Section I: Early Years
Planning Tools for a Preschool Wellness Fair and Screenings Based on Partnerships

Please be advised that children need to have a transition period and therefore screening is not to be viewed as assessment. Only after the process of a transition period can assessment occur (4-8 weeks into the school year).

Assessment in Early Learning – How do we gather evidence in learning?

Observations of students engaged in learning and conversations with students about their learning are key sources of evidence.

All children have the right to a fun and inviting environment where they can meet the teacher and learn about going to school. Parent(s) should also feel comfortable and included in their child's learning. The view of early learning should be creating partnerships between teacher, child, parent and community.

By creating partnerships parent and child should be in a stress free environment in order to assist them and provide information that is useful in their child's learning to have success. All children should be in a stress free inclusive environment that meets their needs and interests.

For students with educational challenges there needs to be a partnership between the school, health services and parent(s) to build a support system for the child from school age to adulthood.

Target Audience:
Parent(s), Children, and Community

Goals:

1. To educate parent(s) and the children on the expectations of school and how parent(s) can access information from the relationship they build with the school and community.

2. School staff has a chance to meet the child and their families to build a relationship so transitioning to school is a positive experience.

3. To register children into programs and to see how many children are to be expected in order to plan for activities in the fall.

4. To establish a partnership between education, health, community and home.

The following information has been outlined to provide ideas on how to organize a Preschool Wellness Fair.

Preparation:
Set up a committee team in order to take the lead in establishing a preschool wellness fair.

1. Decide on a group of professionals to participate in the fair such as:
   - Nursery, Kindergarten, Resource Teachers, Educational Assistants, Language Teachers, Education Director
   - Chief and Council (Education portfolio)
   - Health Nurse / Doctor
   - Health Centre, Community Counsellors
   - Healthy Child Manitoba
   - Audiologist
   - Home-School liaison
   - Dental Hygienist / Dentist
   - RCMP
   - Firefighter
   - Community volunteers with an interest or expertise in early years
   - Others who the school would like to invite

The purpose of inviting professionals is to provide information about their programs of support and create community engagement to strengthen the communication among members to build a strong community for the children.

1. Contact the professionals in writing requesting their participation, and informing them of potential dates and times.

2. Once a date is determined, inform each individual in writing what is expected of them in terms of their roles and responsibilities in providing support to school and community.

3. Advertise the fair by:
   - Contact by home and school liaison
   - Information from the teacher
   - Community posters
   - Contact with daycares, head start program, nursery schools
   - Contact through health
   - Community newspapers or newsletters
   - School newsletters
   - Local radio stations
   - Community bulletin boards
4. The committee is to help with the setup of the fair including registration, securing the location, photocopying, greeting, and catering. Individuals may be recruited through various resources in the community such as:
   - High School students
   - Elder’s groups
   - Parent volunteers

Suggestions for set up:

1. Upon entering parent(s) and child go to the registration desk where they:
   - Register
   - Child and parent receive name tags
   - Parent(s) receive a “passport” to take around to each booth they visit (so they are aware of booths visited)

2. Booths and the environment are set up around the room so parent(s) and children can complete each play experience. Parent(s) and children go from booth to booth and enjoy the play experience together in order to meet and greet people in the booths and learn about the school and community.

3. Set up the environment to promote interactive activities (not assessment) in physical development in fitness, cognition in math, science, ELA, Music and Arts, Language and communication, nutrition and health, social and emotional skills, cultural awareness teachings, community safety, proper eating and hygiene techniques.

4. It is recommended that screening is limited to hearing, vision, dental and immunization record.

5. Showcase each station to engage both parent and child with activities that are inviting and fit the child’s interest about school and community.

6. Be sure to support the child and parent as they move from booth to booth with positive guidance and at the child’s pace.

7. Promote a station for parent information and have administration and staff available should parent(s) have requests or any special concerns.

Suggestions for supplies:
   - Welcome bags for children
   - Coffee/tea, juice, water, fruit tray, vegetable tray
   - Door prizes
   - Extra chairs/tables
- Extra pens/pencils
- Lunch
- Information and resource materials

What will the day look like?
- Booths will be set up prior to the arrival of scheduled families (usually a half hour before scheduled start).
- Provide a schedule of the day for all those involved.
- Greeters will meet families at the door, sign them in or check off their name on the schedule, give them a passport, name tag and direct them to the stations and be available for questions.
- Professionals will stamp or give a sticker on the passport to keep track of who they have already seen.
- Greeters can connect families to available professionals for any questions or concerns.
- Greeters will make families aware of the evaluation forms available and will remind families to complete them before leaving.
- Professionals must be aware of time limits so that families do not wait.
- Families may take their passports home.
- Break for lunch.
- Provide welcome bags to each child at the end of the event so they may enjoy the contents.
- Allow time at the end of the day for cleanup.

Where do we go from here?
- Summarize the evaluations: What worked? What should be changed? Visions for the future.
- Professionals providing screening deliver list of children to resource staff and identify those who would benefit from further assessment.
- A letter identifying need for further assessment can be sent to the parent(s) and carbon copied (cc) to public health of those children for whom follow-up was recommended. Public health can be encouraged to contact them to make sure they a) know how to access further service b) to ask whether they have or plan to access further service.
- Teachers can set up a meeting to discuss planning for the child.
• Thank everyone for their assistance (may be done through thank you cards, letter to the editor, newsletter, etc.)

The following information has been provided for ideas on how to gather evidence in learning.

**Early Learning Canada (ELC)**

Early Learning Canada is based on the understanding that the capacity to learn is in the early years of life. The brain is constantly searching for meaning, experiences to relate to and understand the world.

To do this most effectively requires interaction with others - both children and adult society have a responsibility to practice the African proverb, "It takes a whole village to raise a child." One way is for the community to have programs available that give ideas and strategies to assist children to become successful lifelong learners. Early Learning Canada is such a program.

Early Learning Canada is based on the following principles:

- Parent(s) have an essential role in their children’s lifelong learning.
- Parent(s) are the primary educators of their young children.
- Parent(s) have the capacity to educate their young children.
- Parent(s) are not alone as their children’s primary teacher, because the whole community has responsibilities for raising children.

Upon completing Early Learning Canada, participants will:

- Understand how children “learn how to learn”;
- Have strategies to help children become effective thinkers;
- Have strategies to help children develop their language;
- Have a framework for learning that links early learning and learning for life;
- Have strategies to interact with children to maximize learning.

Early Learning Canada is designed to be;

- For ALL parent(s) and those who have a role in the lives of young children;
- Fun for children, parent(s) and others;
- Informative and easy to follow;
- A time to share with others about young children’s learning;
- A chance to open doors to possibilities for young children’s learning.

Community Workshops
Early Learning Canada is an 8-module community workshop series. This series is based on page 176 Participant Resource of ideas for everyday use. Upon completion, participants will:

- Understands how children “learn how to learn”
- Have effective strategies to help children develop their language
- Have a framework for learning that links early learning and learning for life
- Have strategies to interact with children to maximize learning

Training News

There are two levels of training offered for those interested in facilitating the Early Learning Canada program. It is strongly suggested that both Trainers and Workshop Leaders have previous experience working with young children and their families. There are 30 Trainers in Canada who have gone on to train over 500 Workshop Leaders across the country.

Trainer Sessions

Training to become an ELC trainer can only be undertaken after the Workshop Leader training has been completed and community workshops have been hosted. The Training Sessions are facilitated by Learning and Reading Partners, Adult Learning Systems. To find out more information, please contact LRPals.

Workshop Leader Training Sessions

To become an ELC Workshop Leader an intensive 15-hour Workshop Leader training led by an ELC Trainer, must be completed. For more information on Workshop Leader Training Sessions, contact the Trainer nearest you.

Early Learning Canada Contacts:

1. Canadian Child Care Federation (CCCF)

The overall mission of the Canadian Child Core Federation is to improve the quality care services for Canadian families.

CCCF Goals

- Providing information to and facilitating “networking” among a broad range of targets. Our services and programs are targeted to direct service providers, child care organizations, educational institutions, government policy makers and public opinion leaders.
- Supporting initiatives that increase the skill, expertise and awareness of the targets, their respective roles in support of improved quality of child care services.
Increasing its focus on policy and research, influencing the child core policy framework supporting research to improve the quality of child care services.

For more information, please contact

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Welcome to Kindergarten (WTK)

The Learning Partnership’s newest program initiative, Welcome to Kindergarten™ (WTK), has been developed to provide preschool children (and their families) with the resources and experiences to begin their formal education with a foundation in early learning nurtured in their homes.

In the spring before starting kindergarten, three- and four-year-old children are given preparatory resources and experiences to position them for school success and lifelong learning. Parent(s)/caregivers and children are invited to attend a Welcome to Kindergarten™ orientation at their neighbourhood school where they receive the early learning resources in the Welcome to Kindergarten Bag and learn strategies for using the resources at home. At the orientation, families connect with kindergarten teachers, school resource personnel and staff from community support agencies. These early-years educators provide training on why family planned activity using the resources in the Welcome to Kindergarten Bag will help their children be better prepared for school and learning.

*The above information was taken from the Welcome to Kindergarten website.

Roots of Empathy (ROE)

For kindergarten to grade 8

The Roots of Empathy Program (ROE) is an evidence-based classroom program that has shown dramatic effects in reducing levels of aggression among school children by raising social/emotional competence and increasing empathy. In Canada, the program is delivered in English and French and reaches rural, urban, and remote communities including Aboriginal communities. Roots of Empathy is also delivered in New Zealand, the United States and the Isle of Man.
At the heart of the ROE program is a neighbourhood infant and parent who visit the classroom every three weeks over the school year. A trained ROE Instructor coaches students to observe the baby’s development and to label the baby’s feelings. In this experiential learning, the baby is the “Teacher” and a lever, which the instructor uses to help children identify and reflect on their own feelings and the feelings of others. This “emotional literacy” taught in the program lays the foundation for more safe and caring classrooms, where children are the “Changers.” They are more competent in understanding their own feelings and the feelings of others (empathy) and are therefore less likely to physically, psychologically and emotionally hurt each other through bullying and other cruelties.

ROE has a “younger sibling” called Seeds of Empathy (SOE), a program that fosters social and emotional competencies and early literacy skills and attitudes in children three to five years of age in Early Childhood settings.

In the ROE program children learn how to challenge cruelty and injustice. Messages of social inclusion and activities that are consensus building contribute to a culture of caring that changes the tone of the classroom. The ROE Instructor also visits before and after each family visit to prepare and reinforce teachings using a specialized lesson plan for each visit. Research results from national and international evaluations of ROE indicate significant reductions in aggression and increases in pro-social behaviour.

One of Roots of Empathy’s main focus as an organization is to dialogue with Aboriginal communities across Canada in support of healing and finding a way ahead. As history books are rewritten, school children will learn about the injustices and generational impact of residential schools. Roots of Empathy will challenge all children to develop empathy to ensure that no group in society is ever treated as Canada’s Aboriginal children have been treated.

The Assembly of First Nations Annual General Assembly in July 2008 passed a resolution to support and endorse Roots of Empathy and Seeds of Empathy, calling both programs “compatible with traditional First Nations teachings and worldviews because they address aggression and foster empathy and social and emotional competence.”

**Seeds of Empathy (SOE)**

Seeds of Empathy is designed for Early Childhood settings to foster social and emotional competence and early literacy skills and attitudes in children three to five years of age while providing professional development for their educators.

A series of themes are each taught in three week cycles. During the first and second weeks of each cycle, Literacy Coaches (specially trained staff) read and discuss books with small groups of children. In the third week, a Family Guide (another specially trained staff member) hosts a Family Visit, where a baby (two to four months old at the beginning of the
course) and his/her parent(s) visit the children in the school or other selected location for half an hour.

The baby and his/her parent(s) visit every three weeks over the program year. A trained Family Guide (specially trained staff) coaches children to observe the baby’s development and to label the baby’s feelings. In this experiential learning, the baby is the “Teacher” and a lever, which the Family Guide uses to help children identify and reflect on their own feelings and the feelings of others. This “emotional literacy” taught in the program lays the foundation for more safe and caring environments, where children are the “Changers.” The children become more competent in understanding their own feelings and the feelings of others (empathy), and are therefore less likely to physically, psychologically and emotionally hurt each other through bullying and other unkind acts.

Contact Information for Early Learning Literacy Facilitators for MFNERC:

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Section J: Code of Ethics