

Mentoring Pairs for Child Care

Continues to Enhance Supervisors' Leadership Skills

Lorrey Arial-Bonilla, Interim Executive Director
Early Childhood Community Development Centre
(ECCDC)



The Early Childhood Community Development Centre (ECCDC) is a not-for-profit charitable organization dedicated to providing early learning and child care professionals with affordable access to the specialized resources, training and supports they require to create high quality experiences for children and families. In 2009, with funding through the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, the ECCDC launched Mentoring Pairs for Child Care. Mentoring Pairs for Child Care was a pilot project aimed at helping supervisors in licensed child care settings enhance their leadership skills and become reflective practitioners, while increasing their professional knowledge and developing strategies for building strong relationships.

Mentoring Pairs for Child Care matched experienced supervisors (mentors) with new supervisors (mentees) in twenty five communities across Ontario resulting in the participation of over five hundred supervisors. The mentoring pairs attended various formal learning opportunities together and followed up with visits to each other's programs. For mentors, it was a chance to share what they've learned and gain a new perspective on their professional practice. For mentees, it was a chance to learn from another's gain proficiency in their role as supervisor at a much faster rate than they otherwise would.

Knowing that Mentoring Pairs for Child Care was a pilot project

and that major changes were in store for Ontario's licensed child care sector, the ECCDC took a number of steps to build sustainability into the program. The ECCDC created a variety of affordable tools and materials available to facilitate mentoring in the child care sector and made them readily accessible for purchasing online. It also created a secure, web-based data infrastructure and communications system that would keep mentors and mentees connected after the program's conclusion and help support communities that wished to continue the process on their own.



Since the initial Mentoring Pairs for Child Care project's conclusion in December of 2010, several communities have continued the mentoring momentum. In Waterloo, a local mentoring project continues to meet more than three years later due to the ongoing leadership of the initial participants. Now in year 4, co-facilitators Joanne Neeb of Owl Child Care Services and Krista Schott of Inspiring Minds Early Learning Centre have brought together a brand new group of mentors and mentees to learn from each other and share in the Mentoring Pairs experience. Together they continue to work through the Child Care Sector Council's Occupational Standards for Administrators, expanding their knowledge and understanding. Additionally, they continue to participate in many hours of professional learning exploring topics such as team building; ethics; reflective practice; board governance; and employment law. Lastly, through the support of their local College, a member's only website was created where Power Point presentations, materials from the initial Mentoring Pairs for Child Care initiative and other tools are available.

In Peel, the momentum has continued through ongoing leadership provided by Velma Doran of the Sheridan College ECE Program and Gayle Ballard of Raising the Bar in Peel. Sheridan College continues to offer the ECE Supervision and Administration Program in an online delivery format for those individuals

Five Tips for Developing a Mentoring Culture

1. Offer support and recognition to your team members and partners
2. Encourage a culture of reflective practice
3. Create an environment that helps everyone reach their full potential through the practice of professionalism, excellence and ethics.
4. Provide opportunities for staff to feel safe and speak freely without negative impact, as this develops their sense of self-acceptance and security
5. Foster a sense of belonging by creating opportunities for networking and engaging in professional group activities.

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looking for academic credentials focused on management and supervising. The program grants exemption credit for the Field Placement Course to those applicants who have completed the mentoring pairs program within their college in the past. Interest and enrollment has been positive with candidates participating from all over Ontario including; Manitoulin Island, Thunder Bay, Ottawa, North Bath, Sarnia, Markham, Toronto and Niagara. The Continuing the Momentum group has continued to assist with training at Raising the Bar in Peel meetings, focusing on the Occupational Standards for Administrators as well as the College of Early Childhood Educator's Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice.

In North Bay, Kelli Couroux of West Ferris Day Nursery has supported her community in implementing Mentoring Pairs for Child Care components into their Save the Day for Play Program. Additionally, great mentoring work continues in Scarborough, Sault St. Marie, Belleville and Dryden. Carmen Kellr shares that the mentoring momentum continues in Dryden through having discussions on various topics at supervisor's meeting and monthly Childcare Advisory Meetings. Her community continues to use Mentoring Pairs for Child Care's matching program and online resources.

In Niagara, where the ECCDC receives funding from Niagara Region Children's Services to offer a variety of professional learning opportunities and program consultation services to area's licensed child care programs, a community supervisor's network and other committees have continued to facilitate informal mentoring. The supervisor's network has used the *Occupational Standards for Child Care Administrators (2013)* as well as the accompanying *Self Assessment and Reflective Practice Checklist for Child Care Administrators* to support ongoing planning for staff performance evaluation, and professional development planning, while the Niagara Child Care Sector Executive Committee have used the foundational pieces as criteria for a Leadership Award

More information about mentoring in the child care sector is available from the ECCDC, as are the tools and materials referenced in this article. To start a mentoring initiative in your community, please visit www.eccdc.org for ideas and support.

Continuing the Momentum in Waterloo

