

Designing an Early Years Framework for Nova Scotia

Carrie Melsom

What do our youngest children need from society in order to flourish, learn, develop and grow? This is a new question for governments and communities who in the past have been more interested in asking the question, how do we keep our youngest children safe from the worst harms that might occur when families are not able to nurture and protect them? This change in conversation grows out of an increased understanding that the developmental arc and the lifelong wellbeing of a child is set well before formal schooling begins. From the earliest stages of pregnancy potential futures for a child are being created through the complex interplay between the child's genetics and the environment. Research in the areas of epigenetics and neurodevelopment are making these links much more clear. Research in the areas of population health and the social determinants of health have also become part of the conversation. "Children are raised in families; but they grow up in neighborhoods and communities" (Report of the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Advisory Com-

mittee on Population Health and Health Security, 2003, p.9). Provincially, nationally and indeed internationally public policy conversations are increasingly focused on how to strengthen families and communities so that children will have a good start. Economic arguments for public investment in the early years are gaining traction with drivers like the OECD and bank presidents making the case for young children. Nova Sco-



tia is taking heed.

The Early Years Consultations that were held in Nova Scotia in 2012 led to the creation of The Provincial Early Years Partnership (PEYP). This committee operates out of the recently created Early Years Branch of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. The committee is chaired by the Executive Director of the Early Years Branch, Natalie Blanchette, and is comprised of repre-

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A Message from the Director

Dear Colleagues,

In this newsletter I would like to acknowledge and honour two special women who have given much to early childhood education on a local, provincial and even national level.

Although we knew the retirement announcement of Virginia O'Connell was coming, to see it in writing makes it very real. From a personal perspective I came to Nova Scotia shortly after Ginny became Director of Early Childhood Development Services. I had left behind all of my ECE friends and networks and landed in this lovely part of Canada to begin a new adventure. Virginia O'Connell was one of the first people to officially welcome me to the province and to the sector and she has continued to be a supporter and

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Inside this issue:

A publication informing the early childhood education community of events, services and professional development opportunities offered by the Nova Scotia College of Early Childhood Education.

- *Early Years Frameworks*
- *Educator Kits in the Resource Centre*
- *Book Review*

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representatives from many agencies and organizations that provide services and programs to young children and their families, and many others who have an interest in supporting families and the healthy development of young children. The goal is to bring together multiple perspectives, stakeholders and government departments with the intention of developing a strong early years system in Nova Scotia. There is a real commitment around the table to developing an integrated and collaborative approach so that Nova Scotians are supported in working together to ensure that young children in Nova Scotia get the best start we can give them.

NSCECE is one of many groups participating in the PEYP. It is representing and sharing the perspectives of ECE training institutions and is communicating information back to these institutions. As the person sitting at the table for the College I can attest to the fact that conversations are rich as committee members share their visions and hopes for children and families, and seek to come to common understandings and define common values for this work as it moves forward.

The PEYP is currently working toward creating an Early Years Framework for the Province of Nova Scotia. These types of framework documents are becoming common as various levels of government seek to create the synergies, collaborations and the holistic approaches that support the best outcomes for families and by extension, the best outcomes for young children. A number of these types of documents are available online and I encourage you to explore what are typically very informative and inspirational documents designed to bring people together in this most important task. *Right from the Start* is the framework document from the NWT (www.ece.gov.nt.ca/files/publications/framework_-_web_sept_2013); the *Early Years Framework* of the Vancouver Coastal Region is another example (www.vch.ca/media/VCH_Early_Years_Framework2009); the *Ontario Early Years Policy Framework* is an additional example (www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/OntarioEarlyYear).

The PEYP is still in the very earliest stages of considering and drafting an Early Years Framework for Nova Scotia. Initially it will draw heavily on Nova Scotia's 2012 *Giving Children the Best Start* early years consultations (www.ednet.ns.ca/earlyyears/documents/What_We_Heard). You will likely hear much more about this process and have opportunities to participate in the development of the framework in the coming months.

Early Childhood Educators and people who work in early learning and childcare programs are an integral part of informing the process that will help develop a strong early years system for Nova Scotia. Our sector is one of a number of sectors with a strong interest in the outcome of this process. We join with others from early intervention, public health, education, family resource,



etc. to share our image of the child; our knowledge about the special characteristics of young children as learners; the important role of families in guiding our practice; the powerful role of play in learning; and the specialized knowledge of our field of practice. The Province of Nova Scotia recognizes the importance of the ECE perspective in designing a strong early years system. ECEs are well represented on the PEYP committee through the participation of the Nova Scotia Child Care Association. I encourage you to think about and participate in conversations about the work of the PEYP even when you are busily engaged in the daily realities of providing quality care for children. We have valuable perspectives and knowledge to share and our active engagement will be critical in bringing our hopes for children and our sector into reality.

A Message From the Director

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advocate of me and of NSCECE. They say the best way to measure the passing of time is to watch the growth and development of children. I believe that the best way to measure the accomplishments of Ginny is to assess the growth and development of early childhood services through the many programs and initiatives that we are benefiting from today. The staff, faculty, students, children/families and Board of Directors of NSCECE would like to take this opportunity to wish Virginia O'Connell much happiness in her retirement to Vancouver.

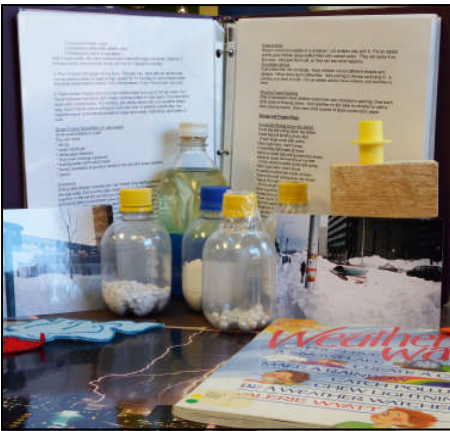
The second woman that I would like to acknowledge is Pat Hogan. I am very pleased to announce that on May 8, 2014 NSCECE will be awarding Pat an honorary ECE diploma. This is just a very small way we can give back to someone who has given so much to the children, families, and Early Childhood Educators of Nova Scotia. Pat has been linked in multiple

ways to our College. She has delivered workshops that were standing room only; she has been a guest speaker for several of the college courses, bringing the real world into the discussion; she has been an advisor for the students on their practicum placements and she sat on the Board of Directors of NSCECE for several years. Pat was even a childcare grandmother at one of our Lab Schools, wearing the family hat instead of the educator hat. Those of us who have had the pleasure to work with her are lucky indeed. The students of NSCECE who had Pat as a practicum advisor and mentor were blessed. She is passionate about children and families like no one I have ever met, and that commitment is contagious. I know you will join with me in congratulating Pat on receiving this honorary NSCECE diploma.

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In the Resource Centre ...

The Resource Centre has many learning materials and books available to support you in your work. You can look for membership information and check out our online toy inventory at www.nscece.ca. For a virtual tour visit our YouTube video. Educator Kits are collections of materials about a particular topic. They typically contain books, items for children to touch and explore and a resource binder of ideas to support the thinking and planning of the classroom teacher. The Resource Centre houses a number of these kits. Many have been designed by students while doing practicum placements in the Resource Centre. One student was recently excited to discover a Chinese Culture kit which contains many special items representative of Chinese culture. It includes a tea set, calligraphy brushes and ink, little red New Year envelopes, examples of Chinese paper craft, picture books, etc. A little bit of home that she could share with the children she works with. Here are a few other kits.



Extreme Weather Kit (K 525)

The Extreme Weather Kit was created as a student assignment many years ago. It offers a wealth of activity prompts around various types of extreme weather. It contains a wonderful set of sensory shakers for creating the sounds of a blizzard as it gets stronger and fades away. There are many photos of extreme weather to spark conversations and wonder about. The kit

also includes a resource book of weather related experiments and activities.

Arabic Culture Kit (K 986)



The Arabic Culture Kit was designed by a student from Kuwait. She made a real effort to include information and materials that show the diversity of Arabic culture around the world. The kit contains rebus recipes for making pita and hummus; a picture book about two girls learning about, and coming to enjoy, the lunch that each brings to school; and a picture book about a boy in Morocco who learns that every language has own way of saying Cock-a-doodle-doo. The kit also contains head scarves, a tambourine, Arabic alphabet blocks and a picture dictionary.

Exploring Emotions Kit (K 475)



The Exploring Emotions Kit was created by Resource Centre staff and is full of activities, materials and books for exploring emotions, social problem solving and resiliency. There is a copy of Tucker Turtle and many of the other materials available for download from the Technical As-

sistance Center of Social Emotional Intervention (challengingbehavior.fmhi.usf.edu/). There are mirrors, a happy/sad doll, a lavender relaxation bear and a fun set of mouth and eye masks. This kit is meant to inspire and encourage classrooms to include social and emotional activities and programming as a key part of the curriculum.

News

- With increasing postal rates this may be the last paper copy of the newsletter you will receive. If you wish to continue receiving a paper copy please let us know. The newsletter and workshop flyers are always available on our website at www.nscece.ca
- We have a new Facebook page. "Like us" to get regular updates. *Nscece Early Childhood Educators Resource Centre.*

FROM CHAOS TO CALM: SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORTING THE STRESSED CHILD

Join presenter, Lysa Appleton, certified Life Development Coach and an accredited member of the International Coach Federation (ICF), for a professional development experience that will be practical, helpful, hopeful, and educational.

Saturday, April 26, 9:00am-4:30pm,
McCain Building, Dalhousie University

For more information visit ecurriculum-training.ca or call us at (902) 431-0410

Resource Centre services are offered with support from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Early Childhood Education Training Initiative.



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NSCECE second-year students enjoy the Ann Pelo Wine and Cheese event in October 2013.

At the Nova Scotia College of Early Childhood Education, we provide an opportunity for students to study and gain experience in Early Childhood Education through a diverse range of courses and practical settings.

We are proud to lay a foundation for the personal and professional growth and development of our students. It is our hope and goal that NSCECE graduates continue to learn, practice and reflect throughout their years in early childhood education.



Join the crowd—become a member today!

Take advantage of the many services provided with a NSCECE Resource Centre membership

Resources for the early childhood community



To download an Information Brochure or Membership Form visit www.nscece.ca

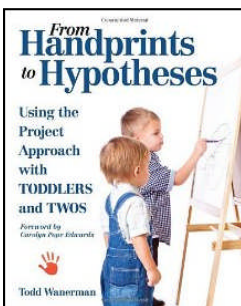
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From Handprints to Hypothesis: Using the Project Approach with Toddlers and Twos

This book review is written by Chelsey Shaw a second year NSCECE student who did a practicum placement in the ECE Resource Centre this winter.



Written by Todd Wanerman

This book is a guide to using projects with toddlers. It includes information about child development and examples of activities with detailed instructions and beautiful pictures. What I really enjoyed about this book is how the author developed projects for toddlers that really follow their development and help them get from toddlerhood to preschool. For example, he starts out with projects that children can work on individually while still contributing to the same project. This was done through the *Canvas Project*. Children got to explore colours on a huge canvas while painting individually, though side-by-side. The focus was more on the investi-

gation than working together. They started with one colour, and then over the span of a few weeks, they added more and more colours to the canvas, making the paint really thick and giving it texture.

Once they start playing together more, Wanerman develops projects that get the children working together and communicating, such as *The Lion Head Project*. In this project, they are working together on a finished product, discussing the shapes and colours involved in the dragon. They also need to be able to work together to dance while underneath the dragon when it is finished. They also explore the Chinese New Year traditions as well as conquering their fears through construction, music, and role playing.

As the children develop more they become more curious and want to learn more about the topics they encounter. This is a good time to explore researching and science with them. One example the book gives is *The Volcano Project*. The children first

listened to stories about volcanoes, which brought up questions about volcanoes that were researched together. The book also gives detailed instructions on how to build a volcano that the children explored again and again, inside and outside the classroom.

All of these projects work with the developmental themes of toddlerhood: sensory activities, exploring, construction, deconstruction, curiosity, and much more. This book is very helpful because it takes what toddlers are already learning, and incorporates that into thought provoking projects that also increase attention spans, and prepare children for preschool and school.

I think most people believe that it is easier to do long-term projects with preschoolers, but this book does a great job of showing us how easy it can be to do projects with toddlers. The author gives us some great ideas, as well as ideas for starting points.

From Handprints to Hypothesis is available in the ECE Resource Centre (375.7 Wan)