



# Raising the Bar

## *Early Childhood Education*

An ASCY Community Initiative

Peterborough's Early Learning and Child Care Community's  
Commitment to Best Practices in High Quality Child Care

### Phase One Report

September 2010



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# Acknowledgements

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## Executive Summary

The Raising the Bar logic model was developed to measure the effects of efforts by Executive Directors and Supervisors along with increased support/mentorship by a Project Coordinator to implement community standards relating to quality assurance, best practices in management and professionalism as defined by Raising the Bar on Quality program.

Research suggests high quality early child care environments increase positive outcomes in children and families and are cost-effective for society. A logic model with measurable outcomes outlining the impact of Raising the Bar will create local evidence and contribute to the quality and effectiveness of the child care system in Peterborough.

The data collected for this report was achieved through attendance lists from professional development (workshops, seminars and networking groups), surveys to the child care community and documents completed during the Raising the Bar on Quality Peer Review. A database was developed to track the activities identified by Investing In Quality – Early Learning and Child Care Peterborough.

Results from phase one of the project outcomes show a significant increase in centres implementing parent surveys and intentionally supporting parent's access to parent education. There was also a significant change in the number of child care centres employing an environmental assessment tool to evaluate their program. The positive impact of the implementation of networking groups as well as increased participation in professional development was also apparent at the end of the review year.

## Introduction

Peterborough has a rich history of collaboration within the child care community. In the 1990's, the Peterborough Child Care Forum (PCCF) was established to support the professional needs of the early learning and child care (ELCC) sector through networks, professional development, resource borrowing and administrative support. While the forum was in existence, the Executive Directors and Supervisors of local child care centres saw the need to collaborate, share resources and mentor new administrators through a network. The Child Care Supervisor's Network was formed and remains a strong and effective means of support and advocacy for the professionals working in the local ELCC sector. In the later part of the 90's, funding was pulled from the Peterborough Child Care Forum, leaving the community with limited professional support. The remaining dollars left from the PCCF moved to the Peterborough Family Resource Centre to be utilized for the annual child care conference. To date, the account is held in trust by Investing In Quality.

In 2007, a group of Directors, Supervisors, Special Needs Resource Agencies and Family Support Coordinators began to meet to discuss the existing, but sometimes fragmented support to the professional needs of child care and decided that a strategic plan was needed to guide the coordination of professional development and resources along with a process to measure and maintain high quality child care in our community. The Professional Development Committee was formed to develop a plan for the dollars in reserve at the Peterborough Family Resource Centre.

Through the Professional Development Committee, Investing In Quality – Early Learning and Child Care Peterborough (IIQ) was formed to look at best practices and a means to set community standards of



quality within the local early learning and child care sector. After considerable research and discussion, Raising the Bar on Quality was chosen as the measurement tool for the Peterborough Community.

Raising the Bar is a program designed to help families ensure their children are receiving high quality early learning and child care services. The presence of a Raising the Bar certificate is a sign that the program is committed to maintaining provincial regulatory standards as well as local community standards. Raising the Bar participants voluntarily submit to an annual review to ensure they meet community standards. After one year of participation in Raising the Bar, programs are expected to achieve bronze level and may progress further in subsequent years.

**Bronze Level** programs follow fundamental quality indicators and are also in full compliance with Ontario's Day Nurseries Act.

**Silver level** programs have additional strategies to enhance quality. Some strategies include increased professional education for Early Childhood Educators, parent and staff surveys, and opportunities for parents to become more involved.

**Gold level** programs demonstrate a long-term commitment to high quality in early childhood education. Short and Long term goal setting, increased professional involvement and community partnerships are some of the standards found at the gold level.

Raising the Bar on Quality consists of 17 standards encompassed within 3 categories; Quality Assurance, Best Practices in Management and Professionalism.

Prior to beginning the Raising the Bar on Quality initiative, the IIQ committee developed a pre-project survey to gain a better understanding of where the child care community stood with regards to the standards set out by RTB. All activities that would fall under a bronze level standard could be found on the survey. For example, centre supervisors/directors were asked whether they distribute parent surveys. They were also asked if whether staff meetings are held routinely. The results from this survey will operate as the baseline from which each phase will be measured.

When developing the logic model for the RTB project, the Investing In Quality committee designed the measurable outcomes by linking the activities identified in each standard with an appropriate output. The following tables outline the progress this initiative has made and recognizes the work that continues as the project moves through each phase.



## Category Progress

### Quality Assurance

Quality assurance is any systematic process of checking to see whether a product or service being developed is meeting specified requirements. Quality is monitored through observations by supervisors, the education teams and by the Raising the Bar project coordinator as well as through parent/guardian and staff feedback. Action plans are developed to address areas of need and to plan for improvement. In addition to annual provincial licensing reviews and local public health inspections, participating programs undergo site visits by qualified third party early learning and child care professionals that the community has deemed appropriate.

| Raising the Bar Category  |  |  | Quality Assurance  |
|---|--|--|--|
| Activities  | Outputs  | Progress in Outputs  | Outcomes   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Child Care Programs conduct annual Parent surveys in each program.</li> <li>-Child Care Centres conduct annual staff work environment surveys.</li> <li>-Delivery of environmental assessment tool workshop for all participating centres.</li> <li>-Delivery of DECA mentoring training.</li> <li>-Health and Safety training support</li> <li>-Development of Child Care Centre Action Plan (gold standard)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- # of parent survey's completed and returned</li> <li>-# of CCC staff survey's completed and returned (Phase 2)</li> <li>-# of DECA community mentors trained</li> <li>-# of participants participating in DECA training (other assessment)</li> <li>-# of agencies accessing health and safety training. (Phase 2)</li> <li>-# of action plans competed (phase 3)</li> <li>-# of programs in full compliance</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>1273</b> parents were surveyed in 2009.</li> <li>• <b>515</b> surveys were returned.</li> <br/> <li>• <b>160</b> Early Childhood Educators, Resource Teachers and Preschool Consultants were trained in the use of the DECA</li> <li>• <b>12</b> Mentors were trained to facilitate DECA training</li> <li>• <b>8</b> Early Childhood Educators were trained in the use of the ECERS-R.</li> <br/> <li>• <b>26/26</b> participating centres are in full compliance and have clear licenses.</li> </ul> | <p>Child Care Centres &amp; agencies are more equipped to monitor the quality of service on an ongoing basis.</p> <p><b>Indicator</b><br/>Number and or percent of participants that complete the bronze level.<br/>(see RTB bronze standards)</p> |



## Best Practices in Management

Best practice is a technique or methodology that, through experience and research, has proven to reliably lead to a desired result. A commitment to using the best practices in any field is a commitment to using all the knowledge and technology at one's disposal to ensure success.

Participating programs in Raising the Bar offers information on high quality early learning and child development for parents and promotes opportunities for community involvement. There are detailed policies, procedures and management practices to guide day-to-day operations along with specific strategies put in place to support optimal child health and development.

| Raising the Bar Category   |   |   | Best Practices in Management  |
|--|---|---|---|
| Activities   | Outputs   | Progress in Outputs   | Outcomes  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Training to support the development of Policies, governance, job descriptions</li> <li>- Child Care Network &amp; Business Partner meetings</li> <li>- Develop an annual organizational planning model. (calendar)</li> <li>- Promote parent education and training opportunities</li> <li>- Promote parent involvement</li> <li>- Facilitate annual recognition event</li> <li>- Develop a template for data collection</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-# of child care programs /agencies participating</li> <li>-# of training opportunities</li> <li>-# of centres utilizing the organizational planning model.</li> <li>- Frequency (#) of Child Care Network &amp; Business Partner meetings</li> <li>-# participants attending the recognition event</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>26/33</b> Child Care Programs have signed on to participate in the project.</li> <li>• <b>33</b> Training opportunities have been offered through Raising the Bar</li> <li>• <b>6</b> Centres have utilized the organizational planning model provided through RTB.</li> <li>• <b>14</b> Child Care Centre Supervisor Network meetings have taken place from Sept. 08 to April '10.</li> <li>• <b>7</b> Business Partner Meetings have taken place from Sept. 08 to April 10.</li> <li>• <b>108</b> participant attended the first RTB recognition event</li> </ul> | <p>RTB participants are more aware of identified best practices in the child care field.</p> <p><b>Indicator</b><br/>Number and or percent of participants that complete the bronze level.<br/>(see RTB bronze standards)</p> |



## Professionalism

Early Years Professionals participating in Raising the Bar programs maintain credentials and commit to additional training each year. First aid and CPR are kept current. All directors and staff attend workshops and conferences to enhance their understanding of early childhood education and care.

| Raising the Bar Category   |   |   | Professionalism   |
|--|---|---|---|
| Activities   | Outputs   | Progress in Outputs   | Outcomes  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Child Care Connections Newsletter: identify existing community PD calendar</li> <li>- Initial Peer Assessment to develop baseline measurement.</li> <li>- Mentoring through networking</li> <li>- Recruit volunteer trainers/facilitators</li> <li>- Promote/deliver workshops/training</li> <li>- PD certificates/cards</li> <li>- Develop a contact list of professional associations.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># of workshops and training offered</li> <li># of participants accessing PD</li> <li>-# of volunteers facilitators</li> <li>-# of newsletters sent out.</li> <li>- Frequency of networking groups taking place.</li> <li>-# of networking groups</li> <li>-# of peer assessments completed</li> <li>- Total # Hours of professional education offered</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>33</b> Workshops and courses have been offered to the child care community through RTB.</li> <li>• <b>984</b> participants have accessed the training offered to the community.</li> <li>• <b>644</b> Newsletters have been sent out to community members. (7 newsletters, 92 centres and individuals)</li> <li>• <b>54</b> bi-monthly Networking groups have taken place since September 2008 – April 2010<br/>Infant<br/>Toddler<br/>Preschool,<br/>JK/SK<br/>School Age<br/>As. Supervisor<br/>Cooks<br/>Supervisor</li> <li>• <b>20</b> Baseline peer assessments have been completed prior to beginning RTB.</li> <li>• <b>131</b> Hours of professional Development has been offered through RTB related events.</li> </ul> | <p>RTB participants are able to apply the knowledge acquired through the professional Development accessed through work.</p> <p><b>Indicator</b><br/>Number and or percent of participants that complete the bronze level.<br/>(see RTB bronze standards)</p> |





# Findings

Based on the results from the survey done prior to beginning Raising the Bar and the data collected through the peer review process, a number of encouraging statistics have come to light helping to give concrete examples of the progress made over the past 18 months.\*

## **Quality Assurance:**

In 2008, 50% of surveyed child care programs distributed an annual survey to the parents and guardians of the children in their programs.

In 2010, 100% of the participating programs had distributed an annual survey to the parents and guardians of the children in their programs.

In 2008, 20% of the surveyed child care programs carried out an environmental assessment on each playroom in their program.

In 2010, 100% of the participating programs carried out an environmental assessment on each playroom in their program.

## **Best Practices in Management:**

In 2008, 20% of surveyed child care programs employ a daily health assessment for the children in their program.

In 2010, 100% of participating programs employ a daily health assessment for the children in their program.

In 2008, 55% of surveyed child care programs provided resources, workshops, or information on issues related to parenting for the families of their program.

In 2010, 100% of participating child care programs provided resources, workshops, or information on issues related to parenting for the families of their program.

## **Professionalism:**

In 2008, 75% of surveyed child care programs belonged to a professional organization related to the field of early learning and child care.

In 2010, 100% of participating child care programs belonged to a professional organization related to the field of early learning and child care.

\*Percentages related to the 2008 survey: 20 of 31 child care programs completed and returned.

\*Percentages related to the 2010 Peer Review: 26 of 31 child care programs submitted a RTB profile.



# Conclusion

The quantitative data contained in this report, provides strong evidence of the positive impact of Raising the Bar initiatives (professional development activities and access to standards of excellence) on the quality of child care across the Peterborough community. Participation in improvement activities, networking opportunities and demonstrated dedication to quality standards also leads to the perception of improved coordination and communication among the centres, their staff and the child care community.

Raising the Bar on Quality is the peer-reviewed accreditation program that the City Peterborough has integrated and continues to sustain the positive influences of training, networking and professional development by providing centres with clear, achievable guidelines for best practice. Although Raising the Bar on Quality has shown improvements to quality, there are limitations to its influence. RTB operates on a voluntary participation basis and is not linked to a regulatory system for ongoing accountability.

The recommendations presented below are designed to both “hold the gains” in improved quality to date, as well as to enhance the child care system even further. The recommendations address centre specific issues followed by more system-wide needs.

## *Centre Specific*

- Encourage participation in the Raising the Bar on Quality peer-reviewed accreditation program as a best-practise model for all child care centres.
- Review/research best practice models for mentoring, and consider those that are practical and can be applied in busy child care centres (e.g., informal mentoring, networks).
- Research/review appropriate policies and procedures for best practices in management.
- Explore models for parental/family engagement at multiple levels to promote quality child care.
- Explore models for staff work environment surveys to enhance quality assurance practices.

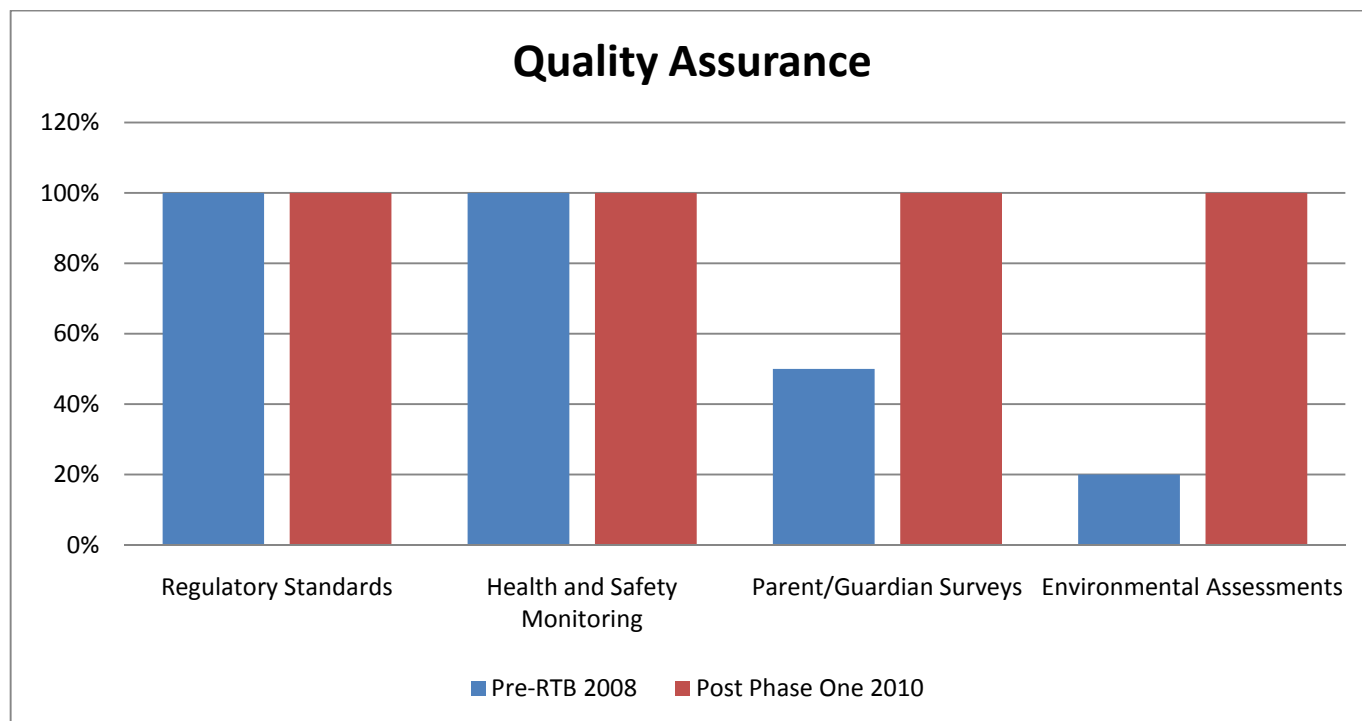
## *System Wide*

- Continue to develop a community driven networking system to address the needs of all programming and administrative professionals in the early learning and child care sector.
- Develop a coordinated professional education schedule that meets the needs of both programming and administrative professionals in the early learning and child care sector.
- Explore ways to improve communication and collaboration with government and community partners such as the City, Province, between child care centres, Ontario Early Years Centres, community agencies, the Board of Education, Public Health, mental health, hospitals.
- Develop a community wide vision/belief statement with guiding principles to guide best practices in child care



## Appendix

The charts below outline the results from the baseline evaluation and the RTB peer review. A total of 20/31 child care centre Supervisors and Directors completed the baseline survey, whereas 26/31 Supervisors and Directors submitted a profile to the Raising the Bar peer review committee.



\*Percentages related to the 2008 survey: 20 of 31 child care programs completed and returned.

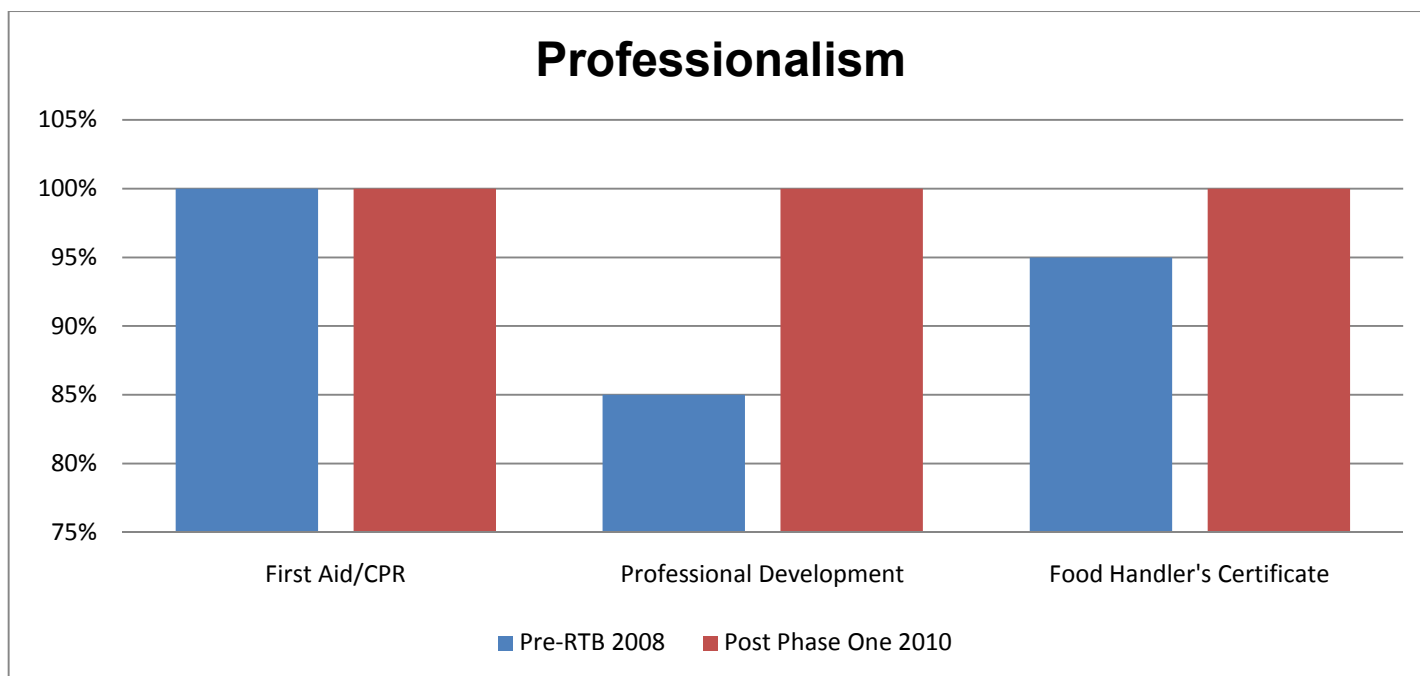
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