

MODELS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD LEADERSHIP



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Project Framework

Framework for ECEBC Professional Leadership Initiative “Everyone is a Leader”

The following ideas have been generated as a result of meetings with the Executive Director of ECEBC, President of the Board of ECEBC and a full ECEBC board meeting. It includes information from a review of three international leadership models along with the Investigating Quality initiative at University of Victoria. It also builds on the strategy session of July 27, 2007. The leadership models reviewed focussed on quality in the early childhood education sector, many strategies are relevant to building a model with focuses on strengthen the leadership skills of early childhood educators.

The following draft framework has been developed as a basis for discussion with the ECEBC Board of Directors, to gain further insights, understanding and ideas on how they see a leadership model emerging. The framework includes assumptions that have been made which guide the overall goals and objectives. The range of strategies is not exhaustive and many need to be limited to one or two ideas, depending on financial resources. They are offered here to help germinate, nurture and/or expand should the board feel they meet their overall vision of ECEBC, which states,

“ECEBC envisions an early childhood profession that believes strong and powerful early childhood leadership will influence recognition and respect by society at large and the community it serves”.

Assumption:

Quality in early childhood is critical to the well being of children. While ECEBC embraces this imperative, the leadership initiative will focus on the early childhood educator as a key agent of quality. Through development and recognition of the early childhood educator and the impact of early childhood education on society, quality is enhanced.

Everyone is a leader and/or has leadership potential. Through ongoing learning, engagement, networking, mentoring and collaboration, the leadership skills of every early childhood educator will be strengthened. Building on the principle of “power for rather than power over” (Valerie Hall, 1996) the early childhood field strengthens its leadership capacity from the inside out. Such an approach could have a much greater effect on the field in the long term.

Purpose:

The Early Childhood Education Leadership (ECEL) initiative will identify, develop and implement leadership strategies, tools and resources that strengthen organizational quality and societal awareness about the role of early childhood learning.

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Goals:

- Tailor leadership provision to individual and local contexts and capitalize on the experience of those most likely to produce the best ideas within the early childhood sector, the people working in the early childhood sector.
- Enhance professional identity and elevated profile of early childhood educators in BC with a view to increase recruitment and retention.
- Create an inventory of leaders throughout the province in early childhood education.
- Increase awareness of the social, emotional and economic impacts of early childhood education in BC communities.
- Identify key challenges facing Early Childhood Educators and develop solutions locally with a view to influencing provincial and federal policy.
- Deliver innovative, culturally sensitive, multi-faceted, holistic, interactive and knowledge-based approaches to networking and empowering participants in the early learning sector, with a view to influencing all levels of government.
- Build models of leadership that encourage empowerment, understanding and that strengthen the role of the early childhood educator as individuals, within their branch and provincially.

Objectives:

1. To gain insight from and make linkages with the Early Learning Framework and the Investigating Quality initiatives already under development in BC as it relates to leadership.
2. To increase public awareness of the critical role that early childhood leaders play in the provision of quality services for children and families through public education strategies and resources.
3. To establish Communities of Leadership Innovation in 10 difference geographic locations throughout BC including but not limited to Aboriginal, Rural, Isolated, Urban, and culturally diverse communities.
4. To examine and learn from the international body of research on key professional development issues as it relates to leadership.
5. To undertake participatory action research in partnership with skilled post secondary institution research associates to demonstrate effective and innovative practices and outcomes of the leadership initiatives.
6. To build leadership capacity at the ECEBC board, branch and membership levels.



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POSSIBLE STRATEGIES/IDEAS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

Professional Leadership Institute

- Retreat/institute opportunities throughout the year, partnered with a post secondary institution and other knowledgeable groups to build the knowledge based of leadership theory and practice. Curriculum could include, defining professional identity; research, policy, legislation frameworks, the value of childhood (international perspectives), advocacy (strategies and tools), assertiveness training, conflict resolution, public speaking, the economic impact of child care, marketing and communications, recording stories etc. Experts both nationally and in the early childhood field will be utilized to share their knowledge and experiences.

Mentor Programme

- Designed to match qualified leaders with less qualified staff and communities that are facing challenging circumstances and who wish to elevate challenges/solutions locally, provincially and internationally. A programme designed to provide suitable candidates with the skills needed to help local communities by providing support and modeling of problem solving, constructive feedback, conflict resolution, marketing and resources, as needed. The mentor would help develop early childhood reflective and strategic skills to increase self-understanding and examine alternative routes to problem solving.

International Leadership Visits:

- Selected group of potential leaders are supported to participate in recognized international leadership initiatives nationally and internationally to build and share knowledge, skills and strategies. This component could provide funding and support to a limited number of individuals to participate in leadership initiatives in other countries with a view to skill and knowledge building. The individual would be expected to bring back skills and knowledge and provide training and femmentoring opportunities based on their learning.

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Consortium of Leaders

- Creation of a circle of leaders including aboriginal, individuals from various ethnic groups, rural, etc communities to develop, share and document effective approaches to leadership relevant to the early childhood sector. The consortium would study a variety of strategies used across groups within BC, Canada and internationally to assist in the development of tools and resources for building leadership skills. May wish to link with other leadership initiatives (e.g., Leadership Vancouver, Royal Roads, Justice Institute).

Interactive Capacity Building/Networking

- Creation of interactive on line opportunity for community participants to engage in discussion, personal reflections and learning surrounding each community of innovation project. Allow individuals to connect with peers from across the early childhood sector to engage in professional dialogue, to stimulate debate and to learn from the wisdom of others on issues relevant to leadership and building a quality early childhood sector.

Communities of Innovation:

- Will develop or build on already established effective approaches and innovative practices that aim to achieve the project goals and overall quality.
- Will undertake participatory action research in partnership with a skilled research associate to show the impact approaches and innovative practice have on building leadership in communities.
- Will share knowledge, understanding and models of practice with others in the ECE sector including parents and partner organizations.
- Will include participants who represent a geographical, cultural, and diverse work force.
- Will support participants to become strong advocates for young children and families.
- Will support centre/organizations who have established philosophy, policy and practices, which embraces quality and leadership.
- Will support centre/organizations who have established relationships with community organizations and local school board.

Revised November 6, 2007