

Spring 2014

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*Step into new beginnings.....*

## *Raising the Bar Update*

**Reminder:** April 10, 1-4 pm mid- year check in RTB at 550 Braidwood Ave.

**T**his is a time to bring your binder, your questions, work on a section with others, talk to experienced peer reviewers, find out more about being a peer reviewer etc. If your program does not currently participate in the RBT initiative this is a great opportunity to learn more about the process involved.

Coffee/tea and yummy treats from Black Honey will be served!

**Self-study packages** I have worked with Katherine to develop self-study packages including a guided reflection. This offers a flexible way to learn and engage in our profession as identified by the CECE and to address the principles in the ELF and Raising the Bar standards. If you wish to access the packages they are posted on the IIQ website found in Links for Professionals. We encourage people to use the reflection as a guide to reading any articles. If you encounter an article you think others would like to read, please forward it to Katherine or me to share with others.



Every child is a different kind of flower, and all together make this world a beautiful garden.



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## *From the Professional Learning Coordinator*

As I write this update, I am in the middle of preparations for our annual spring conference. It is exciting to know that Jim Grieve, from the Early Learning Division with the Ministry of Education, will be speaking to our community at that time. With all of the changes in Early Childhood Education over the past few years and with more to come, it offers us the chance to keep learning and staying current as a profession.

The conference, under the guidance of a committee, strives to offer a day of professional learning and connection with others. Although it may seem difficult to commit to a Saturday, this type of day most often leaves us feeling recharged and opens up new ideas and possibilities. We hope that it will again do it this year for those who attend.

One of the things we are also interested in is supporting local educators who have knowledge and experiences. Although next year may seem in the distant future, if you have or know of someone who has knowledge and experiences to share with others, we would love to talk with you about exploring ways to bring it to the community. We believe there are hidden resources in our community and we all benefit when we come together to learn. The sixth principle of the Early Learning Framework focuses on 'knowledgeable and responsive early childhood practitioners' and we know this is an ongoing journey!



*Katherine Orgill RECE*

## *From the Quality Initiative Coordinator*

How nice to be writing a contribution to the spring newsletter, despite the fact there is still snow on the ground! It certainly has been a long and cold winter and a topic of many a conversation! Hopefully you have survived with true Canadian character, creativity and resiliency!

In the past few weeks I have prepared local Raising the Bar profiles for the 2013-14 review year and developed a package of supporting resources. These have been distributed to all programs participating in the RTB initiative. I have also been supporting three programs new to RTB as well as a number of individuals who are new to the role of developing their program's profile ready for submission.

I have also written a report on Phase Four of the Raising the Bar initiative which will be presented at the Child Care Network meeting on April 9. A summary of the Report will eventually be available for programs to distribute to families.

Along with reporting on the 2012-13 review year, the Phase 4 describes some of the connections between the 6 principles in the Early Learning Framework and the standards of the RTB (see chart below). Participation in the RTB initiative is a great support to the implementation of the 6 principles of the ELF.

*Susan Scoffin, RECE*



Principles of the ELF	RTB standard
Early child development sets the foundation for lifelong learning, behaviour and health.	5,6, 10
Partnerships with families and communities strengthen the ability of early childhood settings to meet the needs of young children.	3,11, 12,15
Respect for diversity, equity and inclusion are prerequisites for honouring children's rights, optimal development and learning.	3, 5, 6, 10
A planned curriculum supports early learning.	5, 6, 10
Play is a means to early learning that capitalizes on children's natural curiosity and exuberance.	5, 10
Knowledgeable, responsive early childhood professionals are essential.	4,5, 9, 13, 14,16, 17

## CECE Update

The College of ECE has recently published four case studies written by RECEs.

"Members are encouraged to read and discuss cases as a shared professional learning experience with colleagues and as a way to gain an enhanced understanding of their practice and their broader professional community." CECE website

They can be accessed from the CECE website [www.college-ece.ca](http://www.college-ece.ca)

The Continuous Professional Learning (CPL) for RECEs is on track to begin in September 2014. The 25 ECEs involved in the pilot leadership project related to the CPL, have, with support from the CECE and the project six mentors, worked through 5 modules, self-directed learning and practicum based on their self-assessments. The project will wrap up in a 2 day closing retreat at the end of May, where among other things, participants will have an opportunity to present their projects.

Please note that Maya Chivi from CECE will be presenting a workshop at our Early Learning conference on April 27. For those interested in finding out more about CPL, the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice case studies, and leadership in the sector are encouraged to attend this workshop.



## What's happening at Fleming College

*E.C.E program*

It is clear that there are enormous changes happening in the child care sector in Ontario. These changes have included: the formation of the College of ECE (2007) which regulates our profession, the rolling out of full day kindergarten with ECEs and teachers working together in classrooms, the creation of the Early Learning Framework, anticipated curriculum for early learning and child care and the proposed changes to the Day Nurseries Act to name a few.

As a second year ECE student getting ready to enter this rapidly changing sector I spoke to my college faculty about the role of the College in preparing us for the new reality. I was told that the number one goal has been to inspire us to aim high and dig deeper into our own practices. We are taught to use observation of children's play to guide our thinking and planning for inquiry based curriculum. Another big part of our learning is discussing making learning visible and truly seeing the child. The six principals of the ELF document, which are even reflected in the names of our courses (Working with Families, Building Inclusive Environments and Play Based Learning), have guided our teachers to:

- ◆ Support us to gain a deep understanding of child development through observation and the use of the continuum of development
- ◆ To create intentional environments through play based learning
- ◆ To create inclusive environments and to engage with families

Through our field placements and coursework we have developed a better understanding of early learning and care environments and of the communities we work in. Our teachers want us to go forth as new professionals to be leaders in and assets to the sector, supporting and collaborating with others in these changing times and ensuring quality programs for children and families.

*Stephanie Muenzel, R.E.C.E. in training*



For information on Professional Development, contact Katherine Orgill at (705) 749-3488 ext. 218 [katherine@investinginquality.ca](mailto:katherine@investinginquality.ca) For full details and registration forms, visit [www.investinginquality.ca](http://www.investinginquality.ca) Check periodically to see new additions.

## Loose parts

When I first heard about loose parts it was my first semester in Early Childhood Education at Fleming College and I was curious and hesitant at the same time. I had no idea what it was and where to find these loose parts. Was this something you buy at the stores or something you ordered in the Avron Magazine?

I am now in my second and last year in the Early Childhood Education Program and I have come to know loose parts very well. I have done a lot of reflection and experimenting around loose parts in my two years at Fleming but I know there are plenty more years of exploring in store for me. When I think about loose parts I think of an open field with endless possibilities of play and imagination that is supported by the six principles of the early Learning Framework. One in particular is “play is a means to early learning that capitalizes on children’s natural curiosity and exuberance”. (Early Learning Framework, 2007)

In my recent placement I was at a wonderful school in the kindergarten classroom, I had decided for my first experience with the children to put out some loose parts. After having a few discussions with the teacher and the DECE and with my own observations of the children I learned that math was something that was difficult for many. I went back to my reflections around math play and what I valued around it as an educator; I then decided to make my loose parts geared towards math. I really didn’t know where the children would take it and I went in with an open mind to all possibilities. I did some research and collected my materials from around my home with the exception of a thing or two from the store.



When I introduced the children to what I was setting out they were very excited and didn’t think twice about what to do with the materials. I didn’t have to explain anything to them they just knew what they wanted to do and let their imaginations open up. All of a sudden they were making patterns and categorizing the materials; they made instruments and even made faces with the materials. Over the weeks I noticed that the same children would come to this area of play regularly and each day I was amazed at the things they came up with. I also noticed that the play became more and more geared towards math and the math skills began to deepen. In particular one child who often didn’t show any interest in math had lined up three numbers in a row and then placed the right amount of materials beside each number. I saw that she had the number three in that row but had five blocks beside it. When I asked her about it she told me that it was the number five not three. I asked her if I could borrow that “five” to compare with the real number five. I placed the three and five beside each other and waited for her to respond. She sat and stared at the numbers for a while as I watched the wheels start turning in her head. She happily told me that she did have the three not the five and placed the three back in her row. I was curious about what she was doing so I asked her and she said to me “well I have five blocks here but this is the number three, so I need to take two away so I will have three blocks”. This was a powerful moment for all the educators who witnessed it, the child demonstrated her understanding of number through the materials provided. The teacher explained to me that she had never seen this child do anything like this before and for the most part had struggled in this area. This showed me perhaps she just needed to explore it in a different way and the loose parts allowed for her to figure out her own way of learning.

I believe that loose parts are extremely powerful in children’s learning and play because not only does it provide an opportunity to expand their thought and curiosity it allows them to discover their own way of learning. Loose parts allows for children to create something of their very own and explore in their own way without meeting expectations. It also gives children a chance to be competent and explore different possibilities while using the skills they didn’t know they had. I believe that having loose parts in any environment is essential to learning and development; it creates an environment where the children are free to think and have more confidence in their work. When loose parts are available for children to manipulate it allows for each child to gain something in a different way, it could be the same materials but one child is exploring math and another is exploring literacy. It allows the children to build on their skills in a way that best fits their needs and allows for educators to scaffold children learning in new ways. Everyone involved is able to have a more enjoyable time and there will be a bigger impact for children, families and educators.

I encourage you to give it a try, place some materials out and watch the children take it to new heights.

*Stephanie Muenzel, R.E.C.E. in training*

Link to Fleming College ECE program pinterest page on loose parts and articles on loose parts.

[file:///C:/Users/Steve/Downloads/Loose%20Parts%20on%20the%20Playground%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/Steve/Downloads/Loose%20Parts%20on%20the%20Playground%20(1).pdf)

<file:///C:/Users/Steve/Downloads/Using%20Loose%20Parts%20for%20Play%255b1%255d.pdf>

<http://www.pinterest.com/marylolummis/loose-parts/>

References: E.L.F., (2007). Early learning for every child today: A framework for Ontario early childhood settings. Best Start Expert Panel on Early Learning.

