, staff, and children safe with the reopening of childcare."
All Seasons Learning Centre

Standards of Quality #5: Community Partnerships

For this standard we asked, what partnerships did you develop or deepen with the early learning community or other community programs during this time?

- Bi-weekly supervisor's meetings
- EarlyON educator chat groups
- Organized a car rally to acknowledge essential Child Care educators
- Advocated for our profession by picketing at our local MPPs office
- Made several peer connections with other supervisors to help clarify expectations being sent regularly from the Ministry of Education and Peterborough Public Health
- Organized a facilitated presentation with IIQ and an international author to bring the message of the importance of outdoor play to the community

- Partnered with Fleming Early Childhood Education program and Beeline Designs and Communication to implement a lawn sign campaign for educator appreciation day
- Partnered with the New Canadians Centre to support the families in our program that English is not their first language
- Represented our community on the Family Literacy Committee, Inspiring Early Learning Conference, and Appreciation Committee
- Participated on an EYPN committee to strengthen community learning

“The Supervisor Meetings were always welcome during this time. Being at home and having all this new information being sent to us on almost a daily basis was overwhelming. It was so welcoming to know that we were not doing this alone, but also that no-one was really the bearer of all answers. We all learned this together. As a whole planet! I had a couple of other supervisors reach out to me from other daycares. They just wrote to me to say they were there or that they understood some frustrations. It was the professional boost I needed on some days.”

Le Centre Éducatif Les Petits Curieux

Standards of Quality #6: Environment as a Teacher

How did you use innovation to create warm, inviting, and creative spaces?

- Researched ‘doing more with less’
- Reviewed Health and Safety Protocols and asked, “what can we do?”
- Elicited feedback from parents
- Provided children with individual sensory and art bins
- Used plastic mats to create spaces and shower curtains to define spaces
- Used lighting to bring warmth into the space
- Rotated loose parts to allow for ongoing play with these materials
- Reconsidered schedules and outdoor time/spaces
- Reconsidered outdoor materials
- Took books apart and laminated them

“We realized when taking things out of rooms that we didn’t need, and a lot of the “things” fill our rooms. We have really re-imagined with even more open-ended materials to encourage more imaginative play all while keeping true to our philosophy.”

Nursery Two Child Care

Standards of Quality #7: Leadership

What has leadership looked like in your programs throughout Covid19? What have you noticed about our community's collective leadership throughout Covid19?

- Supervisors were available to answer questions to educators-there were many questions!
- Individual educators took on new roles as tasks were delegated to meet new expectations- distributed leadership
- Checked in on team members regularly to ensure they were well
- New relationships and 'peer' mentors formed among supervisors partly due to the bi-weekly supervisor's meetings
- Support by the Municipality was helpful during this time and appreciated
- Partnerships were formed with programs who had not partnered previously
- Supervisors/Educators took on advocacy roles speaking on behalf of the profession to the provincial government
- Programs opened their doors for Emergency Child Care despite fears and uncertainty and were successful
- ECC educators shared their lessons learned from providing care during a pandemic to the community

"We have a great team and going through the continual changes just confirms that for us! Gathering information for this report the following was shared... Hucklebug's admin staff were amazing! There were times when as a staff I felt in the dark – but in reaching out it was the sector as a whole not having the answers! Admin did their best to keep communication open and create new ways to do so!" Hucklebug Child Care Centre

Mentor Visits

The Quality Coordinators (QCs) facilitated mentor visits both in person and virtually with supervisors. Program sites that were closed for a significant amount of time may only have received two mentor visits. QCs felt that it was important to be respectful of supervisors' time in relation to reopening regulations and procedures as we knew this had increased their workloads significantly. Conversations during these visits primarily focused on the well-being of children, families, and educators.

Number of Mentor Visits	Engagement Hours	Administrative Hours
101	135.5	164.5

School Age Working Group

A school age working group had been established to engage school age supervisors in determining a mentor process for their licensed program sites. A sub committee of the working group was tasked to develop an *Environmental Assessment* tool that would align with the *Standards of Quality*, developed by *Investing in Quality* in 2019. Both working groups were put on hold in March 2020 and a meeting date to reconvene this work has been determined for February 2021. The goal on the IIQ workplan is to establish a mentor process for this group as well as we move forward with the expectation that school age programs sites will submit a *QEP* in December 2022 and submit environmental assessments in 2022 (month to be determined).

The second piece of the school age work involves the Resource Consultants and Quality Coordinators working together to identify and implement professional learning for school age program sites that will give strategies in dealing with children with disruptive behaviour. This work is also referenced on page 19 of this report.

Strategic Priority 3 Meaningful Measurement for Quality Improvement

In 2020, the expectation for engagement with *Investing in Quality* had been that all licensed program sites would use the *Educator Interaction Tool* and their choice of an environmental assessment to enhance quality within their individual programs to support quality outcomes for children. Many sites were closed for a significant amount of time due to Covid19 and therefore may not have had the opportunity to complete these tools. This section of the report highlights the success of sites who were able to complete this process, goal accomplishments, as well as the new *Professional Learning Framework* that was developed to support quality.

Accomplishments:

1. Many licensed program sites were unable to complete the *Educator Interaction Tool* and their environmental assessment as planned for 2020. However, 15 sites were able to complete these assessment tools. The box below outlines the number of educators and licensed program sites who were successful in completing these requirements. QCs will be reintroducing these tools during mentor visits in the winter of 2021 with the expectation of completion for the 2021 *Quality Enhancement Plan* submissions.

Number of <i>Educator Interaction Tools</i> Completed	117
Number of program sites who completed <i>Educator Interaction Tool</i>	15

Educators conduct a self-assessment using this tool and in partnership with their supervisor set individual goals for the year about relationships.

Common Goals Set from Self Assessments of *Education Interactor Tool*:

- To learn self-regulation skills and how environments support self regulation
- To invite families to share their culture and traditions within the program
- To increase communication with families through virtual opportunities
- To connect families to outside resources in the community
- To learn with parents to deepen understanding of children through documentation

Environmental Assessments

<i>Number of Licensed Program Sites Who Completed Environmental Assessments (partial or entire tool)</i>	5
<p>Assessments Used by Programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The 360 Audit</i> • <i>Play to Learn-YMCA</i> • <i>A Placed Based Lens for Outdoor Play</i> • <i>Creating Meaningful Environments</i> • <i>The Seven Cs to Outdoor Space Development</i> • <i>The Dreaming Protocol</i> <p><i>*Note:</i> <i>Many licensed program sites indicated they used The Four Foundations of How Does Learning Happen and the health and safety protocols from Peterborough Public Health Unit to assess their spaces this year. These sites are not counted in the numbers in the chart above.</i></p>	

Common Learnings from Environmental Assessments:

- Researched 'doing more with less'
- Reviewed Health and Safety Protocols and asked (focused on), 'what can we do'?
- Took apart books and laminated them for easy disinfecting
- Provided children with individual sensory and art bins
- Used plastic mats to create spaces and shower curtains to define spaces
- Used lighting to bring warmth into the space
- Rotated loose parts to allow for ongoing play with these materials
- Reconsidered schedules and outdoor time/spaces
- Reconsidered outdoor materials

Quality Enhancement Plan Goal Accomplishments in 2020

86% of licensed program sites were able to meet 1 or more goals

Many program sites were still able to meet one or more of their goals despite childcare closures and added safety protocols upon reopening. The ways some program sites achieved these goals were different than they had planned initially, but many were able to pivot to meet the changing needs due to the pandemic.

Under the *Standards of Quality* sections of this report, the steps program sites took to reach these goals have been outlined.

Additional goal accomplishments include:

- Development of staff orientation packages
- Participated in Communities of Practice with team members about Self-Regulation/Mindfulness
- Pilot program facilitated by Resource Consultants working with 6 full day and 8 school age programs for identified training needs by offering Conscious Discipline, Self-Regulation, Functions of Behaviour, Zones of Regulation, etc.
- Development and implementation of additional outdoor programming
- Redesigned outdoor play spaces

2020 Goal Themes	Standards of Quality
Teamwork Staff morale Communication with educators	#1 Relationships #7 Leadership
Parent engagement Communication with families Community Resources	#1 Relationships #5 Community Partnerships #3 Making Learning Visible
Mentorship Building Staff knowledge and skills	#4 Professional Growth & Reflection #7 Leadership

Three licensed program sites did not meet any goals due to extenuating circumstances which included the hiring of a new Executive Director, a program being purchased by another agency and a program being closed for 7 ½ months.

Goal Themes for 2021

Many of the goals this year focused on relationship building. Educators identified that the pandemic has brought to the forefront the importance of finding creative ways to communicate and engage with families and the importance of human connection with one another. The goal themes about relationships, communication with families and making learning visible were also chosen as they linked directly to the Family Satisfaction Survey results of 2020.

The pandemic also encouraged educators to rethink opportunities for outdoor play and consider how environments can play a role in healthy development and wellness. The *2020 Early Development Instrument* results demonstrate that 23.3% of children (aged 4-5 years) in our community are vulnerable in the domains of physical health and well-being and thus these goals are critical for our community.

The *Quality Enhancement Plan* submissions identified a need to explore the topics of diversity, equity, and inclusion in a deeper way. The questions posed on *the Quality Enhancement Plan* were:

1. What resources have you been drawing on and what are you curious to learn more about?
2. What are some of the conversations that your team has been exploring in this area?

Many licensed program sites discussed basic strategies such as having multicultural dolls, puzzles, books, etc. or having parents share meals from their culture. There were a few programs who thought about this theme in a broader sense encompassing more than culture and exploring things such as biases, policies, community partners, etc. For *Investing in Quality*, this is an identified area we need to plan for more strategically.

Goal Themes for 2021

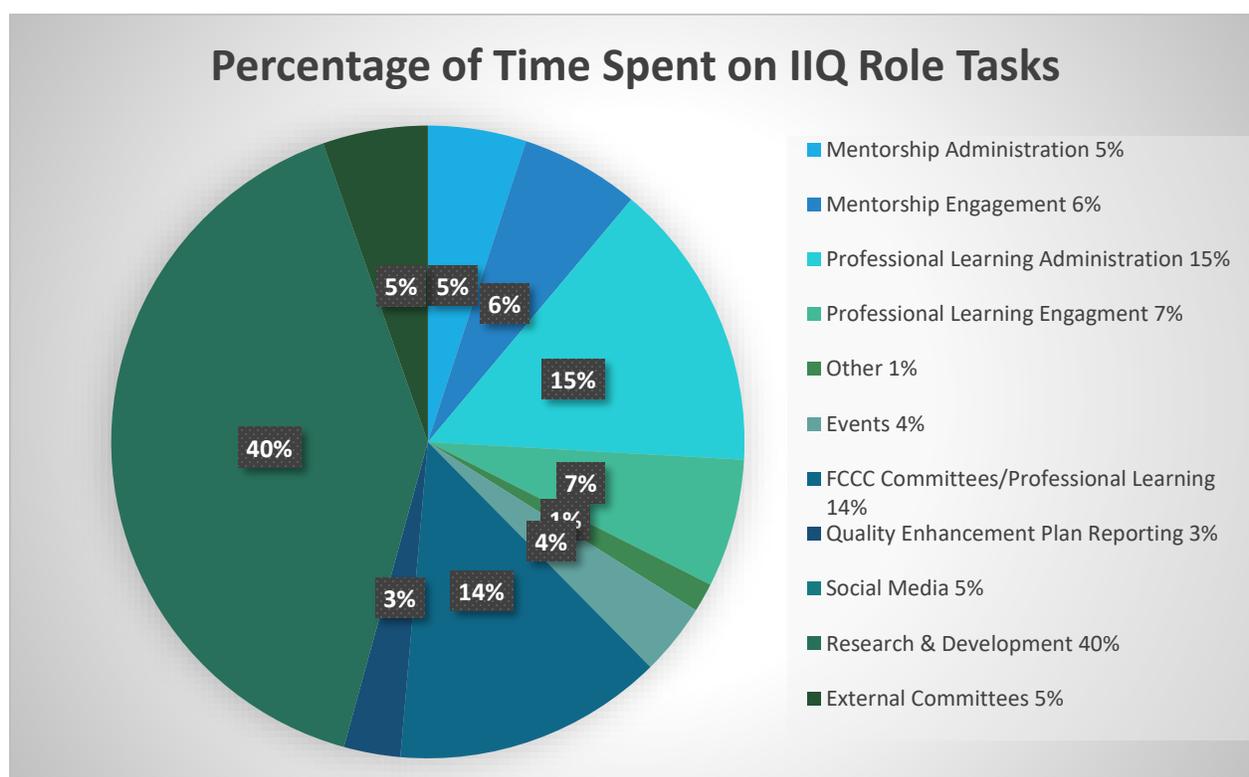
2021 Goal Themes	Standards of Quality
Outdoor Environments & Play	#6 Environment as a Teacher
Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion	#2 Diversity Equity & Inclusion
Relationships	#1 Relationships
Communication with Families	#1 Relationships #3 Making Learning Visible
Making Learning Visible	#3 Making Learning Visible

Strategic Priority 4 Organizational Alignment to Support Transformation

Quality Coordinators and Resource Consultants continued to work together to offer resource supports to early learning programs. These supports included developing and implementing a behavioural support plan for individual programs, participating in appreciation of the early learning community, a Resource Consultant representative on the conference committee and giving feedback on *Quality Enhancement Plan* submissions.

“Several of our educators volunteered for a 10-week course in Conscious Discipline, presented by Amanda Dunn from Five Counties and Kelly Lewis from Trent Child Care. This has provided opportunities for our teams to problem share and lean on each others’ strengths while accepting and acknowledging where we are our weakest. We have continued to offer this course as the year has progressed and will maintain this professional development opportunity for all present and future educators in our Organization.” Trent Child Care

A revised statistical tracking form was developed for *Investing in Quality* to track more accurately where time is being spent in planning, meetings, facilitation, reporting, etc. This system was developed by the Caren Thayer, the City of Peterborough’s Data Analysis Coordinator. The results can be seen in the chart below. This information is based on 1.86 full time equivalent.



Next Steps:

Based on the *Educator Interaction Tool* and programs' *Quality Enhancement Plan* goals, it is apparent that the professional learning themes and mentoring conversations that *Investing in Quality* will be offering this year will focus on the following:

1. Engagement and communication with families which includes how to grow and build relationships, especially during times of virtual communication and social distancing
2. How to support physical development and wellness in children, with an emphasis in outdoor play and environments
3. How to share what children are learning with parents by making their learning visible through sharing and engaging parents with documentation
4. Exploring the themes of equity, diversity, and inclusion in a deeper manner beginning with our own biases
5. Working with the School Age working group and *Investing in Quality* to determine an implementation process for bringing school age programs into the mentor cycle in December 2022 including a bridged *Quality Enhancement Plan*.
6. Resource Consultants and Quality Coordinators continue to work on targeted self-regulation and behaviour support plans for individual programs

These areas of focus will be added to the *Investing in Quality* workplan for 2021.

Conclusion

The early learning community demonstrated resiliency this past year, as they navigated difficult times through a worldwide pandemic. They supported one another in various ways building new relationships which made our community stronger. Many *Quality Enhancement Plan* goals were accomplished, and new goals expanded on previous goals, continuing the important work of quality improvement in early learning and care. Our community should be proud of what they have achieved this year!