

AUGUST 2021

CHANGING RESULTS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

RESEARCH FINDINGS
2020-2021

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**In this report, the term educator is inclusive of Early Years
Community-based Educators, Strong Start Educators and Early Years
School-based Educators.**

1. BACKGROUND

Changing Results for Young Children (CR4YC) is a collaborative inquiry project that brings together Community-based Early Childhood Educators, Strong Start Facilitators, and Kindergarten Teachers to improve the social and emotional well-being of young children.

CORE PRINCIPLES

- To build a community of practice for early childhood educators and primary teachers to share what they are learning
- To extend opportunities for collaboration and implementation of quality practices associated with increasing social and emotional well-being in young children
- To establish a culture of inquiry through documentation, critical reflection and pedagogical narration
- To use current research of what fosters social and emotional well-being in young children

CR4YC is a partnership between The Ministry of Education (MOE) and the United Way of the Lower Mainland (UWLM) and was initiated in the fall of 2017. Community-based educators, Strong Start Facilitators and Kindergarten teachers work collaboratively in six joint professional learning sessions with release time provided by the CR4YC Project. CR4YC is based on the successful Changing Results for Young Readers framework that was implemented in 57 BC School Districts from 2012 – 2015.

INTENT

- To increase the social and emotional well-being of young children
- To enhance awareness and use of the Early Learning Framework
- To improve the quality of practices associated with teaching social and emotional well-being
- To increase collaboration and strengthen relationships between early childhood educators and primary teachers
- To use the science and research of social and emotional well-being to improve both educators' practice and social and emotional outcomes for young children
- To provide young children with opportunities and specific skills that foster their social and emotional competence through positive human qualities: happiness, self-regulation, kindness, empathy, sense of belonging, altruism, sense of agency, compassion, sense of identity, and building relationships

CR4YC focuses on social and emotional well-being to improve outcomes for young children. One of the CR4YC goals is to identify and apply a strengthened understanding of quality practices associated with improving the social and emotional well-being (SEWB) of young children. Another goal is to increase the coherence in pedagogy between Early Childhood Educators and Primary Educators, using the Early Learning Framework.) Kim Schonert-Reichl is the lead scholar advising the CR4YC Initiative, including professional learning sessions throughout the year.

2. OVERVIEW

“

Resiliency is not one more thing to add
to our teaching plates....

IT IS THE PLATE

”

(as stated by Kim Schonert Reichl, May 2021)

Educators at 29 sites, representing 48 BC school districts and communities, met 6-7 times over several months to explore and reflect on practices for enhancing the social and emotional well-being of young children. At each site, educators from StrongStart BC programs, Community-based Early Childhood Programs, and Kindergarten classes met with a facilitator to pursue their own questions. Groups explored practices, recorded and shared observations, interpreted what they observed, and planned strategies to support social and emotional well-being.

Wherever possible, CR4YC participants were selected as triads from the same community. For example, a triad might include: a StrongStart BC Facilitator; a Kindergarten teacher from the same school (or neighborhood); and a community-based Early Childhood Educator who worked in a child care centre or pre-school in the same community. This brought educators together who shared connections with the same children and families and provided them with the opportunity to collaborate and strengthen relationships over time.

A CR4YC Facilitator, contracted by the MOE/UWLM, facilitated the CR4YC sessions. The facilitators were educators with expertise in collaborative inquiry, social and emotional learning, early learning, and facilitation.

Throughout the project, educators observed, supported and recorded growth in seven facets of personal and social well-being connected to the Early Learning Framework and related to the BC core competencies of social and personal competence.

3. RESEARCH PROCESS

The overriding purpose of all CR4YC activities is to support BC children as they develop and strengthen their social and emotional well-being. Our research is descriptive; we collaborate with each other and with the children to explore and learn about social and emotional well-being and how it develops in Early Years.



A child, was crying because his boots were muddy and his socks were wet. RS walked over to where the boy and his mom were standing. He didn't say anything but went over to the bench and took off his boots - showing his wet and muddy socks. The other boy looked at RS as BH exclaimed, "Wow! You have muddy socks too!" W came over and sat next to RS and they laughed.



STICKS, MUD AND FOUR CHILDREN.

Mackenzie watches the action. The stirring and addition of seasoning (fir needles). She listens to the others. A soup is being made. ...

USING THE THINKING LENS FOR LEARNING WITH CHILDREN

- The data we collect serve several purposes:
 - They focus attention and intention on children's social and emotional development
 - They offer a framework for conversations and explorations among educators
 - They illustrate what SEL looks like in various contexts and the range of behaviours that might be observed -- this helps educators and others observe and enhance what children are doing
 - They help educators initiate conversations with families and children
 - They connect observations in the early years with a system-wide focus on the core competencies: Positive Personal and Cultural Identity; Social Responsibility; Personal Awareness and Responsibility
 - They provide insights and guidance we use to develop observation and documentation tools and processes as we scale-up this initiative
 - They address issues of accountability, and keep us asking: "Is what we are doing making a difference? What's working? What isn't? What do we need to add/delete/change?"
- Reports and analysis are based on educators' responses to standardized questions and observations. Educators provided detailed evidence to support their responses.
- Each educator developed a case file for one "wonder child" – a total of over 350 children across all sites. These case files included initial observations, several "recording and reflecting" sheets where educators described and commented on specific teaching and support strategies they had used, and a summary form where they analyzed the child's progress. Educators also kept ongoing observation notes. Many educators also included photographs and artifacts in their case files, and some created scrapbooks and wrote letters to the 'wonder' child and family.

“ Playification

is at the heart of what we do

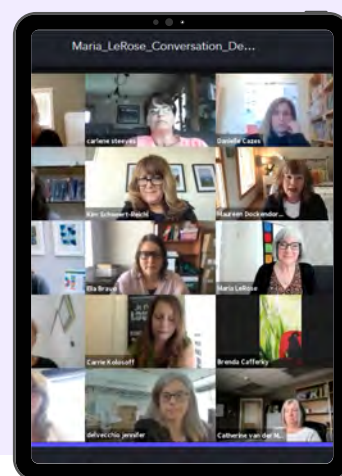
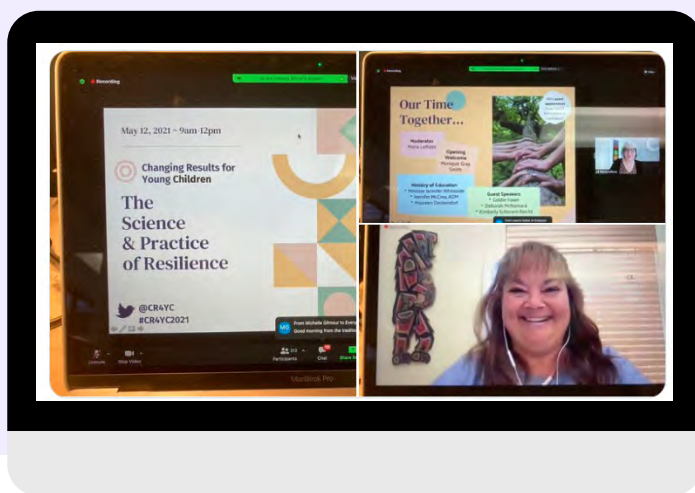
(Maureen Dockendorf, May 2021)



RESEARCH PROCESS

- Educators also completed a survey, *Changes in Practice*, where they indicated the extent of changes they had made in their own practice.
- Implementation involved a wide range of contexts, time frames, resources, and strategies, dependent on local contexts. For example, various groups worked with different timeframes, different meeting schedules, different numbers and length of meetings, and so on. While that makes direct comparisons difficult, it enhanced our ability to be inclusive and to generalize beyond a narrow context.
- The challenges of COVID-19 and the related protocols continued into 2021 with severe restrictions on face-to-face interactions among educators and children. All CR4YC meetings from November to June were conducted virtually (e.g., ZOOM, TEAMS); families were not permitted in classrooms; and COVID protocols required masks and social distancing in most situations. CR4YC groups found innovative ways of sustaining their connections and collaboration and participants repeatedly commented on missing face-to-face interactions.
- Approximately 250 Of the educators (or 2/3) were able to submit completed case studies. The remainder continued to work with their Wonder Children, but often unable to submit the required information for the case studies. We based our reports on the completed case studies and reflection from approximately 250 educators.

CR4YC PROVINCIAL NETWORK SESSION : THE SCIENCE & PRACTICE OF RESILIENCE MAY 12, 2021



Conversation: Maria LeRose, Maureen Dockendorf,
Deborah MacNamara

“Kindness is a salve, it boosts your dopamine.”
Monique Gray Smith

07

4. PARTICIPATION IN 2020-21

Working in 29 inquiry groups that each included 1, 2, or 3 communities, educators examined their own practices and explored ways of strengthening children’s social and emotional well-being (SEWB). They observed, supported and recorded growth in seven facets of personal and social well-being connected to the Early Learning Framework and related to the BC core competencies of social and personal competence. Each participant developed an ongoing case record for one “wonder child” and focused their observations on one facet:

Identity

- Sense of identity – “who I am”

Social Responsibility

- Building relationships; friends
- Kindness and empathy - caring for others
- Contributing to classroom community

Personal Awareness and Responsibility

- Well-being – sense of joy and happiness
- Self-regulation - connecting actions/results; taking responsibility
- Sense of personal agency - self-efficacy; advocates for self; addresses own needs

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS AND GROUPS:

327 educators in 48 communities participated in CR4YC in 2020-2021.

It is extremely difficult to estimate how many children these educators collectively work with across BC, in-person and virtually. Many districts have created active FaceBook and webpages that engage with many more young children than are involved in face-to-face programs. In some cases, even children whose families were required to be out of the country were able to have their children continue to participate in Strong Start virtually.

236 educators in 33 communities also responded to a survey about *Changes in Practice* in June 2021.

243 of educators (74%) submitted case studies including final summaries for individual children by June 2021. Some were unable to complete the case studies because centres had closed, ECE positions had been cut, or children were no longer attending. It is worth noting that the completion rate is much high in 2021 than in 2020, as educators became more and more innovative and skilled at maintaining contact under COVID-19 protocols. Their efforts were amazing.

- At each site the intention was to select approximately 1/3 of the children from Kindergarten; one-third from StrongStart; and one-third from community-based pre-school programs.
- Because of the impact of COVID-19 on the attendance of young children and the ability of their educators to maintain contact with them and their families, each site determined the best way for them to recruit and document children. While they attempted to include 1/3 K teachers, 1/3 Strong Start facilitators and 1/3 community early childhood educators, that was often not possible.

5. CHANGES IN EDUCATORS' PRACTICES

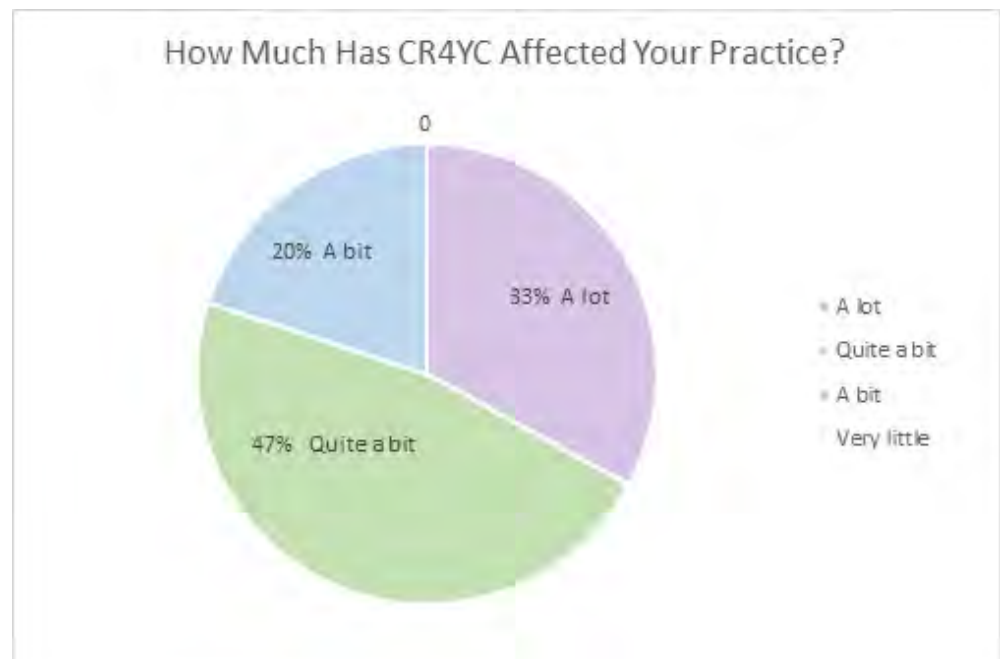
These results are based on responses from over 300 educators at 46 sites who submitted pre and post reports on their practices.

Context

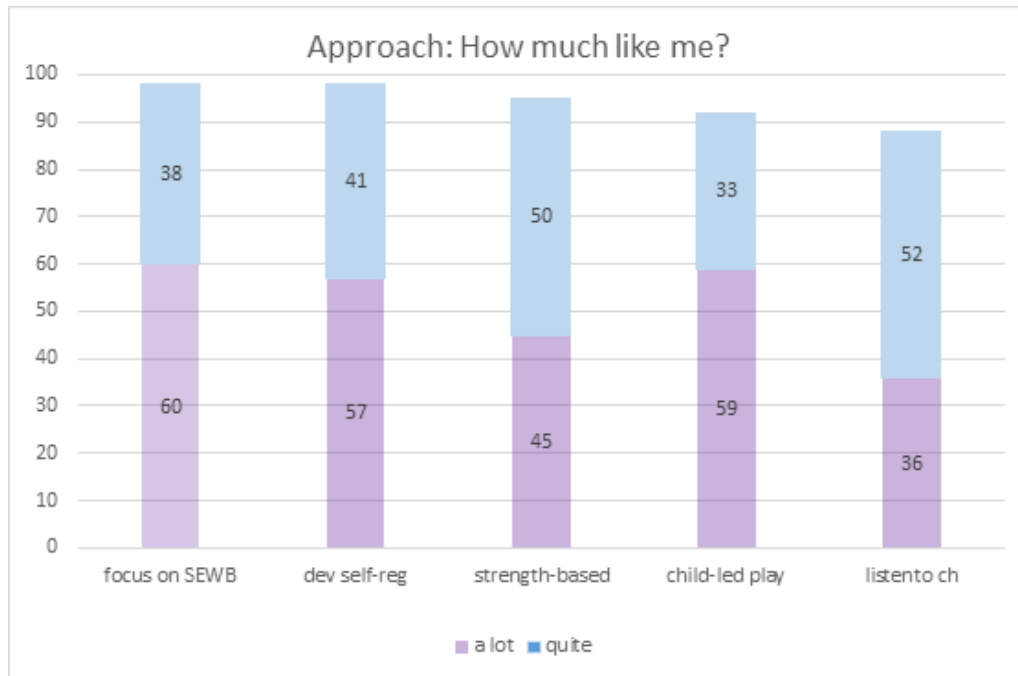
- Many of the educators have been participating in CR4YC for 3 to 4 years. Others are new to the project. Few groups were able to meet in person; most worked together remotely. Kindergarten teachers were often unable to meet because their district reserved TOCs for illness only.
- Where there are pre/post comparisons we made no attempt to do case by case matching (we assured participants of anonymity when reporting on their own practices) so the 300 educators who completed the “practices “ survey at the beginning of the project are not always the same ones who completed it at the end. Some sites were not able to collect “pre” data; others were missing substantial amounts of “post” data.
- A series of questions probed the effect of CR4YC on their approach.

Overall Results

- Reflecting on their experiences, nearly 80% indicated that CR4YC affected their practice, “quite a bit” (46%) or “a lot” (33%.) The remainder chose “a bit”; no-one selected “very little or not at all.”



CHANGES IN EDUCATORS' PRACTICE

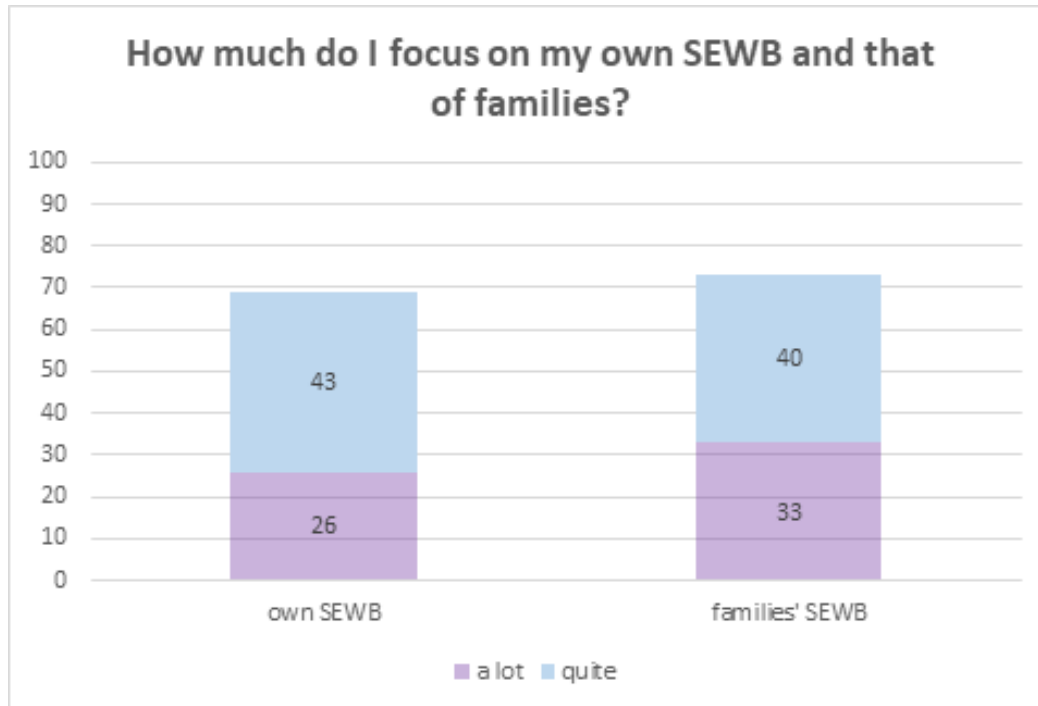


- After participating in CR4YC, over 88% reported intentionally
 - focusing on SEWB (98%)
 - helping children develop self-regulation (98%)
 - starting and building on strengths (95%)
 - creating opportunities for child-led play (92%)
 - listening to child's voice/talking less (88%)
- We asked similar questions at the beginning of the year; the results at the end of the project were consistently more positive; the difference was greatest for "listening to the child's voice" (88% compared with 75%.)
- In 2020, participants were asked to estimate the amount of change to some similar questions. Results cannot be directly compared, as the response scale was not the same; however, the pattern of results is similar.

Supporting SEWB of Self and Families

- After participating in CRY4YC, the percent of participants that reported focusing on their own SEWB increased from 52% to 69%. The increased percent of educators who endorsed this statement suggests that CR4YC may be contributing to both a growth in awareness of the importance of one's own SEWB and an increase in support from their colleagues.
- At the end of the project, the percent of educators that reported focusing on and supporting the SEWB of families increased from 61% to 73%.

CHANGES IN EDUCATORS' PRACTICE

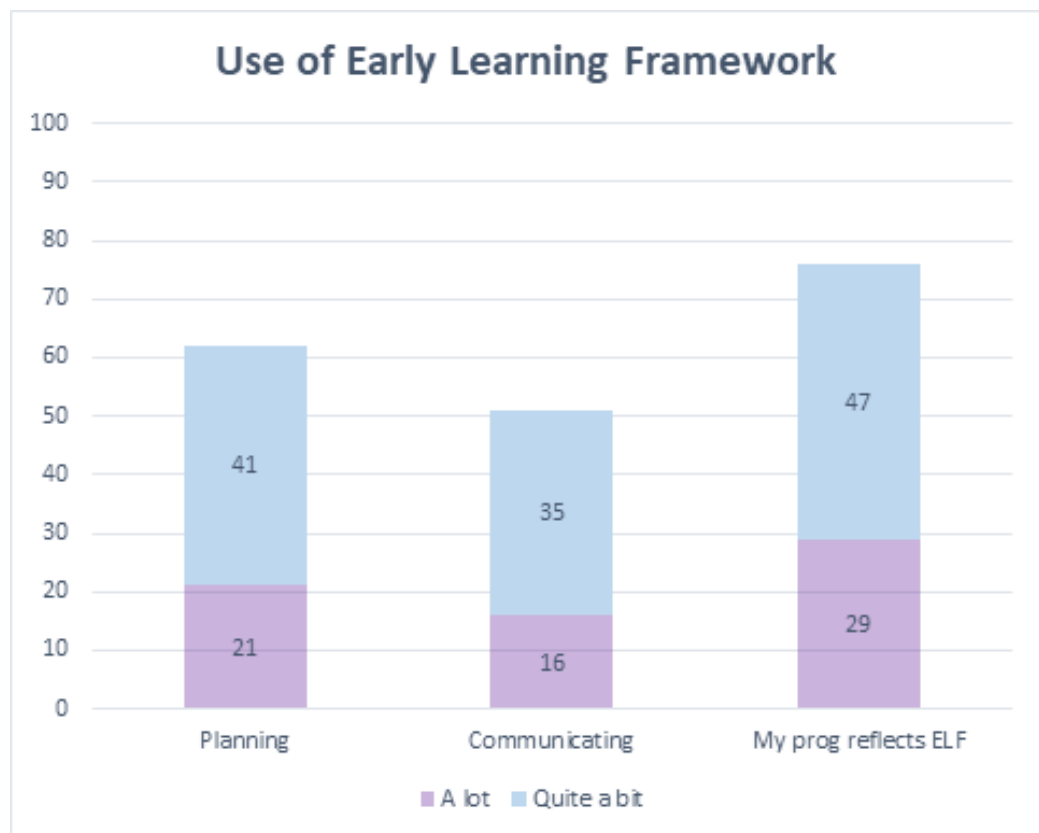


Collaboration

- Collaboration with colleagues is a key feature of CR4YC; participants are aware that they are expected to collaborate with their colleagues when they join the project, and School district Early Learning Leads try to recruit teams of 3: one Strong Start ECE, one community based ECE, and one school-based Early Years Educator (Kindergarten/Grade 1 teacher) that work within the same community. This structure is not always possible. Overall, at the end of the project slightly fewer educators reported collaborating extensively than did at the beginning. This is worth watching, although the fact that many of them had fewer opportunities to collaborate because of COVID-19 protocols than they expected may explain the results.
- Participants were asked about the extent to which they seek out opportunities to collaborate with their colleagues. Results were similar from the beginning (78%) to the end (81%) of the project. In some sites, COVID protocols made collaboration challenging.

6. USE OF THE EARLY LEARNING FRAMEWORK (ELF)

- After participating, in CR4YC, 62% of participants reported substantial use of the ELF in their planning and activities.
- Use of the ELF in communicating and engaging with families was somewhat lower, at 52%, reflecting the fact that COVID protocols reduced opportunities for educators to connect with families. It was certainly one of the most frequently mentioned issues in 2020-21.
- After participating in CR4YC, 76% of participants indicated that they were confident that they were offering experiences that reflected the Early Learning Framework.
- Participants frequently mentioned that learning more about the ELF was a valuable part of their experience with CR4YC.



USE OF THE EARLY LEARNING FRAMEWORK

THE VALUE OF THE EARLY LEARNING FRAMEWORK TO CR4YC

EXPERIENCE *story starters*

I have found ways in my day to include more personal connections with kids. Using ELF as my guide.

Having access and conversation about the ELF gave me space to talk and learn about it, and bring these conversations to my peers as to how we as a school can change our practice.

I am more aware of finding the stories that matter.

I am motivated to advocate for assessment practices aligned with the ELF and also making time for pedagogical narration.

ELF is now what I base my classroom around.

Has made me more aware of using more profound reflective teaching techniques to really see the children and understand how they are in the world.

ELF deepened my connection to place.

Reading *From Teaching to Thinking* and working through the ELF has made me reflect on my practice and get honest about what I could do better. I have started doing some Truth & Reconciliation workshops.

ELF reminds me to slow down and be present with what children are noticing and wondering about.

I enjoyed exploring ELF more deeply and really loved the reminder to find the JOY in each interaction.

First year in BC, CR4YC introduced me to ELF and helped me look at the children with a different lens.

I am not afraid to dive into my vision and into my values to create an new atmosphere for students and not what has been done before.

7. CASE STUDIES

- Each educator chose a “Wonder Child” to follow, observe and document during the project. They chose children to “wonder” about – sometimes, they “wondered” about a child’s strengths in SEWB. Sometimes they wondered how to support a child. Sometimes their choices were based on being able to develop ongoing contacts with families and children.
- For each “wonder child” they focused observations and documentation on one of the seven facets. This focus helped to make the documentation and observation manageable, and encouraged participants to “go deeper” in one area.

FACETS

SENSE OF IDENTITY - "WHO I AM"

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS; FRIENDS

KINDNESS AND EMPATHY - CARING FOR OTHERS

CONTRIBUTING TO CLASSROOM COMMUNITY

WELL BEING - SENSE OF JOY AND HAPPINESS

SELF-REGULATION - CONNECTING ACTIONS / RESULTS ; TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

SENSE OF PERSONAL AGENCY ; ADVOCATES FOR SELF

- At each meeting, they shared observations, “wonderings”, and documentation about their chosen child. At three points over the project, they submitted written documentation to the Early Learning Lead at their site. This documentation was passed on to the researcher and assembled into individual case records.
- Participants were diligent about creating and submitting information for the case records, however there were many challenges that sometimes resulted in incomplete information, including:
 - Families that moved
 - Districts that cancelled TOCs
 - ECEs whose sites were shut down
 - Educators who were re-assigned
 - Issues with technology

CASE RECORDS

Results in this report are based on case records for 250 children that include:

Beginning of the project

Information about the child's SEWB including observations, interviews with the child/family, submission from family members where possible, and artifacts "Cover sheet"

Monthly (approximate)

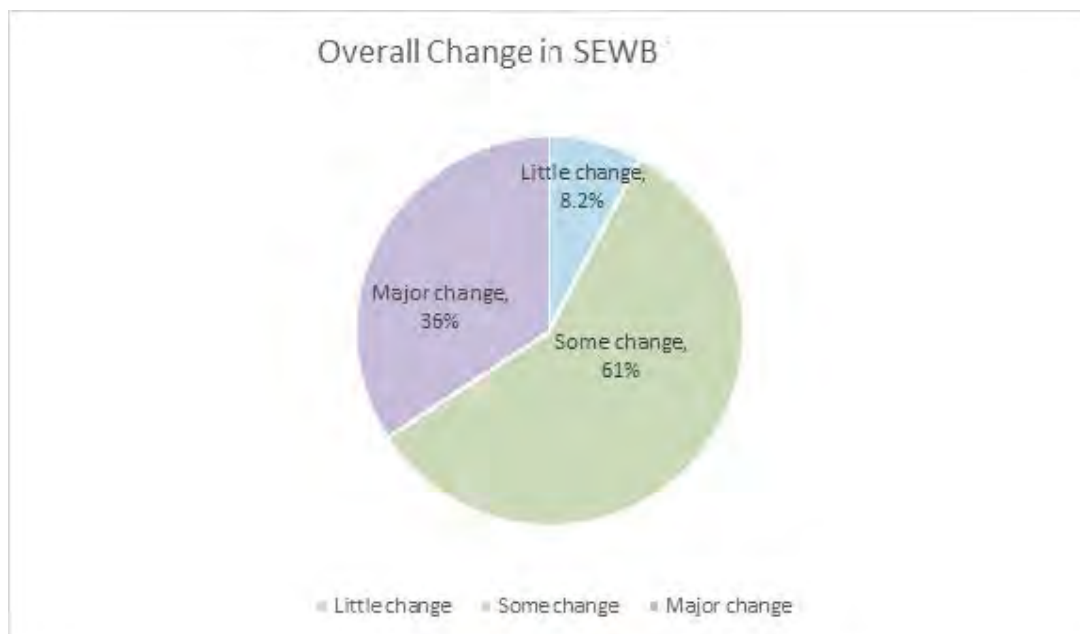
Observations of the child, including interpretation and questions

Note that only one of these was required to be submitted to the researcher; however, most participants shared all of their observations with their colleagues

End of the project

An observation of the child, focusing on SEWB

A final recording and analysis of the child's SEWB, focusing on strengths and changes (final cover sheet") Note: if this information was not available, this child was not included in the case analyses



OVERALL CHANGES IN SEWB

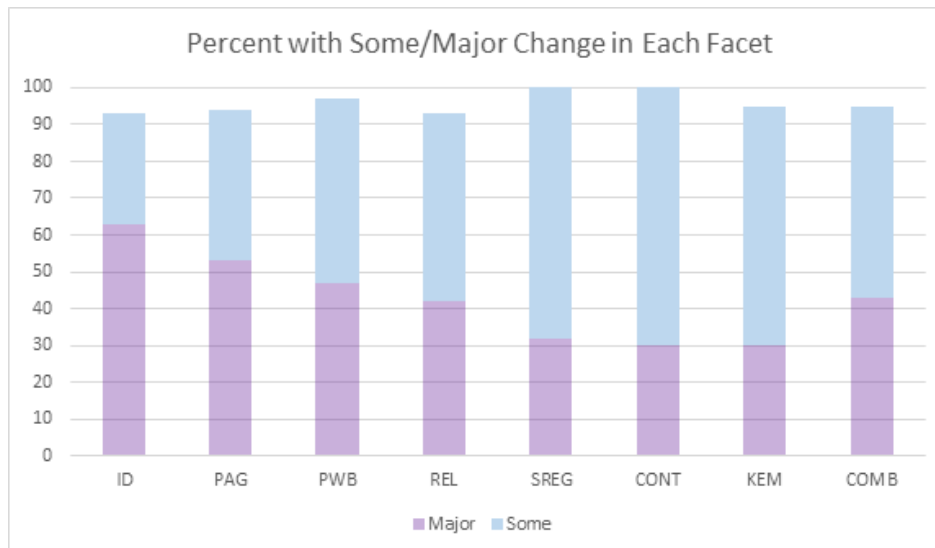
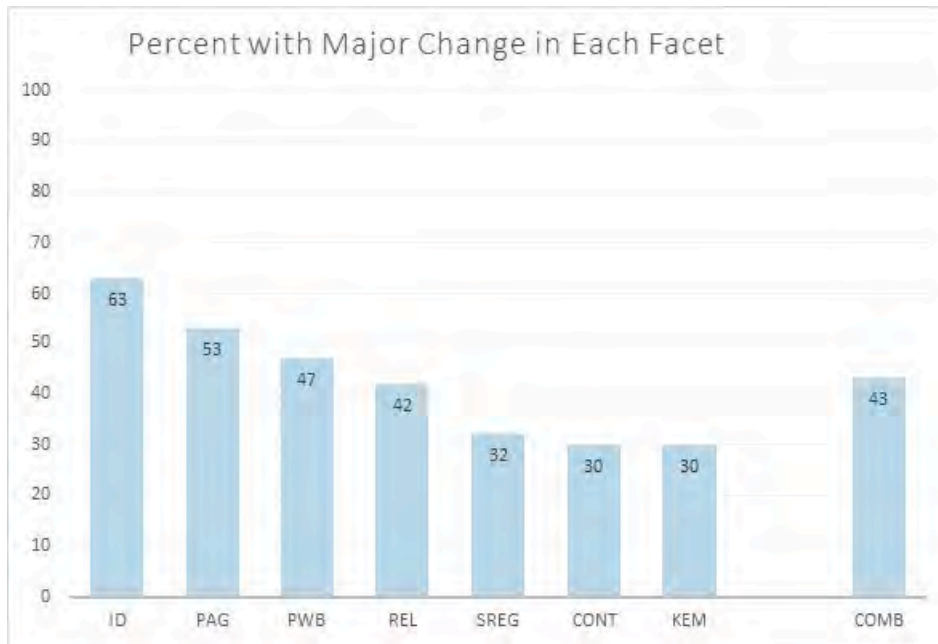
- 36% of educators reported that their “wonder child” had demonstrated major changes in overall SEWB during the project
- A further 61% report “some” change
- These results are very similar to previous years
- Educators provided detailed evidence in the final analyses detailing the changes they observed, and often offering evidence from families and others in support. This documentation provided the basis for the final qualitative analysis

CHANGES IN INDIVIDUAL FACETS

Educators were asked to indicate the extent of change they observed in the one facet they chose as a focus.

- The most frequently chosen facet was building relationships/friends , chosen by 80 participants, followed by self-regulation, chosen by 37 participants. Most of the facets were followed by approximately 30 educators. Somewhat fewer chose kindness and empathy and contributing to the classroom community.
- Over 60% of educators who focused on sense of identity reported major change in their wonder child; over 50% described major change in sense of personal agency. 47% indicated major change in personal well-being, and 42% in relationships. That suggests that educators felt more successful when focusing on these facets than those who chose self-regulation, kindness and contributing to the classroom. It is important not to overinterpret this result – the numbers for each facet are relatively small, the facets are not really distinct, and there was no attempt here to standardize interpretation.
- Overall, 43% of educators saw some change in terms of the facet they focused on; 95% saw at least some change.
- There are clear differences in the extent of change from one facet to another. For example, educators who focused on identity were most likely to identify “major” success (61%)

CHANGES IN INDIVIDUAL FACETS



CHANGES OVER TIME

PRACTICES

Participants continue to report strong use of key practices in their approach to SEWB. In 2020-2021 participants were asked to indicate the extent to which five key classroom practices reflected their programs. Although the format of the questions changed, in all cases, the responses were more positive than in previous years.

CHILDREN'S SEWB

Each year, educators are asked to report on their “wonder child’s” SEWB. For the last two years, results have been extremely similar, in spite of major disruptions that COVID-19 protocols brought to the project. Almost all participants reported a positive change, and 36% percent a major change.

The research team introduced a new analysis this year in looking at growth in the facets. Rather than asking all participants about all of the facets, for this analysis we considered only the facets that were their focus, attempting to find out more about the impact of educator’s focus for each facet. The numbers of educators that focused on each facet ranged from a high of 80 (relationships) to a low of 17 (contributing to the classroom community.) As described in the previous section, this analysis provided some interesting results and we will continue with in future years.

8. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Resilience. CR4YC continues to receive a high level of support from participants throughout the province, in spite of changing conditions and challenges. It has demonstrated remarkable resilience as conditions have changed and many of the initial features have been altered to accommodate a world with restricted face-to-face contact. It has been a difficult challenge for many educators to observe, build relationships, and document their wonder children when they could meet the child or the family face-to-face. They have shown amazing determination and resilience.

Communities of practice. The results from CR4YC confirm that collaborative inquiry is a powerful way of supporting educator's SEWB, providing professional development and developing communities of practice. Educator's written and oral comments emphasize how much they value the support of their CR4YC even when they cannot be together. Each year, survey results reveal a growing consensus and reported use of key Early Learning strategies (e.g., strength-based; child-led play; focus on SEWB; listening to child.) In fact, we have dropped some questions from the survey because there is simply no variance (i.e. almost every educator gives the same answers.)

Growth in SEWB. Over 250 early learning educators from all parts of BC provided detailed learning stories and other documentation of children's growth in SEWB. Virtually ALL children showed growth, no matter where they started. The documentation and stories offer optimism, in sometimes troubled times. Educators do make an enormous difference, and it is not "magic" although it sometimes feels that way. It is the result of strength-based and evidence based practice; of believing in children and change; and of working with determination and a collaborative spirit.

“

Children are strong, capable in their uniqueness, and full of potential.

(BC Early Learning Framework, p. 15)

”

9. DOCUMENTATION AND LEARNING STORIES

HOW HAS CR4YC AFFECTED YOUR PRACTICE?

story starters

I feel like CR4YC gets better every year!

Throughout the pandemic CR4YC has been a touchstone for me. The listening, caring and support of our group really made a difference for me, and I believe for the children in my class.

As a K teacher it was so valuable to listen and learn from ECE teachers during our sessions.

by facilitating creative story telling out in nature and making sure I am part of the creative play, not just the adult reminding students to stay in bounds.

helped me to remember to keep myself in a healthy and positive mental space as then I can be more productive in my work with families and children

I have slowed down and taken the time to connect with each child. I am much more thoughtful & observant, and give the children more freedom in our daily activities.

This propels Early Learning and Care to a professional level.

This was an incredible experience for me – I learned how to see a child as a wonder child. I've been able to see his gifts. Learned more about how to focus on his strengths and talents. I've been able to hear what he wants to tell me.

I am focused on listening to child's voice rather than speaking myself.

I focus less on my own expectations and how I think things should be. This experience helped me see the play and the interactions in a different way that really focused on the children's lens.

Having a wonder child could be the single most important strategy for professional growth.

I often think about this quote from one of our sessions when I planning and when I am interacting with children: "How can I bring more joy to my practice?"

LEARNING STORY

Miss Diana Learns from Bowie

a learning story

choice

Gourds and magnifying glasses were placed on a tray next to the scales. Miss D had thought that the children would weigh the gourds, learning mathematical concepts such as weight through kinesthetic play.

Instead, he learned an alternate lesson.



reflection

Miss D had a prescribed learning outcome in mind, but Bowie reminded Miss D to review her

image of the child.

She was reminded that children are **competent, confident and capable** and she trusts that children know what they need to learn.

self agency

Bowie carried the tray with the gourds to the table and pushed the items around. Bowie then picked up the tray and walked towards the shelf, then the items fell off the tray and onto the floor. Bowie picked up the items and placed them back on the tray, then he walked towards the shelf again. The items fell off the tray for a total of **4** times and each time Bowie picked everything up and continued.

During this time Miss D tried to direct him towards the scale to weigh the gourds. Thank goodness Bowie was **not diverted from his task.**

4

Bowie was building resilience by working through the small and continual disappointments of the gourds falling to the floor.

Children need to build resilience by overcoming many small disappointments to develop the tools to face big emotions when they happen in the future.

Thank you, Bowie.



PEDAGOGICAL NARRATION

IS THE PROCESS OF NOTICING AND COLLECTING MOMENTS FROM DAILY PRACTICE AND SHARING THESE WITH COLLEAGUES, CHILDREN, AND FAMILIES. BC EARLY LEARNING FRAMEWORK, P. 47

LEARNING STORY

Dear Daniel,

What a joy it has been to get to know you this year. When you first arrived in Kindergarten, I wondered, who is Daniel? What does Daniel like to do? Everyday, in little and big moments, you have shared a bit of yourself with me.

I remember the gentle smile you showed to the sunflower in the fall, as you lay on the ground looking up at the seeds. I remember how excited you were when our mud kitchen first arrived, mixing and digging with new friends. I remember the proud look on your face when you finally shared your story with the whole class.

Of all the moments we've shared this year, I'll always remember one of our first nature walks. While the rest of our friends walked ahead, you paused to look down at the leaves that have just fallen off the trees. We had just been thinking about treasures in nature, and I wondered what caught your attention in that moment? Slowly, you began walking again. Gently, quietly, you pointed to each leaf, whispering, "trésor, trésor."

You remind me of the possibilities when we slow down to notice the gifts all around us. The treasures that surround us. Whether it's observing a patch of moss or making mud cakes with friends, you have reminded me about what it means to be truly in the moment - to pay close attention, to see and hear not just with our eyes and ears, but also with our hearts. Thank you for sharing your gifts of helpfulness, of imagination, and of connections with me.

Love, Mme. Pikkarainen



opening our hearts...

As I look back on some of the captured moments in Daniel's journey at our school, I am drawn to his playful and imaginative nature. His sense of humour is infectious, as he always finds ways to make others laugh. Could that be his way of building connections with others and the world? What might happen when I see him from this lens? As we continue to navigate the uncertainties of our current context, I am reminded of how humour can be a form of medicine for our soul. It tugs at my heart strings when I see the care-free and genuine joy Daniel experiences when he plays with his peers, when he finds just the perfect stick, or when he proudly serves up a delicious bowl of mud cereal (not forgetting to remind us to save some for the dog!). He exudes a sense of hope that exists when we are truly present in the moment. Daniel has a way of immersing himself in the moment, whether it's playing a make-believe game with friends, sharing his story, making a map for all of the cars, or carefully holding onto a handful of mud (chocolate cake). What if we experience the world in this way? What might happen if we allow ourselves to slow down and listen to children's stories with our whole heart?

child's perspective...

What brings Daniel joy? This was a difficult question to answer a few months ago. After learning alongside Daniel, I've come to realize that many of life's little treasures bring him joy. Daniel delights in growing his connections with friends by making them laugh. He seems to always have a plan when playing at the mud kitchen - knowing exactly what he wants to bake or cook. He has shown tremendous growth in his language development, which seems to have helped him form more meaningful relationships with peers. While my initial question is around self-identity, Daniel is becoming his most authentic self through relationships with others, with nature, and with new ideas. His sense of identity is informed by his environment, and I am nudged to always consider the conditions that nurture children's sense of who they are, and who they are becoming.

LEARNING STORY



new learning & wonders...



SEL Facet: Sense of Identity


When I began this project, I was curious about Daniel's development of his sense of identity. Who does he consider himself to be as a friend and learner in our community? As I grew my deep listening skills and practiced being in the moment, I have come to appreciate the social nature of human beings. We come to know who we are and who we are becoming through relationships with others, land, place, and ideas. We are not just who we are as individuals, but as a collective. Our sense of identity builds from a strong sense of belonging to and in community.

Ann Pelo reminds us about telling stories that matter. When I consider her words, I am connected to the idea that stories shape who we are, and at the same time, who we shape the stories we choose to share. What does it mean to hold space for all stories to be shared? What might it look and sound like when we consider different narratives of a story? I hope to continue to be curious and sit with the questions and uncertainties, as we learn not by finding out the answers, but by wondering and questioning.



Advice for teachers

Something I wish for Daniel's family and future teachers to remember is that "learning takes patience and time", and so, when we come alongside children with the understanding that our learning journey never ends, we might see them differently. I wish for families and teachers to know that Daniel feels safe when expectations are clear, and that he feels truly heard. Turn your body to face him, drop what you're doing, and listen to the stories he has to share. You will be amazed by the playful, curious, and friendly child he is.



LEARNING STORY

Through the Thinking Lens: The Bridge

By Molly Driscoll



Record of an Ordinary Moment:

During center time a couple of students began looking through a book about different bridges around the world. As they were flipping through KC said "we are going to build a bridge!" Which led to a journey of construction and engineering.

S: "We are going to build this bridge" He points to an image of the Golden Gate Bridge in the book.

The three students start building their bridge choosing the blocks they are going to use carefully and laying them down on the pallet.

KC: "This is not a bridge Sahib"

S: "Don't break it"

KC: "I'm not breaking it. Do you know bridges are not small, they are big"

X: "Let's make this one instead" he points to a different bridge in the book, Let's make is high!"

KC: "I have a brick, we need bigger bricks!"

X: "Yeah, you are right. It's going to be so BIG!"

KC: "Be careful because last time you smashed your finger"

KC: "This one is too short we need a longer one" KC and X place a longer block on the top to make the bridge top.

S: "we need to make it longer"

KC: " yeah, and we need more support" KC and S grab two flatter blocks and place them under the top of the bridge so it does not have a slant to it and it is flat.

The students started choosing a car and driving the cars across the bridge. After a couple of minutes playing the bridge falls down. At first they look at each other and I see a look of defeat until KC says "Lets build it again!" The students cheer and start building it again working together to, yet again, create what they had just worked so hard on constructing.

LEARNING STORY

Reflect on Yourself:

What first caught my attention was the group of students who chose to get together to build this bridge. KC is always in the blocks center, but X and S are often wandering around centers looking for students to engage with. S has limited English and X has some difficulties regulating his impulses, both are often alone in play and rarely in group play. This moment showed to me that KC was welcoming to the two students and engaged with them easily and fluidly. His dialogue during this experience was so mature and stood out to me so much. The falling of the bridge was a big moment. I watched closely to see what S and X would do. Normally it would lead to an incident that I would have to intervene. KC was able to change the reaction from devastation to resilience. I admire his ability to alter the response of the two students and redirect them towards a common goal. I know that KC has spent a lot of his last year in an adult environment while he went to work with his mom. He is an only child and has been left to learn to play by himself or with adults. His insights into the adult world have made him very mature. He is often the director playing the role of the foreman during center play. After I noticed this bridge construction, I planned a unit of inquiry into bridges and their construction. KC was extremely engaged in this inquiry and loved supporting the other students in understanding the parts of the bridge. I have noticed that KC, although extremely bright and aware of his surroundings, he struggles to share his feelings and emotions when he becomes upset. If KC becomes upset, he shuts down and will not talk or move from his position. He will refuse to sit down, interact with the teacher, or communicate his feelings. During these moments I see his vulnerability is being pushed down, he resorts to hiding all feelings and emotions. I wonder if this is influenced by his previous year spent in an adult setting and witnessing how adults maneuver through their emotions when upset. How can I support KC in letting go of this defense mechanism?

Reflect on the Child:

KC plays in a way which embodies the facilitator. He engages with all peers and welcomes them into his construction area. He identifies their ideas and concerns respectfully but continues to work towards his goal. He communicates efficiently and kindly and adds insight and ideas of that of an adult. I think he gravitates towards this block play because it is a point of interest to him and is an adult role-playing job. He enjoys having the control over where the play is going and being in charge of what is happening. He moves through the world with adult insight after being in a grown-up setting for the past year. He wants to let go of this and find more freedom in his play and learn to let his emotions go, but he is unsure about how to do this. This play is comfortable for KC but also allows him to begin to let his guard down more.



Reflect on other Perspectives:

After sharing my Wonder Child Story with my peers, I have begun to think about not how I can change KC's control over his feelings but focus on how can I make KC feel more comfortable with his emotions. Colleagues have mentioned how KC has witnessed how adults manage their feelings and strong emotions in a workplace by containing them. This is what he has seen and all he knows. Slowly he will see in the classroom that it is OKAY to feel these emotions and share them. My role is to model, encourage, and respect how emotions are felt to my students. I wonder how emotions are seen at home, are they acknowledged or brushed away? How would KC play in a center that he does not have control over, like the loose parts center or the dramatic play area?

Next steps:

- Encourage emotions and feelings "It is okay to be sad"
- Bring out open-ended Story Workshop materials and use the provocation "Tell me a story about feelings"
- Celebrate KC's ability to be resilient and sharing this with his peers
- Document examples of emotions in the class and have a conversation about emotions as a whole group