Take Back the Language:
Appreciating the Culture of Early Childhood Education

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In May of 2004, members of the British Columbia Early Childhood Education Provincial Articulation Committee were apprised of the Central Okanagan School District No. 23 initiative called Preschool Partnerships. Committee members representing early childhood education training programs from throughout the province discussed the goals and potentials of this initiative. Members also shared that school districts in many of their own communities throughout the province were looking with great anticipation to the Okanagan initiative– as they, too, consider the advantages of renting empty school space to preschool operators. As well, this project has attracted funding and attention from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry for Children and Family Development, responding positively to an initiative that appears to link programs in early childhood with the kindergarten and primary school years. Apprehension was voiced amongst ECE instructors regarding this and other recent projects initiated by the Education sector and focused upon enriched early learning with the ultimate goal of kindergarten readiness.

As greater attention is directed towards projects not well informed by full representation from the ECE sector, there is grave concern around the overwhelming effect that a focus upon kindergarten readiness will have upon the practice of early childhood education and the public's perception of the actual work of our profession. What follows is a position paper endorsed by the Early Childhood Education Provincial Articulation Committee in May of 2005. This paper represents informed early childhood practice in its response to projects circulating the province of BC under the guise of healthy early childhood development. This position paper is yet another reminder of the rich history of the field of early childhood education and childcare and the well-researched developmental theory that has been the hallmark of its practice. The paper ends with heart felt recommendations that should build the foundation of a more collaborative, better researched and mutually respectful partnership that includes the early childhood education sector in the pursuit of healthy early childhood learning and care.

The Universal Preschool Project – Preschool Partnerships

In the Fall of 2003, School District administrators in the Central Okanagan endorsed a project that offered local preschool operators the opportunity to make use of empty space in schools where enrolments had been declining. The proposal was housed in a document that highlighted a number of initiatives planned to improve student success in this region. In keeping with the renewed national focus upon the importance of healthy early development, a group of individuals worked under the auspice of School District #23, to fulfill the mandate of creating universal access to preschool education in the district by creating "an optional, system-wide preschool housed within…school buildings…to permit access for low-income families, and yet allow for those with higher levels of income to contribute financially to the preschool system". (*Rubadeau, 2003, p. 65*). This 'preschool partnerships' project is entitled 'Universal Preschool'. Universality is assured by the contract required of preschool operators, assuring that 20% of their enrolment was subsidized by the reduced rate for classroom rental.

This work marked a new role for a school district in the Province of British Columbia – supporting the process of universality and contributing to the creation of quality preschool environments. The goals of the project, as outlined in the guiding document, *"Charting the Course to Student Improvement",* include the necessary linking of preschools and the School District, low cost space to support preschool program development and the promotion of well grounded models and philosophies of preschool. Other goals include the development of a transition program for students progressing from preschool to public school, the provision of technical expertise on curriculum matters and assistance in developing an accreditation process for preschools. The initiative is highly commendable and well supported with research linked to enriched early childhood development. As well, for members of the Early Childhood Education Provincial Articulation Committee, it marks the beginning of a much needed mutual dialogue between the community of early childhood education and the community of elementary school education, as attention to the project has now grown and other school districts are looking at similar models in their own communities.

In the fall of 2004, another link between the elementary school community and very young children was announced in the form of a *Ready Set Learn* program. This $3 million initiative has been touted as an opportunity to prepare three year olds for school with a head start in reading. All elementary schools in the province are being funded to organize open houses for parents and their three year olds to attend a session at their local school and to be given a 'family kit' that contains a story book and other resource materials to support early preschool learning. This initiative has been built on the premise that early literacy exposure and language learning are important preparations for kindergarten. As well, this program hopes to reach children at risk who might benefit from early detection and support. Again, this is an example of a program that focuses on cognitive capacity in readiness for school.

> *"Reading is the key to a child's success in school and in life. Ready, Set, Learn will give parents and caregivers the tools they need to help our children be the children be the very best they can be"* – Tom Christensen, Minister of Education, Province of BC.

The project links with community in its delivery as various provincial ministries are invited to participate at a regional level with the opportunity to include information materials for families concerned about health and development issues.

This Ministry of Education initiative seems to have appeared quite unexpectedly, with School Districts asked to quickly create strategies for implementation. Open houses have since hosted a number of parents and children of three-year-olds, with some consultation from community partners encouraged during the last minute preparations. This project was developed by the education sector without advance warning for those community partners who actually specialize in the healthy holistic development of three-year-olds. Its focus upon literacy considerations to the exclusion of all other developmental realms suggests a skewed, somewhat shortsighted perspective that would have benefited from consultation and collaboration with early childhood educator specialists around the province. Attention to the latest concrete research on literacy would have led to a richer and more developmentally appropriate initiative.

The language of kindergarten 'readiness' has become associated with both the Preschool Partnerships program and the Ready Set Learn Initiative. 'Readiness' is a word that those in the early childhood education sector approach with much caution, because, as clearly articulated by Goelman and Hertzman (2004) it is a term that means many different things to many different people. For the education sector the word readiness defines a set of skill sets that children bring with them to kindergarten. In the early childhood education sector, the word readiness is troublesome and has been actively avoided in a philosophy of care with a developmental focus that precludes discrimination between 'ready' and 'not ready'. These differences in definition exemplify the real need for communication and shared understanding amongst the early childhood development community and the education sector. Developmental terminology should form the foundation that guides any future partnered programs designed to best meet the needs of young children. The overview that follows will clearly explain developmentally appropriate pedagogy that has driven the practice of early care and education for the past 50 years. Most obviously, and as pointed out by Goelman and Hertzman (2004), it is feared that those in the education sector may suffer from the misconception that programs in early childhood education have the sole purpose of preparing children for the years in school, when the 'real' learning happens.

Global attention now focused on the issues of early childhood education

It is with some cautious optimism that we, as early childhood education instructors, approach such initiatives at a time when the goals of early childhood education have now become of great interest to professional realms outside our sector. With the new attention paid to early brain research, economists, the business community, medical practitioners, researchers, policy makers and politicians have come to discover what early childhood educators have known throughout the history of our profession – that the early years of life set the stage for all later development. And with this renewed attention to the very young comes the pressure of making just the right decisions in just the right ways, in order to assure that the investments we make at this time in the lifespan come to fruition. Of great concern is the pressure that might be placed upon parents and policy makers by those with limited knowledge about what is best for young children developmentally – without input from the culture of early childhood education that has developed over the past fifty years. At a time when careful, well researched steps are being made in the implementation of a national system of childcare, the danger of fragmentation looms, as sectors outside of the early childhood care and education realm, with all best intentions, continue to work in ways that ignore the lessons learned within our field. The fragmentation between sectors fuels a public misperception that preschool is somehow better than daycare and that both kinds of early childhood programs differ regarding developmental planning. The potential for deeper divisions exist, as the public perceives preschools housed in schools as enriched preparation for kindergarten and somehow more desirable in comparison to other preschools, followed by group daycare and finally, family daycare at the end of the quality spectrum. We have come too far to move back into a time of the history of early childhood when this fragmented perception existed.

In its recent executive summary of the document *Working for Change: Canada's Child Care Workforce (2004),* prepared for the Child Care Human Resources Sector Council, researchers discuss the issue of segregated initiative building with little regard for the child care

sector. They express deep concern around the false differentiation between early childhood development projects and the regulated child care sector.

> *The regulated child care sector often struggles to be a central stakeholder in the development of related ECEC initiatives…Many in the sector believe child care should be the core program for ECEC, yet most governments primarily fund child care as a support for parental labour force participation. There is currently **no common understanding** of the relationship between care and early education, or **shared language that reflects the dual purpose of child care.** Both would help to build public awareness and support for the potential of child care to meet the developmental needs of children and accommodate parental working hours.*

Questions arise from this: Is there no trust or recognition of the expertise that has built the history and current quality of early childhood care and education? Is there some perception that the child care sector is not ready, willing or capable of using resources now being funneled into the very young to do even more for the children they work with each day? We continue to advocate that it is only when the value of early childhood sector consultation is recognized in new initiatives for young children can we avoid potential fragmentation of early childhood development services.

The 'language' of early childhood education – reaching a shared understanding

This paper seeks to begin the dialogue with a full expression of what we as instructors of early childhood education believe is best for all young children, based on the most relevant research in the field. Again, in pursuit of a healthy shared understanding with educators excited about the potential of supporting preschool initiatives, it is important that the 'language' of early childhood be shared, and that the cautious optimism that moves these projects forward is tempered with principles of sound developmental practice. The time has come for us to share the purpose of our work – now that there are so many others so very interested in what is best for young children. As expressed in the online news site, *Exchange Every Day (September 22, 2004),* early childhood educators are encouraged to do a better job of articulating best practice goals of early childhood education.

> *"With parents, politicians and the public increasingly pressuring early childhood programs to push changing objectives from technology skills to literacy to obesity prevention, we need as a profession to express our views as to the purpose of our work."*

With the sharing, comes concern and curiosity around just why, in even today's technologically communicative world, we must do the work of reminding policy makers, educators and parents that we ARE the ones who can and do make the significant difference to healthy early childhood development! We ARE the experts in early childhood care and education, and we have been sharing messages around the importance of the early years in contexts of the past – in pursuits of quality care for all children, excellent education and training for all caregivers and educators working with children, and appreciation of the critical period of learning in the early years. It appears this message must be relayed again.

Families and early childhood educators, family child care providers are feeling the 'push' of early literacy initiatives espoused by school educators and policy makers as well as the influence of school readiness pressure on young parents worried that "no child be left behind". Advocates in the early childhood care and education sector must once again 'defend' the well-researched principles that support their programs of care and the developmentally appropriate 'regard' they have toward healthy and holistic development of very young children. The question remains: why are we not being heard?

> *"As always, time is the enemy. Yet sadly, badly, regrettably, we are STILL in the position of having to defend play as the child's way of learning and knowing. Sadly, badly, regrettably we are STILL in the position of the public, political and policy arena defining readiness in its narrowest academic sense and resulting therefore in the pressured downward curriculum and accompanying summative evaluation!" Gyda Chud, ECE Instructor and Advocate, October, 2004*

It is hoped that a review of developmentally appropriate practice in light of recent findings around brain research will be seen as a first step in preparation for enhanced partnerships with educators and policy makers – a first step toward reaching a collaborative, shared understanding in the important work supporting healthy early development together. The time for 'parallel play' is over. It is now time to move along the social educational continuum into 'cooperative play'! We begin with a message that shares the work of early childhood care and education over the past 50 years while communicating our language of practice.

Brain development and learning – the foundation of early childhood education pedagogy

Early childhood education is a research-based field of study. Early childhood educators develop programs based on current research of children's developmental needs. Recently, neuro-scientists studying brain development have affirmed many of the theoretical assumptions suggested by developmental theorists. Brain development is continuous and there are optimal times for specific aspects of brain development to occur (Cynader & Frost, 1999, Dawson & Fisher, 1994). Brain development begins in the first month after conception. We now understand that brain development is a work in progress, a child's brain is literally 'under construction'. Previously, brain development was considered completed by age three, however, we now know that brain development continues throughout childhood with the last growth spurt happening in early adulthood (Dawson & Fisher, 1994). This is why the environment matters. Early experiences can enhance or diminish a child's potential. The type of relationships with people, health and nutrition, the safety and security of places; all contribute to environmental experiences that will shape the opportunities and risks a child encounters. All developmental domains, physical health, emotional security, social interactions and language rich environments influence brain development.

While a child's young brain is adaptable, the brain is also vulnerable (de Haan, Luciana, Maslone, Matheny, & Richards, 1994). Environmental experiences that match the developmental level of the child are most advantageous to optimum brain development. For example, studies have affirmed that attachment is a biological process where the quality of the relationships that an infant experiences between birth and two years of age, profoundly influences emotional and

cognitive development (Sroufe, 1997, Wienfield, Ogawa, Sroufe, 1997). Thinking is also biological process, a child of three thinks differently from a child of six (Piaget, 1952).   Just as muscles must be strong enough for a child to learn to ride a bicycle, the brain must be ready for a child to be able to accomplish certain thinking tasks. Developmental psychologists support the notion that young children construct knowledge through active engagement with the environment.   It seems children's brains are wired from birth to find patterns and meaning through experiences with the world around them (Gelman, 1998).

Emotional development and cognitive development

Developmental psychologists maintain that emotional development and a child's ability to self regulate are as important to early development and success in school as cognitive development and literacy. To promote educational learning, early childhood programs attend not only to cognitive and language development, but also to the physical, social and emotional needs of the young child. There is a large body of research identifying the importance of emotional competence and adjustment to predicting success in school (Raver, 2002).   Children between the ages of three and five are constructing meaning of self as well as learning new things about their immediate world.   Social relationships are at the heart of development and act as a catalyst for all areas of development. Children live in the social world of family and community, it is through relationships that children learn how to use language, how to take turns, understand how to share and how to use numbers. Research suggests that there are three important social tasks of childhood: understanding basic social rules and situations; acquiring basic problem-solving skills and understanding how to maintain play with peers (Guralnick, 1994).   Early childhood care and education supports the development of these social tasks.

Between the ages of three and five children are very active learners acquiring new skills, physically they go from hopping on two feet to riding a two-wheeled bicycle. Cognitively they go from drawing named scribbles to drawing representations of people and places, from reciting the names of letters to spelling their own names. Emotionally, children go from unregulated emotional outbursts to understanding what emotional responses are needed and when. During early childhood children are forming a sense of self. They are cognitively defining themselves and emotionally they are constructing a sense of self worth. This has been called a time of initiative, a time of experimentation (Erikson, 1972). Preschool age children tend to focus on their own visible characteristics. A child's self -description at this age tends to be centered on what he or she is capable of doing (Harter, 1990). Children describe themselves by how fast they can run and how high they can jump. Early childhood programs based on a holistic approach of developmental outcomes provide success-oriented activities to enhance this aspect of development. Programs featuring a heavy diet of structured activities related to reading and math concepts may contribute to a child's feelings of disappointment and self-doubt when he or she is not able to meet the adult's expectations. This in turn can impact on a child's perception of self.

Physical development and cognitive development

Research suggests that physical growth and cognitive development go hand in hand. There is a growing body of research suggesting that physical development actually alters brain

development. Hanging upside down on monkey bars or spinning around and around influences the development of the brain. Motor patterns need to be practiced over and over again. Children need large chunks of time to run, tumble, and climb.   When researchers consider the elaborate interplay between the brain and body a theme emerges: movement is essential to learning (Hannaford, 1995). Studies of movement and brain development suggest that moving stimulates the growth of developing brains and can also prevent the deterioration of brains (Olsen, 1994). Early childhood development programs provide ample time for outdoor and indoor play activities that promote large muscle movement that enhances cognitive development.

The science of early childhood development and education can support well-documented, evidence-based implications for those developing programs to enhance school readiness of young children, and more importantly, to enhance the well-being of young children. When we consider the importance of the early years to long term developmental outcomes early childhood education programs that over emphasize literacy and beginning math concepts would be negligent. The research on brain development affirms what early childhood educators have practiced for many years; early childhood programs should include opportunities for children to form and sustain positive relationships with educators and children and to develop social and emotional skills for cooperating with others (Hannaford, 1995). Early childhood education programs should provide opportunities for vigorous physical activity. Early childhood education programs should strive to involve children in reciprocal learning interactions rather than isolated structured learning tasks. The research is quite clear, children learn best in an interactive, relational model.

The context for "basic skills"

Advocates of a child centred approach to Early Childhood Education (ECE) have long since battled to defend the honour of play based environments particularly at points in our history when resources are scarce and there is an emphasis on accountability. At such times ECE educators are often pressed towards summative evaluation to prove that particular types of learning have taken place and to demonstrate that children have been adequately prepared to enter the school system. Such evaluations typically focus on "basic" skills such as phonemic awareness and/or letter and number identification (Simner, 2000). These basic skills have become synonymous with "preschool readiness" a term that has entered our lexicon and caused considerable discussion among preschool educators regarding what the ECE curriculum should and should not be comprised of (Raines & Johnston, 2003).

Before a curriculum based on phonemic awareness and letter and number identification begins to dominate our pre-schools and daycare programs and eclipses other developmental themes or projects, we should take some advice from our American colleagues regarding the dangers of superimposing a school aged curriculum on young children. In the section below the rationale for a developmentally appropriate curriculum will be addressed followed by a discussion on our image of young children, possible sources of curriculum and "contexts for learning".

Is the curriculum developmentally appropriate?

To combat the practice of introducing assessment for the purposes of grade retention, and the practice of teaching a narrowly defined set of academic skills, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) endorsed a set of guidelines to help define what they call "Developmentally Appropriate Practice" (DAP) (Bredekamp, 1987; Bredekamp & Copple, 1997 & Wortham, 2003). These guidelines take into consideration: 1) age appropriateness, 2) individual appropriateness and 3) cultural appropriateness in suggesting best practice and curricula areas. Some of the seminal works that DAP draws on include the writings of John Dewey (1916) regarding active engagement in learning; Piaget (1952), Bruner (1983), and Erikson (1963) on young children's construction of knowledge; Bronfenbrenner (1993), and Vygotsky (1978) on the social and cultural context of learning; Fein (1981) and Vygotsky (1978) on the importance of play as a way of leading development and supporting the social emotional domains; and Gardner (1993) on multiple intelligences and ways of knowing and learning. Together with descriptions of best practice[1] DAP approaches learning from a cognitive constructivist framework valuing the whole child and believing strongly in the child's ability to construct, create and not only be *consumers* but *producers* of knowledge.

Although DAP was developed in the US it seems to be consistent with ideals in Canada as well. Whether we care to admit it openly or not both countries share a culture that is driven by *consumerism* and lately *accountability* and educators in both countries have faced pressure to assess young children's "kindergarten readiness". However, as early childhood educators we have distinguished ourselves by our ability to recognize the whole child and we must not lose sight of that concept in early childhood programs. This doesn't mean taking a passive aggressive stance against any curriculum that smacks of a cognitive or skills orientation and seeing our mandate as solely that of appealing to the social and emotional needs of the child, but what it does mean is that learning opportunities must be grounded to the individual needs of the child and must be developmentally appropriate. This approach allows the child to make connections between his or her lived experience and symbolic or representational knowledge. The child's experiential base therefore under girds both present and future associations and comprehension and becomes a foundation for his or her understandings.

Let us use the example of literacy. There has been a nation wide concern about our citizen's literacy levels, however in an "Instapoll" survey of 500 respondents to *Childcare Exchange* less than 4% of early childhood educators indicated that literacy was one of the most important goals of their work. Does this mean that early childhood educators don't value literacy? We would disagree and say that literacy *is* valued but as summed up by one respondent "our goal is to develop a well rounded child who can eventually read well".

How do we go about this?

This begs the question *"what is the role of the educator?"* Given a commitment to furthering the education and development of the whole child and recognizing that it would be destructive to begin to displace the development of foundational knowledge with a narrow set of skills that the child may have no ability to make connections to we would suggest that we might

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[1] Derived from field applications and observations of young children.

begin by asking ourselves: *Who are the children and families in our programs? What are their interests, understandings and most importantly what is their curriculum?* From this we can then begin to construct a curriculum together with the children and families that both draws on and fuels the background knowledge necessary for reading comprehension (if we stay for the moment with our literacy example) *and* within the context of meaningful activities lends the necessary skills to advance the children's reading, writing, thinking and listening. What becomes very important in this process is not teaching to the *summative evaluation* at the end of the preschool year but the *formative evaluation* based on observations, examples of the children's drawing, writing, and transcripts of their language development that will lead the educator to an understanding of the instructional focus. To do this we must learn to trust our own power of observation and trust that children are capable of constructing knowledge, in other words to develop an image of ourselves as *responsive educators* and an image of the children as an *active learners*.

Our image of young children

In his article on Your Image of the Child: Where Teaching Begins, Loris Malaguzzi (1993) a founding teacher in Reggio Emilia Italy discusses how the Image that we hold of young children influences our practice as teachers. In Malaguzzi's words:

> There are hundreds of different images of the child. This theory within you pushes you to behave in certain ways; it orients you as you talk to the child, listen to the child, observe the child. It is very difficult for you to act contrary to this internal image. For example, if your image is that boys and girls are very different from one another, you will behave differently in you interactions with each of them. The environment that you construct around you and the children also reflects this image you have about the child. There is a difference between the environment that you are able to build based on a preconceived image of the child and the environment that you can build that is based on the child you see in front of you—the relationship that you build with that the child—the games that you play. An environment that grows out of your relationship with the child is unique and fluid. (p.52)

The difference Malaguzzi refers to between the environment that we build based on a preconceived image of the child and the environment that we build based on the child in front of us can be seen as a starting point in the creation of meaningful developmentally appropriate responsive curriculum. When we observe the skills and interests of the children in our programs and design learning environments and curriculum based on who those children are rather than who the children ought to be based on "readiness assessment" we are better able to ground our curriculum to the child and families in our program.

How can we create provocative contexts for learning?

The provision of beauty, clarity, order and the ability to explore an abundance and variety of authentic culturally appropriate materials through the senses can be seen as requisite to the creation of provocative child centred contexts for learning. These contexts become the incubators of active learning. Literacy corners that offer children a variety of reading and writing

opportunities will act as meaningful provocations. This requires that we provision those literacy environments with books that represent a variety of genre for example, factual, scientific, fictional, humorous etc. and create play areas with loose parts so that the children can re-enact and consolidate their understandings of the books. This might include the provision of felt pieces representing the story characters or story baskets with manipulative materials that can scaffold the child's re-telling of the story. It should also include areas where children can dramatize a character, event or aspect of the story and actively construct the meaning of the story with their own words and actions. This helps the child to develop deep and meaningful connections and the opportunity to achieve comprehension through re-representation. Provocative contexts for literacy learning should also include writing centres where the children are provided with a variety of authentic writing materials and can write their own stories or have their stories transcribed i.e. story dictation or can construct messages to each other, their family, or other significant people in their lives. Message centres that feature the pictures and names of the other children in the program and provide the child with access to the alphabet can be a valuable place to start to further the child's social connections and provide meaningful opportunities to teach letter names, print conventions, and sound symbol correspondence within the context of a child initiated meaningful activity.

We must never lose sight of the fact that both the educators and members of the child's family make up the child's learning environment. Even seemingly simple moments such as shared storybook reading can become interactive learning opportunities when books are jointly investigated. This can be done by asking the child a variety of open-ended or prediction questions, playing simple games that help the child focus on pictures or features of the print, explaining words or phrases that help extend the child's vocabulary, scaffold the child's understanding of complicated aspects of the text by modeling summation of important concepts or information, engage the child in deeper understandings of the characters or content by encouraging them to make connections to their own experiences and help engage the child in the text of the book by using a variety of reading voices and developing an animated reading style.

The foundations of literacy development are also grounded in rich oral language traditions facilitated through conversations, storytelling, dancing and songs. Traditionally, early phonemic awareness has been developed through speech, songs, stories and rhymes. Children learn to differentiate sounds when adults isolate and extend them in songs or playful rhyming or listening games using choral, echo, or pattern activities to exaggerate sounds by focusing the child's attention on similarities and differences and heightening their auditory acuity. When gaps exist in the child's ability to enter into age appropriate conversations or playful phonemic activities, this has been a signal to good educators that the child requires more adult support. Often this involves further engaging the child in conversations and becoming a play partner to build on her interests and current knowledge, and help her access the opportunities that exist in the environment.

Final Comments

In summary, we believe that the hallmark of our profession is our ability to recognize the whole child in the context of his or her family and culture, and to develop opportunities for children to explore and develop meaningful connections through rich multi-sensory experiences.

The language experiences gained by the child during the pre-school years should be understood as part of a continuum creating a solid foundation based on exposure to language (including the child's first language), print, literacy related play, and storybook reading. This will come about as the result of good quality programming and an awareness on the part of early childhood educators that individual differences in emergent literacy must be addressed in a developmentally appropriate manner based on age, individual and cultural appropriate practices rather than "all or nothing" thinking that suggests that all children should be at a certain point in their acquisition of foundational skills before they are "ready" for "real learning" when they enter the school system. This requires us to develop an image of ourselves as responsive educators and an image of children as active learners and to take time to observe and collect examples of the children's learning that will inform us about the next steps in instructional practice. It also requires us to challenge ourselves to create learning environments that are stimulating and engaging and become the catalysts of cognitive construction.

Only when the field of early childhood education is appreciated for the essence of its best practice can we feel the respect for the work of our discipline. Only when we take a more careful look at better ways to work together as educators from all disciplines linked to young children can we reach the shared understanding that moves us into consistent, collaborative and 'cooperative play' to the betterment of all.

Recommendations

As communities examine new initiatives to ensure that all children have access to early childhood experiences that support early development we strongly recommend:

1. The intent of preschool programs in schools should be to provide access to children who would not have access to pre-school experiences. These programs should not replace preschools in the community, child care centres, or family child care homes. They should collaborate with the existing early childhood care and education community.

2. School boards contemplating preschool initiatives in schools should do so in partnership with early childhood educators in the immediate area. Committees comprised of kindergarten teachers and early childhood educators should collaborate to develop the curriculum.[2]

3. *Preschool programs in schools should be staffed by licensed early childhood educators and comply with the Child Care Licensing Regulation of the Community Care and Assisted Living Act.*

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[2] This process was initiated in Kelowna between School District 23 and Kelowna Child Care Resource and Referral. The document: *Early Learning a Developmental Framework for 3-5 year olds* is in the Draft stage and should be ready for distribution. Contact: Kelowna Child Care Resource and Referral www.kelownachildcare.com . Contacts for early childhood educators can be found through Early Childhood Educators of BC, Branch offices can be found at www.ece-cfc.ca/ecebc/ Contacts for community college Early Childhood Education Programs can be found through the ECE Registry at Toll Free: 1-888-338-6622, or www.gov.bc.ca/childcare/educators.htm .

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