

Investing In Quality, Peterborough

Year 8 Annual Report 2016-2017



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Executive Summary

This report describes the progress made during year 8 of the Investing in Quality Initiative (IIQ) and focuses on the four key priorities as outlined in the operational plan.

The first section-priority 1, describes the approaches to and highlights of the professional development offered in the community during year 8, including the number of events, number of participants and examples of feedback received. The professional development described includes both IIQ led and IIQ supported events.

An overview of the work initiated this year between the community, IIQ staff and committee is outlined in section two-priority 2, of this report. This includes the information gleaned from the supervisor's survey on mentor visits and the renewed direction of the mentor program using tools and lenses with a leadership focus that aligns with *How Does Learning Happen?*

Detailed in the third section-priority 3, is information from the engagement submissions. This year's submissions included an action plan that was developed based on feedback from family and staff surveys and program environmental assessments. Programs highlighted the assessment tools they are currently using which gave IIQ helpful information to consider as we move forward. Programs also included information about staff's professional goals which aligns with the College of Early Childhood Education's new continuous professional learning cycle.

Highlights of peer dialogue day can be found in section three-priority 3, as well. Feedback about this day provided useful information as we move forward in supporting best practice to provide quality early learning programs in our community.

Section four outlines the work that the committee and staff have accomplished with strategic priority number 4 which includes the realignment of the Quality Initiative job role, development of leadership lenses and tools and a new mentor visit cycle.

Recommendations for moving forward are at the end of this report and the appendix provides an infographic, Investing in Quality 2017-A Year in Review.

Introduction

This report describes the progress made in 2017 with the strategic priorities identified in the operational plan (2015) for Investing in Quality, Peterborough (IIQ) committee. 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

This was the third year using the revised submission requirements with the expectation to participate in peer dialogue reflection day becoming optional. Information and data used in this report has been gathered from a number of sources, including engagement submissions, peer dialogue day, professional learning opportunities and mentor visits. Examples from programs and quotes from participants have been included, with their permission.

The IIQ staff and committee spent a considerable amount of time this year reviewing existing quality initiative plans from other communities and exploring what systems, tools and lenses would support our community's programs best. As a result new lenses and tools were developed for mentor visits with a focus on growing reflective leaders.

All of these factors impacted the local early learning profession and influenced the implementation of the priorities of the strategic plan. This report contains four sections each reporting on one of the strategic priorities with recommendations for moving forward with the initiative.

Strategic Priority 1: Champion Professional Learning that Influences Practice

This past year saw the arrival of legislation for Continuous Professional Learning from the College of ECE. A recommended practice for several years, it will now be a requirement for all RECEs. This has implications for individuals, programs and the IIQ initiative. Since its inception, IIQ has been promoting professional learning. For the first time this year, the engagement submission did not require programs to send in the hours of staff professional learning. Instead, it asked programs to have staff develop professional goals for the coming year. These are all steps towards championing 'professional learning that influences practice'.

EVENTS (For attendance numbers, see chart at end of section)

Leadership Events

Since How Does Learning Happen? came out in 2014, the focus has been on supporting the content and vision of the pedagogy. This has been for both educators and those in supervisory positions. With the implementation of the Child Care and Early Years Act (CCEYA) in 2015, there have been numerous changes to operating and licensing practices which fall under the responsibility of supervisors and administrators. Along with Phase 1 and 2, programs are still dealing with the impact of full day kindergarten and keeping up with changes from the College of ECE such as the legislated Continuous Professional Learning (CPL) program.

Not surprisingly, there has been an expressed interest in the community for opportunities for professional learning for those in leadership roles. This past year there were two individual events planned as well as a leadership series starting in the fall of 2017 and continuing in 2018.

Respectful Communication

We know that relationships - with children, colleagues and families - are central in our sector. In keeping with this, Michael Lewis spoke on 'Respectful Communication' in the fall of 2016. Good communication is a foundation for relationships with children, families and between staff. An understanding of what respectful communication looks like is important in building strong relationships.

Participant comments:

- "It's important that you are a true listener. Push away things and give our attention to the person/conversation happening at the time."
- "That every day we work in silos but a day like today we came together and realize that we share the same struggles, wants, ideas and passion. Sharing is powerful!"

Looking at Leadership

It was a pleasure to bring Elaine Winick to Peterborough. She has been active in multiple ways in the early learning and care sector over many years - with the AECEO, the College of ECE and its Leadership Projects as well as teaching and research. She brings many years of experience and different perspectives when she speaks. Many participants expressed a desire that the session had been longer.

Participant comments:

- "I believe defining the words helped me see what my ability was in each of those roles and where I might need to grow."
- "Staff meetings to give dissenters a platform to talk about one thing and then move on help people find their genius."

Leadership Series: The Leader Within

This was the first in a series to support leadership over the coming year (2017-18). Understanding ourselves provides a foundation for future explorations related to leadership. Karen Sjolin spoke about how our internal compass influences our leadership approach and presence.

Participant comments:

- "Thank you for allowing/teaching us to give ourselves permission to be present in the moment today."
- "Loved the values work to be done beforehand. Really enjoyed the chance to think things through."

Other Events

Communities of Practice: Environments as a Place of Research

This three part series was offered in the fall of 2016. It explored the role of the educator as a researcher. Using observation and documentation, it encouraged educators to develop curiosity and inquiry skills in day to day practice. The focus was on looking at the environment and how it can influence the program and experiences for the children.

Participant comments:

- "the need to pause and observe stepping back even more than I have been / to allow the children more time to think and explore."
- "how significantly the environment can impact children learning and behaviour."





Self-Regulation

Educators frequently express interest in more information and support for 'challenging behaviour'. Brenda Smith-Chant is a Trent professor of psychology and an associate with the MEHRIT Centre (home of Dr. Stuart Shanker's Self-Reg framework). Dr. Shanker's research has been influential provincially (Think, Feel, Act) and we are fortunate to have this resource in our local community. One of the key messages Dr. Smith-Chant shared was the idea of reframing behaviour and asking whether it is 'misbehaviour or stress behaviour'. Changing the lens that we look through can make a significant difference in how we approach behaviour as well as on our own level of stress.

Participant comments:

- "I found learning about the difference between stress behaviour vs. misbehaviour is so important and I didn't look at it that way before."
- "realizing 'behaviours' aren't always misbehaving children it could be a stress that occurred that day/morning/night before."
- "my own anxiety problems have been illuminated by my learning on self-reg."

Hands-On Documentation

Ellen Brown, a student of Dr. Carol Anne Wien and member of the Ontario Reggio Association presented a day on pedagogical documentation, looking at the idea of "learning" as making meaning, and an opportunity to experience creating documentation.

Participant comments:

- "the understanding what is pedagogical documentation is how to explore more than pictures."
- "observe more and see what they are doing / listen to what they are saying so I see what is really happening not what I think is happening."

Book Study: The Visionary Director

Beginning in February, a group of supervisors has been meeting on a monthly basis to read and discuss this excellent book. Several had read it many years previously and enjoyed it. However, there was a feeling that reading it over time and discussing it with others has added new understanding and depth to their reading.

Continuous Professional Learning: College of ECE

As we move into the 2nd stage of CPL, the IIQ committee recognized the need for more information to support RECEs with these new requirements. Melanie Dixon, Director of Professional Practice with the CECE, spoke in October to a large group of educators. There were a range of responses.

Participant comments:

- "Thank you for the information. I went away feeling this isn't as stressful as I thought!"
- "just needed to know I was on the right track"
- "Got off to a slow start because of the background information. The information about the cpl, choosing 3 goals and documenting how we will meet them was good."

IEL Conference

This year the annual spring conference had a new name. Recognizing that there was at least one other conference with the same name, the conference committee opened up suggestions from the community in 2016. The final name chosen was "Inspiring Early Learning Conference" and the winner received free registration to the 2017 event.

The keynote speaker this year was Martin Liberio who was extremely well received. Although he has presented in other surrounding communities, some participants commented that he was the main reason for attending. His message focused on the importance of creating environments that are welcoming and respectful for children. This very much connects with the vision of *HDLH?* and the underlying values connected to the four foundations.

This was also the 25th anniversary of the conference which was marked by a display letters of recognition and a look back at with photos.

Participant comments:

- (keynote) "A great way to start the day! An important message presented in a way that minimizes the possibility of ECEs taking it personally and moving in a new direction positively."
- (keynote) "Martin is a breath of fresh air and is so inspiring. He really affirms building a home away from home and allowing children to create lifelong memories."
- "Great workshops offered, variety of topics."
- (Self-care) "Really enjoyed this workshop. Julie was a wonderful presenter and so good for the caregivers well- being and how to look after ourselves not just children's well- being."



Cooks' Conference

This year's conference was influenced by the third phase of the Healthy Kids Community Challenge (HKCC). The focus was 'Choose to Boost Veggies and Fruit' in order to support healthy eating. Held again at Myrtle's Kitchen at the health unit, this linked with other initiatives of promoting gardening in child care programs with the support of Nourish Peterborough. Unique this year was having a morning workshop for educators, the Cooks conference in the afternoon and a shared lunch time.

Networks

There were two Early Learning meetings hosted at programs, offering educators the opportunity to see other sites. The first network had a focus on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) which came out of a third party visit conversation around current interests in a classroom. The second was on early and emergent literacy and linked to the SLHAP conference in May. The Cooks' network continued to benefit from the support of the Health Unit. Topics this year included fish recipes, menu planning, CCEYA new requirements and the Good Beginnings program.

Let's Talk about Gun and Weapon Play

Coming out of an article in the IIQ newsletter, two evenings were held for educators to discuss the challenges with this type of play. A series of reflective questions were offered to the groups to explore some of their thoughts and responses.

Community Events

Again this year there were a number of opportunities from community members.

- Program Tours: This event took place in the spring and the fall and was as popular as ever. In considering ways to offer more depth, one program was approached about adding an interactive reflective piece at their centre. Unfortunately, due to printing difficulties it didn't occur. However, it will be considered for the next tours.
- Peterborough Public Health, which was one of the organizations involved with the HKCC, offered two different programs.
 - Come Cook with Us is a series of four sessions covering topics such as menu planning, promoting positive feeding relationships between caregiver and child and healthy eating programming ideas. This series was offered three times.
 - You're the Chef! This is a hands-on cooking program for school age children. It is designed
 to help develop skills and confidence necessary for children to prepare healthy and tasty
 recipes. It was offered three times which included a session at the IEL Conference.
 - 'Lots of amazing ideas and very knowledgeable fun. Can't wait to start cooking with my children.' (participant)
- Let It Grow! With funds from HKCC, Nourish offered this morning workshop to educators.
- Five Counties Children's Centre
 - Mind in the Making: strategies for improving the skill of 'Making Connections' and the idea that social, emotional, and intellectual learning are inextricably linked.
 - o Teacher Talk A, which has been offered in the past few years, was again offered in June.
 - Supporting Positive Behaviour: recognizing the interest of educators in dealing with different types of behaviour, Michelle Erridge presented this evening workshop.

Professional Learning Summary:

Activity	Number	Hours offered	Attendance	Total hours of participation
Events	21	87	802	2206

	Event	Attendance
1	Self-Regulation (IIQ)	70
2	Environments as a Place of Research (IIQ)	25
3	Respectful Communication (IIQ)	33
4	Book Study: The Visionary Director (IIQ)	8
5	Let's Talk about Gun and Weapon Play (1, 2 & 3)	45
	(IIQ)	
6	Hands-On Documentation (IIQ)	30
7	Looking at Leadership (IIQ with Northumberland)	33
8	The Leader Within (IIQ)	30
9	CPL with the College of ECE (IIQ)	65
10	Inspiring Early Learning Conference (IIQ)	171 (109 local)
11	Taking Care of Ourselves (IIQ)	28
12	Mind in the Making (FCCC)	28
13	Planning for Positive Behaviour Support (FCCC)	25
14	Teacher Talk A (FCCC)	11
15	Come Cook with Us (PPH) (x 4)	54
16	You're the Chef! (PPH) (x 4)	53
17	Let It Grow! (HKCC / Nourish)	22
18	Cooks' Conference (IIQ / PPH)	18
19	Cooks' Network (4)	39
20	Early Learning Network (2)	32
21	Centre Tours (2)	80
22	School Age Network (1)	15

Strategic Priority 2: Enhance Learning through Mentorship

IIQ staff continued to do mentor visits within 29 early learning programs visiting each centre at least once during the year. Mentor visits were conducted in a similar fashion as the previous year. A hold was put on the visits in the Fall of 2017 as the IIQ committee and staff reviewed the mentor process and determined next steps. It was identified by both the staff and the IIQ committee that a clearly articulated focus for mentor visits using relevant tools and lenses and a consistent reporting format was needed. Both the committee and staff also felt that we needed to make the best use of our resources in order to sustain growth in our community.

As mentioned in the introduction, the IIQ staff and committee spent a considerable amount of time over this past year reviewing existing quality initiative plans from other communities and exploring what systems, tools and lenses would support our community's programs. Six outcomes have been a direct result of this research:

- 1. A renewed focus for mentor visits. A new Engagement Resource Guide was developed by Investing in Quality Peterborough and outlines the focus and approach of the visits moving forward in January 2018. "We believe that in order to grow programs we need to develop reflective leaders. Strengthening leadership within the early learning community builds capacity, best practice and professionalism. We do this by providing a number of professional development opportunities and through peer mentoring supervisors within programs." (Investing in Quality Peterborough, Engagement Resource Guide)
- 2. A new Engagement Resource Guide was developed that outlines the vision for the mentor program, how mentor visits will look moving forward, the cycle of mentor visits, tools and lenses, the engagement submission template, resources and research for programs.
- 3. A cycle of mentorship was developed that supports the ability to develop relationships and work on building leadership within programs. IIQ peer mentors will now visit each program 3 times throughout the year with a specific focus for each visit.

Visit 1 January-March Focus: Appreciative Inquiry Lens

Visit 2 April-July Focus: Leadership Lens

Visit 3 August-December Focus: Action Plan development (with template)

- 4. **New tools and lenses** for mentor visits were developed. The purpose of these tools and how to use them are outlined in the *Engagement Resource Guide*. To give an overall summary of their purpose would be that they have a leadership focus based on *How Does Learning Happen?* and each lens builds upon the other to support the writing of the action plan which will be the engagement submission going forward.
- 5. A consistent reporting format will be used by IIQ peer mentors and shared with programs after each visit. These summary reports will include mentoring discussion notes and identified resources and supports needed (books, training, communities of practice, etc.). Summary reports are intended to track goals identified by programs and supports that are needed to support staff, not as an assessment of programs or staff.
- 6. **A new submission requirement** was refined from previous years. The engagement submission for 2018 will be due on December 15th and will be action plans which programs have developed using the templates provided.

Survey of Mentor Visits

In June of 2017 the Data Analysis Coordinator for the City of Peterborough conducted a survey on the benefits of mentor visits. The surveys were sent out to 40 supervisors with 15 completing them.

The key benefits of mentor visits and the summary report identified were:

- Provided recommendations for educators to expand on their practice
- Helped programs to prioritize needs for moving forward
- Was a good reference guide to check back to

Direct impacts of mentor visits and summaries of programs were:

- Increased and diversified toys, increased musical, art and outdoor activities
- More complex materials offered
- New program formats were developed with re-defined goals

Impacts of mentor visits and summaries on educators and supervisors were:

- The engagement of more reflective practice
- Summary reports were brought to team meetings for discussion among the entire staff and some programs used the information from the reports to develop their program objectives for the year
- Staff identified that they felt empowered by the visit and information in the summary report and it motivated them to implement change

Excerpts and quotes from the mentor visit summary report support the direction IIQ mentor visits are moving towards:

"Building relationships is very important because it allows supervisors to share more honestly with the mentor and be more "in the moment" during conversations. The supervisor and mentor can then work together to create strategies and goals for how to improve the concerns."

"Since families and children's needs change year to year, it would be nice to have an initial mentor visit in Sept/Oct with a follow-up visit in Feb/March of the same school year. This would give the mentor an opportunity to see what was applied from the summary report."



"I would like IIQ to know how much our programs appreciate all the work they do. The opportunities and the PL options that have been available to us over the past 5 years+ have been just amazing and has made a very big impact for all our sites. Thank You! You are making a difference in the lives of many children and families and educators."

It is clear from this feedback that the mentor visits provided support, new learning and changes in practice for many programs. The excerpts and quotes from the report also gave good direction for the staff and IIQ committee in the development of a refocused mentorship program.

Strategic Priority 3: Meaningful Measurement for Quality Improvement

Engagement Submissions

Twenty-eight submissions were received and reviewed by the IIQ staff. The submissions provided valuable information to guide the committee/community in considering how to move forward with strategic priority number 3.

Review of Standards

Standard 3: Family Survey

Twenty-three programs administered surveys to families. The total number of surveys that were distributed cannot be reported on this year as this question was not asked in the engagement submission.

A number of programs used the family surveys to develop their action plans. As a result of these action plans some concrete changes have happened in programs:

- A new school age programs opened
- Revision of documentation strategies and protocols were developed
- Expanded upon outdoor experiences/environments with loose parts
- More flexible payment options-swipe card machines for parents
- Communication strategies enhanced with parents-child portfolios
- Updated menus built on PPH healthy eating initiative
- More formalized staff meetings with strategic items
- Program times were changed to meet parent needs
- Created more staff appreciation strategies that were successfully implemented



The City of Peterborough with the help of an advisory committee through the Early Years Planning Network is developing a standardized family survey that will be consistent across programs. Expected implementation is to happen in the spring of 2018 and the municipality will support the distribution of these surveys. Feedback from supervisors has been positive noting that this will take a large amount of responsibility off of them. They are looking forward to getting the collated results to use towards making improvements within their programs. Some supervisors have indicated some concerns about the survey being too generic. There will be the opportunity for programs to add some of their own questions to the survey to personalize it for their programs.

Standard 4: Staff Survey

Seven programs administered staff surveys. The total number of surveys that were distributed cannot be reported on this year as this question was not asked in the engagement submission. Some of the actions taken as a result of the staff surveys were:

- A focus on staff compensation resulted in an increase in salaries
- The Board of Directors is researching pension plan options for staff
- One-on-one support is being given to staff to support professional goal setting

- Staff indicated a need for more planning time so 45 minutes of program planning time has been allotted each day per staff
- New staff planning sheets were developed to support staff who were struggling with planning
- More structure was incorporated into staff meetings
- Encouragement of staff to develop leadership skills by presenting, researching and implementing innovative program ideas with team members

Standard 5: Environmental Assessment

Programs indicated that they are using a variety of tools to assess their environments. These tools are being used regularly and some programs have developed their own tools. Both program staff and supervisors are participating in environmental assessments. Some of the tools programs are using are:

*DECA *ECERS *ITERS *For the Sake of Play *Ministry Checklist

*HDLH? *ELECT *Environmental Scales *3rd Party Visits

Almost all programs commented that they are using *HDLH?* as part of their environment tool and are exploring ways to implement the four foundations into the environment. A number of programs commented that they found 3rd party assessments helpful in supporting them rethink their environments. It was also noted by some programs that although they do a checklist at least once a year, that daily conversations and reflections with team members supports quality improvements within their environments the most. Many programs considered the results from their



environmental assessments to set goals for their action plans.

Programs are exploring a variety of areas when considering the results from their checklists:

- Exploring schemas by observing what children are doing with materials
- Creating spaces to support self-regulation in programs
- Offering more open ended materials and loose parts
- Reconsidering the materials they offer in their outdoor play areas
- Considering the environment as the third teacher
- How to create spaces that support parent engagement within the program

Standard 16: Professional Learning

As mentioned on page 10, this year early learning staff were asked to identify professional learning goals. This requirement was timely with the College of Early Childhood Education's new Continuous Professional Learning Cycle beginning. A S.M.A.R.T goal setting template was distributed to support educators in formulating goals. Many programs already had the practice of staff setting individual goals and for other programs this was new. There were some common themes regarding goals which will certainly inform IIQ for this coming year in professional development opportunities.

Professional learning goal themes:

*Loose Parts *Documentation *How Does Learning Happen? *Self-Regulation

*Supporting Children with Special Needs

Standard 17: Professional Engagement

IIQ did not ask educators this year what professional memberships they held so we cannot speak to this. What we can say is that a number of educators have demonstrated engagement in in our community through such things as communities of practice, peer dialogue reflection day, network groups and ongoing professional development. Some educators are demonstrating leadership by co-facilitating network groups. A number of individuals within the early learning community sit on/or chair local committees and working groups such as: The Inspiring Early Learning Conference Committee, the Appreciation Evening Committee, the Supervisors Network, the Peterborough Early Years Planning Network, etc.

Peer Dialogue

One peer dialogue day was held this year in October. It offered an opportunity for the early learning community and partners to come together to have shared discussions on leadership practices with topics focusing on values, mentorship, professional development, planning and ideas for moving forward with engagement in our community. Twenty-five people attended this day and IIQ received positive feedback from those who participated about how this day was an important part of their reflective practice.

Some interesting things we learned from these discussions are that programs are considering their program statements as a critical document and are regularly revisiting them with staff to determine if they are living in to these statements in their daily work. Programs also felt that we need to explore the mentor role more and determine ways to grow future leaders. There was discussion about a more formalized mentorship program within in our community that the IIQ staff could support the structure for. It was very clear from the feedback that early learning staff valued this day and wanted a day for just program staff as well.

2017 Appreciation Dinner

In November 165 educators came together for the annual appreciation dinner to celebrate. The acapella group Unity opened the evening with prayer and with beautiful voices in song. Brian Nichols was the guest speaker and spoke of his journey as a life-long learner which fit beautifully with the direction of our College of Early Childhood Educators. Sandra Robinson spoke to the changes we have been facing in the early learning profession and inspired us with a video that demonstrated her confidence that we could meet the challenges together as a community. We also used this opportunity to say thank you to Susan Scoffin as she left the role as the Investing in Quality Initiative Coordinator this year to pursue her teaching career.

Strategic Priority 4: Organizational Alignment to Support Transformation

The Investing in Quality committee focused this year on the 'refresh' of the strategic plan, operating plan and priorities. This work resulted in a committee action plan with an associated timeline for task completion. It also supported the thoughtful development by staff of the re-alignment of mentor visits with a leadership focus, a newly defined engagement cycle, the development of leadership lenses and tools and an Engagement Resource Guide. Additionally, the committee supported the development of system-wide standardized surveys for parent and staff feedback. The committee also explored linkages with the Special Needs Resourcing Review committee.

Recommendations for Moving Forward

- Through mentorship and professional learning, support programs to engage their educators as partners in growing and sustaining quality in early learning environments
- Continue to make visible how this practice aligns with the image of educators as described in *HDLH?* and professional expectations (i.e. Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice)
- Consider more ways for sharing promising practices (e.g. peer dialogue reflection day)
- A number of programs have identified that they would find an environmental assessment based on *How Does Learning Happen*? helpful and would support the alignment of the new pedagogy within environments
- Possibly survey programs with the support of the DAC, concerning their ideas about how IIQ could support the development of an environmental checklist based on *How Does Learning Happen?*
- The engagement submissions gave evidence that programs need more mentoring support in setting goals that are concrete and achievable. This is one area IIQ staff will consider as they do their mentor visits in 2018
- Peer Dialogue Reflection Day: the adjusted format of a shorter day and later start to the morning worked well. There were many thoughtful conversations and much energy within the room. We will continue with this format in future
- In the spring and fall of 2018 deliver workshops on developing action plans, the continuous professional learning cycle and hold a half day peer reflection day for program staff with the focus on building leaders
- Development of a standardized staff survey to be distributed in the spring of 2019
- Possible ideas to keep in mind for strategic planning: building a formal mentorship model in community and exploring how to grow PD that supports changing practice

Appendix

Infographic-Investing in Quality Peterborough 2017, 'A Year in Review."