

Professional Learning Survey Report 2016

Investing In Quality Peterborough



Report on the results from the Professional Learning Survey from June 2016.

Professional Learning Survey Report: 2016

Gathering information about professional learning needs and interests is an important piece in understanding and supporting our early learning and care community. It offers the opportunity to learn about the broad range of activities and interests among educators, it can help to identify some emerging trends and also demonstrates to the community the importance given to feedback from those working in the sector.

In early summer, Investing In Quality (IIQ) staff circulated a survey on professional learning in our area. The specific purpose of this survey was to elicit information focusing on strengths, successes in practice, information linked to *How Does Learning Happen? (HDLH?)*, and gathering information about the place of self-directed learning locally.

Background

When the initiative began in 2008, there was a need to gather and record information as a point of reference for the future. In the early years of the IIQ initiative, the professional learning survey contained several questions based on numbers and background information. This served the purpose of gathering information about professional learning but also about the make-up of our local community. Much of the information was quantitative such as asking for the number of events in which people participated. As the initiative continues to move forward and to be guided by changes in early learning provincially and globally, there is a place for gathering information differently.

There are also changes within the culture in our community. For most people, professional learning has become a more integral part of their work. Although part of this stems from requirements for participating in Raising the Bar (RTB), it is also possible that as people have engaged in various types of professional learning, they have recognized the intrinsic benefits for themselves. Professional learning engages us in our day to day work, can support our current practice or offer new approaches to challenges we encounter and it can keep us engaged in the possibilities of working with children, families and colleagues.

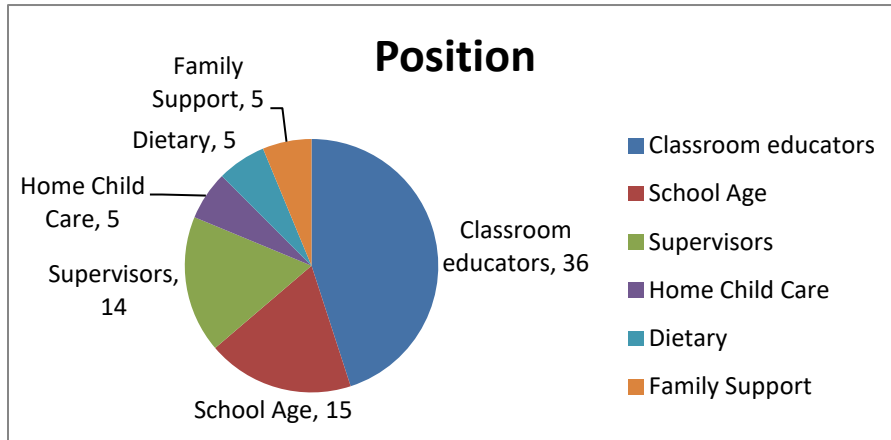
In this most recent survey, the inclusive language used recognized that all those working in early learning and care are 'educators', whether they work mostly in an administrative role, in supporting healthy eating or in the classroom. Since we promote a strength-based approach with children, we also want to hold a high image of educators as reflected in *HDLH?* which sees children, families and educators as all being capable and competent.

The 2016 survey was distributed mostly online through the support of program staff email addresses and through IIQ email distribution lists. It generated 65 responses. The main questions (see appendix Page) were developed from a strength-based focus in line with the work of IIQ staff supporting programs. Sample quotes are included with several questions.

Q1: What type of program do you work in? What is your role?

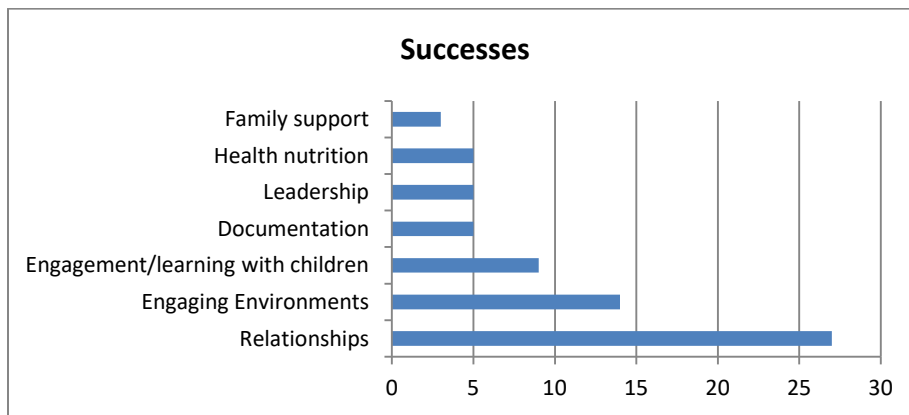
This year there were 65 responses compared with 81 in 2012 and 45 in 2014.

Note: In the chart below, several of the School Age staff also self- identified as site supervisors so the total number of positions is greater than 65.



Q2: Describe 1 or 2 aspects of your practice where you feel you are most successful.

There were a variety of responses. Some of the themes which came out are reflected in the chart below. The top three themes could be gathered together under the headings of Relationships, Environments, and Learning /Engaging with children.



Relationships

- "...making a child feel secure, safe and needed!"
- "creating a team atmosphere and building positive relationships among staff, children and families"

Environments

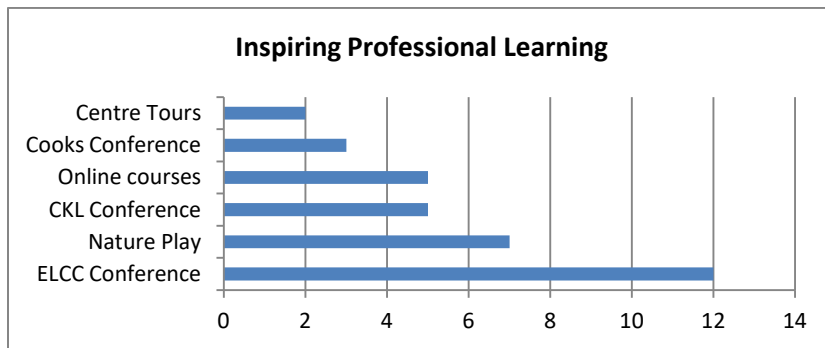
- "providing a safe and nurturing environment
- "engaging the children's interests through to the end of the day"

Engaging

- "learning with the children and seeing things through their eyes"

Q3: What was the most inspiring professional learning experience you had in the last 12 - 18 months? Why was it inspiring? (Could include experiences beyond workshops/conferences such as books, study groups, etc.).

The chart shows the numbers for the top 6 responses. There were also a variety of other single responses demonstrating the range of activities that people are engaged in and also underlining the importance of having a wide variety of options. There is no 'one size fits all'.



Q4: How did this professional learning experience affect your practice? Do you still see its influence in your practice today?

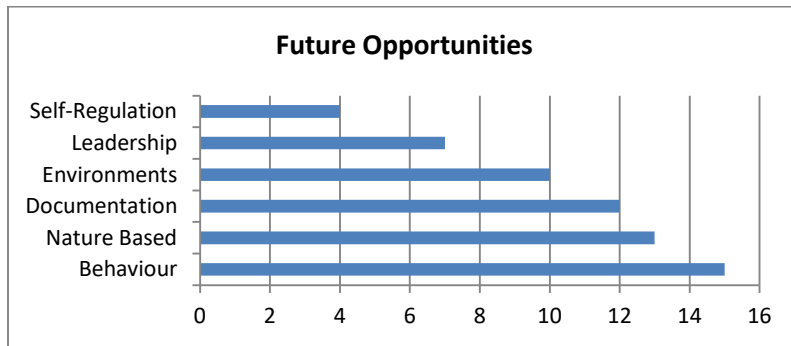
This question recognizes that attending or participating in professional learning is not the final goal. The intent is for it to have an impact on daily practice, whether with children, families or staff. The goal of all professional learning is to influence practice in a positive way. This change often takes place over time and is not always immediate.

- (3) *"Susan Stacey's keynote....was especially inspiring with regard to an approach to observation and its role in program/environmental planning"*
 - (4) *"I definitely look at our environment in a different way when assessing what is working and what is not in following the learning of the children we see in our programs"*
- (3) *"seeing (online) different types of experiences that other educators have set up and seeing inspirational messages about how children learn, how we influence their lives and their development"*
 - (4) *" This professional learning experience affects my practice on how I conduct my classroom, for example setting out different types of experiences for the children and different approaches to different types of children's behaviours."*

Q5: What professional learning opportunities do you believe would support your program for this coming year? (Please be as specific as possible.)

Q6: What would you like to learn more about? (Please be as specific as possible.)

The top 6 responses to these 2 questions are reflected together in the following chart. There were a variety of other responses including stress management, CCEYA, yoga, Reggio and early literacy.

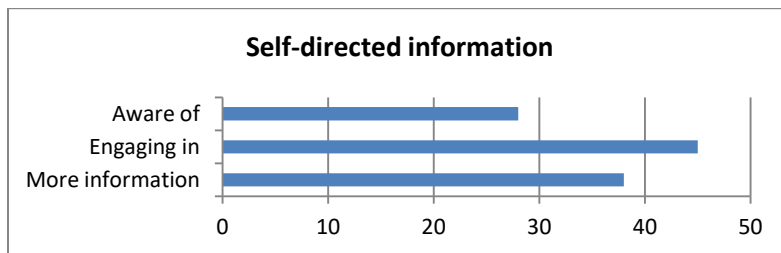


Q7: Are you aware of the possibility of self-directed learning ? (e.g. reading articles, webinars, books, etc.)

Q8: Did you engage in any self-directed learning during the past year? If yes, what were the benefits and/or drawbacks for you?

Q9: Would you like more information or support around self-directed learning?

The responses to all 3 questions are reflected in the following chart. These questions are new for this survey. There is more information contained in the summary at the end of the report.



Q10: Is there anything else you would like to tell us about professional learning in the Peterborough early learning and care community?

- "I am so grateful to be in a community that offers quality professional learning opportunities - I always learn useful information"
- "I so appreciate the IIQ committee and their work to bring all the opportunities to our community....our agency appreciates the affordability of it. THANK YOU"
- "more leadership professional development"
- "keep in mind the educational background of some of the participants - not everyone speaks "RECE"

Analyzing the information

Although some of the questions remain the same from the previous survey, several are different this time. Information about what people are doing and what they identify as their needs and interests continues to be important information to gather. As mentioned at the beginning, there is also a focus this time on the influence of *HDLH?* and also gathering information about self-directed learning.

Influence of HDLH?

When *HDLH?* came out in the spring of 2014, it was recognized that engaging the community with the document would be a key focus and this was reflected in the IIQ staff work plans. Through newsletters, professional learning opportunities and conversations, the vision of *HDLH?* has guided the work over the past two years.

Within the document there are several key words and phrases which occur frequently. In reviewing the survey, we looked for evidence of this in the responses to Q2 and Q4.

- **Q2:** *Describe 1 or 2 aspects of your practice where you feel you are most successful.*

In the 63 responses, 59 used language echoing the language of *HDLH?*:

- relationships (between educators and children/families/colleagues/ 18)
- interaction and engagement (9)
- awareness of environments (7)
- awareness of programming (11)
- learning along with children/seeing their perspectives (4)
- documentation and observation (5)
- inquiry and emergent learning (2)
- support for families (3)

- **Q4:** *How did this professional learning experience affect your practice? Do you still see its influence in your practice today?*

Responses to this question also found similar language connections. Of 59 responses, 50 show possible evidence of the influence of *HDLH?*:

- awareness of best practice (considering new ways to do things/self-reflective practice) (25)
- engagement (25)
- relationships and processes (11)

What does this mean? Although we cannot be certain, it may indicate that educators are incorporating and being influenced, directly or indirectly, by the content and vision articulated in *HDLH?*. This might be through reading, attending professional learning, a focus in their place of work or discussions with colleagues. Since *HDLH?* is the foundation document for early learning and care in Ontario, it is important to see evidence of its adoption in the workplace. To find so many references strongly suggests a positive shift in our community.

Self-Directed Learning

When people think of professional learning, most tend to think primarily of workshops and conferences and these do play a very important role. However, as we move forward, it is also necessary to consider how to support a broader range of professional learning.

When RTB was adopted locally, all staff were to submit a record of events and their hours of professional learning. The intent was to encourage and ensure that staff were accessing new learning and information. This has helped to create a culture for most where professional learning is seen as a regular part of the work we do.

Due to personal time constraints, distances, young families, costs, etc., it is important to offer alternatives to traditional workshops and conferences. Recognizing this, in June 2014 IIQ staff created a page on the website dedicated to resources for self-directed learning as well as offering information and resources in newsletters, emails and at network meetings. This also aligns with the Continuous Professional Learning (CPL) program from the College of ECE for RECEs. Self-directed learning reflects the growing adoption of lifelong learning which is recognized as an important component for healthy living. It also reflects the increasing rate of change and new information available in our world today.

Three of the questions in this survey were on self-directed learning. Simply by including the questions, we hoped to raise more awareness of this practice. We were also seeking to know if people were aware of and understood the term, how they were engaging with it and what might support them moving forward. Of the 65 responses to the survey, 26 (more than 1/3) identified awareness of it and 45 gave examples of what they are currently doing. There were also many responses indicating an interest in getting more and/or new information about some of the opportunities available.

Since many people identified as not being very familiar with it and many were interested in more information and/or support, this will continue to be a focus and we will distribute information such as the piece in the Fall 2016 newsletter.

Learning that Influences Practice

In the strategic plan, the first priority is to 'Champion Professional Learning that Influences Practice'. Question 4 looks directly at this priority: *'How did this professional learning experience affect your practice? Do you still see its influence in your practice today?'*

As stated earlier, 'attending or participating in professional learning is not the final goal. The intent is to have an impact on daily practice, whether with children, families or staff. The goal of all professional learning is to influence practice in a positive way.' An important part of this is recognizing that change is often not immediate and can take place over time. Although this is more difficult to quantify, it is the more important piece. We may wish to see immediate results but knowledge grows incrementally. The comments in the survey demonstrate this in people's reflections:

- "It made me reconsider some of my current practices....."
- "As a result, my team has begun an outdoor planning process with short and long term goals and have been implementing some of our plans."
- "I have been more aware of supporting physical development and talking to parents about the learning taking place...."

Summary

The importance of ongoing professional learning in our sector has moved to the forefront in the last decade. Recognition of its importance continues to grow. Engaging with new ideas and reflecting on our current practice helps to keep us all more engaged and satisfied with our work as well as keeping us more responsive to the people we encounter and new research that comes forward. It has also become a central piece of the professionalism of early learning and care.

For IIQ, *HDL* will continue to be a key driver of what is planned and offered. Planning for future professional learning opportunities is also based on emerging trends and feedback from the community. Taken together with the new protocol for planning, these will influence choices made over the next 12 to 24 months such as the fall sessions on self-regulation, respectful communication and loose parts. These reflect some key areas from the survey such as leadership, child development and behaviour, and environments. Along with these we will continue to:

- promote opportunities for self-directed learning
- promote reflective practice
- offer at least two Communities of Practice this coming year plus Peer Dialogue
- offer opportunities on leadership
- continue to bring in outside perspectives

By promoting a diverse and responsive range of opportunities as well as a reflective model, we will continue to support continued growth as we learn together with educators.

(The results of the survey will also be shared with the planning committee for the April conference to assist in planning for 2017.)

Appendix

Professional Learning Survey 2016

The Investing in Quality committee is committed to supporting quality in early learning and care programs in our area. Your input will help with planning opportunities that best meet the professional learning needs and goals of the community. Thank you for answering the following questions openly.

2016 Professional Learning Survey

Question 1

What type of program do you work in? What is your role?

Question 2

Describe 1 or 2 aspects of your practice where you feel you are most successful.

Question 3

What was the most inspiring professional learning experience you had in the last 12 - 18 months? Why was it inspiring? (Could include experiences beyond workshops/conferences such as books, study groups, etc.).

Question 4

How did this professional learning experience affect your practice? Do you still see its influence in your practice today?

Question 5

What professional learning opportunities do you believe would support your program for this coming year? (Please be as specific as possible.)

Question 6

What would you like to learn more about? (Please be as specific as possible.)

Question 7

Are you aware of the possibility of self-directed learning ? (e.g. reading articles, webinars, books, etc.)

Question 8

Did you engage in any self-directed learning during the past year? If yes, what were the benefits and/or drawbacks for you?

Question 9

Would you like more information or support around self-directed learning?

Question 10

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about professional learning in the Peterborough early learning and care community?

Thank you for completing this survey. It will help us plan the best professional education opportunities for you and your colleagues in the coming year.