

Questions & Answers

Webcast 'Bridging Education and Early Learning & Care'

During the live web cast on June 1st, viewers were invited to email questions to the panelists. More questions were sent in than could be answered in the time allotted. The following questions and answers are those that were answered by the panelists after the live event.

Panelists:

- Clyde Hertzman, President, Council for Early Child Development
- Penny Milton, CEO, Canadian Education Association
- Jim Grieve, Past President, Canadian Association of School Administrators
- Don Giesbrecht, President, Canadian Child Care Federation

1. **The fact that the Early Years Evaluation-Direct Assessment (EYE-DA) that is currently being used in New Brunswick to test children before kindergarten entry and flags the children in red, green and yellow...puts tremendous pressure on parents and professionals to teach to the tool. How can this be healthy for anyone, particularly the child?**

(question from New Brunswick)

Clyde Hertzman: *"It isn't, which is why we never use the EDI in that way..."*

2. **Are there examples of collaboration with schools and private owner operators of early learning and care programs? Many provinces have 50-60 % of spaces with private operators. Does this model lean towards the phasing out of public funding to private operators?**

(question from New Brunswick)

Don Giesbrecht: *"While not directly aware of any situations like this, I am not going to say that they don't exist. As we look for success stories about the cooperation and collaboration between the early childhood sector and the education system from around Canada I would welcome private operators to share their stories along with everyone else."*

As for the second part of the question, as we are in the infancy of how this might work in the provinces/territories and as the provinces/territories figure out for themselves how this might work, I think that this question is better directed at the applicable provincial/territorial ministries."

Clyde Hertzman: *"In British Columbia, there are some private child cares that are co-located in schools, but there is no integration of programs in those cases. You are right that the model would involve phasing out of public funding to private operators, although, with the gradual reduction of the age of school-based programs, there will be a role for independent operators for several years to come. In any case, it is hard to justify spending public money on ANY program that does not mean a reasonable quality standard, based upon more than public health considerations."*

3. **Clyde mentioned that the senior taxation authority (boards of education) should be taking the lead on inter-sectoral collaboration. In Ontario, the formal authority for local Early Learning Program (ELP) implementation is the boards of education and the systems manager for child care is local municipal governments which also are expected to provide leadership to ELP implementation locally in their communities. How might they work together productively to maximize ELP results?**

Jim Grieve: "The Education Officers in all 6 of the Ontario Ministry Regional Offices have been working with the Service System managers (DSSABs and CMSMs) since we first started to implement this program. They began by consulting with each other and the local Boards in the process to select and share the school sites for Years 1 and 2 of the 5 year roll out. Now that Child Care is being moved into Education over the next few years, that relationship will only grow. Education and municipal systems managers are working collaboratively to communicate the introduction of the new program and to mitigate, as much as possible, the impact on local Child Care providers. The management of subsidies for child care is a significant role for the municipalities to ensure that children who currently receive subsidies retain them as they move into the new program. In all of the current and planned portions of the implementation we are asking both partners to be completely engaged together in the project."

4. **What are the plans for the network to move away from provincial focus to national influence?**
(question from Ontario)

All: "We hope that the Network for Leadership in Education and Early Learning & Care will bring provincial/territorial perspectives together to enhance policy and practice at all levels of organization and governance with a focus on leadership. First we need to encourage a base of Network members and supporters from both sectors who will create the voice of the Network and jointly develop the messages. We hope you'll all join us!"

5. **Why is this project for an early childhood network started at mid-day (early morning in B.C.) making it impossible for working ECE & K teachers to be a part of the discussion?**
(question from Sudbury, Ontario)

All: "There is no perfect time for a live web cast that allows all time zones across Canada and all interested professionals to participate. An archived copy of the web cast is available on the Network web site at www.cnleelc.ca/networktools for everyone to view."

6. **The partnership is key to the full day kindergarten program, why then is there going to be a decision based on class size to have this Early Learning Plan team (teacher plus Early Childhood Educator) in place in Ontario?**
(question from Brant, Ontario)

Jim Grieve: "I am not really clear on the intent of the question but I assume it is asking why there will be an ECE and Teacher working as partners. The vision presented to the Government of Ontario clearly showed the value of pairing a professional who is steeped in Early Child Development with a

professional who understands the curricular connections with the Grade 1-12 education system. The experience in Ontario's French Language Boards over the last 10 years as well as the current experience in a number of Boards with this exact model, have demonstrated the huge value this partnership brings to the children. In the end, we want more children to be more successful in life. The Full Day Kindergarten program and Extended Day are viewed as transformational in helping that happen."

7. **Jim mentioned that the federal government was supporting the new direction of amalgamating education and child care. Can you please elaborate on the Federal Government role and their objectives in this new direction?**

(question from Ontario)

Jim Grieve: *"Sorry, the mention was of the huge interest across the country for creating much closer connections between school systems and child care. The very nature of this web cast is predicated on that huge interest and on the creation of a Canadian Network for Leadership in Education and Early Learning & Care. At some point, we all hope that the Federal government will re-engage with this extremely important strategy for helping more children be more ready for life. The investment in human development is the significant long term advantage for any nation wishing to help its population and its economy."*

8. **How do we sort out who is in charge in the classroom? Who makes the decisions; how are decisions made?**

(question from Winnipeg, Manitoba)

Don Giesbrecht: *"If we use the Pascal Report (With Our Best Future in Mind) as the basis for this situation, I believe that he was emphatic that there be a sharing of responsibility for the program. However, how this actually will play out and who will be considered the lead will be at the discretion of the provinces and territories. I believe that a team approach with all participants using their expertise in curriculum, child development, behaviour management, parent/guardian relationships, community relationships and the understanding of the child as a whole should be the primary focus. Each sector has something to add to the care and education of young children and the richness and possibility of this relationship, if done collaboratively and with the child at the centre of all decisions, will prove to be a powerful and influential determinant in positive outcomes for children and families."*

Penny Milton: *"I can offer only a general answer without reference to any particular location or policy. The ideal relationship will be one of respect and collaboration among all professionals who share responsibility for the well-being of children. I believe that children and their families will be best served by the kind of shared responsibility that already exists among teachers who "team teach" a single classroom. However, I suspect that teachers will be 'in charge' during periods that are presumed to be 'the school program' and early childhood educators will lead in the other components of the child's day."*

9. **In all my years of dealing with both teachers in schools and child care centres I find a woeful lack of knowledge of or interest in "child development." Of all of the institutes, conferences**

and workshops I have attended this year, 10 in all, only one speaker has mentioned this issue. The question is "What would the Panel suggest the early childhood community do to remedy this?"

(question from Ontario)

Clyde Hertzman: *"I happen to think that there needs to be a 'pressure-based' strategy at work. In other words, in a province that is phasing in full day kindergarten and pre-kindergarten, there needs to be some compulsory upgrading of key school personnel within a reasonable time window (1-2 years from when the program comes in).....something like this will create demand and shift the use of Professional Development days quite a bit."*

Penny Milton: *"Building learning experiences for children from a human development perspective should be the work of the whole educational community. Child development doesn't end at 3 or 6 or 10 or 15 years. It is an ongoing process best facilitated by caring and knowledgeable adults in and out of school and at every age from birth to adulthood. Even the best early childhood outcomes do not inoculate children against later difficulties. Understanding how children learn needs to be core in the preparation and ongoing development of educators of young, middle and adolescent children."*

10. Can you define Early Learning & Care and identify what services are included?

(question from British Columbia)

Don Giesbrecht: *"At this stage in the development of our Network we have focused most specifically on the regulated and licensed early learning and care sector (ie: child care centres, family child care homes). We understand that this does not capture all of the environments that children are currently in or use on a daily basis. As the network evolves and as we continue to further define all of the services that capture both early learning and care you will see a wider definitional range."*

COMMENTS

The following comments were shared by viewers during the June 1st web cast.

- a) *"What's lost in this?" The political movement to universality is an enormous success – I applaud it! How do we avoid having the language and jargon of this political movement to universality in access distract from the most basic and profound pedagogy taking place in the environments where the young children are?*

What I mean by this is, that "outcome measures," "assessment," "evaluation" are wonderfully helpful for explaining to society (and politicians!) what we need for children across Canada. They are not, however, wonderfully helpful in the microcosm of the classroom where children begin at a very early age to sift and sort themselves and each other according to how they are "sifted and sorted" by their much loved teachers. This is an area many early childhood educators in child care programmes are worried about – assessment, outcome measures and evaluation can diminish a child's experience of (existence in) the day!

(comment from Wellington, Ontario)

- b) *My question is what is our view of the child? If this is about children, what is our view? Do we view them as empty vessels to be filled or do we view them as capable and as learners who come with*

their own theories and ideas. I believe when we change this view we will move closer to respect for this field. We can learn from children. They teach us many things every day.

If play is the avenue then we need to see it as important and as learning.

(comment from Lindsay, Ontario)

- c) *Why have we now lost the word "education" for our sector ... we are asked to remember lexicon ... I am proud to be part of the Early Learning AND Care system ... calling the "non-school" sector the "care" sector does not recognize the dual role we balance every day.*

(comment from St. John's, Newfoundland)

- d) *Why wait five years in Ontario to implement the new kindergarten program - schools not offering full day have the option for implementing play based learning.*

(comment from Brant, Ontario)

- e) *How do we define quality? And who gets to judge what quality is? What does quality look like if it is not fully funded? It has not been my experience that governments are willing to fund to the same level as the Reggio Emilia schools in Italy.*

(comment from Sudbury, Ontario)

- f) *Thank you for making the statement about the UNICEF benchmarks. I am certain that many registered ECEs are not aware of this. We know that we can do better with more and if we have a greater access to dollars to invest in the early years, then it can only improve upon our efforts combined with those of the education system. It shouldn't be viewed as a negative change...it has been studied in other countries and proven successful, we are compelled to accept it and move forward because the future of those children is brighter than ever before.*

(comment from Milton, Ontario)

- g) *In many countries, the qualification level for both early learning and child care is the same. We should be moving towards this approach as Clyde said. Also, many in the early learning and child care sector would not recognize being labeled "the care sector".*

(comment from Nova Scotia)

- h) *Learning during the early years (and the importance of the early years for learning) is relatively new and is coming to the forefront now that Education is leading the charge. Although this may be new to those in the field of Education, it is not new to those of us in child care who have been trying to make this point – with various degrees of success – for quite a few decades now. Penny Milton did acknowledge this at one point but I do think that this is sometimes forgotten. As the two sectors, care and education, merge – I think it is important that the long history of child care's contribution to the well being of children during the first five years be honoured.*

(comment from St. John's, Newfoundland)