

Investing In Quality

Early Learning and Child Care Peterborough



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

-2015-2018-

A LETTER FROM OUR CHAIR

This fall, Investing In Quality — Early Learning & Child Care Peterborough Committee (IIQ Committee) embarked upon a strategic planning process, looking to chart its course for the next three years.

During the three-month process, our nine-member committee examined internal and external environments, and undertook significant stakeholder consultation. Reaching out and hearing from those we serve was foundational as we worked to define and describe our desired future. At the outset, we established that the vision for high quality early learning and child care in this community must be *shared*, and therefore shaped collectively.

Thanks to all our stakeholders and their participation in the planning process, we were able to discuss our community's vision for quality and how we can collectively work toward making it reality. These conversations greatly informed our planning process and as a result of reaching out, we believe that our new strategic direction is representative of the interests of all those who have a stake in child care and early learning in our community.

Over the next three years, the IIQ Committee will shift its emphasis to focus on professional learning and mentorship. While its four strategic priorities provide further direction and detail, the IIQ Committee has made the significant decision to focus on, and deepen its role, in professional learning and development. As such, and as part of its work in the short term, the IIQ Committee will update its mission and vision to reflect this new direction.

However, the way you know IIQ — for its work in the best interests of children and families — won't change. We will continue to invest in quality to make a difference, but we will do so by supporting and strengthening our early learning professionals in their practice. After all, we know that educators who are knowledgeable, responsive, and reflective in their practice hold the key to advancing quality.

We invite you to review this document and to read about how we put the voices of our community at the forefront of our decision-making. We are proud of our plan for the future, and look forward to working together toward a culture of quality.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alex Cranfield".

Alex Cranfield
Interim Chair

OUR CONTEXT

Investing In Quality:

- The Investing In Quality – Early Learning and Child Care Peterborough Committee (IIQ Committee) is comprised of representatives from a selection of community agencies committed to working together to advance quality in early learning and child care in the City and County.
- Its role to-date has been as "Peterborough's Early Learning and Child Care Quality Assurance Initiative".
- The IIQ Committee is an advisory group, reporting to the Child Care Network.
- Membership is intended to reflect a broad range of agencies in the community including rural, urban, single-site, multi-site, home child care, First Nations, Francophone and OEYC agencies.
- The work of the IIQ Committee and its 1.5 FTEs is funded by the City and County of Peterborough. (Note: All communities in the province have the latitude to approach and manage quality improvement/assurance differently.)

Raising the Bar:

As a significant portion of its current mandate, the IIQ Committee oversees Raising The Bar — 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.

IIQ Committee Guiding Principles:

The IIQ Committee's existing Terms of Reference outlined several principles that guide its work, and these remained in place throughout the planning process:

- 1) A community systems approach is an effective strategy. By working together, we can ensure the well-being of all children. It is essential to demonstrate that we value all children by embracing practices and procedures that are free of deliberate or unintentional (systemic) barriers, so that no one is disadvantaged.
- 2) The community system will build on existing strengths of individuals and organizations, by committing to an engaged partnership in the process of developing quality assurance and professional education.
- 3) Initiatives and projects are evaluated to support efficacy, sustainability so that others can benefit from our experience and lessons learned.
- 4) All child development and early learning and child care endeavors must be accessible, adaptable and flexible, and based on research and best practices.

About The Early Learning & Child Care Community:

Investing in Quality – Early Learning and Child Care Peterborough is a collaborative partnership between the early learning and child care sector and the City of Peterborough, Children’s Services. Investing in Quality (IIQ) has provided licensed child care and early learning programs in the City and County with an opportunity to participate in quality improvements since 2008. Our local child care sector is comprised of 54 licensed centre-based child care programs, two licensed home-based child care programs with a Purchase of Service agreement with the City of Peterborough, an Ontario Early Years Centre, a Children’s Development Centre and two First Nations Child Care programs. 40 licensed programs are located within the City limits and the remaining 16 are located across eight townships in the County. These programs support a total of 2,905 licensed child care spaces, approximately 300 FTE educators and six Child & Family Centre Hubs.

Quality is an integral piece of the Ontario Early Years Policy Framework. To support Ontario’s vision for the early years, IIQ is addressing the need for high quality inclusive care and intentional environments that are safe and engaging for all children. IIQ provides opportunities for participants to make improvements in the design and delivery of their services through a variety of resources and supports. IIQ provides support to any of the identified programs who reach out for support.

TERMINOLOGY

These terms appear throughout this report with the following intended usage.

- 1 - Early learning and child care sector: Encompasses all early years programs/providers in the City and County of Peterborough (excludes junior and senior kindergarten).
- 2 - Educator: All those who work with children and families in early years programs.
- 3 - Professional learning communities: Groups of people who share a passion for something that they do, and who interact regularly to learn how to do it better.
- 4 - Quality: See the IIQ Committee's description of quality early learning and child care in this community in the Strategic Priorities section of this document.

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS HIGHLIGHTS

- All IIQ Committee members were involved in every step of the strategic planning process, which took place between October and December 2014. The process was facilitated by a consultant team of two.
- The Committee's early work included visioning exercises, a SWOT analysis, stakeholder mapping and the establishment of an in-depth stakeholder consultation plan.
- The Committee set out to hear the voices of early learning and child care professionals from centres in the City and County, administrators/supervisors, board members, parents of children currently attending the centres and IIQ staff members.

Over a three-week period in November, two distinct surveys (both available in hard copy and online), a large workshop, two smaller focus groups and interviews were conducted.

An extensive stakeholder summary was prepared to inform the IIQ Committee as it prepared for its strategic planning retreat.

- With support from the IIQ staff, an environmental scan was prepared and presented to the Committee.
- A full-day retreat took place in December, where Committee members reviewed their strategic planning journey and the information and insight they had gathered. Decision-making from the retreat was reflected in a draft strategic plan.
- The Committee reviewed its draft strategic plan in January 2015, some slight adjustments were made and the revised plan was approved and adopted in February 2015.



IIQ Committee members at their December retreat.

CONSULTATION HIGHLIGHTS

- Response rates to stakeholder surveys were significant, especially given the busy nature of the early learning and child care sector and in some cases, limited access to technology. Response by parents and guardians was higher than expected. This signifies a collective interest in conversation about advancing quality in this community.
- The IIQ Committee was commended for its important work and its accomplishments in the sector over the last five years. Its members were lauded for their commitment and dedication.
- All those who participated in face-to-face consultation were familiar with the IIQ Committee and its role, especially as it relates to *Raising The Bar* and professional learning and development.

More than 200 parents and board members shared their thoughts in response to the survey, and through surveys, focus groups and workshops, close to 200 early learning professionals engaged in the conversation about quality in early learning and child care.

- Business Partner workshop (early learning & child care supervisors)
- two early learning professionals focus groups
- Staff interviews
- Early Learning Professionals survey
- Parent / Board member survey

Discussion Themes:

Stakeholders were asked for their ideas and input on quality in early learning and child care, and also asked how they thought it could be monitored, measured and advanced.

Discussion also surrounded how the IIQ Committee could best support advancing quality in this community, and how its role might evolve over time. While much information was shared, ideas and input were categorized into the following discussion themes.

- 1 - Furthering our conversation about quality in this community;
- 2 - Considering new ways to measure/assure quality;
- 3 - Revamping Raising The Bar;
- 4 - Professional Development — the community's key to quality;
- 5 - Adapting the role & structure of the IIQ Committee to fit the future.



Early learning and child care supervisors at the Business Partner workshop.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES: 2015-2018

These four strategic priorities set the stage for the IIQ Committee's future and its role in advancing quality in the City and County of Peterborough. Yearly operational plans will be built upon this framework; they will serve to advance the Committee toward its strategic goals.

An important component of the Committee's strategic planning process was to articulate a vision for quality in early learning and child care in this community. To define its work in advancing quality, the Committee determined that it must first, describe what it is we, as a community, are collectively working to achieve.

The following is based on information and input gathered throughout the planning process, synthesized with the insight and expertise of the Committee members.

Quality in early learning and child care in this community is:

- Holistic in its approach and responsive to the needs of all families and all children;
- Children, parents and educators collaborating as they foster and share in the joy of learning;
- Caring staff developing respectful, genuine relationships among children and families and within and across organizations;
- Staff who are knowledgeable in child development, and who learn together to enhance their practice;
- Intentional environments that are safe, engaging and enriching;
- Based on best practice, research and evidence and informed by provincial direction.
- Reflective of the unique needs of our community.

#1 - CHAMPION PROFESSIONAL LEARNING THAT INFLUENCES PRACTICE

We know that professional learning and development strengthens and supports early learning professionals in their daily interactions with children and families. The IIQ Committee will advance quality by being a champion for professional learning that emphasizes the provincial pedagogy and its application, and encourages reflective practice.

Goals

1. Develop and deliver a comprehensive, annual professional learning program for educators in the early learning and child care sector that is aligned with our vision for quality in this community; with the four foundations of *How Does Learning Happen*; and with research and best practice within the sector.
2. Meet the learning needs, and further engage all early learning professionals by modeling principles of adult education.
3. Increase the flexibility and accessibility of professional learning opportunities.
4. Develop foundational learning opportunities for early learning professionals in our community.
5. Collaborate with others in our community and beyond to leverage their expertise and further the depth and breadth of our professional learning program.
6. Create a sense of shared accountability for professional learning for all early learning professionals, and support Registered Early Childhood Educators in their participation with the Continuous Professional Learning (CPL) framework of the College of Early Childhood Educators.

#2 - ENHANCE LEARNING THROUGH MENTORSHIP

We believe that mentorship enhances learning and contributes positively to the development of a network of learners and a culture of shared learning. The IIQ Committee will support the development of knowledgeable, responsive and reflective professionals through mentoring and opportunities to learn together and from each other. This support will apply to all roles within our early learning and child care community.

Goals

1. Develop and implement a model for mentorship to support growth and development for staff that will:
 - Draw on experience and expertise in the local early learning and child care community to identify, develop and sustain a network of mentors across the community.
 - Transition the Network Meetings to a structured model of learning together to support sharing and collective learning, with an emphasis on application of the provincial pedagogy.

#3 - MEANINGFUL MEASUREMENT FOR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

The IIQ Committee will lead the early learning and child care sector to measure quality improvement in a different way, using new perspectives and new indicators to measure and support community progress in advancing quality.

Goals

1. Create meaningful measures for quality improvement that:
 - Incorporate metrics to reflect the experiences of parents/families and early learning professionals.
 - Focus on key performance indicators such as parent satisfaction, staff satisfaction and workplace-related metrics.
 - Supports the ability to demonstrate year-over-year quality improvements, facilitates reporting and assists in identify programs requiring additional support for advancing quality.
2. Review Raising the Bar to reflect community needs.
 - Establish a foundational standard for quality in our community.
 - Build upon the existing standards that are dynamic from year-to-year.

#4 - ORGANIZATIONAL ALIGNMENT TO SUPPORT TRANSFORMATION

The IIQ Committee will align its role and structure to implement and deliver upon its strategic priorities, furthering its vision and mission for quality in early learning and child care in the community.

Goals

1. Establish an annual planning cycle and a measurement framework to facilitate monitoring and reporting of progress against strategic priorities.
2. Support IIQ staff with the expertise and resources required to help shift the organization's emphasis to professional learning, mentorship and the development of professional learning communities.
3. Develop effective communication mechanisms to inform all stakeholders in our community about the work of the IIQ Committee, its role in advancing quality, and its progress.
4. Revisit and revise as necessary, the policies, procedures, systems and structures to support the effective operation of the IIQ Committee in the achievement of its strategic priorities. Reconsider existing mission and vision statements.

CONCLUSION

Thank you for your interest in the IIQ Committee and in advancing quality in the early learning and child care sector in this community. While there is much work ahead, this plan and its priorities set out clear direction; it also reflects our community's passion for, and commitment to, children, families and early learning professionals in our community. We are excited about the future, and look very forward to moving ahead in advancing, and investing in, quality.

Thank you to the consultants, Alicia Doris and Karen Sjolín, for leading our community and committee through this very rewarding process. Additionally, thank you to the members of the Investing in Quality Committee (listed in Attachment B) and staff who committed a significant amount of time to this process. This team of dedicated professionals was thorough, inclusive and thoughtful in the development of this strategic plan.

For further information, please contact:

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Approved by IIQ Committee on April 7, 2015.

Appendix A:

DRAFT MISSION & VISION

Through the process of reflecting on the new priorities to advance quality in our community, and the changes to the role and structure of the IIQ Committee, it became apparent that the Mission and Vision needed to be refreshed. We will further consider this draft mission and vision as we move forward.

Vision Better outcomes for children through the creation of a culture of quality and continuous improvement in our early learning and child care environments

Mission Advancing quality in early learning and child care in the City and County of Peterborough through high-quality professional learning and development for early learning professionals.

Appendix B:

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Lorrie Baird, Kawartha Child Care Services

Trish Bucholtz, City of Peterborough

Alex Cranfield, Five Counties Children's Centre (Interim Chair)

Shelley Davis, Wee Watch

Erica Diamond, Peterborough County City Health Unit

Susan Gilchrist, Child's Play Montessori School

Mary Ann Meagher, Peterborough Family Resource Centre

Katherine Orgill, Investing in Quality

Sandra Robinson, City of Peterborough

Susan Scoffin, Investing in Quality

Moira Vance, Trent Child Care

2015/04/03