The Development of Team Relationships in Teacher and Early Childhood Educator (ECE) Integrated Staff Teaching Teams in Full-Day, Every Day Kindergarten

by

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Abstract

This collective case study examined the factors affecting the collaborative relationship between teachers and early childhood educators (ECEs) teaching together in elementary schools as Early Learning Teams in the first year of implementation of full-time kindergarten in Ontario. There are six major adjustments required concurrently by the Ontario government’s new policy in all kindergarten classrooms: team-teaching (sharing instruction, not just classroom management); supporting ECEs as new staff; changing from theme-based to inquiry-based; balancing the School District’s literacy goals with provincial play-based curriculum; double the instructional time, and the increased number of children in the classroom (up from 19 to 24-30). Two of the four classrooms studied in a rural Ontario school district were full-day, every day kindergartens (FDK) for 4 and 5 year olds and the other two were alternate full-days. Data were collected through classroom observations and interviews with principals, kindergarten teachers and ECEs. Case study theory guided the collection and analysis of data with open coding of transcripts, active code notes and memos to help answer the question of how to best implement FDK programs in Ontario. Results indicated that the FDK Team relationship itself enabled and
constrained classroom instructional strategies, which would in turn have an impact on student outcomes. Collaborative practice involved a process that was affected by both internal factors (such as teacher foreknowledge of ECE skills), and thirteen external factors which arose from government and school district mandates, as well as practices of the school principal. Examples are: planning time, pay differential, hiring practices and adjusting to the new curriculum at the same time as the team adjusts to team teaching. The collaboration of more than 9,500 teacher and ECE teams is key to the success of Ontario’s new full-time early learning program. The education sector needs to adopt the long-established business practice of supporting team development through recognizing progressive teaming stages, such as those identified by Tuckman (1965). Recommendations are made for principals, school districts offices, government policy, FDK teachers, ECEs, and colleges that provide ECE training. A mnemonic for the four attributes evident in high-functioning collaborative integrated teaching teams (RISE) is proposed.

Key words: collaborative practice, full day kindergarten, all-day kindergarten, every day kindergarten, pre-K, team teaching, early childhood educator, ECEs in schools, early learning program, teaching team building, instructional aides, kindergarten, early learning teams, teacher structure, education policy.
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This dissertation is dedicated, not to Dr. John Ross, my finest graduate school instructor, but to his wife, Dr. Nancy Ross, who was the finest elementary school teacher my children ever had. There is no greater pleasure to a mother’s heart than when one’s children come home from grade 3 or grade 4 shining with their day’s accomplishments; no greater gift to a community than the spectacular public education teacher that she exemplified.

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Chapter 1
Introduction

Context of the Study

Stuart Shanker, distinguished research professor, Director of the Canadian Council for Human Development and past president of the Council of Early Child Development, called Ontario’s plan to expand kindergarten to a full school day for all 4 and 5 year olds “one of the most significant improvements in education in decades” (Shanker, 2007, n.p.). Beginning in the 2010-11 school year, the government of Ontario provided full funding to school boards to double the length of the school day for children in both years of its two-year kindergarten program in every public school in the province at a cost of $1.5 billion when fully implemented.

Ontario children will continue to attend ‘junior kindergarten’ (JK) when they are 4 years old, and kindergarten (‘senior kindergarten’ or SK) when they are 5, both in the same school where they will attend grade one, but instead of being half-day or alternate full-days, both JK and SK will become full-day, every day programs, the same length as the grade one school day. By 2015, more than 240,000 students are expected to be attending full-day kindergarten in Ontario.

Full-day kindergarten is an increasing phenomenon in North America. Access to full-day kindergarten programs has grown enormously in the United States where more than 60% of children attending kindergarten in the U.S. are now enrolled in full-day programs (Lash, 2008), although the definition of ‘full-day’ varies. The U.S. Department of Education reports that 61% of American schools offer at least one full-day kindergarten and 53% offer only full-day, rather than half-day, kindergartens classes (Walston & West, 2004). In Canada, Quebec and Manitoba now have full-day kindergarten for 5 year olds in most or all of their schools (Lewington, 2009). British Columbia and Prince Edward Island (PEI) have just begun implementation and in
Alberta, an Education Commission has just recommended an expansion of their half-day kindergartens to full-day (Lewington, 2009).

In Ontario, the formal name of the new program is the Full Day Early Learning - Kindergarten Program however, for the purposes of this paper, the term Full-day Kindergarten (FDK) will be used in order to be consistent with the research literature. A critical feature of Ontario’s model is that there will be an Early Childhood Educator (ECE) (registered with the professional College of ECEs) in the classroom for the full school day in addition to the certified teacher, to create an ‘Early Learning Team’ in each JK and SK classroom. The new FDK program will be rolled-out in stages over a 5 year period, starting with 35,000 JK and SK students in 1,400 classes in almost 600 schools across the province, about 15% of the Ontario JK/SK population. At maturity, the new full-day program will add an additional 3,850 kindergarten teaching positions and 9,500 Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) to Ontario’s public education system.

Ontario’s FDK plan has the following attributes:

- the full-day program will be the only one offered in each school, no half-day programs will be provided;
- attendance at kindergarten continues to be optional although more than 90 per cent of Ontario’s 4- and 5-year-olds attend kindergarten, (Pascal, 2009). Almost all of them are part-time;
- school principals are the third member of the kindergarten Early Learning Team;
- teachers and ECEs will both report to the school principal (teachers have no responsibility to supervise ECEs);
- average kindergarten class size within each school district will increase to 26 students;
• an extended day component is being considered, involving before-school and after-school care, and,
• a new 108 page Kindergarten Curriculum has been drafted with learning expectations for each of the educational learning domains. All kindergartens classes in Ontario, whether they are new FDK programs or not, are required to begin using the new curriculum. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010).

Selection of schools for the first year of FDK was not random. The Ministry of Education provided the 72 school boards with a target number of classrooms. Boards then completed a template of information about the schools they chose as the best candidates to be the first to implement FDK based on the following criteria for each school they chose: availability of space, community needs, low income neighbourhoods, impact on existing childcare programs, student achievement and readiness to implement. After reviewing the completed recommendation templates, the Ministry then provided a list of approved schools across the province.

As implementation rolls out, all of the half-time kindergartens (HDK) in each year’s selected schools must become FDK programs; there cannot be both half-time and FDK in the same school. School districts may continue to have ‘split grades’ of JK/SK students blended within one class, as many do (Ontario Public School Board Association, 2008), or offer separate JK and SK classes.

**Benefits of kindergarten to young families**

Between their years of child care and Grade 1, children currently experience two years of many daily transitions that half-time schooling programs bring. Children (and their families) have to adjust to the half-day kindergarten years that increase transportation, the number of transitions they have in their day and the number of caregivers. Full-day kindergarten presents an
opportunity for a much smoother continuum and stronger bridge between preschool (pre-K) and grade school.

Kindergarten is an important transition year and much has been written about school readiness and adjustment to school. An investment in kindergarten clearly impacts future success. Kirp (2007) reminds us that adequately funded programs for 3 and 4 year olds, delivered by certified teachers, deliver results that are impossible to ignore. Perhaps the strongest example is the Perry Preschool program that began in 1961 in a school located in the working class town of Ypsilanti, Michigan. More than 35 years later, when adults who had attended the Perry Preschool were compared to those who did not, the Perry students who were then in their 40s, had more family stability, earned a higher income, were less likely to receive welfare, and were less involved in crime (Kirp, 2007). By 1996, the study showed that, for every $1 investment in the program, there was more than a $7 return in reduced costs to society. By 2004, the return on investment had increased to $11 (Ontario Elementary Catholic Teachers Association, 2008).

FDK has potential benefits for parents as well as children. Despite a declining birth rate, increases in the proportion of lone-parent families with young children, and an increase in the incidence of non-traditional work hours have added to the demand for non-parental child care during the work day (Doherty, 2003). In 1976, just over 30% of women whose youngest child was less than 6 years old were in the workforce in Canada. By 2003, their employment rate was over 67%, having more than doubled over those 30 years (Bushnik, 2006).

Quality care and education of preschool children is a significant source of stress for working parents. Finding and maintaining good experiences for their 4 and 5 year old every workday, particularly the regular opportunity to learn social skills with their peers, is a priority for parents and a bigger challenge for rural parents. In order to meet the needs of their work hours, parents
may have to find more than one daily childcare provider and location for their child’s care. In a study of childcare in Canada between 2000 and 2003, Bushnik (2006) found that, in 2002-3, just over 70% of children (less than 6 years old) were in one non-parental care arrangement per day. Bushnik (2006) also observed that:

Consistently over time, about three children out of every 10 were in at least two care arrangements. The number of child care arrangements did not vary significantly with respect to the child’s age or main care arrangement, and the few small provincial differences were not consistent over time…Multiple care arrangements may have implications for the child in terms of adjusting to multiple caregivers in a day and overall times spent in care, as well as implications for the parent, in terms of coordinating schedules and travel time. (p. 27)

Household income and parental status were both associated with the number of different care arrangements. Children in the lowest income level were more likely to be in multiple care arrangements where they travelled between two different places with different caregivers during the day compared to all the other income levels combined (Bushnik, 2006). Some regularly had three different caregivers and locations in a day before their parents picked them up. As well, a higher proportion of children who lived with just one parent were in two different care arrangements. The children from low-income or lone-parent families also tended to be in their multiple care arrangements for significantly more hours per week (Bushnik, 2006). This indicates that there are a significant number of young families, especially vulnerable families, struggling to balance jobs and preschool children with complex childcare arrangements are highly dependent on every day travel. With its provincial play-based curriculum, full-day kindergarten is more than child care, but it fills a realistic need of young families in the community to increase parental confidence in their child’s care and reduce the number of transitions in the day for young children.
Recent history of kindergarten in Ontario

In 1989, 107 of Ontario’s 129 school board districts were already providing kindergarten for 4 year olds in their schools when the Ontario government announced that boards would have five years to implement universal JK; this would really affect only the 22 boards that did not have the program yet (Johnson & Mathien, 1998). (Some urban areas, such as Toronto, have had some JK and SK classes for well over 50 years.) With a change in government in 1995, however, the mandatory implementation requirement was delayed pending further study (Anderson & Ben Jaffar, 2003). The new government reorganized school board boundaries effective January, 1998 and the term ‘funding formula’ came into the education sector lexicon for the first time as government funding of school boards was reconfigured. School boards were technically required to offer half-time JK and half-time SK upon ‘parent demand’ but by the end of the first year of the new funding formula, when the 1998-1999 school year began, 68 of the 72 new school boards provided universal half-day JK and SK (Cooke, Keating & McColm, 2003). Attendance at JK or SK continued to be an optional choice for families, as school attendance was (and is) not mandatory in Ontario until September of the calendar year in which a child turns 6 years old (grade one).

Until the 2010-2011 school year, Ontario JKS and SKs have been almost exclusively either half-days or alternate full-days, although there have been some FDKs in some school districts. Full-day every-day programs were piloted in schools in northern Ontario, francophone school boards, a few publicly funded Catholic school boards, and in low-income or high-immigration English-public schools in urban centres such as Toronto and Ottawa. All of these have been funded by the local school districts who chose to redirect funds from other areas of their budgets to support these full-day pilot projects, not directly funded by the province.
Interestingly, schools with established FDK pilot classrooms were not eligible to be selected in the first round of the province’s new FDK funding – all selected schools were required to be new to FDK.

The change from the current type of kindergarten program may be quite different in rural communities than in urban communities in Ontario. Urban schools tend to be facing a change from their established half-day Monday to Friday programs. Most rural and northern communities, on the other hand, changed to alternate-day FDK programs (every other day for the full day instead of every day for half the day) more than a decade ago in order to save money on school bus transportation costs. While urban schools are more likely to be lengthening the day, rural schools are usually adding more kindergarten days. There is much more research pertaining to the outcome differences of half-day kindergarten compared to FDK than there is in the change between alternate and every full day in kindergarten that many Ontario kindergarten students will now be experiencing.

**Purpose of the study**

This is an exciting time in the Ontario education system. Full-day kindergarten is a high-profile political issue in the province. The enormous investment of $1.5 billion tax dollars has been committed for full implementation during an economic downturn. FDK is one of the Premier’s proudest achievements and frequent television ads tout the benefits of full-day kindergarten at the beginning of the school year.

The first year of such an innovative new initiative is an opportunity to study elements of the new kindergarten experience while everyone has the same amount of experience with the program. The blend of educators with specialization in two different areas of early childhood expertise teaching 4 and 5 years olds, sharing the classroom, is an innovation in North American public education. This blended collaborative model is of critical importance to the success of
FDK. If the teacher and ECE team fails to create an effective partnership, the consequences are not just a lost opportunity (because the program is no better than regular kindergarten) it may also result in a weaker level of instruction for the children because FDK class sizes are significantly larger. The study will focus on the development of the collaborative team relationship. Findings may be used by officials at the Ministry of Education, by senior administrators at School District head offices to plan training and implementation for subsequent years, by school principals to ensure smoother implementation in the schools, and by early learning teams in classrooms to better understand the new FDK program and their collaborative relationship.

This study has two purposes:

(i) To investigate patterns of collaboration between teachers and early childhood educators teaching together in junior kindergartens classes in the first year of implementation of full-day, every-day programs; and,

(ii) To identify recommendations for schools and School Districts that are preparing to implement full-day, every-day kindergarten programs.

Research Questions

This study will address the following questions:

1. How do teachers and ECEs collaborate in kindergarten classrooms?

2. What factors affect the teacher-ECE teaching pair?

3. What are the obstacles and facilitators of collaborative teaching teams in kindergarten?

Background of the researcher

As Eisner (1991) observed, researchers are the instruments of the research. In the fieldwork of a qualitative investigation, the researcher’s emotions, attitudes, beliefs, values and characteristics enter the research itself (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989). In fact, the strength of the
researcher’s attitudes and beliefs can overwhelm the voice of the participants’ perspectives. It is important, therefore, to understand the impact my own background and experience may have on this study. As a parent with kindergarten-age children for eight years, I spent many years in proximity to kindergarten classrooms, picking up and dropping off children as well as volunteering in the classroom and on field trips. I need to be aware of any attitudes or values about kindergarten that I may have developed as a parent.

Serving on the parent council and as a founding member of the regional parent council led me to run for office, and I was an elected school trustee for six years with an Ontario school board. As a trustee, I chaired a number of committees, debated and voted on all policies of the School District, ensured that each new Ministry of Education requirement was fulfilled and voted to approve the overall School District budget. I participated on interview teams to promote teachers to principals and principals to superintendents, and I represented the board at union negotiations, including those with teachers unions.

I completed my terms in education governance more than a decade ago, serving as Vice-Chair of the Board twice and Chair of the Board in my final year. Those were turbulent times in the Ontario education sector and there was more media coverage than usual, consequently there may be some teachers, ECEs or principals who still recognize my name and associate me with that role, even though it was rather a long time ago. It could have the affect of heightening the perception participants may have of the researcher as an authority figure or someone with control of information. To address this and minimize its impact, I was alert to any signs that participants seem familiar with my name. It was also be a good opportunity to assure them of anonymity and confidentiality.
I had not been in elementary schools for almost a decade until recently when I was employed (as one of the assessors) in a quantitative FDK study. As one of the assessors, I was responsible for withdrawing children from the kindergarten class, with parent permission, to administer the short Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT-III, Dunn & Foster, 1997) so I was in 11 schools where I met a few of the teachers, ECEs and principals that I worked with in the current study. I took great care to re-introduce myself to staff and administrators as a qualitative researcher now, in order to avoid any confusion; however, having already met them in their schools may be an advantage as it helped them feel more comfortable talking to me about their experiences.

I admire the work of teachers, but I am not one myself. My undergraduate degree is in child development, particularly infancy, toddlerhood and the preschool years. This qualified me to become a member of the newly-formed professional College of Early Childhood Educators (ECEs). I have not worked in childcare since those undergraduate years, but because I have continued to work at the administrative level with early years community agencies, I am a registered ECE with the College, the same requirement necessary for ECEs to work in full-day kindergartens in the school system. This presents the possibility that my disciplinary sympathies lie more with the ECE in FDKs than the teacher or principal. Some distance from the first-hand experience of being a classroom teacher may be beneficial in that I may not be as prone to ignore the familiar - everything was new. I am not so close to the situation that certain aspects of it are no longer noticed, as I might be if I were a classroom teacher myself.

My Master of Education degree is in measurement and evaluation. In 2009, I accepted a one year contract as a Senior Policy Advisor on children’s issues for the government of Ontario at the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS), Research and Outcome Measurement.
Branch. This provided me with additional research and analysis experience including undertaking an evaluation of a province-wide initiative for 18 month olds and their families. MCYS is a partner with the Ministry of Education on the full-day kindergarten program because of the Child & Family Centre component and the before & after school component of the FDK initiative. I gained a great deal of insight into government processes and the complexity of provincial policy development.

I acknowledge that my background will have some impact on the study, but my experience has also provided me with a strong understanding of the way that schools work, the needs of young children, the on-the-ground implementation of provincial policies, the responsibilities of teachers, ECEs and principals as well as recognition of both the school and kindergarten as ecological parts of the community.

Summary

Ontario’s new FDK initiative represents a seismic change in kindergarten program delivery. It introduces a non-certified teacher into every kindergarten classroom as part of the daily teaching team, it effectively adds a year of education (half in JK, half in SK) to every child’s education, and it creates one of the largest free, universal programs for 4 and 5 year olds in North America. Because this FDK plan involves a five year roll-out, the opportunity exists to apply lessons learned from this first year of implementation to schools in the subsequent implementation years, as well as being of interest to other jurisdictions who are considering initiating or expanding an FDK program, an important educational phenomenon.

Qualitative data sources included interviews with principals, kindergarten teachers and early childhood educators, and classroom observations. The participants were collaborative blended model Early Learning Teams, consisting of the principal, teacher and early childhood educator. The site was a rural Ontario public School District where there were case studies of
four ‘senior kindergarten’ classrooms where children turned 5 years old in the September of the beginning of the school year.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

A thorough review of empirical research over the past 20 years included cross-referencing Scholar’s Portal and other search engines (particularly for peer-reviewed journals), Google and Google Scholar (which yielded grey literature such as unpublished theses and scholarly studies undertaken by large school districts in the U.S), and the ERIC Clearinghouse search engine. In addition, the websites of specific organizations were searched for relevant documents: Ontario Teachers’ union sites (Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario, Ontario Elementary Catholic Teachers Association), the Ontario Public School Board Association (OPSBA), the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario (AECEO), The Atkinson Foundation (for Toronto First Duty), the Ministries of Education for Ontario and other provinces, the Department of Education for a number of U.S. States, Sure Start in the U.K., the Founders Network, People for Education, Early Years Education Ontario (EYEON), and the Childcare Resource & Research Unit (CCRU).

The focus of the current inquiry regards the development of the relationship between the teacher and ECE team in FDK, however in addressing the research question about facilitators and obstacles of collaborative teaching teams and other factors that effect the teaching team, it is important to also consider the research literature around student outcomes of FDK and increased instructional time compared to half-day kindergarten (HDK). This literature review focuses on the following areas: outcomes, immediate effects and enduring effects of FDK, factors contributing to FDK outcomes, research pertaining to early childhood educators or instructional aides in the classroom, teaching teams in kindergarten and the role of the administrator in FDK.
Full-Day Kindergarten in the United States

Most research studies on the effects of full-day, every-day kindergarten originate in the
U.S. where there is only one year of school before grade one, called simply ‘kindergarten’.
Programs for children before school entry are called ‘pre-kindergarten’ or ‘pre-K’ and they are
much less likely to be offered in schools. There is no such thing as ‘junior kindergarten’ as there
is in Ontario. It is challenging to compare American and Canadian studies because they tend to
be confounded by variations in:

a) age requirement and cut-off dates to enrol in kindergarten. (Four states have cut-off dates
to turn 5 between December 1 and January 1 before September enrolment; thirty-six
states are between Aug 31 and October 16; five states are on or before August 15; and six
states leave the cut-off decision to individual School Districts (Kagan & Kauerz, 2006).

b) definition of the meaning of a “full-day” of kindergarten. Ontario’s FDK program is at
least 6 hours per day. Illinois defines full day kindergarten as 4 hours per day, Florida is
720 hours per year, yet these states are included in national FDK studies (Education
Commission of the States, 2006);

c) accessibility (universal or targeted populations);

d) mandated implementation. Even in U.S. states where FDK is mandated, schools or
entire school districts can choose to opt-out of increasing their kindergarten classes to
full-day by submitting a waiver to their Department of Education; and

e) most states permit publicly-funded schools to choose to charge tuition to attend Full-Day
Kindergarten, especially if there is also a HDK program in the school. One study of
national data on kindergarten indicated that 10% of public school FDKs charge
kindergarten tuition (Walston & West, 1997).
In the absence of similar Canadian studies, and keeping in mind these clear limitations to applying the findings of American studies to the Ontario FDK program, I gave particular attention to several important studies: a U.S. longitudinal investigation, studies undertaken by major U.S. school districts, American studies that used other data sources, and a small number of Canadian studies. Key features of each set of studies will be described in the following section before summarizing the main findings of the literature as a whole.

Outcomes of Full-day Kindergarten

Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Kindergarten

The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study- Kindergarten (ECLS-K) is the source of data for many U.S. studies of kindergarten-aged children, including those comparing various aspects of full-day and half-day kindergarten (Cannon, Jacknowitz & Painter, 2006; DeCicca, 2007; Lee, Burkham, Ready, Honigman & Meisels, 2006; Le, Kirby, Rathbun, 2010; Votruba-Drzal, Li-Grining & Maldonado-Carreno, 2008; Walston & West, 2004). In the 1998-99 school year, the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Educational Statistics undertook the ECLS-K, collecting data from a nationally representative sample of 21,260 kindergarten children and their parents, teachers and schools. The database includes standardized achievement measures administered on entry and exit from kindergarten and at the end of grade 1, surveys of teachers, principals and parents, classroom observations and interviews with teachers and students. Although the methodologies used to analyze the database vary, sophisticated quantitative methodologies such as mixed level modeling and structural equation modeling predominate.

ECLS-K data indicated that 52% of children in U.S. public schools were in full-day kindergarten in 1998-99 (Rathbun, 2010). However, the ECLS-K survey permitted individual schools to self-identify whether the programs they offered were a full-day or half-day (mornings
or afternoons). The ECLS-K employed a naturalistic quasi-experimental design in which individual schools selected their programs rather than being randomly assigned to them. A key feature of the studies using the database is the inclusion of control variables to make fair comparisons between FDK and HDK programs. With no standard definition, ECLS-K “full-day” kindergarten programs actually varied in number of hours per day that kindergarten students attended (2 to 8), as well as days per week (2 to 5) (Rathbun, 2010). Considering the sample sizes reported in other studies using the ECLS-K database compared to Rathbun’s sample size, there appear to be a number of investigators who have introduced a limitation into their studies by not controlling for the varying definition of full-day. This is a particular problem, of course, where the length of the instructional day is a key factor in the study.

Comparing FDK and HDK

Researchers such as Hildebrand (2001); Baskett, Bryant, Rhoads and White (2005); Wolgemuth, Cobb, Winokur, Leech and Ellerby (2006); and Zvoch, Reynolds and Parker (2008) have undertaken investigations comparing FDK and HDK with laudable design rigour. Elicker and Mathur (1997) completed a comprehensive evaluation of a two year FDK pilot program of a school district suburb of Wisconsin as the first part of a four year longitudinal study. The incoming pool of kindergarten students was randomly assigned to a kindergarten schedule for the school year: 69 FDK students and 110 HDK students in four classrooms. Two HDK teachers were matched in terms of education level, years of experience and teaching philosophy with the two teachers who had volunteered for FDK. Teacher interviews, parent surveys, and classroom observations provided insightful qualitative data, but the study was limited by the use of report cards and first grade readiness ratings (written by the teachers in the study) as measures of child outcomes because school district policy precludes the use of standardized testing of children.
under 8 years old. Despite this limitation, the Elicker and Mathur investigation is frequently quoted for its strengths as a process evaluation, especially regarding insight into teacher perspective, parents’ views and use of the instructional day.

Using a match-pairs design for 6 FDK schools and 7 HDK schools (total of 25 classrooms, n=511 students), Hough and Bryde (1996) employed qualitative measures such as classroom observations and separate parent, teacher and kindergarten student focus groups, and quantitative measures of criterion- and norm-referenced standardized tests to consider both academic and prosocial behavioural outcomes.

The statewide quantitative longitudinal study by Cryan, Sheehan, Wiechal and Bandy-Heddon (1992) compared the effects of three types of kindergarten schedules in Ohio: half-day (HDK), every full-day (FDK), and alternate full-day (AFD). FDK was defined as 5 hours per day. The first part of the study was a retrospective of extant data from 1982-1984 of the grade retention, remedial needs and special education provision of students who had experienced different kindergarten schedules for more than 8,200 students. Phase Two was an ongoing longitudinal study of 120 classes in two cohorts of students: 2,827 who entered kindergarten in 1986 and 2,889 who entered in 1987. Teacher reports on a pro-social behaviour measure, standardized achievement tests (the Metropolitan Readiness Test administered in April of kindergarten and the Metropolitan Achievement Test administered in April of first grade), and parent surveys for data regarding children’s pre-K experiences, for instance. Researchers controlled for age at school entry, gender and preschool experience. Two Ohio universities and the Ohio Department of Education co-operated on this study and they do not appear to have published a subsequent study following the cohorts.
School districts in the United States, especially large ones, have been motivated to undertake their own studies of the effects of FDK including associated outcomes. Direct access to large data sets of individual students over time facilitates longitudinal investigations such as those by Alban, Nielsen and Schatz (2003) in Maryland, Sofflet (1998) in Alaska, and Weiss and Offenberg (2002, 2003) in Philadelphia. Although none have been found published in the research literature and they remain housed in the accountability offices of the large school districts where they were completed, many exhibit rigour and they are mentioned here. Cross sectional investigations, although less persuasive than longitudinal ones, can shed light on important issues.

Canadian studies of FDK

Only two Canadians studies comparing FDK to HDK have emerged, one in Saskatchewan and one in Alberta. Using a methodology similar to that of Elicker and Mathur (1996), Muhajarine, Evitts, Horn, Glacken and Pushor (2007) evaluated all of the students in FDK classes in three school divisions in rural and urban Saskatchewan in the 2005-6 school year (N=322) using a process-oriented, multi-method, multi-perspective approach. FDK students were matched with half-time classes for gender (child and teacher), age, socioeconomic status of the community, class size and teacher experience. Although it is clear that some classes in the comparison half-time group were HDK and others were alternate full-day, these were not separated in the analysis. Focus groups with teachers and parents, classroom observation and administration of standardized instruments were used in data collection, although training for their use was not specified.

DaCosta and Bell (2001) studied the first two schools in Alberta that undertook the FDK program. Through unnamed private benefactors, the number of kindergarten hours was doubled
in these inner-city schools. Like the Muharjarine et al. (2007) study, DaCosta and Bell matched classrooms into pairs, and both qualitative and quantitative measures were used. DaCosta and Bell’s semi-structured interviews were collected only to provide context, however, and the standardized quantitative measure was selected to assess the development of non-readers and emergent-readers. They found that the students in the four full-day classrooms experienced significantly greater growth in the prerequisite skills for reading than children in the half-day program, even after controlling for previous ability, age and gender (DaCosta and Bell, 2001).

Impact of FDK

The key finding from previous research is that FDK tends to have a positive impact on students during the kindergarten year but the effects may dissipate over time. In this section, the evidence indicating the immediate impact of FDK participation will be reviewed. In the next section, duration of the effects will be addressed. Research findings indicate improved student outcomes for children who attend FDK in the following areas.

The purpose of kindergarten is to prepare students for entry into the more formal schooling of first grade. FDK contributes to school readiness in three ways: by generating higher achievement on entry to grade one, by giving students a deeper understanding of school rules, and by developing students’ socio-emotional well being.

Several researchers report that, after controlling for initial differences, students in FDK have higher levels of overall achievement at the end of kindergarten than students who attended HDK (Weiss & Offenberg, 2003; Wolgemuth et al., 2006). Hough and Bryde (1996) observed that FDK students outperformed HDK students on every criterion used to measure math skills, while Weiss and Offenberg (2003) found significantly higher achievement scores in reading and science in addition to math. Walston and West (1997) reported effect sizes of the FDK advantage
ranging from .22 standard deviations in math to .36 SD in reading over their half-day kindergarten peers during the kindergarten year. Weiss and Offenberg (2003) also supported evidence of higher achievement score for full-day kindergarteners. Teachers in Elicker and Mathur’s study (1997) reported significantly greater progress for all-day kindergarten children in literacy, math and general learning skills, based on an analysis of report cards.

Although there is not a lot of research reported on the effects of FDK on compliance with school rules, Hough and Bryde (1996) and Weiss and Offenberg (2003) found that FDK improves student attendance.

Literacy and language development are particularly important to future learning. In the early years, students need to learn to read in order to read to learn in later grades. Participation in FDK is more likely than attendance at HDK to lead to early literacy strength. FDK students scored higher in language arts (DaCosta & Bell, 2001; Hildebrand, 2001; Hough & Bryde, 1996; Zvoch et al., 2008), but not in math and reading (Hildebrand, 2001). Brannon (2007) found that students participating in FDK scored significantly better on phonemic segmentation skills than HDK at the end of kindergarten, although differences were gone by the end of Grade 1. Walston and West (1997) observed a small to moderate effect of .32 standard deviation gain for FDK than HDK in reading between fall and spring.

Social competence and emotional well-being are, in themselves, outcomes of formal education. These attributes constitute an important set of learning skills and they clearly make an indirect contribution to achievement by reducing impediments to learning. FDK students exhibited increased reflection, independent learning skills, classroom involvement, and productivity in work with peers. They were also more likely to approach a teacher, and they exhibited less shyness, anger, withdrawal and blaming than HDK (Cryan, et al., 1992). Hough
and Bryde (1996) noted an increased number of social interactions for FDK students and they found no significant difference in fatigue compared to students in HDK.

In summary, claims about the short-term benefits of FDK are well supported by previous research. Less attention has been given to whether the increased benefits of FDK warrant the increased costs of the program. There is also recent cost/benefit research to suggest that attending FDK is more likely to improve retention rates than HDK and help children ‘remain on grade’. Weiss and Offenberg (2003) found that FDK children were 26% more likely than HDK students to make it to grade 3 without repeating a grade. Since fewer children have need of remedial help, this may help offset the cost of implementing FDK (Weiss & Offenberg, 2003).

Enduring effects of Full-day Kindergarten

Research on the lasting benefits of attending FDK on success in future grades is mixed. Cryan et al. (1992) concluded that FDK students performed better than HDK students well into grade 2. In their large study, Weiss and Offenberg (2003) found that, by grade 3, the former-FDK students still had higher scores on standardized tests of reading and math, better grades on their report cards and better attendance than children who had attended HDK, even while controlling for age, gender and family income. By grade 4, however, the only better outcomes were for science and attendance.

Cannon et al. (2006) noted that, although there were some benefits to student success for FDK students as they entered grade 1, these ‘evaporated’ by grade 3. DeCicca (2005) and Walston and West (2005) agreed that, in general, the academic advantages which are apparent in kindergarten seem to fade by the end of grade three. Stofflet (1998) added that student motivation, home life and educational opportunities after kindergarten influenced students’ later
successes more than the type of kindergarten they attended. Since preschool experience and family factors may influence this, further research is recommended.

The decline might be influenced by the fact that because primary grade teachers focus attention on lower achievers, bringing them up to the levels reached by the FDK students (Wolgemuth et al., 2006). DeCicca (2007) and Cryan et al. (1992) suggested that the decline occurred over the summer. It may also be that the more highly structured grade one program reduces the FDK-HDK advantage.

**Factors Contributing to FDK Outcomes**

Several researchers have suggested that creating developmentally appropriate learning environments for all children, regardless of the length of the school day (Rothenberg, 1995; Plucker, Eaton, Rapp, Lim, Nowak, Hansen et al., 2004), is where the value of full-day kindergarten programs lies. In other words, how the extra kindergarten instructional time is used is an important consideration. Rathbun (2010) agreed that “instructional time use is one of the most important resources available to schools …(but) less is known about how to structure the additional scheduled time” (p. 2).

FDK students spend more time in child-initiated activities (especially learning centres) as well as teacher-directed individual work compared to HDK students who spend more time in teacher-directed large groups (Cryan et al, 1992; Elicker & Mathur, 1997; Hough & Bryde, 1996).

The increased length of the school day allows FDK teachers greater flexibility in their decisions about how to allocate instructional time (Elicker & Mathur, 1997; Rathbun, 2007) and it may permit more time to tailor practices specifically to enhance children’s reading achievement (Rathbun, 2010). Teachers reported their belief that FDK provides more time for
child-oriented creative activities, more time for curriculum planning and to incorporate more thematic units, then cover them in more depth (Elicker & Mathur, 1997).

Elicker and Mathur (1997) found that both FDK and HDK students spent most of their day in reading, language arts and math activities. There were differences, however, in the amount of math instruction (80% for FDK, 50% for HDK), reading instruction of at least 60 minutes per day (68% FDK, 37% HDK) and hearing a story read aloud every day (79% FDK, 62% HDK).

Pianta, La Paro, Payne, Cox and Bradley (2002) observed that there was tremendous variation in patterns of instructional practice between individual kindergarten classes, with some activities varying between 0% and 100%. Hattie (2009) demonstrates through his meta-analysis of over 800 studies, that instructional practice effects student outcomes.

**Instructional Aides in the Kindergarten Classroom**

ECLS-K data included three kinds of ‘instructional aides’ who worked in kindergarten classrooms: regular, special needs and volunteer. Although 80% of public school teachers in the U.S. have an undergraduate degree (Walston & West, 2005), no information was collected regarding the educational background of instructional aides, so similarities between aides and ECEs in the kindergarten classroom may be limited. Walston and West (2005) did find that 76% of all full-day and 44% of half-day kindergarten classrooms in the U.S. had a paid instructional aide working in the class at least one hour per day directly with children on instructional tasks. They also noted that African-American children in FDK made more reading gains in the school years up to grade 3 in which they had an instructional aide in their classroom.

Rathbun (2007, 2010) identified instructional aides and class size as two types of ‘classroom resources’ that are likely to increase the amount of time teachers have for direct-child activities by reducing the student-teacher ratio, calling them “key resources to quality and
quantity of teaching” (Rathbun, 2007, p. 42). Using ECLS-K data, she found that the magnitude of benefits of the instructional aide depends on the manner in which the teacher organizes instruction. There were higher levels of children’s academic engagement in classes with teacher-directed whole-class groupings, though the effect was still small at 0.20. ECLS-K data collection regarding classroom organization came from teacher reports rather than observation.

Gerber, Finn, Achilles and Boyd-Zaharias (2001) analyzed data from studies in the 1970s and 80s and found that 40% of the tasks K-3 teachers asked full-time instructional aides to perform were manual, even when the teachers were aware of the nature of the aides’ reading training. However, the type of duties performed by instructional aides had little bearing on student achievement. The only positive impact on student achievement they found was increased reading scores for students who had had an instructional aide full time for 2 or 3 years (Gerber et al, 2001). In kindergarten to grade 3, smaller class size was more effective at improving student achievement than the presence of a full-time instructional aide (Gerber et al 2001).

Research has focused on the effect of an instructional aide, paraprofessional or teacher’s assistant in the kindergarten classroom, especially with regard to a particular instructional practice, such as literacy activities. Before 1998, this would have reflected the experience of assistants in Ontario kindergartens as well, but for more than a decade Educational Assistants (EAs) have been in kindergartens because they were assigned to a specific special-needs child, sometimes two, to help them get the most benefit from integrated classes, not as an aide to the teacher for the entire class. Some EAs with ECE credentials stepped from one role to another within their own School District, while other FDKs have an ECE new to the school system who previously worked in a childcare centre.
Early Childhood Educators in Kindergarten classrooms

In this section, role confusion in FDK teams, the school system’s need to gain a better understanding of ECE competencies, tension due to the difference in pay between teachers and ECEs, and the incompatibility of some established school policies with early childhood pedagogy will be discussed.

With both a teacher and an ECE in kindergarten classrooms with little training on how to create new teaching practice together, there could be role confusion in Ontario’s FDKs as teachers adjust to giving up tasks and responsibilities to the new early childhood educator in the classroom that they may have been operating for years and ECEs struggle to find their place in the school system. Gananthan (2011) reported that all of the FDK ECEs she interviewed expressed their concerns about the lack of understanding of their role in the school system. When Gibson and Pelletier (2011) surveyed ECEs in Ontario full-day kindergartens, they found that 35% felt they acted as an assistant to their teaching partner, even though they were aware that it was to be an integrated staff team.

Cassidy, Hestenes & Shim (2004) observed that when teaching roles are not clear in any early childhood program, instructional practice can be affected.

The results also suggest that the blurred roles that lead teachers and assistant teachers share in the early childhood classroom may somewhat inhibit higher quality interactions with children…Teachers in [early childhood] co-teacher structures share the decision-making power and may be more empowered to develop a collaborative relationship that enhances teacher-child interactions and overall classroom quality. (p. 9)

Teachers, principals and system administrators may not have worked so directly with someone from the early childhood field before and the school’s lack of knowledge of ECE competencies may lead to undervaluing their capacity to contribute to the team and enrich the kindergarten classroom. It would benefit the FDK program if teachers could learn about ECE training and post
secondary education in order to provide insight on ECE qualifications and competencies (Gibson & Pelletier, 2011; Gananthan, 2011).

Another theme noted in the research literature when ECEs work in schools (even if they are in separate childcare centres in the same school building) is pay differential (Johnson & Mathien, 1998, Desimone et al, 2004). The difference between public school teachers’ salary in Ontario and ECE salary is significant. “Housing preschool and elementary school teachers in the same building invites salary comparisons.” (Desimone et al., 2004, p. 382) Pay differential may hinder team development as compensation rates denote the employer’s value of the work or skills.

The final theme evident in research findings on ECEs in the school system is the incompatibility of some established school policies with the pedagogy and philosophies of early childhood education. A study of the professionalizing of ECEs that is currently underway in Ontario includes the views of ECEs about their experiences in Ontario FDK classrooms during the first years of implementation. In a preliminary report, the study’s author offers recommendations of the ways that the new role of the ECE can effectively shape early learning policy and practice in Ontario (Gananthan, 2011).

Historically, school-wide policies, practices and rules may have been developed to address issues of elementary school children and staff without reference to the effect on 4 and 5 year olds in the school. Now that ECEs are in the school building, school-aged policies may conflict with their early childhood training and philosophies. In one example of this, Gananathan (2011) notes that School District ‘no-touch’ policies were mainly put into place to deter educators from using excessive force in disciplining their students. Because there have been teachers brought before their professional body, the Ontario College of Teachers, to consider
disciplinary action for concerns regarding physical contact, both the public school and Catholic teachers unions have also issued directives to their members instructing to, wherever possible, avoid touching students (Gananathan, 2011). “Unfortunately, these directives inform and affect the day-to-day interactions between educators and students, permeating these caring and nurturing relationships with a sense of caution and surveillance that does not exist in the childcare environment.” (Gananathan, 2011, p. 35). The researcher provides four examples in which FDK ECEs were advised to avoid touching students in situations where, in childcare with the same age children, they would have been responsive and used developmentally appropriate physical contact as part of their professional practice: sending a child home because she was not permitted to clean vomit from the child’s clothes, not being able to take a crying child onto her lap to calm her, bathroom accident assistance, and hand holding. In this last example the ECE said:

It’s really hard when you are walking down the hallway and a child reaches up to take your hand. As an ECE, you don’t even think about it...you just take their hand. After all, they are just 4, some are not even 4 yet, and it is completely natural for them to reach up to hold your hand. Now I have to think about it and I even got told by other teachers in the school not to do it. Not my teaching partner, but another teacher that saw me holding a student’s hand. (Gananathan, 2011, p. 36)

Applying accountability requirements to kindergarten curricula has often been a concern of kindergarten children being in school at 4 and 5 years old, but this different type of ‘schoolification’ as Gananathan calls it, raises serious concerns about the critical emotional and social development of young children. Changes would have to be made, not by ECEs who have little recourse over School District policy, but by school board trustees, senior administrators and principals who need to become aware of the dissonance between developmental science and policy application in kindergarten. Care and nurturing are at the core of effective early child development programs, so preserving these elements needs to be foundational to integrated staff
teams in Ontario’s new FDK programs in order to “ensure the prevention of ‘schoolification’ of early learning programs.” (Gananathan, 2011, p. 34). The value of early childhood care philosophies “must be reflected in education policy at a team, school, organizational and systems level.” (Gananathan, 2011, p. 31). When school policy trumps early childhood pedagogy and ECEs feel powerless, the formation of a team relationship between the teacher and ECE is impacted.

Teaching Teams in Kindergarten

The research literature uses ‘co-teaching’ to refer to teaching teams where one of the teachers specialized in special education which was the reason for forming the team. ‘Team teaching’ is two or more instructors “working together to plan, conduct and evaluate the learning activities of the same group of learners.” (Goetz, 2000, p. 2). Teaching teams may use a variety of these strategies through the day or they may tend to use one or two predominantly in their teaming relationship depending on the needs of the learners, teaching philosophies, time and financial constraints. Educational psychology professor Sharon Maroney (1995, 1997) identifies five different types of team teaching:

*Traditional Team Teaching*: In this case, teachers actively instruct at the same time and accept equal responsibility for children’s learning goals.

*Complimentary or Supportive Team Teaching*: In this model, one teacher assumes responsibility for curriculum instruction and the other prepares follow-up instructional activities to support the learning goals.

*Parallel Instruction*: In this model, the class is divided into two without reference to learning needs and each team member instructs their group on the same content or skill.
Differentiated Split-class: For this team teaching strategy, the class is divided according to a specific learning need and instructed according to the need. “This type is frequently applied when the class is divided in a higher-lower split and one teacher provides an enrichment activity to the higher functioning students while the second teacher provides reteaching of the newly taught content or skill to those students who require additional instruction.” (Maroney, 1995, p.1)

Monitoring Teacher: In this approach, one teacher provides instruction to the whole class, while the other teacher circulates around the room to monitor progress and provide help to individual students.

Goetz (2000) found that Maroney’s team teaching models fall into a broad ‘Category A’ where two or more instructors are teaching the same students at the same time in the same classroom. ‘Category B’ of team teaching is where instructors work together but do not necessarily teach the same groups of students, nor necessarily teach at the same time, for instance when one teacher undertakes planning for all instructional activities for the team (usually due to time or financial constraints) or when each instructor teaches his or her own specialized skill area to the entire class. In the FDK model, this could apply, for instance, if the teacher did all of the literacy instruction and the ECE undertook social-emotional activities.

Team teaching is public policy for middle schools (10 to 15 year olds) in Australia where teachers work in small teams that collaborate at least at the Category B level of team teaching, but with the goal of reaching the Category A level. In a year-long qualitative inquiry, Main (2007) found that school culture (established team expectations in the school, the school administrator’s commitment to teaming, and physical structures to facilitate teaming such as double-sized classrooms) and time issues (time as a team to improve their team’s performance, common planning time) were important themes. School culture exerted both facilitating and
inhibiting effects on five other characteristics that impacted team teaching: training, administrative support, team member attitude, relationship building, and conflict.

Main (2007) found the following specific facilitators of collaboration – willingness to team, understanding the benefits of teaming, positive attitude toward teaming, good communication skills, teacher choice of partner, experience in teaming, knowledge of team processes, flexibility, administrative support, training, self/team evaluation skills. Barriers to collaborative team teaching were reluctance to learn, inexperience in teaming practices (not knowing how team teaching should work), mismatched personalities or pedagogies, poor conflict management skills, lack of knowledge of team processes such as goal setting, lack of continuity of core team members, lack of training, poor communication, balkanization, social loafing and groupthink.

Other research has been consistent with Main’s findings on challenges in the physical sharing of classroom space and resources (Desimone et al, 2004), importance of common planning time for teacher and ECE (Gibson & Pelletier, 2011, Corter et al, 2007) and that personal attributes influence team building. Intrinsic personal qualities such as positive regard (Seery, Galentine & Prelock, 2002; Main, 2007; Desimone et al., 2004) and “lack of trust, selfishness, egos, unrealistic expectations and paranoia all became barriers to collaboration.” (Shipley, 2009) Choice of a team partner was observed to be important to acceptance and success (Main, 2007), recognizing that in education, there are many other factors determining ones teaching partner.

Team development in business and industry has been studied for decades. Like business or project teams, teaching teams develop in predictable stages (Seery et al, 2002; Cheng & Ko, 2009; Main, 2007; Shipley, 2009) and understanding this is an advantage to team members,
administrators and school boards. After completing a meta-analysis of the research literature on
team development in 1965, Tuckman (1965) published a paper called “Developmental sequence
of Small Groups” that is widely used by businesses and large corporations to facilitate
progression in the development of teams. His ‘Forming, Storming, Norming and Performing’
model shows that teams follow a predictable pattern in their development (Tuckman, 1965).

When a team is first formed, Tuckman said that they need some time to get to know each
other. Team members are conspicuously polite at this stage, but as this Forming stage continues,
there is increased confusion because of unclear objectives and undefined roles. There is a lack of
team cohesion, there are hidden feelings, and individual team members may have a hidden
agenda. If the Forming stage continues without moving to the next stage, team members will
have low morale and remain uncommitted.

The next stage is more volatile because, in order to advance the relationship, team
members must have debate. In the Storming stage, there will be confrontation and there may be
resentment and anger, however debate and open discussion resolve the frustrations and hidden
opinions inherent in working in a team. Teams can become stuck in this stage, especially if a
team member feels the discussion is personal. On the other hand, if teams have safe opportunities
to ‘fight right’ they can resolve risky issues and listen more empathically. When they know they
can tell each other what is bothering them, team trust is manifested.

In the Norming stage, team members identify strengths and weaknesses, they clarify
objectives and they change or confirm their roles. Part of Norming may be questioning
performance and testing new ground. The team is much more comfortable with each other if they
reach the Norming stage; starting to move in the same direction.
If they are able to reach the final stage, called Performing, teams have confidence and high morale. They each feel pride in their success. They take initiative; they are creative and they learn well from each other.

Tuckman’s model has some limitations when applied to education. The stages were designed to be used in project teams for business and industry, projects that have a clear end point when the team achieves its objectives. These projects may take years, and, indeed it may take years for the team to reach the Performing stage. In education, there is no end point when a teaching team’s project objectives have been achieved and the team is therefore dissolved. Although Tuckman’s team development model is compelling for newly implemented teams in FDK in their first few years, his model does stop short at providing stages that address the ongoing nature of FDK teaching teams after they reach the Performing stage.

Tuckman’s important business model does fill a significant gap in the education sector, especially as parallel instruction and differentiated split-class teaming become established in FDK and the need to understand the stages of team development becomes more pressing. “The way that teams move through these progressive stages is important to the effective functioning of the team.” (Main, 2007, p. iv). Through applying Tuckman’s stages to education settings, researchers have also noted policy implications for system and school administrators such as the importance of maintaining staff continuity in teams so they have the time they need to develop (Seery, Galentine & Prelock, 2002; Main, 2007).

Training team members on the team development process is also important. Main (2007) found that teachers in her study were placed in a position of ‘compulsory collaboration’ without training on how teams evolve and with limited guidance. Shipley (2009) noted that “While they were all willing and prepared to work together, they were not prepared for the dynamics of team
building.” (p. 47). Researchers advocate explicit training on team development. Cheng and Ko (2009) noted that members of a team may need different team process instruction, depending on their teaming experience, but they found that school culture was even more important than team training. In Main’s (2007) study, when explicit training in team practices was not provided (or was provided after teamwork had begun), team development was hindered in two specific areas: (a) Teamwork skills (collaborative planning, collaborative teaching, communication skills and conflict management); and (b) Team process skills (establish team goals, roles and protocols, and effective meeting skills). One team was assigned a mentor for the first six months of teaming and they made progress towards becoming a ‘performing’ team, however core members changed at about the same time the mentorship ended. The team regressed to the forming stage of development and did not recover by the end of the year-long study.

One of the challenges for teams in the education sector is the issue of conflict. Two teachers, who had teamwork imposed on them and did not choose their partner, found working closely together daily tended to engender conflict, and teachers are mostly accustomed to avoiding it or deferring in a conflict. However, in team development theory, conflict (storming) is the spark that advances the team to the next stage. “One of the most common problems in teams is that people aspire to be ‘comfortable’ with another, believing that harmonious relations are a facilitator of team performance.” (Hackman, 2004, p. 85). Teachers and ECEs are aware of the importance of the high-profile initiative in which they are a key factor. Research indicates that the expectation that they will automatically, or at least quickly, form a collaborative team may influence the way in which they resolve personal and professional conflicts between them, which may in fact delay the progress of their team development.

An implicit corollary of the overarching feeling in all schools that collaboration was a priority was that conflict was viewed as a negative feature of teaming practices...
was an expectation that the teachers would get along. These ‘new’ teachers either used an appeasement strategy (i.e. continually agreeing with the views of the more experienced middle years teachers) or strategies that involved compromise or avoidance to avoid conflicts. (Main, 2007, p. 272)

Fewer conflict issues may arise if the team agrees on goals, expectations and especially their roles during the forming stage of their development. The sense of trust that is built then helps team members focus on conflict issues when they arise and manage the conflict that is an important component of the storming stage without escalating negative conflict behaviours. In other words, conflict is a necessary and important part of team building. It is the way that teams resolve conflict that determines whether they will grow as a team. Conflict management styles such as deferring and appeasement may create ‘contrived collegiality’ and the appearance of collaboration, but teaching teams will not advance to the norming stage unless they learn to feel comfortable in ‘fair fighting’ and to disagree with each other and debate issues as they arise. “Conflict should be an expected feature of team life dealt with openly & honestly.” (Main, 2007, p. 38). Understanding the natural role of conflict in FDK team development may be of critical importance to kindergarten teachers, ECEs and the principals that support them.

**Role of the school administrator in FDK**

Principals are in a position to have a powerful influence on kindergarten programs. They hire and evaluate both the teacher and the ECE in their kindergarten classrooms, they control the school budget, schedule educators’ planning times, and communicate with parents and the community. The Ontario plan clearly indicates that there are three professionals in each school’s Early Learning Team: teacher, ECE and principal.

Administrators’ beliefs about early childhood development are related to the overall quality of the classroom. Kinter (2009) found that the nature of the principal’s beliefs influence the classroom global quality, as measured by the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (r
= .252), even though she found no relationship between the beliefs of the principal and the
teacher. Two types of principal-teacher interaction were noted: a) administrative (arranging
supplies, workshops, time off), and b) influential (goal setting or other ways of the kindergarten
teacher learning more about the administrator’s beliefs and values about early childhood).
Although the principal and teacher may interact daily, it may not be enough (or in ways that)
influence the expressed child development beliefs of the teacher.

On the other hand, Rusher, McGrevin and Lambiotte (1992) found that the belief systems
of kindergarten teachers in three areas: child development, early childhood curriculum and
teaching strategies, were somewhat related to those of their principal, under some conditions.
Teachers agreed with child-centred practices and strongly agreed that motor activities, expressive
arts, and physical movement are an important part of early childhood education. In general,
principals expressed similar beliefs, but the relationship was less strong between male principals
and teachers than it was between female principals and teachers. In this investigation of the
views of 51 principals (out of 167) and 178 kindergarten teachers (of 500), there was only a
response rate of 34%, although an attempt was made to reach staff at a range of large, medium,
small and rural or urban schools. Just over 33% of principals in the study’s Texan elementary
schools came from previous teaching experience exclusively in secondary schools, rather than
elementary schools, compared to less than 12% of female principals. Males tended to emphasize
administrative tasks such as budgeting and school plant management in their questionnaire
responses, and to favour academic activities for the kindergarten rather than the motor and
expressive activities for young children. Although there was some accord in their beliefs, the
study concluded that kindergarten teachers and principals (especially male principals) were not
in full agreement with what constitutes best practices for instructing early-years children and this
has implications for the implementation of early childhood programs once the door of the classroom is closed.

School principals who have a strong understanding of early childhood development are more effective at supporting and implementing quality programs (Desimone et al, 2004; Shipley, 2009; Main, 2007). “In elementary schools that included preschools, however, principals need additional knowledge in early childhood education or an understanding and interest in learning about it.” (Desimone et al, 2004, p.382).

While there is agreement that each principal’s knowledge of reform is critical (Desimone et al, 2004; Main, 2007), the types of principal support that benefit teaching teams in a new initiative is not well researched. “To be effective, teacher teams may need changes in scheduling, access to student data, professional development and other forms of support” (Moats, in McClure 2008, p. 82). Main (2007) found that administrators themselves were not aware of the support, protocols and structure that should be offered. They lacked training to support new teams, as well as knowledge of the most effective forms of professional development and support that facilitate the success of fledgling teams. Shipley (2009) found that the lack of administrative support, particularly at the beginning of team formation, delayed both team development and quality collaboration.

Administrative support for initiatives such as the new FDK teams needs to be go beyond verbal support. “School leaders undermine teacher trust when they give verbal support to collaboration but fail to provide the time and resources for teachers to work together.” (Moats, in McClure, 2008, p. 82). When early childhood programs are in schools, principals may remember to invite ECEs to staff meetings so they feel part of the school culture, but neglect to ensure that the agenda holds anything relevant to their daily work, which can make them feel isolated. “I feel
a lot of pressure about attending the teacher meetings [but] they really have nothing at all… I mean, I can go and sit for two hours and I’ll come away with nothing that applies to my children.” (Desimone et al., 2004, p. 374).

Principals come to the job from varying undergraduate degrees and experience which may not include as much knowledge of early childhood development as they might now feel they need.

As instructional leaders, a challenge for many principals will be the expectation that they have a strong foundational knowledge of curriculum and instructional practices that foster young children’s learning and development. Principals are at different points on the continuum of understanding early childhood development and pedagogy. (Cantalini-Williams & Telfer, 2010, p. 5)

The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) in the U.S. has recognized the importance of improving and standardizing principals’ knowledge of early childhood education. They are currently attending congressional hearings to make their case for specialized training on early years issues for principals. Their proposals involve all principals gaining the knowledge base and capacity to:

- provide high-quality early childhood education and develop a continuum of learning from Pre-K through to grade 3;
- support teachers with strong instructional leadership in early learning;
- work with teachers to identify high-quality curriculum and developmentally-appropriate practices; and,
- use multiple measures of developmentally-appropriate assessments and data to help teachers make instructional decisions. (National Association of Elementary Principals, n.d.)

Ontario principals will need to develop similar skill areas and their views about their role in FDK are important and need to be studied further.

Principals have a critical role as change agents in FDK in this ministry-driven system-wide reform initiative. Kindergarten is the transition year into the education system; the family’s first experience with the neighbourhood school, and the principal and their first teacher. Much
has been written about principals and literacy or math initiatives, but there is very little research regarding the influence of principals on kindergarten programs, especially involving 4 year olds in the school.

**Summary**

Although the program shares the same name, there are many differences between U.S. and Ontario kindergarten classes. Variations in age of entering kindergarten, whether it is a targeted program for disadvantaged schools or students, whether tuition is charged, whether there is a state curriculum for all schools, whether the school is chartered by an organization or church, and kindergarten teacher training requirements all vary depending on the state or province in which the study was undertaken. Even the definition of “full-day” varies widely so that some FDKs are not the same length of instructional day as first grade. Kindergarten in the U.S. is also a one-year program, not a two-year curriculum as it is in Ontario. These differences raise cautions regarding applying American kindergarten research findings to Ontario. Since most kindergarten research and almost all FDK research is American, there is clearly a need for research to add to the meagre body of Canadian research literature on FDK and particularly about the Ontario experience as the largest province.

Previous studies have had other limitations. Most consider the differences between FDK and Half-day only, without considering the full-day alternate day model. Other studies are of one-year kindergarten programs which does not leave much time before the shock of Grade one. In addition, a high proportion of American studies use the same database from the 1998-99 kindergarten population (ECLS-K).

The collaborative blended staffing model with a full-time ECE in the classroom is a unique innovation in North American education. Research on team teaching tells us that teams
develop in stages and that conflict is an important spark to advance teams in their interpersonal communication which leads to collaboration. Managing the conflict positively is critical. Teams benefit from the mentoring that principals can provide, but that principals may not have a background in early childhood development, they may not have knowledge of how teams develop and they need more information on exactly what kinds of support would help teams progress.

What happens when the aide is not an assistant but a professional in early childhood education who is in the classroom full-time, and reports to the principal as a team member, not to the teacher? Teachers continue to have the responsibility to undertake evaluative evaluation and write report cards; how will they adjust to new shared responsibilities in their classroom? A deeper understanding of the implications of blended staffing models would benefit: other provinces who are about to implement similar programs, individual Ontario schools that will be next to implement FDK, and American jurisdictions where instructional aides are in kindergarten classrooms.

FDK provides access to quality education and care that is consistent, reliable and free during the critical years of social-emotional growth and brain development of 4 and 5 years olds, and it will be universally accessible to every Ontario child, regardless of income, ethnicity or family structure.

Full-day kindergarten is clearly a rising phenomenon in North America. The multiple benefits of education beginning before grade one are well documented. We know that instructional strategies impact student outcomes and teachers implement instructional strategies. How will having two educators from diverse pedagogies sharing the classroom affect instructional strategies? With imposed full-time collaboration, what factors affect the
professional relationship in this blended staffing model? How can principals and other administrators recognize the attributes of a highly-collaborative teaching team? Kindergarten experiences impact each child’s future in school and in life. Mandatory team teaching with a professional from another field, full-time, in more than 9,500 classrooms directly affecting 240,000 students, as Ontario is implementing, is new ground. We need to know more about how teaching teams in Ontario’s Early Learning Plan full-day kindergarten are working in the first year of implementation. The Southeastern District School Board (a pseudonym) provides a rich site to extend FDK research in new directions, such as the patterns of development of team relationships and how that relates to instructional strategies.
This instrumental collective case study is a qualitative measure of teamwork patterns, influences, and impact on instructional strategies in a naturalistic setting.

Research Context

The Southeastern District School Board (SEDSB), a pseudonym, is located in eastern Ontario with more than 20,000 elementary school students within a large geographic jurisdiction. SEDSB’s schools are in a largely rural area with a less culturally-diverse student population than urban School Districts in the province as less than 2% of students have a first language different from English, the language of instruction. This is a publicly-funded English language school district without a charter or religious affiliation. Because Canada has two official languages (English and French), this District offers the option of ‘French immersion’ kindergarten classes taught entirely in French in selected schools, for families who wish to avail themselves of this option. As with all junior kindergarten (4 year olds) and senior kindergarten (5 year olds) classes in Ontario (whether full or part time), there is no fee or tuition.

SEDSB received government FDK funding for around 7% of their elementary schools for 2010-1011, the first year of the initiative. Like many rural school districts, all kindergarten classes in SEDSB have been alternate-day, all-day programs for more than ten years in order to reduce school bus (transportation) costs.

Research Design

Case study (Stake, 1975) is a good fit for this study. The cases in this inquiry explore the interactions of the collaborative blended staffing model’s new Early Learning Teams in order to provide deeper descriptions of the experience. Creswell (2007) sees case study as a
methodology, a type of design, “as well as a product of inquiry” (Cresswell, 2007, p.73), whereas Stake sees case study research as a choice of what is to be studied. Both agree that cases must be within a bounded system. The current study is bounded by time (the first year of implementation of a new program) and space (kindergarten programs in a rural School District).

There are four components to case study methodology (Creswell, 2007, p. 74):

1) Identifying cases within clear boundaries;

2) Collecting data in the field that is unobtrusive and collected from a number of sources such as interviews, observations, documents and artifacts;

3) Data analysis such by direct interpretation where the researcher looks for patterns in the data and develops naturalistic generalizations (Creswell, p. 163), and;

4) Interpretation: a sense of story but within a clear structure, sufficient raw data themes articulated, effective use of quotations, and empathy shown for all sides (Stake, 1995, p. 131, in Cresswell, 2007, p. 219).

The findings in the current study emerged through observation and constant comparison of the rich data from the case study classrooms which will be discussed in the analysis section.

**Participants**

There were three groups of participants in this study: kindergarten teachers, Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) and school principals. Of the four schools participating in the study, two were full-day, every day kindergarten (FDK) classes and two were everyday, alternate day kindergarten (ADK) classrooms. Using convenience sampling to maximize the likelihood of participants sharing their insights into their FDK experiences, and suggestions from the District consultant regarding schools with consistent staffing (no change in staff during the school year
due to maternity leave, for instance), I approached the principals to inform them about the study and invite them to participate. When they agreed, I approached the teacher and ECE at the school through email to inform them about the study and invite them to participate. When the entire Early Learning Team of an FDK classroom agreed to participate, I followed the same procedure for the matched ADK recommended by the School District consultant as having similar demographic attributes.

Participation was completely voluntary. All invited participants agreed to participate and no one withdrew from the study. Participants were sent a copy of the final results of the study.

Data Collection Methods

Four Junior Kindergarten (JK) classes (4 year olds) or JK/SK blended classes (4 and 5 year olds) participated: four were FDK classes and two were ADK classes. Interviews with staff and classroom observations in each of the four classes were completed. There was one interview with the principal and three interviews with the teacher-ECE team (one with the team together and then one with each of the teaching pair individually) followed by a full school day observation in the classroom. I arrived at this design after undertaking a pilot interview with a teacher-ECE FDK team in a neighbouring school district. This was one interview with both members of the team together, which was my original intention for the design. A few weeks later, however, I encountered the ECE who confided that there were a number of points she would have added (as well as further depth to her answers), if the teacher had not been present, as they were both conscious of not discomfiting their teaching partner when talking with a researcher. She noted also, that she believed the teacher would have been more forthright on some issues if interviewed alone as well. This was a valuable insight and I changed the research design to include individual interviews after the team interview and classroom observation.
This design also provided a way to check findings by using a variety of data collection methods. “In triangulation, researchers make use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence (Ely et al., 1991; Erlandson et al., 1993; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1980, 1990)” (Cresswell, p. 208). Interviewing the principal at each Early Learning team’s school was another way to corroborate findings by including the views and experiences of the school administrator. “A hallmark of all good qualitative research is the report of multiple perspectives that range over the entire spectrum of perspectives.” (Cresswell, p. 122).

All interview questions were semi-structured to expand breadth and facilitate depth for participants’ responses.

a) Principal interviews.

A 30 minute, semi-structured interview was completed with the principal at the schools. Their views were sought regarding challenges and strengths of being an administrator in the new FDK program, or their anticipation of that if they were administrators at an ADK school.

b) Team Interviews.

A 60 to 70 minute semi-structured interview with each of the four case study school teacher-ECE teams was completed one or two weeks before the classroom observation and tape recorded with participants’ permission. Teams were asked to share information on their experience with the FDK program and their views on the FDK program’s strengths and challenges.

c) Interviews with individual teachers in all FDK case study schools and with ECEs.

A 60 minute semi-structured interview with each teacher and ECE separately was undertaken on separate days after the classroom observation day for FDK classes and tape
recorded with participants’ permission. This afforded the opportunity to confirm the data sources and allowed for any individual views they wished to express on FDK without their team partner present. Interviews with alternate day teachers tended to be shorter.

d) Interviews with alternate-day teachers.

A 30 minute interview with each of the ADK kindergarten teachers was undertaken and tape recorded on a day before the classroom observations. There was not a second interview after the classroom observation although I did provide teachers with the opportunity to debrief with me about how the day went and ask any further questions they had about the study. I also asked any questions of clarification that I needed about observing their classroom routines and I checked my observations with them.

e) Classroom Observations.

I visited all four case study classrooms, immersing myself in their culture for one full school day. This acted as a triangulation to complement the three different types of interviews for each school (principal, team and individual). The purpose of the observation primarily pertained to observing instructional practices and the types of instructional strategies that were used. Were there more opportunities for individual instruction and small groups in FDK classes than in ADK ones? How were tasks divided between teachers and ECEs? How could the nature of the team relationship have an impact on instructional strategies? Were there signs of theme-based or of inquiry-based pedagogy? Were there barriers to team building evident in the classroom?

Observation also built trust between the researcher and participants, improved my understanding of their reality, added insight into their team interview answers, prolonged my engagement in the field, and informed the final interview questions for the individual teacher and ECE interviews. As the researcher, I took care not to interact with the children, teacher or
activities during the school day. After some initial shyness and curiosity, students accepted my passive presence in their room without incident. Care was taken to disengage from the classroom with as little disruption as possible.

In summary, the research was designed to maximize credibility, transferability to other FDK teams and to other school districts, and other validation strategies through: multiple vocalities (teacher, ECE and principal), triangulating two interviews of each team member with classroom observations (multiple sources, different perspectives), the closeness of the researcher to participants in the study multi-site investigation, including both ADK and FDK classrooms, member checking throughout the data collection period, interviews that were semi-structured to allow for unanticipated participant views (and depth of response), and prolonging engagement in the field.

Data Analysis Methods

All interviews were audio-recorded and entered into N-Vivo software for analysis. I transcribed all data myself in order to attend to verbal cues. Creswell (p. 208) indicates that dependability, or reliability, is enhanced by the researcher transcribing audiotapes themselves so they can attend to ‘trivial but crucial’ pauses and overlaps. Each team interview was transcribed before the classroom observation, which enabled me to check my interpretation of initial patterns and observations with the teacher and ECE twice: at the beginning of the classroom observation day (before children arrived) and at the individual interviews. Teachers and ECEs were keen to provide feedback and discuss my observations at every opportunity.

Cresswell notes (p. 46) that “Rigor is seen when extensive data collection in the field occurs, or when the researcher conducts multiple levels of data analysis, from the narrow codes
or themes to broader inter related themes to more abstract dimensions.” I followed the following
four key analytic stages identified by Charmaz (2008) in the interpretive analysis:

(1) Codes: The initial or open coding focused on actions and analytic possibilities and
moved toward themes by selecting particular open codes as focus codes. With little notion of
what codes or themes might emerge in this new program, no theoretical framework guided the
first coding of the data. The first themes to emerge were Initial Formation, Early Team
Partnership, and Formative Events in Team Collaboration, now the subtitles of the Findings
chapter. Data from the interviews and classroom observations were systematically scrutinized
and categories were successively developed and checked. Line by line analysis was conducted,
progressively refining the coding scheme. Building levels of analysis, the final analysis step was
selective coding and the following themes emerged: internal and external factors that facilitated
or constrained the team relationship, a team development theme and a pedagogy (instructional
strategies) theme. The Team Relationship Model (page 186) was developed as an operational
framework to illustrate theoretical categories early in the process. Although it was challenged
and reflected upon throughout the analysis period, it endured without significant adjustment.

(2) Memo writing: Memos are successive elaborations of theoretical categories with
memos created at the earliest analysis stage. I wrote memos as I was transcribing the audio tapes
into N-Vivo in order to reflect on my observations of potential patterns in the data. The memos
defined each code through its properties found in the data so the code and its properties could be
compared to other codes and their properties. I included the data that support the properties in the
memo, outlined the consequences of the code and noted gaps in the data and my conjectures
about them.
(3) Theoretical sampling: After large portions of data were coded, Tuckman’s (1965) team development model was applied to identify properties missing in the data and to guide the search for missing data. Since the research questions centred on the team relationship, I had undertaken preliminary research about how teams worked and how teams developed, so I had some knowledge of Tuckman’s (1965) stages of team development before data collection. However, that theoretical framework did not guide coding; rather it was applied at the end of the coding process as themes were being systematically refined. Quotes from participants heavily loaded into the ‘forming’ code and there were foreshadowing quotes of ‘storming’ and ‘norming’.

(4) Theoretical saturation: When no further properties of a theoretical category could be generated from existing data or by gathering more data, saturation was reached. For the theme of Team Development, assertions were made in terms of the business literature about the process of development of teams.

In qualitative research the researcher is the key instrument” (Cresswell, p. 38) so an important part of reporting results is to report my background with attendant biases (see p. 9).

Clarifying researcher bias from the outset of the study is important so that the reader understands the researcher’s position and any biases or assumptions that impact the inquiry (Merriam, 1998). In this clarification, the researcher comments on past experiences, biases, prejudices, and orientations that have likely shaped the interpretation and approach to the study. (Cresswell, p. 208).

Reporting of results includes narratives with thick, detailed description and verbatim quotes from participants that support the themes. “With such detailed description, the researcher enables readers to transfer information to other settings and determine whether the findings can be transferred ‘because of shared characteristics’ (Erlandson et al, 1993, p. 32, in Cresswell, p. 209).
To sum up, the following reporting practices and interpretive analysis of the evidence contributed to the rigour of the findings: reporting rich descriptive quotes so readers could make their own determination about whether findings could apply to them, and studying the leading edge of change.

Limitations of the study

With a five-year roll-out plan for the high profile FDK implementation, the provincial government was careful in its choice of schools that would be the first to implement the program as the schools were not selected randomly. The Ontario Ministry of Education provided school districts with specific factors to use to choose first year implementation schools based on factors such as readiness (enthusiasm of the principal, for instance), low school scores on provincial testing, and a minimum of 10% of first year schools were required to be those that serve low income neighbourhoods. The Ministry then approved the school district’s recommendations, also taking into consideration classroom space being readily available in the school, enough prospective kindergarten age children in the school catchment area to fill the space, and school located in neighbourhoods where there would be minimal impact on existing childcare centres (who could lose children to the new FDK program). Similarly, the two alternate-day classrooms in the current study are aware that they will be required to implement FDK in year 3 of the roll-out. The nature of the provincial staging of implementation could potentially affect results since provincial school selection was based on population of JK and SK aged children in the area, income levels, physical attributes of the school, readiness of the school for the new initiative, provincial testing scores and proximity to a childcare centre.

In addition to the bias inherent in the province’s selection of which schools would participate in FDK in the first year of implementation, the sample was further biased in that I
only investigated teachers and ECEs who agreed to participate in the study. Both teaching teams that I asked said yes, but one of them was invited by their enthusiastic principal before I could approach them directly. The two ADK teachers and their principals were then selected because they had comparable demographics to the FDK teams.

Another limitation is that in the school district of the study, ECEs for the new FDK program were hired on a 10 month contract, each hoping that it will be renewed every year. Since they do not have permanent positions, ECEs may therefore be particularly cautious about expressing their views to a researcher about the new program that brought them employment with the school district.

Because the current study considered only the first year that the school district implemented full-day kindergarten, there may be themes that arose because it was the very first year and these may not last into subsequent years.
Chapter 4
Findings

Introduction

Interviews and classroom observations provided rich qualitative data on the lived experiences of teaching in the first year of full-day, every day kindergarten, both as a teacher and as an ECE. Kindergarten teachers face significant changes to their established practice. There are six major adjustments for practicing kindergarten teachers required concurrently by the Ontario government’s new policies: team-teaching (sharing instruction, not just classroom management); supporting the ECE who is a new employee; changing from theme-based (apples) to inquiry-based (co-constructed play); balancing the District’s Literacy goals with provincial play-based curriculum; double the instructional time, and the increased number of children in the classroom (up from 19 to 24-30).

The findings of this study will indicate that student outcomes for kindergarten children are affected by the nature of collaborative practices of their classroom’s teacher and ECE. There are a number of factors that facilitate collaboration between the teaching team in full-day kindergartens, some coming from the ECE and teacher themselves and others coming from the school, the school district or government requirements. This new relationship between two educators with different skill-sets is key to the success of full-day kindergarten for young children. It has an impact on instructional strategies which in turn affect student outcomes.

Throughout the account, the perspectives of FDK staff are emphasized while drawing on data from the ADK cases to reflect concerns of staff not yet in the program and provide a comparison to FDK programs. As case studies, the data provide focused insight into what it is like to work in full day, every day kindergarten classes and develop a working relationship with
a teacher from a different sector in a shared classroom. While it is hoped that results and discussion provide an insightful snapshot that may be useful for School Districts, the Ontario Ministry of Education, principals, teachers and ECEs to anticipate their own experiences, as qualitative data they are not designed to be generalized to other populations. All quotes are from individual interviews unless otherwise noted. Since all participants were female, ‘she’ will be used to refer to principals, teachers and ECEs.

**Context of the Schools**

Participants were from an English public school district called the Southeastern District School Board (a pseudonym) in Ontario, Canada. Kindergarten for 4 year olds and 5 year olds is a free program so there are no tuition costs for the two year kindergarten program. Kindergartens are located in classrooms inside elementary schools with classes from kindergarten up to grade 6 or grade 8.

The four elementary schools in the study are in rural areas, all located in small towns or villages, and they are not ethnically diverse. For three of the schools (Radcliffe, Prince William and Forestview) most of the children arrive by school bus. It is the first year of FDK for two of the schools, Radcliffe Public School and Elm Valley Public School (all school names are pseudonyms). The other two schools, Forestview Public School and Prince William Public School, still have full-day kindergarten only on alternate days. The ADK teachers work full time and each have two distinct classes of children. Observation of only one of each of their ADK classes was in the study. The full day of kindergarten for FDK and ADK lasts about 6 ½ hours, including nutrition breaks, from the beginning of September until the end of June. All classes in the study were taught in English, not French-immersion.

This school district favours blended grades for kindergarten, so a kindergarten class will usually have both Junior Kindergarten children (JKs) who turned 4 year anytime during the
calendar year of the September they started school, and Senior Kindergarten children (SKs) who turned 5 during the calendar year they began SK, in the same JK/SK class. Both FDKs are JK/SK splits, as well as Forestview’s ADK, but Prince William’s class was a ‘straight’ JK.

The ADK teachers, Roberta at Forestview and Maria at Prince William, have both taught for many years in their current school, they both have also taught primary grades, and they both have been teaching kindergarten for more than 13 years. Both of the ADK schools are scheduled to implement FDK in the third year of the five year roll-out. Roberta’s class at Forestview and Maria’s class at Prince William, each have at least one upper-grade student who comes to the class to assist for a short period during transition times (such as the arrival of the kindergarten children), as well as at lunch time. These older students may also help briefly with preparing a learning centre or compiling packages to go home to parents in the children’s backpacks during the short time they are in the classroom. Roberta’s JK/SK class also has an Educational Assistant (EA) who works specifically with one special needs student. The following chart outlines the case study classes, principals, teachers and ECEs:
Table 1: Summary of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School name</th>
<th>Type of kindergarten schedule</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Early Childhood Educator (ECE)</th>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>Class size</th>
<th>Number of junior kindergarten children (JKs)</th>
<th>Number of senior kindergarten children (SKs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Radcliffe Public School</td>
<td>FDK (every day)</td>
<td>Gurleen</td>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>Luba</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elm Valley</td>
<td>FDK (every day)</td>
<td>Usha</td>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>Kim</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince William</td>
<td>ADK (alternate full days)</td>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forestview</td>
<td>ADK (alternate full days)</td>
<td>Roberta</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>Janice</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Janice, the principal at Roberta’s school, taught for more than 20 years and she has been a principal for more than 8 years. Brenda, the principal at the other ADK school, Prince William, has taught mostly junior grades, rather than primary, and like Janice, never taught kindergarten. She has been a principal for less than five years.

At Elm Valley public school, with an FDK program, Usha has been a teacher for more than 20 years and she is one of a number of FDK teachers at the school. She originally completed a two year diploma as an ECE and worked in childcare briefly before returning to university to train as a teacher. As well as being a certified teacher, Usha has the credentials to qualify as a registered member of the College of ECEs if she applied. Having taught all the primary grades and then kindergarten for more than eight years, she is a reading specialist and
holds a masters degree in education as well. Usha is enthusiastic about the FDK program as she felt frustrated with the inconsistency for the children that was manifest in both the half day program and the ADK program. She requested a transfer in order to be part of FDK from the beginning.

Emma, the ECE at Elm Valley, has taught in childcare centres for over five years. None of her childcare centres were located in schools so this is her first experience with the school system. Although Emma has some experience working with 4 and 5 year olds, her previous preference was to work with the toddler age group. She worked hard to do well in her job interview to become an ECE in the FDK program and she is pleased to be part of the school system. Kim is the principal of Elm Valley. She taught a wide range of grades for more almost 20 years and she has been a principal for more than eight years.

At Radcliffe, the other FDK school, Gurleen has taught kindergarten for about 10 years. She had previously worked part time at a childcare centre for a number of years, but, without the early childhood credentials, she would not qualify as a registered ECE. Her teaching partner, Anna, worked in childcare centres for more than 20 years through all of the age ranges. Although she had some experience working with 4 and 5 year olds, she had been many years at the management level in the ECE field and was involved in hiring and design of space, but not program recently. Anna had worked in childcare centres in school buildings before so she was comfortable with school procedures rules such as signing in procedures and fire drills.

Luba, the principal at Radcliffe, Luba, has a strong literacy background. She had taught mostly the primary grades for more than 20 years, more than six of those in kindergarten. There are other FDKs in Luba’s school and one of them has a teacher who is also new to teaching kindergarten. Although she is very supportive of the FDK, Luba recognizes that she spent a lot
more time with that new teacher and ECE team than with Gurleen and Anna or other FDKs in her school.

Three themes arose in interviews with early learning teams and observations in the classrooms: team member perceptions of student outcomes, the team teaching relationship (particularly collaborative practice), and pedagogy. These will be described in the following sections.

**Student Outcomes - Team member perceptions**

FDK participants viewed the innovation as a positive development that improved outcomes for children, particularly in the areas of literacy, numeracy, social interaction, internalizing routines and independence compared to their experiences teaching in ADK. The data suggest that FDK staff perceive that full-day kindergarten has many benefits for young children and that these benefits are the type that will affect their future success. Staff did also have some concerns and these will be described in the following section.

**Perceived Benefits of FDK to children**

Teachers reported administrative advantages to FDK such as fewer parents to communicate with and only one curriculum plan to track. With each FDK teacher now responsible for one class of about 26 children every day instead of the two different classes of children they had in the ADK program (30-40 children), teachers found advantages to having fewer parents to communicate with and only one set of report cards to complete. FDK teachers also liked preparing a single set of curriculum plans and learning materials. Roberta, ADK teacher at Forestview, already anticipates this when FDK comes to her school:

[Right now in ADK I am] always juggling, trying to keep two classes equal … always having to be really conscious about what you have done with each class. And if you are not quite finished something, you do not see them again until two days down the road but if you saw them every single day, you could just pick it up again the next day.
There was also a reported impact on the nature of the team’s relationship with the children FDK. They know each other even better. “For a boy like Sam whose family is in crisis, we are there every day. The relationship between the kids and us is just so deep-rooted because you see them every day. You know what is going on.” (Usha, teacher, Radcliffe)

After the first year of implementation of FDK, teachers, ECEs and principals described both benefits to children and challenges when it comes to the full-day program. Foundational abilities necessary for learning in a classroom environment such as social skills and understanding routines were reported to have improved, but it was reading ability that was mentioned by all FDK teachers, ECEs and principals as the most dramatic improvement that they attributed to FDK. They indicated that gains in literacy were evident in full-day every-day JK/SK split classes when, after one year of FDK, the JKs had caught up to the SKs in their class (who had only been to school every other day in their JK year). Gurleen, the FDK teacher at Radcliffe observed:

Maybe you see it more in literacy because you have all those board standard tests that put a number on their skills. We have four JKs who are already reading at the Level 4 which is the level they are supposed to be reading at the end of SK. The only thing that is different is they are coming to school every day and seeing the words and letters.

Teachers reported that in the FDK program, children were better able to access computer resources than they were in the ADK program because in FDK they developed accelerated literacy skills. Gurleen, the FDK teacher at Radcliffe public school, had this to say:

Gurleen: You should see them logging on the computer… I just think it is amazing that we have taught them the alphabet letters and then they sit down at the computer keyboard where all it is capitals, but when they type them they show up as lower case and not only can they log on now but when the Google sign comes up, they can type “treehouse” or “PBS kids” and they can navigate between the internet.

Researcher: That is remarkable. Had you seen that before?
Gurleen: No, never. By Senior Kindergarten, yes – but JKs?! We used to think it was a big deal in kindergarten if they could type their simple sentence that they wrote here on the computer and print it out down there, but these children, they can do that already….I think it is huge!

The literacy benefits of FDK were especially important for an English Language Learner who experienced success in his spoken language as well as written when he Gurleen and Anna’s kindergarten every day.

A principal observed that because of FDK, teachers are ‘flagging’ JK reading problems earlier. The principal emphasized that teachers are able to provide remediation through individual attention in class because of the structure of the FDK program. The availability of another adult in the classroom frees up the teacher for individual tutoring.

They are all reading pretty well, except the ones that probably have some learning difficulties. We are identifying those things much quicker…because we are questioning, we are flagging them. One of the teachers came to me and showed me her results. She went through how everybody did and then she said now these three I am going to be working with. She is now pulling them more frequently aside to pull them up to speed. And she is able to do that because there is someone else in the room to keep things going. (Kim, Elm Valley principal)

FDK staff also reported the strides of FDK JKs in the area of numeracy skills compared to the SKs in their blended class because the SKs had experienced ADK in their junior year, rather than FDK. Anna, the ECE at Radcliffe, highlighted increased opportunities to apply math concepts, while Emma, the Elm Valley ECE, noted improvements in patterning skills. Other FDK staff identified increased mastery of JK students’ counting skills:

It is not just literacy… in the old curriculum by the time you reached the end of SK you should be able to recognize your numbers 1 to 20. My JKs are doing it now. (Gurleen, teacher, Radcliffe)

With consistent reports of significant percentages of JKs now performing at SK levels, there is discussion of Grade 1 teachers adjusting their curriculum to adjust to accelerated FDK student outcomes. Principals in FDK schools as well as non-FDK schools are considering the implication
for Grade one classes because children with FDK experience are, as one FDK principal noted, “much further ahead academically”:

When you have been a Grade 1 teacher forever and you get SKs coming in and you expect them to be Level 2, 3, 4 on [literacy benchmarks], and they are coming to you at 4, 5, 6, your program is going to change in Grade 1. (Luba, principal, Radcliffe)

Beyond academic skills, kindergarten teachers have been the unsung heroes of establishing and nurturing more important abilities in young children that will be the foundation of their success in school – social skills. Early Learning Teams are also reporting accelerated social skill development. There is a lot to learn when you are only 4 years old, especially for rural children or those who are culturally isolated from socializing with other children: how to approach a group of children to join in an ongoing game, how to make a friend, how to communicate an imaginative play idea to other 4 year olds, figuring out how to speak in a large group and especially how to deal with conflict. An important component of socializing is self-regulation and teachers mentioned this as a key goal of kindergarten. Again, staff noted a difference in the social skills of JKs after one year of FDK compared to SKs in the same class whose JK year had been ADK:

Our Juniors do a better job coping with social situations than some of our Seniors do. They do a good job of dealing with it appropriately whereas I would say more Seniors will hit or it comes to a screaming match. (Emma, ECE Elm Valley)

Gurleen, FDK teacher at Radcliffe, provided an example of a child who particularly benefitted from being in kindergarten every day:

When he started JK, this particular little boy would cower at the back, and he did it for months. We would come in and we’d have that little breakfast in the morning with cheese and he would not try cheese or crackers or anything. He barely spoke. His parents told us that he had never seen another little human being until he started school here. They lived way up north.
Gurleen and Anna focused first on developing Sam’s social skills. They also requested one-on-one help from the itinerant Special Education resource teacher (SERT) who worked with Sam on his academic skills. Gurleen reported that the SERT said she was seeing the improved gains of the FDK students she worked with compared her ADK students as she worked in different kindergarten classrooms in the District. Gurleen was particularly proud of the development of this little boy and she attributed that to both FDK and the support of the SERT.

Luba, the principal at Radcliffe, was surprised that fewer kindergarten children were being sent to the principal’s office for behaviour problems now that her school is on the full day, every day schedule. She attributes this to FDK teamwork:

I am not seeing a lot of behaviour students down from the kindergarten because I think they are working on the self-regulation piece, whereas before [in ADK] I think I would have had them sent down [to my office]. I think that the teacher and the ECE working together and the consistency every day [have made a difference]. I am not sure if it is the ECE’s [experience] working with younger children in a daycare environment [and they] had to work with those things all the time and they didn’t send them to an office [that is having an impact, but] I know there are [problem] behaviours down there but I am not seeing them.

Usha and Emma, at Elm Valley, value the impact of FDK on improved impulse control and self-regulation as measures of student success. From the ECE’s perspective, Emma indicated that:

That is another big thing for us. With children at the beginning of the year we were constantly having to monitor [them but] they have come such a long way [for instance with] impulse control and self regulation. We have given them the tools; it is not just academics. We had one guy at the beginning of the year, every five minutes we were putting out a fire with him [but we have worked hard with him and] now he can actually sit [on the carpet with the whole class] and we do not think ‘and there he goes he is going to hit someone’. He can go and play. That is a big success too.

Both FDK teams mentioned that the consistency of daily attendance provided more opportunity for children to practice impulse control with support for the team in FDK.

Another accelerated foundational kindergarten skill noted by FDK staff was the independent participation in the daily routines of school. Classroom observations revealed no
demonstrable differences between FDK and ADK students participation in routine such as putting their things away in their own ‘cubby’ or locker, changing their footwear, greeting each other, signing in (various procedures for printing their name as part of the attendance), and getting a book or whatever the established routine was while waiting for the teacher and ECE who were still at the door greeting children or talking to parents, however this was nine months into the school year. Teachers said that in the past, establishing routines has been a major part of JK for most of the year but that daily attendance has been advantageous for children in this area. “Having them every day is lovely for the consistency because you are always building on what they have already learned.” (Gurleen, teacher, Radcliffe). Adjustment to being away from home and establishing comfort in the classroom seems to be happening more smoothly with every-day kindergarten. Kim, the principal at Elm Valley, reports:

The children have moved into routine, very very quickly. Being here all day, every day, they just have flowed into the routine. There is none of that having to re-teach things after a 4 or 5 day lapse where they were not here. Children who were reticent to come to school became adjusted much quicker. Within two weeks we did not have children crying at the door whereas I can picture kids crying for 2 or 3 months [when we had ADK].

Emotional adjustment to school and internalizing routines away from home are important developmental tasks for 4 and 5 year olds and, because they are necessary before JKs can begin learning other skills, acceleration in this area means academic instruction may begin earlier.

Gurleen at Radcliffe noted that FDK JKs internalized routines in half the time of previous ADK JK classes she had taught over the past ten years (two months instead of four months):

It used to be when you came back from Christmas you would see a difference in the kids because you’ve been parted from them for awhile. They came back all grown up and mature. More motivated by routines. Just more grown up. Well this year it was Halloween! Everything is just accelerated. The routines, they internalized them so quickly.
Independence, self-help skills and problem solving abilities were all mentioned as areas of improved development that teachers noted in FDK children.

Now they are putting things on their backpack on their own, they are zipping it up. And if they have accidents, if something goes wrong, they are more [improved in self help skills] now. They will come up and tell us what is happened after they have dealt with the entire situation on their own as opposed to the beginning of the year. (Anna, ECE at Radcliffe)

Gurleen, FDK teacher at Radcliffe, observed “You’re coming to work here every day anyway. It’s nice to have the same children [every day] which I had never experienced.” There were, however, some concerns about FDK mentioned.

**Perceived Challenges of FDK to children**

Fatigue by the end of the school week, the increase in the number of children in the classroom, more toileting accidents, class size/space issues and inconsistent attendance were mentioned by FDK staff as challenges that children were experiencing in full-day kindergarten.

The introduction of daycare-aged children into a school building full-time affects the entire school culture, sometimes in unexpected ways. In Ontario, junior kindergarten children are mostly 4 years old but the youngest are only 3 years, 8 months old. One FDK principal noted that many kindergarteners are too small to step off the school bus. Every day they get to the bottom step wearing their backpacks, then pause and “do the two-foot jump.” There has not been a nap or rest time in kindergarten in more than two decades, even in school districts that have gone to the Full-Day schedule but only on Alternate days. They may, however, have just finished afternoon naps at home a month or two before junior kindergarten starts. An Alternate Day principal noted that “They come here and they do not have naps because it is just too stimulating but they still get caught up [napping on their days at home]. They are kind of on an ‘every other day’ nap schedule. And I know parents have expressed that concern as well.” ADK
teachers mentioned student fatigue as a major concern about full day, every day classes, especially for JK, and cited it as a reason to have smaller class sizes.

Although student fatigue was a major concern of FDK teachers before they taught in the program (and of ADK teachers contemplating their transition to the new program), teachers were less concerned about children being tired after they began teaching FDK. Teaching teams reported that although JK children may demonstrate signs of being tired at the beginning of the school year, SK students going full-time and JKS after Christmas are adjusting well and this is turning out to be much less of an issue that anticipated. In the team interview at Radcliffe public school, the teacher, Gurleen, said: “Especially Fridays. I thought ‘Oh my goodness, we are going to have to try to keep it kind of calm on Fridays. But they are not, they are just like us, their little adrenalin gets going, I guess, and they just go, go.” Parent concerns about fatigue are being addressed by strategies such as the Early Learning Team taking the class outside for a fun break or otherwise varying the schedule.

There have been more toileting accidents in FDKs, but it is difficult to know whether that is a function of being in the school twice as many days as before.

There have been more concerns about toileting issues [from parents and] from staff. A lack of being ready for school And my response is, be prepared for more accidents, because they are here more….And I do not think anybody really thought about that. Maybe it is because the children are tired. (Kim, FDK principal at Elm Valley)

A number of professionals mentioned the challenge of having 26 children in one classroom, compared to 16 to 18 in ADK, even though there are two adults in the room. An Alternate Day principal notes the challenges she anticipates in finding space in the room when they implement FDK:

That is a lot of little guys in one room, even if you have got another adult there. Physically you just have one washroom, 30 little ones. We need 10 more [coat] hooks. We need 10 more [backpack] cubbies. We are going to need another table to eat at. That
will mean the teacher plans another centre, or two, because you do not often have more than five little ones working at a centre at a time, otherwise it does not work well (laughs). Too many bodies, too many opinions. And too many developing social skills – it is tricky! (Brenda, ADK principal at Prince William)

In a separate interview, Maria, the ADK teacher at the same school, echoed her principal’s concerns about social interaction per square foot.

You put 30 little bodies in one room, you are going to have an increase in social negative reactions – it is going to be a bit of [a challenge]. Junior kindergarten is a lot of work getting routines established. The more bodies, especially if you have children that have not been socialized yet [the more problems]…One of the things that is often the scariest for them is the amount of the children that are in the yard and are in the classroom. They have not been in an environment with so many, so the class size is a big, big issue for me.

An FDK principal agreed that the larger number of kindergarten students in the new program’s classes compared to ADK classes was a challenge of FDK:

The ones that have self regulation difficulties have difficulties with the larger number of children. Even though there are two adults…and I do not think it would matter what size room some of those kids were in, it is just so stimulating for them. And over-stimulating for them. ….It is just the hustle and bustle of that many bodies in the classroom. (Kim, FDK principal, Elm Valley)

She also mentioned that the larger number of very young children in the schoolyard “each and every day” was a challenge that FDK principals will need to consider.

Usha and Emma at Elm Valley found it difficult when children do not attend consistently. They felt it was an affront to their program as it makes them feel like parents think it is ‘only’ kindergarten and there is no problem missing school. About four or five of the class’ 24 students attend kindergarten inconsistently without explanation. When nice weather arrived at the end of the school year, it began to happen with even more children - more than one third. The teacher and ECE were frustrated that parents did not provide a sick note or other explanation and usually did not ask what the child had missed. The teaching team felt this indicated that parents do not trust them, that they are treating the class as a drop-in or babysitting service. ‘It is [just]
kindergarten is probably what they are thinking.” One child who attended the class most sporadically will be transferred to a different FDK within the school next year, as the teaching team felt the family may gain a stronger sense of trust with another team.

Finally, despite their confidence in the gains they observed, both FDK teams were concerned that the gains in FDK may not continue into Grade 1. They said they anticipate watching to see whether the gains of FDK maintain an accelerated developmental trajectory, especially for academic skills. “I think the telling tale will be three years though – not next year but the following year, how the JKs do in Grade 1.” (Usha, FDK teacher, Elm Valley)

In order to reach positive student outcomes, life in the every-day, all-day kindergarten is affected by the relationship and collaborative practice of the teacher and ECE. The next sections will discuss the professional partnership that has arisen in the data as a critical factor in FDK. The team relationships emerged through a series of processes in which facilitators and impediments played a key role. Although the process was quite similar in each of the FDK study classrooms, the team at Elm Valley public school was able to advance more quickly than the team at Radcliffe public school in the first year, with a higher degree of collaboration and shared roles.

The following sections will discuss the story of the partnerships and the factors that helped or hindered their path: Initial Formation, Early Partnership, Formative Events, and Anticipating Year Two. Before reaching conclusions, pedagogy will also be discussed as a contributing factor, specifically the adjustment to a Play-based curriculum and instructional strategies used in FDK.
Team Teaching Relationship - Collaborative Practice

In this section I will discuss three areas: initial formation of the team, early team partnership, and formative events in the team collaboration. In each area, I will describe what happened in each case.

Initial Formation of the Team

Both of the FDK teams showed a pattern of development that suggests a stage of initial formation. Before the first day of school, the teachers and ECEs only met twice: once at a Ministry and District sponsored meeting and a second time at a staff meeting at the school. After that, almost all of the development of their working relationship was while they were in class with the children.

In the initial formation stage of each FDK team, each member entered into their work together from their own context. The provincial government’s new draft curriculum document outlines learning goals for kindergarten children, and teacher and ECE roles are mentioned obliquely in learning goal examples, but neither in this, nor any other Ministry document, are there clear outlines about who does what in the new collaboration. Luba, one FDK principal, said the Ministry “did not ever want to define [the roles]” suggesting that since “they are to share and co-plan everything”, except writing the report card, the Ministry may have thought that is all the direction needed. This section will discuss team members’ initial expectations of their role, sources of information about their role, entry behaviour, and the effect of orientation practices for the ECEs as new school staff.

Role Expectations

Before her first FDK year started, Usha thought that her role as a teacher would be like working with an Educational Assistant (EA): “they are the person that follows direction”. She learned at a workshop that her working relationship with the ECE would be more like a
marriage, with give and take, back and forth. This was a paradigm shift for her, and she finds that the metaphor of an arranged marriage has helped her make adjustments to ‘let go’ of control she had as a sole teacher:

>[The success of FDK] depends on the size of room and this relationship working with another person...They have to have more input than an EA. No teacher would say to an EA, ‘what do you think about my program?’ You have to be really open to what that other person thinks of your program...You have to be really open for input for them to say ‘let us add this to our program’. It is our program together. It is like a marriage.

It takes a leap of faith for the teacher to have her program open to the input (or criticism) of an ECE whose specialty is seen to be this age group and, as principal Brenda says, “we’re sure throwing them in quick to get to know each other.”

Like the team at Elm Valley, Anna, the ECE at Radcliffe, saw the partnership in terms of a dance:

I think for both of us that was not set in stone. [There was no] ‘here is the instructions how to do that’. I think we just worked on what our roles were. It was a collaborative. Like I say, a dance is the best way for me to describe it. Just talking, more sharing.

Both teams agreed that collaboration between them was important and the children would be negatively impacted if their team relationship was not working. If they were working separately, not communicating and each having their own agenda, the students would see that:

Because they would be working separately, not communicating and probably having their own agenda. I would think [they would] see it. And the children would not be happy because the adults aren’t happy. Children pick up when their parents are not happy...They are there all day, every day. And if two people are less than happy, in an unhappy marriage [the children will feel it too]. Yes, a very unhappy arranged marriage. (Usha, teacher, Elm Valley)

Problems in the team relationship directly affect student success. Study participants related negative anecdotes of FDK teams in their district such as the account of an ECE who feels treated as a co-op student. She was told not to touch anything in the room without permission and she sits in her chair until the teacher dictates what she should do next throughout the day
(‘could you please wash the paint brushes now?’). Other stories centred on an ECE taking
offence from the first day at being expected to take a turn sweeping the floor or cleaning, a
frequent necessity in a kindergarten classroom, because she took this to indicate that the teacher
thought of her as a hired babysitter. They reported that one teacher and ECE are not speaking to
each other at all beyond what is necessary while the children are there.

An FDK principal noted that experienced kindergarten teachers seem to be having more
of a struggle changing their way of thinking. In one case, this struggle affected all of the other
FDK teams in the same school. Luba at Radcliffe:

   [For] somebody who is worked for awhile, it is harder for them to change their way of
   thinking so I think the ECEs [may be affected by that]. I talked to one colleague and the
   teacher who has always been positive [in that school] has been nothing but negative
   because this person is finding it very hard to give up control. And she is part of a larger
   team. There are actually four early learning teams and because this person has taught
   awhile, she is influencing the whole [kindergarten staff]. They are all walking on
   eggshells because she is influencing them all in a negative way.

Principals, teachers and ECEs all recognized the importance of forming a trusting, collaborative
relationship, but they were unsure how to do it. A teacher and a paraprofessional sharing
responsibilities is such new ground with no precedent, that this first year really was a time of
getting to know each other.

**Sources of information about roles**

ADK and FDK teachers and ECEs all expressed frustration at not having a clear notion of
the division of roles in FDK. Information from the school district, or for FDK staff, Ministry
workshops, was supplemented with information they sought from other sources. In the first year
of collaborative work in FDK classrooms, ECEs and kindergarten teachers reported the
following sources of information about what their new roles would be in FDK:

- the Ministry’s draft kindergarten curriculum document;
• peers: they talked to other FDK ECEs, teachers or principals;
• in-service workshops (principals relied on this source), and;
• the frequent TV commercial on Full Day Kindergarten from the provincial government; and/or,
• they worked it out on their own;

All respondents mentioned that working out the roles on their own, one-on-one in the classroom on a day-to-day basis was an important part of the process for them.

The principals did not hesitate when asked about their source of information about division of roles (in-service workshops and talking to other principals), whereas all the teachers and ECEs took a moment to consider their answers. Their predominant answer was that they worked it out on their own, but they also looked for role information in the provincial curriculum, the TV commercial about full day kindergarten, and asking their peers what they had heard. School District in-service workshops were a source of information, as well, but only for FDK teams. ADK teachers reported that no in-service workshops would be provided to them until their school was scheduled to offer the FDK program later in the five year roll-out and in the meantime they had very little information from the District.

Janice, the ADK principal at Forestview, expressed concern that only in the first year would FDK principals and staff would receive workshops from the District and schools implementing FDK after the first two years might not receive the same amount of workshop time as first or second year implementers. She had worked for a time at the head office of a school district as a consultant, designing and implementing district-wide in-service workshops for staff, which made her more aware that, in subsequent years, other new programs may come along and take precedence as workshop themes:
If I have any concern, and I know it is because of money, but we only ever in-service the people that it is happening to [that year], and you are sort of supposed to learn by osmosis [if you implement it another year] because [the district office may think] we have already done all that in-servicing, we do not need to do all that again. You are really on your own. You have got to learn it before it happens.

Her feeling was that it may have been better to in-service all principals in the District on FDK from the onset. Like FDK principals, the ADK principals, Janice and Brenda frequently find themselves fielding questions from parents and staff without having authoritative answers, especially about the collaborative roles of the new teaching teams. They expressed a sense of isolation on this issue.

Both ADK teachers, Maria and Roberta, said their primary source of information about the roles of team members in FDK was from other ADK teachers (asking what they’d heard). An ADK teacher that Roberta knows was taking a kindergarten qualification course, and she brought back information from other teachers (ADK and FDK) from other districts on what they had heard or experienced. Maria indicated that the internet conferencing provided by the local school district to teachers gave her the opportunity to exchange information with other kindergarten teachers about what they had heard or experienced with FDK and this was her only source of information.

In the first year of the program, the District and Ministry provided three separate meetings just for principals of the FDK program beginning in June before the school year started. FDK teachers and ECEs attended the second parts of these meetings as well. At most of them, Ministry officials provided presentations and video examples of the new curriculum and answered questions. These were the workshops which principals, teachers and ECEs referred to as a source of information.
Gurleen and Anna from Forestview each said, at separate interviews, that they worked out the roles without a particular source of information although they attended workshops. When asked specifically what support the District had provided regarding the division of duties, Gurleen said that at a District in-service:

They gave us a pep talk about how we should be a team, a teaching team with very equal kinds of responsibilities [and] that the ECE could definitely be in the classroom on their own, just like a teacher would. But no real guidelines.

Anna, her ECE teaching partner, said that “[the relationship] just rolled and we went with it. [There] was not a definition of you need to do this, this and this.” When they received a copy of the Kindergarten Curriculum at the June workshop, the information it provided on detailed cognitive and social skills expectations for JK and SK was sufficient for Anna. Anna did not express as much interest as Emma, the other FDK ECE, to know more about her role than that source provided.

For Emma, the ECE at Elm Valley, the first District workshop in June before they started their positions in September was not the first time she saw the Kindergarten Curriculum document. She used it to prepare for her job interview. It helped her understand what kinds of things might need to be taught to kindergartners, however she did not find that the document gave her much insight into her job description. After she got the position, she said the District did not provide her with information about her duties when they called to offer her the job; the phone call focused on advising her which school she was assigned to. Before the first day working in the school classroom, Emma’s best source of information on her role in FDK was a TV commercial:

I went through [the curriculum] and there is nothing [about my job description]. But then you see the commercial on TV that says there would be an ECE and a teacher, and the ECE looks like they are playing with the children. So, I thought [the position] would be you would be playing a lot and doing a lot of observation. I thought there would be a lot
of activity planning, like setting up those [kinds of centres you see in the ad]. But you do not really know.

This provincial government’s Full Day Kindergarten advertisement on TV has been broadcast regularly for more than 18 months.

ADK teachers and principals who will be implementing FDK in years 2 to 5 of the roll-out may also be using the TV commercial as a primary source of information. As an ADK teacher curious for more information about how her job will change in another year, Roberta mentions the TV ad as a hopeful source of information about what her classroom will look like. “On TV, when they talk about the all day kindergarten – the advertisements – that is a beautiful big classroom!” The TV commercial designed by the provincial government to promote parent and taxpayer support may also be a primary information source for principals, ECEs and teachers who are about to implement the program until their school district provides more information to support them.

**Entry Behaviour**

Both ECEs brought up the importance of being aware that the teacher may experience a transition when they have another kind of teacher in the classroom that they were accustomed to thinking of as their own over the years. Anna and Emma both displayed a sense of empathy that modified their entry behaviour. As childcare teachers, they had their own classroom and they said this made them mindful of what it would be like to have another professional suddenly in their room every day. Before their new jobs in FDK started, they each consciously made the decision to tread carefully, to take some time to get to know each other and gain the trust of the teacher in her school, in the classroom in which she may have taught kindergarten for many years. Emma at Elm Valley School said:

I have friends who are ECEs and they said you are going to be in there and you are going to be just the teacher’s slave. They are going to tell you to do this, this, this. I said: well, I
have the mentality that when you come into somebody’s classroom that’s been teaching for a number of years, they are not going to trust you right off the bat to be able to teach a lesson or to be capable of doing that. You have to gain that trust. And I told my other colleagues [who] were having trouble [in their team relationship] that she’s going to have to trust you first. She is not going to give you responsibility [right away] because it is her classroom and ultimately they are in charge for what’s going on. They are accountable.

In the individual interview, Usha, Emma’s team partner, commented that Emma had a great attitude and was receptive to discussion which she felt led to teachable moments together, which supported the view taken by Emma about the importance of entry behaviour.

For the FDK team at Radcliffe Public School, Anna had also given some thought to how to begin working with the teacher.

[Gurleen has] always been by herself. So now she has a stranger coming in who is coming to her room and her program and I totally respect that, so I made that conscious effort. This is her space and her room and she needs to have some time to get used to having someone in here with her. I certainly did not want to come in and be that bull in a china shop.

Both teams acknowledged the importance of taking time to build trust between them. For the first few weeks, they observed each other, perhaps had a look at each other’s work, ‘checking each other out’.

An issue that arose early in the school year was classroom set-up, the physical layout of the room. Both teachers and ECEs were very experienced at setting up their own classroom environments. Teachers found themselves protective of this function, but after a few weeks, they each accepted the ECE’s suggestion to relocate the rug, house centre or toy placements; minor changes. Gurleen said, “I admit, my forehead may have had a trickle of sweat on it but (laughs), I just thought well you ca cannot be like that. Give it a chance. And it turned out okay.” Anna was not involved with the initial set-up of the classroom before school started, but this was more of an issue in the other FDK classroom.
Usha, like Gurleen, expressed trepidation at the thought of the ECE helping set up the classroom before they had worked together at all. The classroom environment is an important part of the kindergarten teacher’s view of her program. There is both personal and professional attachment to the room set up. As Maria, the ADK teacher at Prince William said, “Your classroom is more than just your place of work, it becomes … it’s like my home. It’s my domain.” When they met at the first in-service in June, Emma asked Usha to let her know when she was going in to set up the classroom at the end of the summer (before schools started). Since Usha was switching schools in order to become one of the first FDK teachers, the room itself would be brand new to both the teacher and the ECE. When August arrived, however, Usha went into the school and arranged the furniture, play materials, art supplies, books, reading area and computer station by herself:

I always came in the summer time. I would always spend two weeks getting everything ready, especially with the new classroom. And I didn’t contact her because I knew she was still working [at her other job] and I thought, you can’t do both. I would feel guilty saying ‘okay now you have to come in’, whereas [this August] she will be working at [a more flexible summer job]. She said make sure we come in together. Now we’re a unit, where we weren’t a unit yet [last summer].

It was far too early in the relationship for the teacher to feel comfortable sharing this important function with someone with whom she had not had a chance to build a sense of trust.

In the ECE interview, Emma brought up the subject without prompting, expressing disappointment that the teacher didn’t include her in classroom set up even though she had made it clear she wanted to be there:

Everything was set up when I came in. And I had reached out to her and said you know I can help, let me know. And she never got back to me…I remember when we met each other at the first in-service. We were just put together and I didn’t know how we were going to jibe because she’s so quiet and she seems so serious. And she’s not! She’s hilarious and she’s not quiet at all. But that first impression was I don’t know how this is going to work out. But we really didn’t get together in a classroom environment until the very first day we were supposed to be here.
Both ECEs and teachers commented that they experienced some anxiety over the summer about what the personality, ideology and style of their new partner would be and whether those would fit well with theirs. Usha’s comment that they “were not a unit yet” is telling. After their first few weeks together, their relationship did advance enough that Usha could ‘let go’ of complete control over the physical space and Emma made some suggestions which were accepted:

Emma and I have changed [some things]. I set it up differently [when I first arrived] and when Emma came out [after awhile she said ‘This will work” and to give that up it is okay, yes you can have some input and [I’m] giving up that. It is like a marriage. Going ‘okay, let us try it, I will see if you are right’.

For their second year, the team is pleased to be kept together, but since they have to move to a different classroom, the opportunity to design the layout of the classroom has arisen again. Without being asked specifically, Usha also acknowledged that although she recognized that she had blocked Emma from co-establishing the classroom, she is going to be able to let go enough to have the ECE come in this year to set up the new classroom because she knows her well enough now.

Letting go of control over the set up of the classroom may feel like letting go of control of one’s program, especially in kindergarten where the location of centres in the room clearly reflects the teacher’s philosophy. A play-based classroom looks very different from an academic kindergarten, for instance. The scenario of the teacher setting up the classroom on her own and the ECE not able to make suggestions about alterations until a number of weeks into their relationship, may well be common across the province, since letting go of control over the physical layout of the room appears to require a sense of trust on the teacher’s part (developed from time spent working together), as well as a comfort level that they can successfully engage in fair debate if they disagree. They do not yet know that about each other so early in their
professional relationship. Although the design of classroom environments for preschool aged children is one of the specific areas of training for ECEs, both understood the challenge to the teachers of letting go of that in their first year together. Anxiety about someone else having input into re-designing a kindergarten teacher’s existing classroom is clear in the concerns of ADK teachers who won’t have FDK for another year or two as well. If the ECE is not involved in set-up, however, the challenge is that the when ECE arrives on the first day of school, she will be as new to the classroom as the students.

**Orientation**

Beyond in-service workshops about their roles in the new FDK program, both ECEs were new employees to the school district as well as to the school. The lack of an orientation to the policies and practices of their new employer was seen as a difficulty for one of the ECEs, but not the other. Anna at Radcliffe Public School had worked as an administrator in childcare centres that were located in schools for a number of years, so she had few questions about school procedures. Signing in, fire drills, lunch or recess duty, handling food for snacks, and relationships with principals and school staff were all familiar to her.

Emma, on the other hand, had never worked in a school building before. She had very little orientation to the school building or procedures, which escalated her anxiety. Practical matters such as where to find paper, a TV or other school resources was a challenge because the teacher was new to the school too and was unable to answer those questions. The lack of an orientation to district policies and school procedures meant that the ECE had to ask the teacher for guidance as issues arose, which had a negative impact on her self-confidence. The ECE felt the teacher was her supervisor which created an unequal relationship between the teacher and ECE. Lunch supervision duty, bathroom accidents and parent communication issues illustrate the point in the following examples.
Emma had received a ‘duty schedule’ by email the week before school started and her name was on it for the very first day of school. She was unaware what this meant, where the ‘primary hall’ was, and what time she was to do it so she had to ask:

[Usha said] ‘They are eating right now, so you are probably [supposed to be] supervising [now]’. So I went and asked the principal to clarify where I am supposed to be and what I am supposed to be doing. And she said you are doing the four [grade 1-3] classrooms down there, just go in and out, and make sure that they are eating. But it really did not give [enough training] because this hallway was awful. There are major behaviour [problems] in it.

Emma also mentioned that there was no clear direction on how to handle bathroom accidents with the kindergarten children. She had asked Usha about privacy and personal contact bathroom policies and she observed that Usha would not even zip up a child’s pants unless they stepped back out into the classroom. There were different practices entirely in the other FDK case study classroom. Emma notes:

School policies can be scary, because you really [are not sure what you are allowed to do] … [Another full-day kindergarten I know of] had somebody that was having accidents and there is no [clear direction to ECEs on how to handle this]. That ECE will change them and help them clean up. I said I am not touching them. I did a kindergarten placement in high school and the kindergarten teacher said to me we are not to touch them. We are not to clean them. We are not to help them change. We are to talk them through it if they need to be talked through it, but we are not to assist. You do not want to do that. I guess that was direction from her union back then. That had been asked, and the [teachers’] union said absolutely not. Do not touch that with a 10 foot pole. So if they had a [bathroom] accident here, I would talk them through it. But if it was a big accident, they went home; we called. [The other ECE] was cleaning them up and I said to her that you do not know [what the implications could be here]. This is not daycare. And that is the difference: [ECEs] have until now worked primarily in daycare, where if I had a 4 or 5 year old have an accident [at childcare], I would clean them up. We also had change-tables and wipes and [proper facilities to do that, and they do not have any of those here].

Emma’s ECE training told her to provide assistance to young children as they learn to manage their bathroom abilities as part of their age-appropriate development, but the school policy was to avoid physical contact with students. Caught between her early childhood training and school policy expectations, the ECE’s only alternative was to send children home as they were, without
any clean-up other than what the child could do themselves, which is what the school required.

In this example, when early childhood philosophy met up against elementary school culture, the latter won out. No orientation about kindergarten bathroom help was provided by the principal or district office so the teacher had to provide supervision and orientation on this issue to the ECE.

Recognizing that this is the first year of the new program, and not being told these specific examples, the principal, Kim, acknowledged the need to provide orientation materials to ECEs but did not feel she would be able to find time to put anything together herself and the District left this to principals. She felt perhaps there should have been a standardized orientation:

As it comes up, it is really hard for people who have never been in the school system to all of a sudden enter. We think they kind of know how things are going. But if you have not been in it, it is tough. There is a lot to think about and to remember to tell them. Did we forget in the beginning? Yeah. It would be nice if there was sort of a common set of standards for them so they could go back and look at it and refer to it.

Kim said that one of the adjustments that ECEs had to make pertained to parent communication. The ECEs in her school were in and out of the classroom making calls to parents during the day more frequently than usual in a school setting, but as much as they did in childcare. As principal, Kim redirected them to only make phone calls through the office where they could be tracked so that office staff could respond appropriately if a parent called back. Emma said that, in a childcare setting, “if something was wrong, or you needed to talk to [parents], I would just talk to them. But here, it seems like there is a lot more steps to get to that point to speak to them about it.” She called it a ‘social rule’ that she had learned during her first year. Confidentiality and parent communication in the school system was another area that ECEs learned ‘on the job’.

It was clear that the ECEs orientation in their first year was left almost entirely to the FDK teacher:

I have been very lucky. I have not had to speak to anybody about the way they approach parents. Now I think the teachers maybe a couple of times have had to just say, you do
not quite have to get into that much detail. Just, confidentiality wise, the way you say things. The teachers are a little more experienced in that and school protocols around that… They have had a really good relationship with their teaching partner, so often I would not even hear those kinds of questions, they would just ask [them]. Or they would post on our conference, asking questions. They seemed to feel comfortable enough to do that.

ECEs confirmed that they felt comfortable approaching principals, but they relied on the teacher to guide their professional development.

Supervision

The Ontario Ministry of Education is clear that it is the principal who is the supervisor of the ECE, not the teacher, and both ECEs said this as well. When asked how they supervise their ECEs, both principals indicated they do it by observation. There is no recorded process as yet. This School District has no ECE evaluation process although it is an important component of staff supervision. With no evaluation process and principals supervising by observation, reporting lines felt a little grey in this area, and with ECEs relying on the teacher for their orientation questions, a mentor-apprentice role arose from the beginning. Emma expressed it as reassuring to have the teacher supporting her in the school when she said “But she really does watch out for me when I ask, ‘What do we do’? She says ‘well we cannot do this. Never do that.’”

When asked about what topics, Emma said:

Everything. Board policies, supervision that kind of thing. At the beginning of the year we did non-violent crisis intervention [such as] when children hit you. She told me you cannot ever pick them up – because in daycare you can – or she would say you cannot move them. She would tell me those kinds of things, not because I had done it, [but] because she wants me to know. … Maybe she does think that she is supposed to supervise me, but she does not do it. It is more she looks out for me. She will teach me things that she has learned throughout the years. [But] I think that my supervisor is the principal.

ADK teachers already express the concern that, in addition to having 8-9 more students in their class, they will also have the added responsibility of being the de facto supervisor of an ECE every day. Usha said she felt supported that Emma often takes her advice. The wise-mentor role
may suit some relationships well as a way to build trust between the teacher and ECE as a step before the team relationship advances, but with other personalities this role may slow the progress of collaborative practice.

The initial formation stage involved the pre-conceived notions of each team member, their struggles to let go of practices they had become comfortable with in their previous settings, adjustment to new working conditions, and their introductory behaviours as they entered the beginning of their collaborative practice. The FDK teams then moved into the Early Partnership stage which follows.

**Early Partnership**

**Dividing Roles and Role Confusion**

As the teacher and ECE came together in the classroom on the first day of school, they began to work out what kind of a relationship they would craft. Sorting out roles was a task undertaken by each teaching team in their own way. ECEs were unsure of what might be expected of them. Teachers were unsure of whether this would be very similar to having an Education Assistant except that she would support the whole class. When principals and teachers from both FDK and ADK schools were asked what skills ECEs brought to the kindergarten, their response was likely to be that ECEs had knowledge of child development. Gurleen at Radcliffe said:

> I think they learn about how children’s brains actually develop. I mean, you read about it in the First Steps Continuum of Development, but I am kind of guessing here, that ECEs delve into that a lot deeper, about how their brains are actually developing. We took psychology and sociology and all that but they actually observe children and they would kind of have cutting edge research. I guess we kind of had cutting edge research but it is school based.

Teachers did not have confidence that they knew how the skills of ECEs would compliment theirs. There was a tendency to underestimate the abilities of ECEs. At the joint interview, Gurleen said she thought Anna would know “lots of cutesy songs and things” and she was
surprised when that was not the case and Anna, who had not worked directly in childcare for some years, did not have a favourite ‘tidy up’ song, for instance. Gurleen added other skills she felt that Anna provided to the class:

She puts the nurturing back in it I think…And she has lovely centre ideas. The vet centre was her idea and, I rely on her for some cut and paste ideas and even the painting centre…Anna is another set of ears and eyes and she’s wonderful at observing things and telling me what she has seen or ‘you should have seen what so and so just did’ or ‘go show (the teacher) this’.

In this first year of implementation, the contributions of the ECE in this case were not very advanced and this contributed to the teacher having low expectations about what an ECE could bring to the classroom. Anna is looking forward to her second year when she plans to propose more activity centre ideas.

The other FDK ECE, Emma, said that there was a lot of confusion about roles throughout the year:

To not really know what you are to do and where your duties end – there is no direction - I think it has caused problems with the other [FDK classrooms] too because there has been a clash on wanting to do more and the teacher saying no, you are supposed to do [it] this [way]. I know some people personally that work in other programs and there has been a big wide spectrum of people being able to do lots of things in the classroom – teach lessons, plan lessons, assess children [and others who were not].

Usha, also at Elm Valley, confirmed that there are classrooms where FDK roles have not worked out smoothly in the first year and that an ECE job description would not necessarily have helped.

Yeah, if there is a power struggle, definitely. Because I know from Emma, some of the ECEs feel that they are right and the teacher is wrong. That would cause rifts. [But if the Ministry made them too rigid, that would that be a problem as well] because if you get a group where there is a power struggle, all the teacher or the ECE would say is ‘That is not my job.” It would be ‘well that is your job, you should be doing it’.

Although Usha and Emma had advanced in their level of collaboration through the year, division of duties was something they had to continue to work out throughout their first year. Emma notes that, by the end of the school year, she has some frustrations that she has not yet voiced to Usha:
I have [become friends with another] ECE that works [here] and we talk a lot about [our new jobs]. We have a lot of things that we are not supposed to do or we have to do every time. [We ask each other:] do you have to do this every single time? Always my job! Some things it is no, we share that. There are things in this room that are specifically my job, whether I like it or not. Like in the gym - putting the toys away and taking them out in playground. I hate taking them out, they are clunky and annoying and I just do not like doing it. And it is my job every time to take the toys out. I do not know what she is doing [while I do that]. She stands around and talks to them about what they’re going to do. But I think that is something they hide behind – [teachers seem to be thinking] ‘this is a moment I can instruct so you should go do it’.

Emma has some frustrations that she has not discussed with Usha yet. They both seem to be avoiding confrontation in this early stage of their relationship. When teachers have a good understanding of ECE competencies, the duties that fall to ECEs seem more likely to be commensurate with their skills. Since teachers (and principals) need more information about ECE knowledge and skills in order to maximize collaborative practice, it is important that ECEs have rich opportunities to actually demonstrate what they can do. Teachers’ answers about what they have learned from the ECEs do not demonstrate that the ECEs have had a chance to showcase their skills in the first year of FDK.

Factors that influenced collaboration

Planning Time

In the following sections, five factors that impacted the ECEs’ opportunities as part of the FDK team will be discussed: planning time, pay differential, ultimate responsibilities, hiring practices and literacy-instruction skills.

Planning time is clearly a factor influencing role division. All FDK teachers, ECEs and principals said that it is the teacher who plans almost all the activities and the class scheduling each day and throughout the week. There was some recognition that the Ministry direction is that the collaborative relationship should involve planning together. The challenge arises because kindergarten teachers are provided with paid planning time within school hours (though not
every day), whereas ECEs salary is at an hourly rate specifically matching the hours the children are in school. They do not have any paid planning time periods. The ECEs’ union has indicated to them that, because they have no paid planning time during the school day, they should not arrive early, nor stay past the time that the children depart to volunteer any time for planning. ECE hours are sometimes referred to as “bell to bell”. Luba, the principal at one of the FDK schools, observed that this creates the potential for the ECE to feel that “the teacher’s planning everything and they don’t have a say on what’s going on” and further that “it’s kind of hard to have a say if you don’t [have a chance to] talk about it” through common planning time. Anna, the ECE at Luba’s school, was amenable to fitting in some planning time before or after school, but her family commitments meant she had less flexibility.

Emma, the ECE at the other FDK school, frequently arrived early and stayed late at the beginning of the year while they established the classroom and routine (volunteering as many as two hours extra on many days). This provided Usha and Emma with time to discuss plans for the week, more time for Emma to ask questions, and more time for Usha to answer them then Gurleen and Anna had. All principals, teachers and ECEs mentioned the challenge of no formal planning time together and the Ministry has heard this concern from School Districts as well. During a joint interview with the teacher present, Emma related her concern that the reason ECEs do not have paid planning time is that the School District (the Board) or Ministry staff may believe that planning time is not necessary in a play-based curriculum:

What we have been told, what I have heard trickling down through the Board is that there should not be a need for ECEs to have planning time because this is a play-based curriculum. But even for play-based you need to set materials up for them, you need to brainstorm what you are going to bring in. You can’t just give them toys and think that they are going to [learn]. You have to give [learning opportunities]. There is thinking behind play-based. There has to be intention behind it or there would be [no learning].
Emma’s point illustrates the complications of introducing a number of innovations to kindergarten all at once. Whether it is economics alone that is an obstacle to planning time for ECEs, or if perhaps misconceptions about the nature of the new curriculum are contributing to the problem as well, each school is struggling with finding ways to help the teacher and ECE plan together. Part way through the school year, principals were told by their District that they could look for creative ways to release ECEs during school hours for planning, but neither of the study’s FDK teams reported that they had any regular planning time in their first year. Without much time to plan jointly, the degree of collaboration of the teaching team and the types of instructional strategies they undertake are severely restricted.

Pay differential
There is a significant difference in compensation rates between the kindergarten teaching team members. ECEs are hourly employees for just over nine months of the year and they are laid off for 10 weeks in the summer, with yearly earnings approximately one third that of salaried kindergarten teachers. Neither ECE mentioned pay differential as a limitation; rather they consistently expressed interest in taking on more responsibility within the classroom which they might not have done if they been aware of the pay differential. Teachers, however, were sensitive to the pay difference and both FDK teachers mentioned that it would be unfair for ECEs to take on some responsibilities because they are not receiving enough compensation for that. At Elm Valley public school, Emma relates the following:

Today for instance, I was with a teacher in here and she left to go do something else and as I was sitting at a table doing Father’s Day gifts and watching the room and another teacher came in and looked around for the teacher. I said ‘No, she went somewhere’, and she said ‘Are you okay?’ ‘Yeah’. ‘Are you sure?’ ‘I am fine’. She asked if I wanted her to get her ECE to come over and help me. I said ‘No, I am fine. I’ll call if I need someone’…I think she felt bad that I was [responsible for the whole class by myself]. I think a lot of it for the teachers that we work with – I know it is for Usha – is that for what you are getting paid, you should not have to do it. Because we are making pretty
Emma said that taking on responsibilities in the kindergarten makes her feel more comfortable and accepted in the classroom. Even though it is well-meant concern by teachers, the pay differential tended to place limitations on the opportunities that are offered to ECEs or responsibilities expected of them by the school system.

Teachers and ECEs may not be accurately aware of each other’s salaries yet. Emma underestimates the difference in pay, which made the gap a smaller issue for her. She thought ECEs salaries were about 75% of the salary of teachers whereas they are actually about one third of the annual salaries of these kindergarten teachers. Teachers may not be accurately aware of the salaries of ECEs either, as Gurleen at Radcliffe, the other FDK school in the study, mentioned an ECE hourly salary figure (without being asked) that is 30% less than they are paid, which widened the gap in her mind even further.

Principals mentioned the pay differential as well. Janice, the principal at Forestview, felt it is important to create strong job role understanding now, in the early years of FDK, because a point may be reached when ECEs say “What am I doing that’s a lot different from this person and why am I only being paid this?” The pay differential seems to be having an impact on collaboration between the teacher and ECE because it restricts the scope of responsibilities for the ECE in the view of principals and teachers.

Ultimate responsibility
The concept of ‘ultimate responsibility’ is another factor that impacts the way the development of the relationship between the teacher and ECE progresses. In FDK, teachers continue to have the significant responsibility of writing report cards and, if necessary, defending their conclusions and observations to parents and the principal. Luba, the FDK principal at
Radcliffe observes that the Ministry’s direction is that the teacher and ECE are to co-plan everything. The only difference is that the teacher writes the report card. The report card responsibility has other implications. How much of formal assessment of student skills should the teacher let go of? Usha, the teacher at Elm Valley’s FDK program observes:

I know my chair is bigger than Emma’s and Emma’s is littler because of just how the pay schedule and the responsibility [work], but I taught Emma different assessment things which I can easily rely on her [for] because she is that type of person. With the basic assessment for literacy and math, Emma knows the onus is on me. She knows that, and we have talked about that. But I have asked for input from Emma. And I work on report cards and I let Emma sit, and she reads them, but she does do [some] assessment. Now, it does not always work in everybody’s relationship.

Both ECEs had the perception that, if it is something that the School District or the Ministry requires, including the provincial kindergarten curriculum, literacy and numeracy requirements in District manuals, or reading level updates for the District, then it is the teacher’s job. If it required for reporting or in a manual, then the ECEs may perceive that their role is to assist, because it is official, and accountability is the teacher’s responsibility. Usha felt ultimately responsible for all assessment of student skills because assessment leads to report card marks. Emma took her cues for her role from whether there were written goals or instructions from a higher authority such as the Ministry of Education or the School Board head office. If those existed, then she stepped back and saw those as under Usha’s authority. For the Ministry’s curriculum document and the District’s literacy manual, for instance, Emma felt it was the teacher’s responsibility to fulfill those requirements of the higher authority, and her role was to be supportive of Usha’s work.

Gurleen, as an FDK teacher, felt ultimately responsible, not only for reading scores and report card marks, but also for safety in the classroom and other classroom functioning, right
down to lunch orders that needed to be returned to the office. In the Radcliffe school joint team interview, Gurleen stated:

I feel, maybe I am wrong, but I feel that I am ultimately responsible for everything. If anyone got hurt in this classroom I feel that I have to [have been there to] see what happened…I [even] feel responsible for the lunch orders and the .. (laughs)

Anna agreed with her:

But I think what makes you the awesome teacher that you are though, [is the fact] that you do take ownership. I think that is really great. It’s a lot for you, but I feel that you are confident enough in my skills [that you will] give me [responsibilities such as when] we break up [into smaller groups] so I feel that you must be confident enough in my skills to let me [do that]. You let go of some of it, but ultimately you are still [the one who is responsible].

The collaborative relationship between Gurleen and Anna is still developing. By the end of the first year, Gurleen continued to do almost all the planning and assigned activities to Anna throughout the day. Gurleen was still adjusting to sharing responsibilities in the classroom and she was uncomfortable leaving the ECE alone in the classroom. In the individual interview, Gurleen clarified her views:

I think at first I did [feel like Anna’s supervisor]. Only because I felt like I have a second sense of safety issues, like [when] you can look over and see something is going to happen there and you jump in before it happens. I still feel uncomfortable leaving Anna alone with the children. It is getting better near the end of the year now. Maybe it goes back to the ‘I am really ultimately responsible’ thing. It usually comes from safety things, children getting hurt. How can [someone] come in and learn everything [there is to know about running a kindergarten], all those little spidey sense things – in a few months when I’ve been here for a decade? I want her to learn, but I just do not want anything horrible to happen either. It cannot.

The feeling of continuing to be ultimately responsible for student outcomes, for the management of the classroom, for planning and especially for literacy instruction and all ‘teaching things’, as Usha called them, was common to both FDK teachers, although to different extents. Ultimate responsibility tends to have an effect on the level of collaboration between the teacher and ECE because it affects the teacher’s comfort level with letting go of control and
sharing responsibility. In their first year, the ECEs acquiesced to the teacher’s view of responsibility.

The next section on the impact of District requirements around literacy skills in kindergarten on FDK collaboration expands on the concept of ultimate responsibility.

**Literacy**

About six years ago, according to teachers, the School District began to focus on the importance of literacy goals in kindergarten in response to a provincial initiative. They provided a series of intensive workshops to kindergarten teachers over the course three years, instructing them more specifically on how children learn to read, strategies for reading instruction and building literacy skills in every part of the kindergarten program. There was more training than kindergarten teachers had ever received from the District on anything, according to the teachers. All four teachers spoke with pride about the focus on learning to read in their classroom that arose from all the training and literacy support from the District. They see their program as the foundation for learning for the primary grades and they do not want to lose it.

The District produced a specific manual on literacy that each kindergarten teacher uses. Twice a year, in JK and again in SK, the District requires teachers to report specific skills of each individual student, such as the number of letters of the alphabet each one knows. A new benchmarking standard was set with the objective of every child reaching PM ‘Level 4’ before they begin Grade 1. This academic goal may have tended to raise the value of kindergarten (and kindergarten teachers) in the eyes of teachers of other grades as well. Other Districts have established similar literacy benchmarks to meet provincial requirements. When asked if she had seen changes in literacy requirements and expectations for kindergarten in her years of education, Janice, an experienced principal at Forestview public school said:
Oh yes, definitely! Especially when the [literacy requirements] stuff came in and now we’re supposed to be at Level 4 by the end of Senior Kindergarten. That seemed to be the biggest jump. I never taught kindergarten, but I can remember it [used to be] play. I can remember the old green play document that was experiential learning and the sand table and the water table and all that stuff. I think we upped the expectations all the way around for language. I think it is good. Finally we could score it to actually say where kids were. There are now explicit expectations for the end of kindergarten, and I do not think they will disappear. If anything, what we will find out is that kids are going to get a lot farther than level 4 by the end of kindergarten. If they are going to be working on it twice as long, hopefully we will get there.

Kindergarten teachers tended to see play-based curriculum as a threat to the literacy-based programs they have established. They do not want to lose their exemplary literacy program, a laudable position, and they wonder how to maintain it if they move to a play-based curriculum. As Janice posited, teachers are indeed reporting that after one year of FDK,JKs (turning 5 years old) are reading at the same level as SK children (turning 6 years old) whose earlier year was ADK, and teachers are very pleased with this language skills achievement.

Although they value literacy and reading aloud to children, ECEs do not conventionally receive training in college on teaching children to read. Consequently, the skill most valued in kindergarten by the school system, especially kindergarten teachers, is one that ECEs do not arrive equipped with. Both FDK teachers felt motivated to teach the ECE the literacy-instruction skills they were missing and they managed this during the school day, since there was no common planning time.

Three reasons contribute to teachers’ decisions to do this: they wanted to maintain the literacy program they have developed for their room, there were 30% more children in their class now so they cannot do it alone, and the Ontario Ministry of Education consistently encouraged the FDK program to have small group instruction of 13 or so kindergarteners for each member of the FDK teaching team.
ECEs reported enjoying learning new teaching skills and they had a sense of pride at instructing children to read, but the School District’s specific focus on literacy goals without providing enough in-service to teachers and ECEs on the shift to a different ‘play-based’ curriculum caused an imbalance in the team. Teachers need ECEs to provide some literacy instruction because classes are larger in FDK, yet this is the one early-learning skill of which ECEs have little knowledge. Because teachers and principals had only a general idea of what ECEs can contribute to the classroom, not a sound understanding (as noted at the beginning of this section), this gives a weak first impression of ECE abilities. Rather than being a capable addition to the classroom from the start, this put the ECE in an apprenticeship role with the teacher at best, or at worst a ‘caretaker’ role, which tends to be a stereotypical view of the work of ECEs. The ECEs, in turn, were grateful to the teacher for bringing them up to speed so they could help with literacy.

The fact that components of reading skills were to be reported to the School District office emphasized the primary importance of the mechanics of reading as an important outcome of kindergarten, perhaps the most important outcome, since literacy, and to a lesser extent, numeracy skills, are the only kindergarten skills reported to School Districts in detail. What the District requires to be reported to them, beyond report card marks, influences classroom values and therefore the relationship between the teacher and ECE. Because the ‘reportable’ is a skill that ECEs do not have, even experienced ECEs with years of knowledge of designing and implementing programs for your children may feel less confident about their skills as applied to the kindergarten. Anna at Radcliffe said in the joint interview (with the teacher also present) that “the [literacy] skills that she has taught me to do, are phenomenal. That is where her experience and her teaching knowledge and education are far beyond what I have. Her ability to program for
literacy and all that is what Usha does.” In the other FDK, Gurleen seemed pleased to be able to teach Anna these skills as well as they discussed in the joint interview. Gurleen said:

I feel she is my apprentice. Is that bad? I have taught her how to do the inferred writing and I have taught her how to divide and conquer [the class into small groups for literacy instruction] and even discipline.

Anna says she felt like an apprentice:

And it is true: I feel like the apprentice, I feel like I am just your sponge. I am learning with the kids. I come with some things but as an ECE I do not come with that background [to teach reading] and everything. So it is an amazing opportunity for me [for] personal growth, so yes I really am thrilled.

This apprenticeship dynamic was introduced into each of the FDK pairs when the teachers felt enough trust in the ECEs to begin instructing them on this didactic skill. Usha, at Elm Valley, taught Emma reading instruction and also entrusted her with completing the formal assessment of their reading skills for reporting to the School District. Gurleen at Radcliffe taught Anna reading instruction and pre-assessment collection (such as a checklist of letters each child knew), but as the teacher, she completed the formal assessments for the District reporting by herself or with the assistance of a volunteer who was a retired teacher.

Usha had a very open attitude to working collaboratively with an ECE, as she had intentionally transferred schools so she could teach in an FDK program. Emma exhibited empathic entry behaviour at the beginning of the year which helped build a sense of trust, and she soon created teachable moments for Usha to instruct her. Emma took the initiative of suggesting to the teacher that she would like to take the lowest group of readers out of classroom and do a literacy circle. She told Usha what she planned to do with the small group and Usha said ‘That is great’. Emma said:

After she learned that I was capable of doing that, that is when she started saying, ‘Could you go through this book?’ And I would say ‘Okay, is there anything I should do with it?’ [She told me that] they need to do a picture walk [and] they should be pointing to the
words, sound it out. …So she gave me the tips, but she did not say okay I need to tell you [how to do this right]. When I asked, she will tell me.

Emma felt that Usha does not make assumptions of her ECE skills based on her education because she herself was an ECE briefly before she became a teacher. “She knows that even though you don’t have a university degree, you do have some knowledge of how children learn.”

Usha describes what she taught Emma:

[I taught Emma] the skills of reading. What a good reader does: they look at the picture, they get their mouth ready for the first sound. Let us do a picture walk – okay look at the first picture. They set up in their mind so when they come to the first word they should be thinking of the pictures in the story. [I taught her] that. …Just watching and knowing how to teach them and they start using those skills easily. Sliding your finger along the word and trying to sound out the word. We do the Jolly Phonics, so now they have got the sounds, and listening to those sounds as they do it. I was doing it with one of the little girls today and she [read it as] ‘dog’ and I said ‘Listen, you just said ssss.’ (laughs). And then go skip a word, going back and re-rereading again. So those are [the literacy teaching skills I have taught her] and Emma follows through on those. Yeah, that is six skills that we do, and we teach them. It is taught.

Usha emphasizes that learning to read is a skill children achieve through direct instruction rather than picking it up through play. Usha scaffolded Emma’s learning. Emma learned from observing Usha, then Usha would check on Emma’s progress and tell her how to extend her learning to the next step. Usha said:

Emma is great at observing, so I think she watched me a lot on how I dealt with [instructing] and sometimes I would say ‘okay, this is how to carry it on further’. She would watch me and she’d do some of it herself and I’d say ‘okay now, add a little bit more’. But she’d always say ‘I handled this this way, what do you think?’ And I’d say okay, well let’s pull them back together and [then] I’d add more.

Usha was comfortable instructing Emma how to teach in a small group, but there were limits evident when Usha added later “Then after math I would always do a literacy [activity] or we would make connections to the story. [Emma] has not done that. Again, I feel that is a teaching thing.”
At their individual interviews, both ECEs felt that it was the teacher’s confidence in their
capabilities that led to the teacher mentoring them on literacy skills. Emma said:

She lets me deal with things on my own. She is confident in that. And she is confident in
me doing assessment and me doing reading with them…I am glad she thinks I am
capable because I feel like I am capable of doing it too.

Anna learned from her teaching partner, Gurleen:

[I learned literacy instruction] from watching how Gurleen did things, that was a big part.
She would role model it for me and it just flowed. I am hoping, I am assuming [with] the
confidence Gurleen had in my abilities, it did not need detail. I mean I have background,
just in different ways. And this is not something we would do in childcare centres. I have
learned a lot of technical ways of teaching and sounds and putting together sounds and
the click and all the different ideas…how to make letters the proper way and how to
encourage [students].

In the first year of FDK, Gurleen had not reached a comfort level to teach Anna to complete
formal assessments of student literacy skills for the District yet, as Usha had. She indicated that
she relied on the ECE to look after the rest of the class while she did the assessments. Anna
noticed this and attributes it to the fact that assessment is needed for report cards, and report
cards are Gurleen’s responsibility, so assessment is also the teacher’s responsibility. Anna said:

I was able to do [some assessment type of work] with the SKs and with some of them I
worked with letter recognition – ‘pre’ stuff, where they were at with that - what letters,
what numbers, counting. So I did have some input. That goes back to accountability.
Gurleen doing the report cards and all that sort of stuff.

In the other FDK, after Emma learned some literacy-instruction skills, Usha taught her to
complete literacy assessments as well. Usha said:

When we do assessment back and forth, Emma will do the JKs, I do the SKs for math.
We are doing rote counting and number recognition and I trust Emma in that too - we
have done it all year long. And alphabet recognition, alphabet sounds…
With [literacy assessment], she was watching me and I said do you want to come and see
how to do it? …I modeled and [it’s the same thing] I would do with a student teacher. I
would rely on Emma for that. But I do not think in the [FDK] model that you could rely
on every ECE in that [assessment] role.
Entrusting the ECE with the assessment of individual students’ skills for reports to the District was an advanced level of collaboration for the first year of FDK. Although Emma was pleased to have the responsibility and Usha felt a strong sense of trust in the accuracy of Emma’s professional opinion, the principal was surprised that Emma was doing assessments. Usha said:

I did say something to the principal, and Kim said ‘But she is an ECE.’ and I said ‘You know what, she is very skilled.’ [And the principal said] ‘All right, but you do the final one. Make sure, because you are the teacher.’ And I thought well, whatever, because she is quite capable. I trust her. I have seen her growth and progress over the year. But I think that is part of the meshing [of our roles in FDK].

The principal had not had the opportunity to build a sense of trust in the skills of the ECE yet and she was concerned to maintain the quality of the assessments.

Some ECEs may feel disadvantaged and de-skilled by the emphasis on an ability they have not had a chance to develop in the field of early childhood development. Literacy benchmarking has an effect on the collaborative relationship of the FDK teaching team that may not be negative. On the other hand, teachers seemed to enjoy the role of mentor, and ECEs were proud of their new professional skills in their first year in the education system. The mentor role may facilitate the teachers’ sense of trust in the ECE which could accelerate the number of responsibilities that become available to the ECE.

**Hiring Practices**

School districts in Ontario have never had a reason to need to know much detail about ECE training and childcare centre staffing practices until now. This may have had an impact on the District’s FDK ECE hiring process, especially in the first year. In order to meet the requirements of provincial licensing under the Day Nurseries Act, most childcare centres in Ontario have separate classrooms based on the licensing ages – infant, toddler, preschool, kindergarten and school-age. ECEs work in a distinct room and are responsible for only that age group for most of the day. Although all professional ECEs learn about child development in
college for the full age range from infancy to school-age in their degree or diploma programs, their professional experience is with the age group of the children in the type of room they worked in after graduation. School District principals, superintendents and HR staff hiring ECEs for FDK may not have realized that a professional ECE, duly registered with their College, who has worked at a childcare centre for 10 years, may not have had any teaching contact with 4 and 5 year olds since they graduated. Experience working in childcare does not mean they have ever taught 4 and 5 year olds. School Districts, however, may be assuming that childcare experience equates to working with kindergarten-aged children.

Neither of the ECEs in the study, both newly hired by the District specifically for the FDK program, had much experience working with 4 and 5 year old children. Anna’s recent expertise was in setting up childcare centre locations for a company with many childcare centres, which provided her with hiring and management experience but most of her work had been with school-aged children 7 to 12 years old. Emma’s professional experience was working in toddler rooms, but with some part-time work with infants, preschool and kindergarten rooms. She felt that she was hired because of her extensive preparation for the interview, especially researching the new draft curriculum document on-line which she used to create the example of lesson planning that prospective FDK ECEs were required to bring to the interview.

In this School District, a small team of FDK principals interviewed prospective ECEs and created a pool of FDK ECEs for the District. This pool of hired ECEs was used by the District to assign each ECE to a school. No principal interviewed ECEs specifically for their school. None of the principals on the hiring committees had ever worked in a childcare centre or the early childhood field. Both FDK principals in the study happened to also have been on the District’s
ECE hiring teams. Kim from Elm Valley says this about the ECEs who were hired for the FDK program:

> A lot of them were in charge of their daycare centres. The teacher in the toddler room [for instance], so [they were] very much in control of what was going on. I have worried about that - whether they were feeling part of the planning [in the full-day kindergarten].

Both of the FDK teachers in the study had themselves worked in childcare centres earlier in their careers. They strongly believed that experience with 4 and 5 year olds should be highly valued in new hiring. Usha from Elm Valley:

> I would think Emma would probably say toddler room would be fine experience. Whereas my teaching experience would say I would like you to have experience at the 4 and 5 year old level because I need you know where their learning is at that level. [That really] helps build the room and the program.

Both Emma and Anna said that, if they were responsible for hiring ECEs for the Board’s FDK program, they would select candidates with experience designing program activities for 4 and 5 year olds. Anna, who had responsibilities to hire ECEs for new childcare centres in her previous work, said “absolutely, that is a given”. Emma qualified her answer further, as Usha the teacher in her FDK predicted. Emma said:

> I would look for strong programming skills for 4 and 5 year olds...or [maybe] not. I just had Toddler [experience, so if] you can work with 2 year olds but you can program for a 5 year old, then I do not think they should just limit themselves to [hiring just ECEs who] have a majority of experience with 4 and 5 year olds because if you are good, you are good. You can do it over the [age range]. Before I came here I had preferences for working with toddlers because I just like the age group. It was not that I did not think I could work with the 4 and 5 year olds, I could do it. But I just liked working with the toddlers. So I think they should look for people who have good strong programming experience. And if they can show you something they would do with a 4 and 5 year old, then why not?

Without recent experience working with this age group, however, ECEs are less experienced in socialization issues of kindergarten-aged children and delayed in their ability to design program.

Emma noted that, although program ideas would be more readily available to her if she had
kindergarten-age experience, it was skill at designing programs that was important because it could be applied to different ages.

Do I think that sometimes [I could have used more experience with kindergarten age]? I do. The ECE next door had worked in a Kindergarten [aged] Room [at a childcare centre]. And I think that if I worked in a kindergarten [room] activities would come to me easier. [However] I do a lot in here so I don’t think it is hindered me that much. But sometimes she has songs that she sings and I’m like oh yeah! That is not a song I would sing with toddlers, so it is not [in the forefront of my mind]. So that would help with programming a little bit more.

Emma points out that other types of early learning experience, such as her work in toddler rooms, furnished her with valuable parent communication skills because of the sensitivity of parents of infants and toddlers to leaving their child at a childcare centre and the necessity of frequent, detailed communication.

I think it would [have helped if I had recent 4 & 5 year old experience], because they are very different. But at the same time, I think that when you work in a toddler room you have a lot more parent communication skills than you would if you [had only] worked directly with 4 and 5 year olds.

Although there is certainly value in other types of early learning experience for ECEs, if it was early learning professionals who were doing the hiring, their focus would be to select ECEs for FDK based on their demonstrated ability to design daily learning activities, colloquially referred to as ‘programming’. A strong demonstration of that would be collegial, successful experience working with 4 & 5 year olds, specifically. Emma and Anna have sound experience in the early learning field, but Emma’s toddler experience and Anna’s administrative experience will mean they will not have the ready ideas they would have had if they worked with 4 & 5 year olds recently, especially if they had worked with other colleagues and had shared rich planning ideas. This may affect their level of self-confidence and delay their ability to showcase the skills of an ECE to the teacher, and this could impact the pace of collaborative practice.
Principals on the hiring committees may have valued experience through the lens of the school system, for instance valuing sole-charge responsibility, rather than recognizing the importance of the age group that ECEs worked with in their childcare or other early learning professional experience. Hiring FDK ECEs with infant or toddler room experience might be compared to hiring teachers with only high school teaching experience to be the new FDK teachers at your schools; their experience is with a completely different age group. They know how to teach, but they will face a steep learning curve remembering how kindergarten children think, learn and socialize in the classroom. Because no one on the hiring committees was familiar with ECE professional work, they may not have been aware of the clear division of age-groups in child care centre in their hiring decisions.

During the this Early Partnership stage, a number of factors had an influence on the collaborative practice of the teacher and ECE, especially little planning time, the pay differential, the concept of ultimate responsibility and the ECEs’ lack of training in teaching children the range of literacy skills, particularly learning to read. Misunderstanding the skills and training of ECEs impacts hiring practices of School Districts which also affect team relationships. There were a number of formative events during the course of the first year of FDK relationships that will be discussed in the following section.

Formative Events in Team Collaboration

Introduction

Up until the end of the Early Partnership phase, the two teams, Usha and Emma, and Gurleen and Anna, both experienced an apprenticeship component to their relationship with the teacher teaching the ECE in literacy-instruction training in particular, but also in some assessment and professional conduct (school District policies and procedures). Explicit teaching of language skills and play-based learning seem like two solitudes for principals, teachers and
ECEs; each important, both part of the Ministry of Education’s mandate for kindergartens, but a dichotomy, so they are puzzled about how to have both in the same classroom. Luba, the principal at Radcliffe, said:

The teacher may want to focus more on the literacy, teaching of the reading and the writing, whereas I think the ECE brings that piece [where] they can arrange a centre with different activities that will meet a variety of different stages. I think teachers will have to become more open that the ECE does have some really good background and information and sharing [as part of] that [partnership].

In the first year of FDK in the study classrooms, the focus was clearly on elevating the ECE’s knowledge of literacy-instruction with the teacher as mentor. Another strong component of a successful FDK is that the ECE also has the opportunity to share her knowledge with the teacher, and this was not as evident. In the same way that the teacher cannot provide literacy instruction to 26 students as readily as 17 or 18, neither can the ECE provide rich inquiry-based programming to such a class size without the assistance of the teacher. The ECEs recognized that they needed the teacher’s mentorship to learn how to teach reading, but teachers may not know what they can learn from ECEs about play-based curriculum. Furthermore, the teacher’s literacy mentorship may be an obstacle to the development of reciprocal mentorship if the ECE does not then feel confident enough to teach the teacher. There was some evidence of knowledge transfer and the beginning of reciprocal mentoring in the FDK classrooms, a hallmark of collaborative team teaching, in the following examples.

**Reciprocal Mentorship between Team Members**

Principals and teachers anticipated that ECEs would be specialists in development in early childhood and that they would know more about the intellectual and social development of children of this specific age range. Teachers, on the other hand, would know more about how
children learn to read, academic instruction from kindergarten to grade 6, and classroom management.

Both teams started out as two distinct specialists working side-by-side in the classroom each day, with goals established by the teacher. As the year progressed, the teachers taught the ECEs how to help children take their language skills (reading and writing) to the next level. At Elm Valley, Usha also taught Emma to do some school-based assessment of those skills. Both ECEs also learned different classroom management skills such as restorative justice in the Elm Valley kindergarten. These were all skills learned by the ECE from the teacher. ECEs were mentored by teachers, but what did teachers learn from the ECEs? The ECE brings expertise to the team as well. Tapping into each other’s expertise is critical to the success of the team.

The teacher’s certificates qualify them to teach any grade in the full range from kindergarten to grade 6, as mentioned by one principal, whereas ECEs’ training specializes in the early years before 6 years old. In a collaborative relationship - even a marriage or a dance, as they described it - each partner benefits from the skills and experience of their partner, otherwise they remain as two separate individuals rather than a team. Learning from each other is critical, perhaps key, to the whole FDK program. As mentioned earlier, teachers’ understanding of what ECEs do is vague, so it is up to ECEs to look for opportunities to showcase their skills in the classroom.

Usha and Emma at Elm Valley had a number of small acts of reciprocal mentorship by the end of their first year working together. In this example of a formative event in their relationship, the ECE, Emma, has taught Usha, the teacher, about a theory of social development in young children as evidenced in their play pattern. Parten’s (1933) theory of play as a demonstration of social development is embedded in the curriculum of ECE college program.
because of its relevance to the development of 1 to 6 years olds, especially in the play-based curricula of childcare centres. It is uncommon in teachers’ college curricula because it pertains to preschool-aged (kindergarten) children. Parten said that a child’s level of social development is reflected by the way they play with other children, and she outlined the following stages: solitary, onlooker, parallel, associative and co-operative play. In parallel play, children are playing side by side but without interaction with another child, in a sandbox, for instance. In normal social development, children move to associative play where a child is interested more in the play of other children than in the toys they are playing with, but there is not yet any planning or discussion in their play at this stage. By 5 or 6 years old children add complex co-operative play, such as the much more organized dramatic centre play seen in kindergarten, in house centres for instance, where children dress-up and assign each other roles to play.

When Usha asked Emma her opinion on how to explain to the parents that a particular child was not interacting with other children at an age-appropriate level yet, Emma related the play style she observed in this child and applied Parten’s stages of social development:

> We talk about play and for one of my report cards I was writing about the children in here, one I am pretty sure has Asperger’s [in the autism spectrum], and I was asking Emma, how do I describe her play? She said, ‘Well she is [just] doing parallel play.’ And I said, ‘That is right! So how do I say that to a parent so they will understand?’ So that was Emma teaching me about looking at the different levels of play and [pointing out that] she is often playing beside other children [as opposed to interacting while playing]. She said this child often directs other children too, so she is not playing together or co-operatively. She is playing where she is directing and she is still not [interacting socially in play as she should be for her age].

Play is not just play; it tells you something about the child’s level of development in a number of ways. Usha found early childhood development knowledge enormously useful in this instance, and a non-threatening way to communicate her concerns about the child’s social development to the child’s parents.
This is a small example of one of the ways that an ECE’s depth of knowledge of preschool-aged (pre-grade one) children’s non-academic development can provide a rich addition to the academic focus of kindergarten. This is only possible, however, when the teacher and ECE are both open to reciprocal mentorship after trust has been built within the team. Emma’s opportunity to demonstrate her specialized knowledge arose because Usha asked her professional opinion. Teachers and principals cited that ECEs had more ‘knowledge of child development’ than teachers. Emma’s application of her knowledge is an example of the depth of child development knowledge ECEs have through at least two years of study of early childhood development specifically, and how it can be applied in kindergarten. This would remain untapped if the school culture is not conducive to reciprocal mentorship.

**Negotiating Curricular Ideas**

Building trust is a ‘huge’ part of the development of the relationship, as Gurleen the teacher at Radcliffe phrases it. The trust that teams had been building resulted in formative events when they negotiated ideas together. Gurleen provided the simple example of the ECE suggesting a change in routine which the ECE felt would give the whole class a sense of independence and confidence, but in order to say yes, the teacher had to let go enough to trust that it would work. From Gurleen’s point of view as the teacher, she was taking a risk that the children would all still be safe. She said:

[I had to learn to] trust in her abilities to develop centres that are stimulating and engaging and educational. You would have to trust her abilities. For example, it was Anna’s suggestion to have the children walk down by themselves to the library - one of us would go down [to the library] first and the other one would dismiss them one at time [from the classroom] and they had to use their grown up, Grade 1 feet, to responsibly go solo to the library. And the children bought in and they loved it! They’re always asking can we do it to the gym? So sometime before the end of the year we’re going to do it to the gym [at the other end of the school]…[When Anna suggested it, my first thought was] ‘What! Not have our eyes on them!?’ (laughs)…[But] I said yes, and it turned out great. So, trust!
For Gurleen, with her strong sense of ultimate responsibility about the children’s safety, this was a formative event in the relationship. As the ECE, Anna felt she had not provided as many program ideas through the first year in FDK as would reflect her abilities but this was a result of a personal situation. Her energy in the first year had also focused on learning literacy-instruction skills rather than curricular ideas although she felt open to make suggestions.

I just say ‘Gurleen, I have an idea’ [and] she says do it. She said whatever you want to try, do whatever. The door is open, go ahead. Over the year it was just a couple of different ideas and activities that I did.

Anna is enthusiastic about the second year so she can bring many more ideas to the classroom.

The process of negotiating curricular ideas was more evident in the Elm Valley FDK than it was in the Radcliffe FDK team. Emma said that, although she was respectful of being in ‘someone else’s’ classroom, she did not wait to be asked to do things; she took the initiative to do the same basic things she would have done in her childcare classroom to keep the children’s routine moving through the day such as cleaning tables and setting up the next activity centre without being directed to do so. Emma said:

If we did not have such a good relationship [it would be hard] because I know there is another team here that the teacher wishes she would do more and the ECE does not do a whole lot. She waits to be asked. But maybe she waits to be asked because she does not feel like it will be accepted if [she initiates something] … maybe that ECE feels that when she does something [it is not well received], [so] she just does not do things anymore.

Emma’s non-passive activities in the classroom could be called approach behaviours. She was testing out how she could participate as a member of the team. The examples Emma provided of other FDK ECEs who waited to be asked, such as the one who felt treated as a co-op student waiting in a chair for the teacher’s next instruction to wash the paint brushes, describe ECEs with low levels of approach behaviours.
There is a fine balance for the ECE between taking initiative and appearing aggressive in the same classroom where the teacher had previously taught on her own, so building some trust first is important. An ECE with approach behaviours that are too low will take the teacher’s time for supervision, whereas if the ECE’s approach behaviours are strong too early in the relationship, she may appear too aggressive. Usha, from the teacher’s point of view, really valued initiative, indicating that ‘taking initiative’ is the top attribute she would look for if she were responsible for hiring the pool of ECEs for the School District.

As Usha’s acceptance and trust of her became apparent to Emma, she grew more confident and began making planning suggestions. When I observed the classroom, Emma had set up a store as a dramatic play centre in order to instruct the children about the different denominations of coins. This was the first major curricular idea negotiated between the ECE and teacher and it happened at the end of the first year of their FDK partnership. The viewpoint of the teacher is followed by the ECE’s point of view, each in individual interviews. Usha said:

We sat down and I said okay the next topic we are going to do is money and what I first did was ask them what they knew about money. They did not know [the names of the coins] and I said, ‘Emma, they know nothing’. And Emma said ‘Well I can set up a shop, a store’, and said I said okay, and that is how we usually do it. I did the [whole-class teaching] stuff on the carpet and she set up [the dramatic play centre] over there. And she [asked] what do they need to know? So we went into the [curriculum] document and really it does not say much, so I said what we really need [as an outcome] is they need to recognize each coin. So that is what I would teach at the carpet and then by following through on playing at the store - she sat there for, I’d say over a week separating the coins so they would know what they were dealing with. For the [item with the] 10 cent [price tag], which coin do you have to use? Recognizing different coins but as they play.

In a separate interview, Emma relates how the process unfolded and what her goals were.

Money is something that they have to teach, where they have to be assessed on it for kindergarten, I guess. I am not absolutely sure what they need to be assessed on, [but] this needs to be on their report card. You need to be able to speak on their knowledge of money. From what I understand that needs to be a unit. We had done our thing at the carpet, and they do not know anything about money. They probably just are not exposed to it enough. So I said, ‘You know what, I am going to make up a store for them’. At first
I took money and did money rubbings at the table, just to expose them. Look, that is a caribou. That is a quarter. Get the language going, instead of doing paper sheets, because they get to actually physically hold the money and see it. And we wanted to switch [the dramatic play area] up anyway, so I cut the price tags out and the picture of the quarter and the 25c and I taught them how to play with money in the store. I think I very much made it up myself.

Setting up a store as a dramatic play area is a common learning activity that ECEs design for 4 and 5 year olds in childcare centres, so that in itself is not an innovation. This example does, however, provide a glimpse of the thoughts of the teacher and ECE in joint planning. Usha approached Emma with a theme she wanted to introduce based on the curriculum document and her previous years experience with the former curriculum. Emma takes the curriculum document very seriously and assumes that anything in the document is direction for what must be taught by the teacher in the kindergarten so she was anxious to assist. She does not yet see it as curriculum guidelines for both of the teaching team although she has been given her own copy of the provincial curriculum. She also assumes that, if it is in the curriculum document, it must be formally assessed and that assessment is for the report card. In her current view, all of these are the role of the teacher. Emma does, however, come up with a fun, play-based way to achieve the teacher’s learning goal of recognizing denominations of coins.

Children had the free choice to play at the store centre if they wished and while there they chose their own roles (shopper or cashier, for instance), which are tenets of play-based pedagogy. Emma sat in the centre and marked on a paper whenever a child happened to demonstrate that they knew the difference between the coins and she redirected play if it got too rambunctious for a store. This curricular idea was theme-based, not inquiry-based yet, because the structure came from the adults not the children, but they had some freedom of play to explore some other ideas while they were there.
Emma felt a sense of satisfaction at supporting an outcome written in the curriculum document. Usha agreed that Emma’s idea was successful but it was not something she would have set up if she were alone in the classroom because it was noisy and active.

I thought [Emma’s idea] worked [but] I do not know, a lot of work to set it up and I wondered how is it going to work? Am I able to trust her to go do it? I do not want to have to go do everything and Emma is very open to take part of the role, whereas some of the teachers feel that they have everything to do. And I do not want to have everything to do. Usha said:

Usha felt strongly motivated to find ways to support Emma’s planning ideas and to let go of some things in FDK because she does not want to have to do everything herself. They functioned as Complimentary Teaching Team (Maroney, 1995) in this example as one took the responsibility for curriculum instruction, while the other team member set up the follow-up instructional activity to support the learning goals. After seeing Emma and Usha’s store, another FDK team in the school soon opened a Tim Horton’s coffee shop centre in their classroom but with a reduced shopper’s function because there were no price tags.

The right balance of approach behaviours plus taking initiative affords ECEs the opportunity to showcase their skills. As previously mentioned, teachers and principals are vague in their understanding of what ECEs have learned in their training and professional practice, so ECEs’ actual demonstration of their knowledge is an important source of information about their potential contributions to the FDK classroom for teachers.

Social Development

The final examples of formative events in the FDK partnership pertain to the important domain of social development. There were two examples of formative events in team collaboration in the area of social development: explicit social instruction program and restorative justice practices.
At the beginning of the school year, Usha asked for advice from one of the School District’s special education resource teachers (SERTs) regarding inappropriate social behaviours in the classroom, such as hitting. The SERT suggested that the FDK team implement an explicit social teaching tool called Second Step and Emma jumped at the chance. She had seen it used in the Preschool Room at her childcare centre but had never used it herself because she taught younger children:

It is very simple. There is a picture on the front, and it starts out with facial expressions – they are sad, they are mad, they are happy, they are surprised, they are scared – and there is a script on the back that says What do you think they are feeling? and you say ‘How can you tell?’ Well, their mouth is turned up, you can see their teeth, their eyes are squinting, they are smiling, they must be happy. But it goes beyond that into showing situations where somebody’s left out on the side and they are sad and two people are playing like ‘What do you think is happening here?’ And there is role playing that goes along with it…How do you get along? So it does not look like it happens by magic. What can you do?…There are certain steps to be successful [and we taught them that].

This was one of Emma’s first opportunities to teach the kindergarten class herself. The teacher had not used this curriculum tool before either and she was pleased to see how well it worked with helping children take responsibility to solve the many social challenges they were encountering all day in kindergarten.

At the team interview, Usha and Emma reported that the JKs were “doing a better job at coping with social situations than some of our Seniors”. Emma’s use of Second Step provided children with strategies to solve their own problems and increased understanding of the other child’s point of view. As an experienced teacher, Usha said that kindergarten children benefited from being explicitly taught social skills. She felt that Emma’s instruction had other implications for their classes which she mentions in the following quote:

You would never know there were 24 [children] in here because we have got them where they are moving. It works like magic, but it is not. It is setting up the social skills and knowing how to move to different centres [so] you would not know there were 24 in the [classroom] until they come and sit on the carpet. (laughs) …I think [Second Step]
improved their social skills, but it has taken us awhile to get those social skills built up [to the point] where they can be in smaller groups.

Before they can benefit from the learning activities provided by their teachers, kindergarten children need to build their social skills up to a level where they can comfortably interact with 25 other inexperienced 4 or 5 year olds all day. Once they can do that, learning centres and small group work can engage them in other kinds of learning, so social development is a critical part of kindergarten. Teachers see a role for ECEs in this.

Explicit social instruction also supported Usha’s established use of restorative justice practices in her classroom. She taught Emma these skills as well. Usha said:

One of the things that Emma is really learned well is the dealing with behaviour. She helps a lot and we work really well as a team…using restorative justice. I call it self-regulation because we are teaching them how to do whatever they are feeling inside.

Emma had little experience with mediating disputes between 4 year olds or 5 year olds and learning this new skill was a significant boost to the partnership as well since it positively affected daily interactions and the tone of the classroom. The team described restorative justice in the joint interview. Usha said:

What we do is, each child wants to be heard, so you make sure they each tell their story – whether true or not, whatever – but they have had their moment, and then you deal with the judgment of what is going to happen. And depending on if there is a perpetrator, you say to the person [who was the one who was hurt], “Okay, was that good enough?” For the most part they say yes. [When] someone says “no”, you ask “What could [the other child] do to make this situation better?” [The hurt child may say] ‘A hug’ (laughs). Nothing dramatic but they do think it through.

Emma added more about restorative justice:

Or shaking hands. Nothing earth shattering, [but restorative justice] makes them think beyond the ‘sorry’. They have to think about it a bit. I have learned a lot of things for discipline. She is very good with restorative justice. I have learned to listen to them more. [Before] I worked in a toddler room, [where] you clearly see what is happened [with disagreements].
One wonders whether this communication skill would also improve listening to each other as well. Usha’s choice to use restorative justice practices is an excellent match for the new play-based curriculum. It engages higher thinking skills because children need to determine their options in order to solve their own social challenges (with the support of the team). It is inquiry-based because it is student-led. Including Emma in the restorative justice mediation style right from the beginning of the year so they could both teach children self-regulation and problem-solving skills was a formative event in their relationship.

Role of the Principal

The Ontario Kindergarten curriculum notes that the principal will “play an important role in building professional learning communities that promote collaboration, reflection, and growth that enhance teaching and learning in all areas of the Full-Day Early Learning-Kindergarten program” (p. 11) and to “ensure that the work environment is one in which the practice of both Kindergarten teachers and early childhood educators is valued and supported” (p. 11). At a May, 2011 workshop provided to FDK principals by the Ontario Ministry of Education, the provincial government recommended six observation ‘look-fors’ for principals to use to support change in their kindergartens; the ‘6 Cs’:

1) classroom environment;
2) curricular decision points;
3) collaborative culture;
4) core instructional strategies;
5) concentration; and,
6) courageous conversations.
As the curriculum leader, the principals’ role is important to the development of the new program in their school. Principals, teachers and ECEs were asked the role of principals in FDK. This section will discuss the role of the principal as outlined below.

FDK teachers and ECEs felt the role of principals is to:

- provide resources;
- supervise the ECE;
- support and promote the program to parents and the community;
- ensure play-based learning is being used, and;
- keep the rest of the school staff abreast of the new program addition of the ECE to the kindergarten team.

Both FDK principals mentioned providing resources and promotion to parents, and one added free up time for joint planning, and include the ECE in school planning. ADK principals added the importance of ensuring that the building is ready for full-time JKs and SKs through as renovations, furniture and equipment for the classroom, and helping the teacher and ECE resolve conflict.

Brenda, the principal at Prince William which has ADK, had primary concerns that were the same as the two main ones stated strongly by her teacher: having too many children in one room (they even used the same phrase ‘that many little bodies’), and the concern that, although SKs could benefit from every-day kindergarten, JKs may not be ready. For Brenda, fatigue was a concern. “It will be interesting to see how it changes the day. It was the same when we went from half day to full day. We cannot get as much covered in a full day as you did in two half days, two mornings. Because of fatigue.” Her view was that an important part of the role of an FDK principal is convincing parents that FDK is a good option. Other parts of her role she felt would include facilitating the team relationship:
Supporting the staff and making the room change and creating a trusting dynamic between the ECE and the teacher. Because that is going to be a very close relationship when it is people that don’t know each other. We are throwing them in quick to get to know each other. You have to make sure no hard feelings happen along the way while they are working it out when they do not have a long time to get to know each other that can be kind of tricky. So we will have to keep making sure that we are okay…If the ECE has come from a program where they are used to running their own program and making ‘teacher-like’ decisions about their programs, and they are used to being in control of everything and you have got a teacher who is very much used to being in control of everything and running their own program and they are not used to collaboration, I think that is where you run into some real difficulties.

Brenda felt collaborative planning would be key. She did not feel there would be much adjustment for the kindergarten students with the new curriculum because she felt that her kindergarten teachers still used play throughout the day. This may be an underestimation of the differences in the transition to an inquiry-based curriculum.

Janice, the principal at Forestview which still has ADK for two more years, articulated an insightful grasp of play-based curriculum that was mentioned earlier. She also expressed an interest in talking to experienced FDK principals to find out what their active role had been in helping a teacher and ECE team work out their differences. Janice said:

I would like to have discussions [with principals] especially [about] situations where the ECE and the teacher were not clear on what their roles were and they have had some rough go. What was the best way to work together with them to make sure things were good?

The FDK principals said that their teams seemed to be working well together, except that one ECE had talked to her principal about taking on more responsibility in the classroom. The principal counseled the ECE on her own, at this point and did not discuss it with the teacher.

When referring to the kindergarten teachers, both FDK principals use the name of both the teacher and ECE to refer to class, not just the teacher. Kim, the principal at Elm Valley, said language is important:
The kids respond to each of them equally. They are both teachers. When I talk about [the class] – I do not say Ms C’s class, it’s Ms C and Ms T’s class. I always do everything with both their names. The rest of the staff is not quite as good at that, but I am always conscious of that; always including both names. Everything that goes home has both names at the bottom.

ECEs have been invited to attend staff meetings but they do not consistently attend. They are not paid for this time. It may also be that the discussion does not seem relevant to their work. Luba, at Radcliffe, observes that including ECEs in the school’s professional learning communities (PLCs), where staff meet to agree on school goals based on data and plan ways to change their practice to better meet student needs, is an important component to recognizing the ECE as a school professional. Luba states:

I think the professional learning communities that we free up with our [funding provided for that by the board] is really important. [I want to] make sure that the teacher and ECE come to those meetings with the other staff. [Other] principals do not free them up. And you know, the first couple [of meetings], I did not and I suddenly thought that they need to be part of this. And so I will make sure I do it regularly next year.

Brenda, the ADK principal at Prince William, has thought of this as well. “Probably what I will end up doing for PLCs is we may even have [all] our kindergarten [staff form] one PLC…It would be nice to bring them in as a group since although [kindergartens are part of] a continuum, it is a unique program in the school in itself.”

The FDK principals felt that one of their most important roles in the new program was to help parents to make the commitment to send their young children to kindergarten all day, every day. For many, it is their first experience with the school system as parents and they may be understandably anxious about a system change at the same time as this milestone in their child’s life and their development as a parent. The principals hosted family information nights and responded to the individual concerns of parents in all their kindergartens throughout the year.
FDK is just one of the many responsibilities of busy principals. Luba found that she had to spend much more time in another of her classrooms where the teacher was new to teaching that grade and therefore she did not have as much contact with Gurleen and Anna’s kindergarten classes as she had hoped. She plans to remedy that in the second year of the program. When asked about the support she has received from the principal, Gurleen mentioned in her individual interview. Usha said:

That is a hard one…not non-support. I guess we do not go down [to the office much]. I guess we have not asked for over-support. We have not gone in search of it. If we have gone, we have gone to ask for more resources. We have not asked for much behaviour [follow up for children in our class]. We may have for a couple of the kids back in the fall. We went to the [special education consultant from the board office]. We went to the SERT [special education resource] teacher for that.

Anna sympathizes with the role of the principal since there is much confusion about what roles are supposed to be in the first place:

I do not think they have been given a lot of direction. So I think it is hard for them to 100% support us when they have not been [given a clear idea of what ECEs are supposed to do]…Because we have not been given a lot of direction…So I think [the principal’s] as supportive as she can be but without us all having a clear direction of the program, I think it is hard for her. Because we are all seeing it differently. So how I feel we should be supported may be different from how next door feels they should be supported.

Usha, the FDK teacher at Elm Valley, says it all comes down to the teaching team in the classroom. “I know the [ministry] document says [that the principal is one the members of the early learning team], but I do not see that. I see [it as being] more [just] Emma and I.” She would be more likely to include the other kindergarten teaching teams in her school as part of the same early learning team as her, rather than the principal, since they meet regularly to plan use of shared learning materials.

Providing resources is another role of principals mentioned by FDK staff. The provincial government provides one-time start-up funding for each FDK classroom to purchase learning
materials such as books, toys, shelves, dramatic play centres, math manipulatives, science activities and other non-consumables to support the transition to inquiry-based learning with more children in the class. The funding was received by each principal before the previous school year ended. Kim, the principal at Elm Valley, made the decision that she would select and purchase resources for the new full-day kindergarten classes herself in June (the end of the school year), and this was a disappointment to Usha and Emma that they mentioned in the joint interview. Usha said:

We have not really gone to ask the principal for specific things. Now, she has been there for resources. [For instance], there was money to set the program [up] but she picked all the stuff out. Last year there was [a] set [amount of] money, and I thought we might have been involved [in selecting new resources for the full day program ourselves]. . A lot of the things that Kim bought were educational but we also need [resources that support] the play-based [curriculum] . . [One of the things] she did was spend [some of the] money on levelled books, which is good because I do a set program [using books at different reading levels].

In the individual interview, Usha expanded further:

We really wanted to get resources in the summer but [the principal] did all the ordering and she sort of put us off because she wanted to be in control of that. So we waited a long time for different things and had to get our own. Brought in things from home. She has been very very supportive [on other things]. And she believes in the program, we know that.

This is in contrast to the other FDK principal who held those funds until September so the new team could select their resource materials together themselves. Luba waited until the ECE came on board in September and she had the team choose their resources:

Another thing was making sure that the ECEs [participate in selecting learning materials] and that is what I said to the [new FDK] principals yesterday – let the ECEs be part of it, do not rush and spend your money.

Her thought was that this could be part of the team building experience and would include the ECE in the creation of the new learning environment. Gurleen and Anna appreciated the recognition of them as a team, but they felt they needed much more guidance about the kinds of
learning materials that would be of use in a play-based curriculum. When asked how the principal supports them, they cited the example of resource purchasing as the way the principal supported them.

Gurleen – She is a very busy woman... oh, she helped us order all the new things.
Anna – And told us our budgets and guidelines.
Usha – Well, passed us the catalogue and let us pick what we liked. That is huge.

Later, in the joint interview, Anna, the ECE, expressed a feeling of being overwhelmed by the process:

And even ordering of toys and tables and chairs…what would you say if someone came [with that much] money and said “Here. Order.” You know, spend it and use it. I think it would be nice to have somebody who has been in it, to say that the puppet theatre was a really good investment or the furniture in the kitchen or whatever … Maybe it was not unusual to have a principal pass you a catalogue and say here, you have however many of thousands, make me a list.

Although other Districts have written evaluation policies or practices, this School District does not yet have these in place for the new ECEs and neither of the FDK principals had undertaken an evaluation process with the ECEs.

Anticipating Year Two of the Implementation

As the first year of FDK came to an end, teachers, ECEs and principals talked about their plans for the second year of implementation. At Elm Valley public school, Usha is ready to include Emma in more planning next year. She needed the first year to get to know the ECE first, to achieve a sense of trust that Emma could follow through on plans, and to feel assured that the ECE could manage a classroom and smaller group of children on her own. Usha is expecting there will be more concessions on her part as she opens up the door to more responsibility for Emma in their second year of ‘marriage’ together, indicating a more advanced stage of team development.
[Next year will have] more planning together whereas I was planning [on my own at the beginning of this school year] because I didn’t know Emma as well as I do now. There will definitely be more give and take between [us]. We’ve already talked about [it].

In the second year of FDK, Emma will be assuming responsibility for music in the classroom.

This is a curriculum area Usha does not savour. When asked if there are things Usha had in mind for Emma to pick up on next year, Usha said:

Yes, music. I would like to have her do some more of that because she likes to do a lot of the music. She has an interest and a comfort in music, where I (makes face). Not my choice at all. So she wants to pick up the music and do that and do music & movement with them…It really makes the program that much stronger, because that is my weakness.

Emma is receptive to the notion of taking over the music and movement part of the curriculum beginning next year as well. This team is moving into a different classroom in next school year.

Unlike their first year together, in the second year, the teacher is ready to have the ECE arrange the room together with her. Usha is giving up some control of the domain of the kindergarten classroom and opening herself up to debate with the ECE about where to arrange learning and play stations in the classroom.

I am not looking forward to [moving] because I like things just so. So does Emma. I think this time she wants to be involved in that, whereas [last] time I did not let her be involved. It was just done right. She is going to be very involved in this setting up. So it will be interesting. And having worked with her [for a year, I will be comfortable saying] ‘you go right ahead’.

Principals had also learned from the first year of implementation. Luba, at Radcliffe, plans to increase time spent with teaching teams (especially at the beginning of the school year), and reorganize school funding to allow more time to plan together. She said:

For next year, definitely the full planning piece [is important] to make sure that you allow time to free them up, otherwise you’re not going to get through collaboration and you’re going to get the teacher feeling like ‘you know what, I planned all this, I am going to [be the one to] do it’.
Another area that principals mentioned for their second year is including FDK teachers and ECEs in school planning beyond the kindergarten such as Professional Learning Communities in the schools so ECEs can be actively involved in setting school goals.

The final issue mentioned by FDK principals for the second year is supporting kindergarten teaching teams in the continued implementation of the play-based curriculum, although they are unsure how to do this. Principals are still learning the vision behind that transition.

**Pedagogy**

**Introduction**

There seems to be agreement with the concept that play is the critical method of learning for young children. As Albert Einstein said, “play is the highest form of research”, but putting it into practice in full-day kindergartens is running into significant challenges. The Ministry-mandated change in pedagogy is a confounding factor in the development of a collaborative relationship for the teaching team primarily because there are a number of misconceptions about what play-based curriculum means. Misunderstanding the attributes of a play-based curriculum will delay its implementation. The following ideas and practices of teachers, ECEs and principals regarding the new pedagogy will be discussed in this section. The view is that:

- the play-based curriculum is not much different from the last curriculum style they had been using, just add more play time to what they were already doing;
- play-based curriculum is a swing of the pendulum back to the way it used to be before we had literacy benchmarks and it will swing back again sometime;
- there is an either/or dichotomy: explicit instruction versus play
  - children will not learn as much from messy or noisy activity centres as they would from ‘carpet time’ explicit instruction of literacy and numeracy skills
  - use some of FDK’s extra instructional time for play, but ‘sneak in’ academic practice of explicitly taught lessons as part of activity centres wherever you can;
- play-based curriculum is the same as ‘play-to-learn’; and,
- teachers and ECEs should use the time while children are playing to either prepare new work materials or ‘pull’ children who need extra literacy help.

Play-based Curriculum “The Big Balancing Act”

Teachers have been provided with little training regarding the ways in which the new pedagogy differs from previous practice. They mentioned the amount of training they had had when the literacy requirements were implemented as an example of the magnitude of training they would like in order to understand how the new pedagogy is different from what they had been doing. The FDK principal at Radcliffe noted the significant adjustment that kindergarten teachers are experiencing, especially if they have been teaching around themes for many years. Luba said:

[The kindergarten curriculum] is all around inquiry-based and I think some [teachers and principals] are still trying to get their heads around that fully. A lot of teachers still want to pull out their themes, like doing apples in the fall, but [the new curriculum] is trying to get away from all of that so it is more inquiry-based. [For many teachers] who’ve taught kindergarten a long time this is the biggest struggle… They are saying some people who have really bought into it well have said ‘My husband is so happy I am finally getting rid of all the [theme] boxes in the basement’. This has tended to be [the common kindergarten teaching strategy over many years]. I know when I started as a kindergarten teacher you did your apple unit in September and then you had Halloween and you pulled out your boxes and did those things... it is a change in thinking. So, getting that. Plus more inquiry and specifically situating the environment, the materials, in a way so that you are getting at the higher level thinking with the children.

Higher level thinking skills and problem solving are a focus of the new pedagogy and these have implication for classroom design and program planning. Janice, the ADK principal at Forestview, talks about the major paradigm shift for FDK teachers. She points out that the new kindergarten curriculum will be better aligned with the higher thinking strategies of the primary intermediate grades as well:

It will align better with what the rest of us are moving towards in terms of the whole inquiry is around teaching kids to think, and teaching kids to ask questions. As opposed to teaching kids things and stuff. ‘I have to teach them letters. I have to teach them to memorize. I have to teach them apples. I have to teach them about these things.’ But it is
letting go of what we think they need to know and providing opportunities for them to learn and grow. And it is better that we are going to start young, because it is what we are asking them to do in Grade 2. It is what we are asking in Grade 6 and Grade 8. And that is been hard for kids and it is been hard for parents to understand ‘so why are you asking my kid to think of a solution to this? Why do you not just tell them the way to do it?’ And that is the big paradigm shift… I think it will be a stretch for some teachers but at the same time, I think they will see that they fit and they are part of us, part of the rest of us. Yeah they do have literacy things they need to teach but there is a lot more thinking. I hope the inquiry-based centres really are inquiry-based and not just experiential in the sense that ‘I will put it there and you experience it’. But let them drive it.

The Ministry has suggested to principals that kindergarten classrooms undertake the following strategies to conform to the new curriculum: repeat what is working well, rethink what needs to be changed to move to the new pedagogy, and remove those practices that are theme-based, have too much ‘carpet time’ (large group instruction) or lower-level thinking skills (such as worksheets). There were several challenges to the collaboration of the teaching team inherent in the co-implementation of the play-based curriculum. Resistance to change evident in feeling that ‘it is not much different’ and the either-or dichotomy of literacy and play-based will be discussed in the following section.

Resistance to change came in two types of statements: the new curriculum is not much different from what they have been working with, and the notion that the kindergarten curriculum is a pendulum swinging between play and an academic focus every decade or two.

Usha, the FDK teacher at Elm Valley, said:

The new curriculum is not much different from the old curriculum. Just that it has more play based in it. But the expectations – what they call the big ideas - are not much different than the last curriculum document. I think probably the biggest thing for us is to value the play more and make sure it happens more, so we talked about [not having so many] worksheets in September.

Janice, the ADK principal at Forestview, expects that her teachers will not experience a significant adjustment to play-based since they still have play in their classrooms.
I have not read the whole document itself, just the overview and the things about being a play-based [program]. Our kindergarten teachers very much run [a similar program]. The literacy and numeracy are run through activities and there are short little lessons and then they go through and they do an activity or it is run through music. So it is not like they were hammering in a traditional school classroom…They very much did not throw out the baby with the bathwater. We are integrating literacy and numeracy into the kindergartens [whereas] I understand in some cases it is lost that play-based atmosphere. And kindergarten teachers here, at least from what I have heard in meetings, I do not think the programming piece is going to be a big transition for these ladies. They very much believe in the play-based social development of the child.

There is the idea that play-based simply means the children are not sitting in large groups being instructed for very long. This may be underestimating the adjustment to inquiry-based pedagogy which is much more than that.

A sense that the pendulum of kindergarten curriculum swings between play for a decade or so and then back to an academic (literacy) focus was a common theme. Roberta, the ADK teacher at Prince William public school, said:

When I first started teaching [more than 20] years ago we did a lot of play-based. We still had the easel in the classroom. We still had the housekeeping area. We have gone full circle to where that is not in the classroom [now]. I think we will go full circle back to where they will be in the classroom [again].

This may give experienced teachers the feeling that this is all something they have seen before and there is not much point in making a genuine change in their pedagogical practice if it will not last long either. Others argue, however, that this play-based pedagogy has an inquiry basis not seen in the 1980s when easels and water tables signaled play in the kindergarten. Janice, the principal at Forestview notes:

I think the biggest… here I am talking about kindergarten teachers, generalizing, but I think they made a big move when they said ‘okay now we are measuring literacy and now kids have to be here and here and here.’ And the curriculum got a lot more detailed in terms of what they’re expected to do. So in some ways kindergarten went from playing to ‘okay we have got to go to the carpet, we have got to learn these things’. So, going back to the play piece, I think people will look at it and say, oh, this is a step back. But I do not think it is. And that will be the mind shift for them I think.
Resistance in the form of concluding that the curriculum has just swung the other way for awhile, or that it is not much different from last year’s program, underestimate the challenges ahead for teachers to develop a different way of teaching, one in which ECEs have a clear role and knowledge base.

There is also a perceived ‘either-or’ dichotomy between explicit literacy instruction and play-based learning. Literacy and play-based pedagogy were often referred to in terms that see them as two parallel systems and the role of the teaching team is to figure out how to run them parallel to each other. As Janice, the ADK principal at Forestview, pointed out, each of the teaching team comes to the FDK with a specialty in one of the areas:

The ECE will come at it from a developmental perspective, a child development perspective, and the teacher will come at it from [an academic perspective]. It is play-based, right, so you have got the child development and you have got the literacy experience perspective so it will be a matter of bringing both of those very important things together. And it is not that one of those things is more important than the other. I think it will be a nice combination, but one’s going to be focused on this is what you do with this age group, and [the other with] this is our academic piece. So it will be sort of figuring out where everybody fits.

Having two educators in the classroom divided by the same two specialties that the pedagogy is trying to unite makes the collaborative relationship even more important to the success of FDK. A collaborative teaching team might be more likely to have a genuinely play-based curriculum.

Teachers were concerned that explicit instruction had no place in the concept of play-based learning that they are hearing from the Ministry and District workshops. There is the misconception that play-based means no explicit teaching as Gurleen, the teacher at Radcliffe, mentions in the team interview:

It is a struggle with the whole thing. I worry that because our curriculum is play-based now, and I may be all wrong but I have it in my head that you have to explicitly teach children the basics that they need to know, and then they use those play centres to almost independently play with what they have just learned - like the weighted numbers and the adding. It is a play centre but we have already started with their adding skills in other
ways, with the number line with buttons, with everything from a different view. So we teach it to them and then they play with what they know and that is how you know if they have really learned it, right?

Teachers do not want to lose the emphasis on literacy and numeracy but recognize that a change has been mandated. Usha called it ‘the big balancing act’. When asked if she could keep the literacy and numeracy goals as well as put a play-based program into practice in her classroom, Usha said:

I think so. I think that’s the big balancing act. I feel that for me in my role, you have to bring them out and work with them individually or in groups on letter recognition, sight words, reading, getting a chance just to read. And although I have had Emma pull out people too, especially the really low ones that needed alphabet and letter recognition, we are thinking that part of her role for next year needs to be to go and sit with them while they are playing and try to do some of the stuff there for the quote ‘play based’. But again, it is progress in learning. I felt that there needed to be some quote ‘teaching’ going on just because of all the requirements from the Board.

The School District and Ministry focus on children learning to read well in kindergarten has not changed with the introduction of play-based curriculum. In fact, there may be even higher expectations of literacy as a kindergarten outcome, as children begin to read a full year earlier than with ADK. As an FDK teacher, Gurleen, said in the team interview:

It is academic growth…it started a few years ago that this first block of the day [became] pretty serious literacy learning now but we have them sitting at the carpet for that first block, not all the time…that is one serious block…But how could they do this without the explicit teaching? I choose that morning block because that is when they are fresh and eager and that is when they settle better for you. And then we play, and usually the last block is when we do a lot of computer stuff and free play and a beautiful story that you do not have to have a meaning for or have to infer or have comprehension strategies…During that first block of the day, we are teaching them the sounds and the vowels, [then] we put this up at a centre and they might need some help getting the clues but …then they can write it. We sneak it in.

This example illustrates the struggle teachers are having with maintaining their reading programs at the same time as they adjust to the new play-based pedagogy.
Teachers may need more information about how to dovetail explicit instruction with inquiry-based learning and the fact that they are not mutually exclusive. While they remain as two distinct features of the FDK, teachers and ECEs may be more likely to be working parallel as opposed to as a collaborative team.

Another challenge of the introduction of the play-based curriculum is that messy or noisy activities may not be seen as academic learning. Emma, the ECE at Elm Valley said:

If things are messy or put out [in our classroom], it is put out by me. If water is put out, it is because I put it out. If sand is put out, a lot of the time it is because I put it out. I am used to that all being open [for the children in childcare]...I think I am a little bit more easy-going with the outcomes of things with children. If we go to the gym, and we are dancing to music, they can just dance to music. At the beginning of the year [the teacher] was very regimented in that we would do music in the gym but she would have a CD that would be telling you what to do to the music. So now I think she is a little bit more relaxed. She likes things the way she likes things and now I think she has let some things go. In fact, I do not think she likes mess and I think she has let that go a bit...If I have said I want to do this big elaborate painting messy activity, she has never said she thinks that would be too messy. She says okay, and I can tell sometimes she is not [really sure], it is always ‘oookay’. (laughs)

In a play-based curriculum, there is free choice for the children regarding which activity they can participate in. The classroom changes frequently and centres are put up or taken down as needed, even throughout the day. Ideas for new activities or continuing activities arise from the children. Educators listen and expand the children’s ideas. Messy and noisy activities may be an adjustment for the kindergarten teacher, and those walking by her door, as teams evolve toward applying play-based strategies.

The Ontario Ministry of Education’s draft Full Day Early Learning Kindergarten Program (“the new curriculum”) specifies that the early learning team will use three types of instruction: “a balance of exploration and investigation, guided instruction, and explicit instruction” in their strategies (p. 12). Teachers and ECEs need to participate in exploration and instruction (both free-play and more structured play-based learning opportunities) because this is
their opportunity to guide, shape and extend play ideas (p. 14) when they can “observe, listen and question… using the instructional strategy of scaffolding” (p. 12). Scaffolding, the Vygoskian notion of meeting a child’s learning at the edge of their knowledge to take them just a little farther, cannot be done from afar.

Using the additional instructional time of every-day classes to be engaged in play with children is an adjustment for teachers, though not for ECEs. Rather than participating in play, teachers may still have a tendency to use the time that children are having ‘free play’ time to either prepare materials for later use or to ‘pull’ children away from play for one-to-one work with literacy. Usha said “we would just pull them for different things. I call them teaching-based things.” An understanding about the ways that cognitive skills, not just social skills, are stimulated by inquiry-based play guided by an educator is still developing. Emma notes:

Because the whole thing is play to learn, I think I should be sitting playing with them more. But I sometimes feel that Usha thinks that when I am sitting playing with them that I am not [contributing]. I will be sitting playing with them and she will [call me away to] because she will have something that she wants me to do. So I think sometimes she thinks I am just being lazy and sitting there.

Emma does not focus on inquiry-based learning as the reason both educators should be participating in the children’s problem-solving and higher thinking skills; she thinks she should be participating in order to provide checkmarks that the children have attained certain academic skills.

Really the whole curriculum is you should be sitting there assessing them through play. They say look I made a pattern! They made a pattern while they were playing - check they did it…I thought I was going to be planning activities and doing it with them all the time. Whereas now, Usha does have things that she wants me to do. She wants me to work on their journals with them or work on this alphabet page with them, whatever. I thought I would be sitting [playing] with them all the time.

Without the guidance of an educator, play’s value in kindergarten would be minimized. The new curriculum notes that observation of each child’s level of development through discussion with
them and detailed notes on their development, rather than on measurement of discrete skills (p. 28). An example in the new curriculum closely reflects Emma’s comments:

In the early years, the main focus of assessment should be on informal assessment of prior learning and on assessment that is intended to support ongoing learning and to determine instructional methods. For example, before beginning a series of planned activities on patterning, a member of the Early Learning – Kindergarten team may observe children working with pattern blocks, and ask general questions to determine their interests, vocabulary, and knowledge. The team then introduces a planned activity and continues to observe the children as they work on the task in order to determine what individual children understand and what the direction for further teaching will be (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010, p.30).

The ECE’s rationalization about why she is playing with the children is based on a value of the school system – an opportunity to measure specific academic skill levels - rather than a child development value of scaffolding their play through expanding the children’s emerging ideas. ECEs have a great deal of training on the differences in types of preschool curricula, for instance Reggio Emilia and other emergent practices, but since ECEs are new to the school systems and unfamiliar with the former kindergarten curriculum or pedagogy, their concept of a play-based curriculum in the first year of FDK was led by what the teacher said about the differences. Emma recognizes that play-based instruction begins with participative interaction with the children, but she focuses on the school value of assessment, rather than the purpose of listening carefully to their learning so she can scaffold it.

A teacher’s focus on academics can find some balance through the ECE’s sense of fun in the curriculum. With the knowledge transfer of reciprocal mentorship, the result would be to create a play-based curriculum for their classroom. Usha notices this:

I love working with Emma. I guess I get caught in the ‘this is what I have to do’, right? This is my role. And Emma makes me go back to ‘let us have some fun!’ So back to the play-based, because I think I get stuck in the ‘education’…back trying to MESH those (entwines fingers from both hands). And I think with the model the government’s trying to put [in place], it is too out there. We need a mesh between education and it has to be together. So we have to work together. So what I have learned from Emma is I always
say to her ‘what else can we be doing together to make sure that we are educating them as well as allowing them to play?’

In the following comments, Usha’s partner, Emma, has some confusion about the difference between play-based and the YMCA’s commercial play-to-learn curriculum, but she makes the important observation that there are advantages to some flexibility in pedagogical practice.

Emma said:

I have heard that [the YMCA’s] whole curriculum is play-to-learn but I have not worked there so I cannot tell you exactly. I have worked in centres that are theme-based which I think is great. And I have worked in centres that are emergent Reggio Emilia which is learning through experiences similar to, not exactly the same as, play to learn. And I think that you should never just jump into one [curriculum]. At my old centre we were emergent and they had really strict stipulations on what you cannot do that because we are emergent. You cannot tell them to all sit at the carpet because we are emergent. And that was annoying because emergent’s not great for everyone. Some children need to know that now is carpet time and we are going to sit here. Because it works for them. They need to learn that structure. I really think it should be a mix of everything, not based on one philosophy. I think that you should be able to take from one thing and morph it to the way you think your classroom needs to be run.

Janice, the ADK principal at Forestview, had a sound concept of nurturing young children’s higher level thinking and problem solving skills through their play.

I remember saying to the Grade 3 teacher when the well was spewing oil in the Gulf of Mexico ‘Get out your Kinex and have the kids cap the well’, and he said ‘My kids are only in Grade 3. They cannot even all read. How can they cap the well?’ And this woman at this workshop said ‘When adults sit down to solve problems, we should always have a 5 year old at the table because they have not learned what they cannot do.’ So they might not know how to do it, but they might have the solution. And when they give us the solution, because we have the experience and education we make it work. And I thought ‘you know, that is very powerful’. I think little kids have great ideas, we just teach them over time that they do not. That they cannot.

The introduction of play-based to the new FDK classrooms at the same time as the new teaching teams is understandable, but in the absence of significant in-service, similar to that which was done for the introduction of the literacy benchmarks, may significantly slow down the collaboration process. Curriculum confusion may contribute to role confusion and an increase in
teacher supervision of ECEs. It may increase hierarchy in the team’s relationship, make opportunities for reciprocal mentorship more confrontational and maintain current literacy and numeracy instructional practices as the status quo, reducing transformational change in kindergarten.

**Instructional strategies**

ADK teachers were surprised by the question of how they would use double the instructional time. They had not given it any consideration. At the end of her first year teaching FDK, Gurleen said she does more interactive writing with her kindergarten students than she did in 10 years of ADK. When asked what kindergarten teachers will do with double the instructional time, Usha, at Elm Valley, had no hesitation in her succinct answer: “It is more individualized. Recognizing each child’s needs.” Usha felt that the FDK was affording kindergarten children with more individualized instruction, and this clearly would impact student outcomes. Luba, the principal at Radcliffe, noted that part of the Ministry’s vision is for small-group and individual instruction to increase and whole-class instruction to be reduced in the new FDK programs. Luba said:

> I have talked to some of my colleagues who say that some of their teachers who have been teaching kindergarten a long time are finding it difficult to give up that control. But ideally, they say, look at two groups of 13s, even if one of [the teaching team] works with a bit of a larger group and then the other takes a smaller group who may need a bit of extra help [that should work]. In a large group, we want to try to limit the carpet time.

In observations of the ADK and FDK classes for a full day each, the most significant instructional strategy affected by the relationship between the teacher and ECE was the percentage of the school day invested in individual or small-group instruction, as opposed to whole-class instruction. Anna, the ECE at Radcliffe said that dividing the class into smaller groups was achieved using whatever criterion was important to the task. Anna stated:
[Dividing into small groups] was done in many different ways. It was not just [a matter of] splitting the class up. Sometimes I took children out one on one and worked with them, and Gurleen had the [rest of the] group which gave phenomenal opportunities for those children. Other times because we also had other teachers coming in to help with Reading Recovery, we had three groups that we could divide up into. And it was not just physically staying in this room. Sometimes I would be able to take just the SKs, which was 4 or 5 at the time, and move into the library which gave Gurleen the opportunity to focus with the JKs. And then some of the JKs were moving up to the SK levels, so throughout the year it was a growth of knowing where the children were [with their skills] - what was appropriate. There was a group of JKs, for example, who were not all at the same level and not all learning the same. (Dividing into small groups meant we were) able to take that group and divide them again in terms of skill abilities [depending on] what you were working on, what as age appropriate for them, but also what their skills were. Some were pushing towards the SKs, some were pushing still towards the mid-JK range. So you know, it has paid off huge I think when you look at where the kids are now, just to have that smaller group size.

Although FDKs divided children into small groups for instruction more often than the ADKs, there were marked similarities in the other instructional strategies used in both programs.

FDK and ADK programs followed a similar combination of activities through the day. Both ADK and FDK tended to plan around four instructional blocks of time divided by nutrition breaks or outdoor play. Both types of programs used the following instructional strategies: whole-class ‘carpet time’ where explicit instruction took place, individual required activities (such as worksheets), learning centre time, free play, library visits and small-group instructional activities. Time spent at learning centre activities and free play was similar in ADK and FDK classrooms; however the proportion of small-group to whole-class instruction differed. The amount of time spent in small-group contact with an adult was greater for the FDK class, compared to whole-class carpet time with the teacher where ADK children tended to spend more time.

Teachers in both ADK and FDK classrooms started the school day the same way: with whole-class instruction where all the children sat on the carpet in one area of the class with a blackboard and magnetic whiteboard used. The teacher engaged the children in discussion about
what day of the week it was, the weather and the children’s activities the evening before, and attendance was taken. They heard announcements on the school’s public address system, joined in singing the national anthem, and breakfast snacks were brought in by volunteers.

During carpet time in both FDK classrooms in morning or other times of the day, the ECE did one of three things: she sat on the carpet with the children while the teacher was in a rocking chair, she pulled out a disruptive child to sit with her at an empty centre table nearby, or she set up/cleaned up centres. Each ECE did undertake one whole-class instruction on her own for one carpet time later in the day: Anna did a literacy activity on a storyboard and Emma did a dance activity with the children on the carpet.

The ADK class of Roberta at Forestview happened to attend an assembly at the beginning of the observation day, where they saw a brief presentation with the rest of the school before returning to class, and this made the proportion of activities of the day unusual. Roberta reported that the time spent at the assembly would normally have been used to read a book during carpet time followed by other literacy instruction following and that is taken into consideration in the analysis of types of instructional strategies in that classroom’s day.

Both ADK and FDK classes did a literacy block during the morning carpet time and then children were free to choose between five and eight learning centre activities. Each program had one literacy centre that children were required to attend and the teacher also pulled children to a station where she sat to listen to individual children read aloud, assess their reading skills or tutor selected children on language or numeracy skills (individually or in very small groups) for a portion of the learning centre time. These activities were common to both ADK and FDK classes.
In the morning, the ADK classes both had upper-grade or co-op student helpers in the classroom preparing communication bags that had come from home and would be restocked with new information or children’s work to go home with each child, whereas in the FDK classrooms the ECEs did this.

Roberta, the ADK teacher at Forestview, has an Education Assistant (EA) in her classroom assigned to work with a special needs child through the day. She mentioned that some EAs are strict about only working with the assigned child, whereas others will help out in other ways in the classroom when the child is interacting with other children. On the day of the observation, the special needs child was absent so the EA helped in the classroom for about half the time, and the other half she was pulled out to help in the library or in other classrooms.

Maria, the ADK teacher at Prince William, used music and drama extensively in her classroom. During one of the whole-class instructions, she read Goldilocks & the Three Bears, and then a small group of children were chosen to act out the story for the rest of the class to a taped version of the story being read, using costumes and props. This was done three times with three different groups of children, a retelling strategy. The teacher planned to use other ways to have the children retell the story throughout the week. These were whole-class activities but not the conventional ‘carpet time’ as this strategy incorporated active learning.

Both the teacher & the ECE in the FDK classes resolved small disagreements between children, and they each undertook custodial tasks such as cleaning tables, sweeping and attending to the bathroom. All ADK and FDK classes had upper-grade student volunteers for two nutrition breaks (which replace the traditional lunch hour) with the children.

Since the ECEs in the two FDK schools have no planning time, they remain with the children when the teacher has her planning time for a period two or three days a week. In Usha
& Emma’s FDK classroom, another teacher comes in to do math and science with the class when the teacher is gone for planning time and the ECE remains in the class. For Gurleen’s (FDK) planning time, the ECE takes the children to the library where she assists the children with the library teacher’s activity and selecting books to check out. During planning time for Roberta’s ADK classes, the library teacher instructs the children in a combination of whole-class and individual activities.

Collaboration between the teacher and ECE through the mentoring relationship they developed in each of the FDK classes had an impact on the range of the ECEs’ instructional strategies for academic student outcomes. Teachers’ planning had flexibility in order to adjust to the needs of the children for both ADK and FDK classes. ECEs were becoming able to meet the needs of that flexibility in kindergarten such as when Gurleen (ADK) said during the observation day: “So Ms R., I was thinking if you could do interactive writing, I will take the seniors over there.”

The collaboration that led to Gurleen to teach Anna to do interactive writing, as well as reading-instruction skills, increased the range of academic activities that the ECE could undertake with a small-group of students. Otherwise she might have been just another adult in the room while the teacher tutored individual children. Similarly, Usha’s mentoring of Emma in the instruction of reading, writing and assessment skills increased her opportunities to improve academic student outcomes. Reciprocal mentorship and trust both appeared to be evident in more collaborative relationships. The development of the teaching team’s level and depth of collaboration in FDK seemed to impact the range of instructional strategies they could undertake, particularly meaningful small-group instruction.
Summary

As the teacher and ECE in each classroom develop their relationship in their classroom, there are factors arising from their experience and their own attributes that impact the development of the relationship, as well as many factors from outside of their doors that put up obstacles or facilitate the development of a collaborative professional relationship that benefits their program and practice. These factors will be explored in the Discussion section.
Chapter 5
Discussion

Introduction

In this chapter I will answer the research questions, connect my findings to the literature, provide recommendations for stakeholders, and suggest future research.

Teacher and ECE collaboration

Research Question 1: How do teachers and Early Childhood Educators collaborate in kindergarten classrooms?

Team teaching in FDK is a particular challenge because of the blend of two different education sectors, unsure of their common ground. When a collaborative relationship is slow to develop, kindergarten children may notice tension as well as the different levels of authority of the teachers in their classroom. Each team member practicing their skills means that learning centres in the classroom could evolve into experiential projects and a smoother transition into inquiry-based practice.Opportunities to expand and extend learning ideas that arise from the children’s questions multiply as two adults have more chance to hear the children’s ideas and expand upon them.

On the other hand, when the teacher is not able to use the ECE’s skills, there may be fewer small groups (more whole-class teaching) and less individualized attention. If the teacher and ECE fail to develop an effective partnership, the consequences are not just a lost opportunity (because the program is no better than the regular kindergarten), it also results in a weaker level of instruction for the children because there are 30% more of them in FDK classrooms. When the ECE is deskilled, the teacher will also have an adult to supervise each day. These factors seem to motivate teachers to train the ECE in reading instruction and find out what they know, however
personal attributes and prior experiences (internal factors) play a part too which agrees with previous research (Main, 2007; Seery, Galentine & Prelock, 2002).

Teachers and ECEs in the current study have had no choice about who would be their partner in the kindergarten classroom for years to come and this can be a barrier to collaboration (Main, 2007). In this school district, the principal also has no opportunity to hire a good match for the kindergarten teacher’s skills, philosophy and personality because ECEs are assigned to schools based on ECE geographic requests. Factors external to the team, such as hiring practices of ECEs for the FDK program, do affect team development as well because hiring committees may not have a clear understanding the skills and competencies that ECEs can bring to the classroom and this will be discussed later in this section.

The new curriculum and the required move towards play-based instruction add an additional layer of ‘newness’ for educators in Ontario’s FDK initiative. These changes will affect the teacher’s instructional strategies. But educators, both teachers and ECEs, are not clear on the difference between what they have been doing and play-based instruction.

The Ontario curriculum seems to shift towards play-based pedagogy, beyond the outcomes of explicit instruction and learning centres to the experiential goals of carefully planned classroom projects that value overcoming obstacles and deducing cause and effect relationships in children’s inquiries. For young children, Katz (2011) distinguishes between ‘academic learning’ (important work that is necessary for a child’s future), and ‘intellectual learning’ where children are genuinely engaged in investigating the world around them, asking questions, studying and making predictions. When we only establish academic learning outcomes, we can neglect the importance of intellectual learning processes critical to pre-grade-one development. In tandem with literacy and numeracy benchmarks in Ontario, we also need to
establish “standards of experiences” (Katz, 2011) for our 4 and 5 year olds. The disposition to want to learn, to enjoy the school experience while still learning higher-level thinking skills, is something beyond the requirements of literacy benchmarks and more closely matches the new curriculum. Ontario’s new kindergarten applies the concept of standards of experiences in their outcome expectations, however standards of experiences need to be locally developed and articulated at the school board level, in the same way that benchmarks for early literacy have been. This clarity would improve the understanding of kindergarten teachers and ECEs regarding their shared goals.

As kindergarten teachers and ECEs rebalance to this new pedagogy, a key to the success of the full-day kindergarten model is the professional relationship between the teacher and ECE. We know that instructional strategies affect student outcomes (Hattie, 2009). Instructional strategies are, in turn, impacted by the nature of the professional relationship between the two types of educators that will soon be in every Ontario kindergarten classroom.

**Team Development**

Evidence from the current study suggests there are predictable stages in the development of teacher and ECE teaching teams. In these case studies, the stages seemed similar to the patterns seen in the research literature regarding the Tuckman model (1965) of Forming, Storming, Norming and Performing, used in business team development over the past 40 years. In other words, the stages of team development may be the same whether one is part of a teacher-ECE teaching team or a working team in business or industry. Significantly, there is an enormous body of research on providing support to progressing through the stages of team development in business, but almost none regarding teaching teams, especially cross-sectorial teams. Teachers do not usually work as part of a team in their classroom every day. When considering the question of how teacher and ECEs collaborate in kindergarten classrooms, the
finding that teaching teams may develop similarly to other working teams using the Tuckman (1965) model is significant. A deeper understanding of team development could be a significant tool for School Districts and principals to support team relationships. Improved team collaboration in the classroom, in turn, impacts the range of instructional strategies a highly collaborative team could make use of.

Although team members, particularly teachers and principals, said they had pride in their FDK programs, both FDK teams were still in the Forming stage (Tuckman, 1965). Typical of this stage of team development, the data provide many examples of unclear objectives and role confusion. All FDK members were positive about the program, but expressed frustration at the confusion over roles. They felt they were ‘in the dark’ and on their own to work out what was expected of them in respect to the professional relationship. Teachers wondered, ‘how much do I give up?’ Consistent with previous research, FDK staff were confused about their roles (Gibson & Pelletier, 2011; Gananathan, 2011). Confused roles and unclear curriculum expectations hinder collaboration and contributed to a longer Forming stage (Main, 2007). The Ministry curriculum goals and the method of teaching are different. The play-based curriculum is poorly understood which makes it difficult for the FDK team to have common goals to which they can agree. These are additional challenges to moving beyond the Forming stage.

Hidden annoyances, another attribute of the Forming stage, were expressed in individual interviews indicating that frustrations are building. There was evidence of a number of instances of hidden annoyances. Emma and an ECE colleague regularly exchanged frustrations, perhaps resentment, about some of the tasks that fell to them. One of the concerns Gurleen experienced as an FDK teacher was leaving the ECE alone in the classroom with the children because of safety issues. Even though she acknowledges that in FDK the ECE is permitted to be alone with
the children, Gurleen avoids it. She needs more time to get to know her teaching partner and build trust in the Forming stage.

There were some signs of assertiveness from the ECEs that would indicate moving into the Storming stage, such as discussion about curricular ideas, but still in the nature of the Forming stage, where they are both politely feeling their way. There was little evidence that either team had moved to the other stages, Norming or Performing. With the pedagogical confusion around the move to play-based provision, neither team had confirmed their program objectives nor had they opened risky issues yet. Reciprocal mentorship is a hallmark of the Performing stage, when FDK teams will truly evidence learning from each other and this will be manifest in pride in their creativity in their joint practice.

The important consideration with regard to the application of Tuckman’s developmental sequence to FDK teams is its value to principals in supporting team development. Courageous conversations, a phrase used in education to refer to the importance of being clear but kind when disagreeing with the views of another professional, is a first step in to storming. In order to advance relationships, principals can benefit their FDK teams by facilitating or ‘allowing’ debate. These discussions need to take place at some point between the teacher and ECE if a strong team is to form (Main, 2007; Tuckman, 1965). FDK teams may be working more closely, all day, every day, than any others the principal supervises. As one principal noted, we are throwing them in together pretty fast, and the success of a province-wide program is riding on their individual relationships. Principals can note the stage of team development by whether there has been genuine debate that resulted in clarifying roles and/or objective. They should take care not to put obstacles in the way of the ECE and teacher ‘fighting right’ (with the principal’s
Factors affecting the Teacher-ECE pair

Research Question 2: What factors affect the teacher-ECE teaching pair?

Evidence points to three main findings regarding influences on the teaching pair:

1) FDK Team Relationships enable and constrain Instructional Strategies;

2) There are Internal Factors that affect the Team Relationship, and;

3) There are External Factors that affect the Team Relationship.

On the following page, Figure 1, the FDK Relationship Model, describes the relationship between three elements: the FDK team’s relationship, instructional strategies and student outcomes. As seen in the model, the current inquiry finds that there were internal factors (those that arose from the background and philosophies of the teacher and ECE) and external factors that had a significant effect on the professional relationship between the teacher and ECE as they entered their first year of work together. Factors that originated from outside the classroom, either facilitating a faster collaborative relationship or slowing it down, are divided into three types: factors arising from the provincial government’s Ministry of Education policies, administrative practices of the School District, and factors involving the school and/or principal.
Figure 1: FDK Relationship Model
A potential range of collaboration is intrinsic to the FDK Relationship Model: from a relationship with low collaboration – a teacher who has not changed her practice very much from what she did last year (except that there are more children in her classroom and an adult to supervise every day) - to an interdependent team of early learning educators who have created a collaborative learning environment using the strengths of both team members, together with shared pedagogy, planning, implementation, assessment, and communication responsibilities.

The strong link in the model between Team Relationship and Instructional Strategies makes Team Relationship the core construct. A discussion of this link will be followed by the 20 internal and external factors that affect the team relationship.

**Instructional Strategies linked to the Team Relationship**

In what ways are instructional strategies impacted by the team teaching relationship?

Previous research indicates that the additional instructional time, in and of itself, changes the type of instructional strategies used in the classroom compared to HDK (Rathbun, 2010; Elicker & Mathur, 1997). However the issue underlying the value of full-day kindergarten programs is to create developmentally appropriate learning environments for all children, regardless of the length of the school day (Rothenberg, 1995; Plucker, Eaton, Rapp, Lim, Nowak, Hansen et al., 2004) and that is the responsibility of the teaching team. Evidence indicated that, when the ECE is a full team member, team-teaching positively impacted how the team structured the additional scheduled time in the following ways:

**a) Smaller group size and increased individual attention**

The current study found that, with an ECE in the classroom, children had twice as many adults to answer their questions and help them, which is not surprising. When asked how she spends double the instructional time that she previously had in her kindergarten classes, Usha did
not hesitate in her answer ‘more individual attention’. Quantity improved, but so did quality of interaction. When the ECE’s skill set was understood and valued by the teacher, the ECE could showcase those skills in her interactions with the class and the quality of educator contact for children improved. In the ADK classes, teachers could take a small group of children aside when the rest of the class was engaged in child-initiated activities, such as learning centres. Whereas in FDK classes where the teacher had built a sense of trust with the ECE, both the teacher and ECE could take small groups of children for teacher-directed activities such as literacy practice in parallel or differentiated split-class instruction (Maroney, 1995) every day if they wished. These findings agreed with Rathbun (2010) that FDK may permit more time to tailor practices specifically to enhance children’s reading achievement. Dividing the class into small group or individual child activities is an instructional strategy most available to teacher and ECE teams who communicate well, have co-planned, have agreed of understanding of shared curricular goals, and particularly when the ECE has literacy-teaching skills.

Collaboration in the team relationship leads to increased individual instruction time for students. High team collaboration also moves the team teaching mode, discussed in chapter 2, that Goetz (2000) described as Category B (where instructors work together but do not necessarily teach the same groups of students, nor necessarily teach at the same time) to Category A (where both instructors are teaching the same students at the same time in the same classroom). In the FDK model, Category B would continue to apply when, for instance, the teacher did all of the literacy instruction and the ECE undertook social-emotional activities (each their own specialization), or when the teacher does most of the planning. Category B is less collaborative than Category A.
Large group ‘carpet time’ sessions tended to be shorter and more frequently led by the teacher than the ECE in FDK. When the teacher or ECE led whole-class activities with the children in the carpeted area, the other educator prepared the classroom for the next activity in complimentary team teaching (Maroney, 1995). With the ECE in the room, the teacher could, at minimum, make use of an additional adult in the room to circulate during free play so she could tutor children who needed extra literacy help, but with higher collaboration, the skills of the ECE could be put to better practice.

b) Flexibility to be inquiry-based

Rathbun (1997) and Elicker & Mathur (2007) noted that the increased length of the school day allows FDK teachers greater flexibility in their decisions about how to allocate instructional time, and teachers confirmed this in the current study. The additional challenge in Ontario’s FDK is the concurrent change in pedagogy to play-based curriculum. Educators have time to expand on inquiries that arise from the children, and time to actively co-construct play together with the children but to do this well, they need the synergy of a team teaching together rather than two individual educators. FDK provides more time to meet the academic learning requirements of students as they come into the school with skills on a wide spectrum, but also builds higher-level thinking skills that are a part of the upper grades. The teacher and ECE need to learn from each other in order to improve the quality of learning activities and projects with two professionals planning and to transform activity centres to investigative learning experiences.

c) Self regulation and conflict resolution for kindergarten children

Socialization is an important outcome of kindergarten: the ability to understand how to work in a group, how to make friends, and how to solve problems. A collaborative teaching team
relationship affords rich opportunities to nurture these important skills in children. With two professionals in the classroom, the team can choose to adopt practices that would take too much individualized time in a regular kindergarten, such as restorative justice where children are asked to reflect on how the other person in their dispute feels. This builds on the new ability that 4 and 5 year olds are just developing - to recognize that someone else may have a different point of view than them about the same event.

Restorative justice, used in one of the study’s FDK classrooms, fits very well with higher-level thinking of the inquiry-based curriculum as well as the development of self regulation of 4-6 year olds, but it takes longer to listen to two children explain their dispute and decide themselves how to solve it, than it does to solve it yourself as the teacher. Restorative justice is just one example of the enriched opportunities for instructional strategies in the area of social development when FDK staff develop a team-teaching relationship.

Obstacles and Facilitators of Collaborative Practice

Research Question 3: **What are the obstacles and facilitators of collaboration in teaching teams in kindergarten?**

There were five internal factors that arose as themes affecting the collaborative nature of the FDK team relationship: background of the teacher and ECE, entry behaviours of team members, teacher foreknowledge of the professional skills of ECEs, opportunities for the ECE to showcase her skills and knowledge, and approach behaviours.

There were 13 external factors that arose as obstacles or facilitators of collaborative practice in FDKs. External factors came from three sources: the result of provincial government policy, practices at the school, and practices arising from the school district board office. Examples from the data that illustrate internal and external factors will be outlined, and this will
lead to specific recommendations for government policy, school district practice and the support of the school (particularly the principal) at the end of this section.

**Internal factors**

**Background of the teacher and ECE**

The teacher’s background affects her knowledge of child development, her confidence working with an ECE, and what her reservations about FDK may be. Principals mentioned that teachers with many years of experience may have more challenge in changing their practice to accommodate the blended collaborative team and new curriculum. Usha had a degree in child development and she worked in a childcare before she returned to school to become a teacher. After many years as a kindergarten teacher, she jumped at the chance to teach in the first year of FDK and switched schools to do so. Gurleen did not have professional training when she worked in a childcare for many years before becoming a teacher and she focused on ‘making it work’ when it came to FDK.

Both the ECEs and the teachers believed that experience teaching 4 and 5 year olds in preschool should be a basic requirement for FDK ECEs, yet Emma and Anna had far more experience with other age groups in the 0-6 range. In the individual interview, Emma said, at first that experience with kindergarten aged children was essential, but backtracked to say that she recognized that she did not have much and knew of friends without it who wanted to apply for FDK jobs, so what was important was the ability to design programs for that age group, not necessarily direct experience. Her teaching partner Usha said, in the individual interview without being prompted that, although she knew Emma would say that experience with 4 and 5 year olds was not a critical attribute for FDK ECE candidates, as a teacher she felt it was important because it was a quicker help to her. All principals value direct 4 and 5 year old experience too, yet school district hiring committees may not yet be adept at divining this skill in candidates.
Entry behaviours of team members

In the first years of implementation, the ECE will usually be entering into a classroom already established by the teacher, perhaps for a number of years. Time is needed to get to know each other. It would facilitate development of the relationship if the ECE is cognizant of the adjustment of the teacher to another educator in the classroom during this period when the relationship is forming and suggestions may sound like criticisms. Emma and Anna both decided not to enter ‘like a bull in a china shop’. In later years of FDK, it may be the teacher who is new to a classroom and school where the ECE has long worked and it will be the teacher who needs to enter gently.

Teacher Knowledge of the Professional Skills of ECEs

School systems have low expectations of ECEs. Teachers, principals and school district officials are still learning what it is exactly that ECEs do, and what they learn in college. When asked what the ECE contributes to the classroom, one FDK teacher’s first response was ‘cutesy songs’. A principal was concerned that adjustment to working with a teacher in kindergarten would be a challenge for ECEs if they were used to making ‘teacher-like decisions’ themselves. This is a new field outside of the direct experience of principals and teachers, but familiar enough that they may be embarrassed to ask to find out more about it.

Teachers (and principals) may be reluctant to leave ECEs alone in the classroom with the children, as Gurleen was, even though the ECE had been sole-charge teacher in childcare centres (albeit with fewer children). These findings agree with previous research that ECEs feel unequal or misunderstood in school systems (Cassidy, Hestenes & Shim, 2004; Gibson & Pelletier, 2011; Gananathan, 2011). Ministry officials need to recognize that school systems require a lot more knowledge about what ECEs learn in college. Speakers such as ECE professors would help inform principals and teachers about this additional expertise in their schools. This is so
important it has a category of its own because it impacts whether teachers and principals have high enough expectations of the ECE from the outset.

ECEs showcase their skills and knowledge in the classroom

The teacher can best make use of ECE skills for student outcomes when she sees what those skills are. When the culture of the classroom and the school are such that the ECE has early opportunities to showcase her skills & knowledge, the teacher gains a clearer idea of how her skills and that of the ECE can be used together in the classroom. Emma had begun to do this when she introduced her instructional idea of the store to teach money ideas. Once the new team starts to get more comfortable together, and the gentle-entry period has passed, ECEs should take the initiative and look for opportunities to shine with program ideas. Classroom reorganization suggestions from the ECE should wait until after the teacher gains a better idea of what an ECE can contribute to the classroom and some trust is built.

Approach behaviours

Overtures that make it easier to include someone in an activity start with the other person showing signs they are interested in participating in something new. In building collaboration in the FDK teaching team, taking the initiative to exhibit approach behaviours can be seen from both the teacher and the ECE. When Emma asked Usha to let her know when Usha was going into the school in the summer, before school started, to set up the new classroom they would be using together, this was an approach behaviour. Usha was not ready to accept the offer as they did not know each other yet (had not begun to build trust) and Emma was disappointed. The teacher designed the kindergarten environment by herself. At the end of the first year teaching FDK together, the team was moving to another classroom and Emma again asked Usha to inform her what date they would be setting up the classroom in the summer. This time, Usha plans to accept the offer and the team will debate the placement of furniture and play centres in the
classroom. Usha says “it will be interesting”, recognizing that she is letting go and opening up
the design of the classroom to debate, a significant indicator of progress in team development
that started with the ECE’s approach behaviour. Similarly, Usha showed approach behaviour by
asking Emma for help describing the social development of a student on her report card.

Personal attributes contribute to collaborative team building (Seery, Galentine & Prelock,
2002; Main, 2007). It is recommended that personal attributes such as initiative to showcase ECE
skills and use approach behaviours, openness to learning from each other, readiness to engage in
professional debate, and a positive attitude about being part of a teaching team be fostered in
FDK teachers and ECEs by principals and school districts as attributes that contribute to team
building.

External factors

These are largely beyond the control of the teaching team in the classroom but they
constrain or facilitate the speed with which the teacher and ECE collaborate.

Role confusion and Pedagogical confusion

There were many examples of role confusion in the evidence of this study and this is
consistent with previous research (Gananathan, 2011; Gibson & Pelletier, 2011). FDK and ADK
teachers and principals were all trying to unravel who does (or would do) what in the classroom.
It was startling to learn that the provincial government’s TV commercial showing an active full-
day kindergarten with a teacher and ECE was a main source of information regarding the ECE’s
role and the classroom environment. Without a better understanding of their roles, teachers and
ECEs relied on comparisons to stories from colleagues and they set their collaborative goals low.
Kindergarten staff relationships would benefit from clearer direction at the provincial level on
expectations about their roles. Confusion about what ‘play-based’ means contributes to role
confusion.
Government requirements made changes to six aspects of provision of kindergarten programs at the same time: double the instructional time, new ECE school employees, creating team teaching, more children in the classroom, new provincial curriculum goals to be balanced with existing literacy goals, and play-based instead academic-focused professional practice. There was significant resistance to changing practice in the following ways: teachers did not see the published curriculum as a significant change from what they are already doing, they may think it will not last long because the province will change their mind like a pendulum, and they may see the new curriculum as a dichotomous challenge to their established literacy program. Teachers seem to be seeing the play-based curriculum as a sandwich – literacy hidden between two slices of play – rather than a new dish altogether. There does not seem to be a clear measure of how well teachers understand the magnitude of change in practice expected by the province or school districts, and principals were not clear on their role in monitoring implementation of play-based.

**Pay differential**

Teachers and principals cited the difference in pay between FDK team members as a reason why ECEs should not be expected to have as much responsibility in the classroom as teachers. Ontario public school elementary school teachers salaries (including kindergarten teachers) range between a starting salary of $50,000 to a current maximum of over $93,000 if they have post graduate degrees and enriched teacher accreditation and after 10 years of experience. ECEs working in kindergartens are paid by the hour, not salaried, and compensated at a rate of a maximum of about $26 an hour. Both teachers and ECEs are off work in the summer but ECEs in most school districts only receive 10 month contracts, so they are laid off for the summer without pay. Teachers were more likely to notice the pay difference, whereas first year ECEs may not yet be aware of teacher pay rates. Emma, for instance, thought ECEs
make three quarters of what teachers make, whereas she actually earns less than one third of an experienced teacher’s salary.

When ECEs work in school buildings, pay differentials become obvious (Johnson & Mathien, 1998; Desimone et al., 2004). Two issues arise from the pay differential: responsibility commensurate with compensation, and professional respect as cross-sectorial equals. Teachers (as well as principals) may be reluctant to expect ECEs to take on more responsibility than an Education Assistant (EA) because they perceive that ‘they’re not paid enough to have to do that’. In addition, ECEs must make the decision about whether to participate in parent-teacher interviews (as expected in the Kindergarten curriculum document), as volunteers because they are not paid outside of school hours.

This perception may limit tasks expected by the school of the ECE. Funding for ECE salaries is provided at a specific hourly rate from the Ministry of Education. Although School Districts may use other funds to supplement this hourly rate, they would have to take those funds from other programs. This external factor that constrains the team relationship in FDK is a provincial funding issue that the Ministry of Education is aware of during trying economic times.

**Time for joint program planning**

Time to plan together is a critical part of collaborative team teaching (Gibson & Pelletier, 2011; Main, 2007; Goetz, 2000). Funding to School Districts for ECEs by the Ministry of Education is calculated based on the ECE working in the school during the hours when children are present, without provision for co-planning time with the teacher. School Districts are also funded for another teacher to be in the classroom (besides the ECE) when the kindergarten teacher leaves the classroom for planning time through the week, but they are not funded for any planning time for ECEs. Even though FDK teams are expected to co-plan, the key to team teaching, there is no time to do it. I observed that although teachers reported that they were not
the ECE’s supervisor, they did, in fact, find themselves performing supervisory activities with the ECE. It is difficult to see how this could be avoided when the teacher is doing almost all the planning and must then instruct the ECE what the day’s plans are and what activity will be undertaken next.

Some School Districts have found other internal funds to provide FDK teams with co-planning time, and principals in some School Districts carefully arrange their school budget to provide the teacher and ECE with regular planning time together, but otherwise, FDK teams plan in one of three ways: the ECE stays after school without pay, they plan together when they can while the children are in the classroom, or the teacher does all the planning. Certain practices such as teachers planning during the summer or more generally outside of school hours constrain the development of equal partnerships.

**Measures that reflect curriculum values**

One reason that governments establish measureable goals is to be accountable to taxpayers, which is an important reason why they require regular reporting on academic outcomes (such as kindergarten literacy) from School Districts. Reporting a very specific learning outcome for each child to the school district head office, especially several times in the school year, significantly elevates its value as an outcome in the eyes of the teacher, ECE, principal, and other teachers in the school. Literacy reports may give the impression that they measure the success of the kindergarten teacher as well. High profile reporting may also reduce the perception of the importance of other kindergarten learning goals that are indeed critical as foundations to early learning (self-regulation for instance).

Since specific attributes of language skills are mandated to be carefully and explicitly reported by the teacher (only) for each kindergarten child and it is the only reportable outcome of kindergarten (JK & SK) to the District & Ministry (numeracy to a lesser degree), this seems to
contribute to the notion in schools that learning to read is the single important outcome for all 4 year olds and 5 year olds. We value most those things which we measure; and what we measure, we can improve.

While there is no argument that learning to read is indeed an important learning goal, benchmarks need to change to reflect the values of the new curriculum. The curriculum goals in the new documents changed without concurrent adjustments to benchmarks or reporting of skills. It is recommended that literacy benchmarks be maintained, but that ECEs become an intrinsic part of measuring them as well, not just teachers.

**ECE evaluation**

Principals in this study had not evaluated the performance of ECEs in their first year other than dropping by the classroom to see how they were doing and inviting them to their office for a chat. ECEs confirmed this. This School District had not yet established forms, policies or administrative practices to provide support to ECEs through performance appraisal, although some other School Districts have done so.

The provincial government has legislated standard provincial requirements for performance appraisals for teachers called The Teacher Performance Appraisal System with components for both new and experienced teachers. The New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP) component, for example, has more than 160 ‘look-fors’ for principals when providing support to new teachers in their first year. In order to standardize provincial requirements for full-day kindergarten ECEs in the areas of orientation, professional development, mentoring and evaluations in the first year for ECEs, it is recommended that the provincial government create an Early Childhood Educator Performance Appraisal System with components for both new and experienced ECEs in kindergarten classrooms.
Hiring process of ECEs

In the first year of the FDK program many school districts offered the ECE positions to Education Assistants (EAs) who were already on staff. An EA in Ontario works in the classroom alongside the teacher, but one-on-one with one or two children who have extraordinary needs in cognitive, physical and social development (for example a child in the autism spectrum). Those EA staff that were qualified to be admitted to membership in the new professional College of ECEs, were offered first opportunities to accept the ECE positions in many school districts.

These new FDK team members had the advantage of knowing school procedures, but a strong disadvantage was that EAs re-assigned as ECEs were accustomed, perhaps for many years, to being an assistant to the teacher. This may have slowed down the process of developing a collaborative relationship in teams with former EAs. This challenge may have been concentrated, for the most part, in the initial year of FDK, because in subsequent years ECEs will need to be hired from outside of the school district as there are not enough qualified EAs on staff to fill all the registered ECE positions.

ECEs with ready knowledge of planning for 4 and 5 year olds will be faster to showcase their skills to teachers and this will facilitate the pace of team collaboration. Demonstrating their knowledge through a presentation that is age-group specific at the interview is one way to distinguish ECEs who will be faster to showcase kindergarten programming skills, and interview questions focusing on knowledge of 4 and 5 year olds will also distinguish candidates.

An additional way to find fast-track ECEs is working experience. School Districts’ Human Resource personnel and principals on hiring committees need to either have an ECE on the hiring committee or inform themselves about the standard staffing structures at child care centres in order to understand that ‘child care’ experience may mean only having worked with
infants, toddlers or school-aged 6-12 year olds in before/after school care. This is like hiring teachers with only highschool experience to teach grade two; it could certainly be considered, but only if the hiring committee is satisfied that the teacher clearly demonstrated that she has the skills to teach the new age group from the first day of class.

**Standard School District Orientation for new ECEs**

New ECEs would benefit from a standard school board district orientation including information on school board policies, regulations, supervision practices, parent communication and yard duties) when they are hired. School districts should also provide ECEs with their own copies of the provincial curriculum and other documents pertaining to kindergarten. ECEs in this study did receive the provincial curriculum but they were not provided with their own manuals for kindergarten program requirements of the school district such as Literacy benchmarks and literacy reporting and only learned of these documents and reporting requirements when the teacher showed them their copy. Providing both team members with background materials and requirements facilitates professional team development.

**Play-based curriculum training**

FDK and ADK teachers in the study referred to the intensive training the School District had provided for them when the literacy benchmarks were established; three years of training for kindergarten teachers to help them implement changes to the curriculum to teach kindergarten children to read. Some school district consultants (specialists who design training for the district’s teachers) may not feel that even they themselves have a clear understanding of the differences between theme-based, academic curricula and the new play-based, inquiry curriculum. Principals, teachers and ECEs were certainly struggling to see what needs to change in classrooms. Confusion about what play-based means contributes to role confusion in FDKs. Role confusion acts as a constraint to building the team relationship. School districts should
consider working with the Ministry of Education to provide hours of training commensurate with the degree of change in practice and delivery of the new curriculum that they expect.

**Team development**

Development of the relationship in FDK teaching teams seems to follow a predictable pattern. School Districts should apprise principals, FDK teachers and ECEs of the stages of development for teaching teams. Team development takes time, certainly more than one FDK school year (Main, 2007). School Districts need to provide strong teams with the opportunity to develop by keeping them together for more than two years. Union collective agreements should not include seniority processes for ECEs that break-up strong FDK team relationships by ‘bumping’. On the other hand, School districts should consider dividing dysfunctional FDK teams at Christmas or the Spring Break (before the school year is completed) if that would benefit the children.

**Knowledge of ECE competencies**

Consistent with previous research (Gananathan, 2011; Gibson & Pelletier, 2011), there is a need for teachers and principals to receive specific information about ECE training and skills. In other words, school systems need training on what ECEs learn that is different from what teachers learn in teacher’s college. When asked what knowledge ECEs bring to the classroom, principals and teachers mentioned ‘child development’ but they were not clear on how this could be used in the kindergarten. They tended to underestimate ECE skills. School districts should consider ECE professors as guest speakers at in-service training to provide an overview of the ECE curriculum with examples such as Theory of Mind.

School Districts should also develop local processes for performance appraisals similar to those for new and experienced teachers in order to: facilitate this unusual team relationship in schools, to ensure high quality ECE delivery, and to increase ECEs’ sense of being supported. A
clearer understanding of ECE competencies will also assist principals to apply ECE evaluation procedures and meet Ministry of Education’s vision for full-day kindergarten.

**Literacy instruction training for ECEs**

ECEs bring skills to the classroom that are different from those of the kindergarten teacher, but complementary. Although they value reading to children, ECEs have no training about on how to teach a child to read and supporting them while they practice. Since literacy benchmark reporting twice a year in this school district sends the message that learning to read is the critical learning outcome of kindergarten, ECEs enter the classroom missing the most valued kindergarten teaching skill. This perceived singular focus on reading skills in the kindergarten classroom may contribute to a tendency for ECEs to:

- feel less important than the teacher, and less confident in their abilities and child development knowledge;
- be reluctant to participate or initiate joint planning;
- be less sure of their role in the kindergarten;
- have a tendency to defer to the teacher in all planning; and
- be less likely to share some of their child development knowledge/skills with the teacher (reciprocal mentoring).

The ECEs’ lack of knowledge about how children learn to read may disappoint the opinion of teachers in the school (and perhaps the principal) regarding the ECE’s professional skills; it gives FDK teachers additional work during the school day because she has a larger class size to teach to read, and it contributes to initiating the team relationship with the feeling that the teacher is the ECE’s supervisor and the ECE is the apprentice.

Both the teacher and ECE noted that it would benefit the classroom and team relationship if the ECE had basic literacy instruction skills. The teachers in the study chose to find the time themselves to teach the ECE, largely during classroom time, since planning time is limited and informal. The ECEs then had knowledge of how to support small groups and individual children.
as they practice reading. For example, one ECE learned to help children use six practices of a
good reader such as sounding out the first letter of the word and looking at the picture for clues
of what the word is. The teacher continued to be the literacy specialist for the team, but the ECE
now had skills to support early reading skills.

Learning to read and other literacy skills will continue to be an important outcome of
kindergarten for children in Ontario’s FDK program, so without this particular teaching skill
ECEs will be relegated to custodial care of the children while the teacher undertakes all literacy
teaching in what Goetz (2000) would call a Category B collaboration. On the other hand,
functioning as a member of a team that is teaching all the class’s children to read through the
year is a wonderful new skill for ECEs and supports the work that teachers and the school
already value. However, having to learn the new skill from the busy teacher may highlight what
ECEs do not know, rather than all that they do bring to the classroom. This difference in literacy-
teaching skills between team members is a structural constraint of the development of the
relationship which needs to be addressed.

For the two FDK teams in the study, both teachers made the decision to teach the ECE
literacy-instruction (during class time), which meant the ECE was able to regularly take half the
class for literacy instruction and, although this started the relationship out as an apprenticeship, it
did seem to be a mechanism to enhance their team teaching relationship and comfort level with
each other. This was an individual decision of the teacher, however, and for FDKs where
teachers choose not to take on this task, the effect would be that the teacher will have to
undertake all meaningful literacy instruction for the year, and the ECE may feel de-skilled.
Learning to read is a complex process and it is not necessary for the ECE to become as
knowledgeable as the teacher is in this area, but rather for her to be able to instruct small groups and support individual children in characteristics of good readers.

Establish local Standards of Experience

As they implement play-based pedagogy in FDKs, School Districts need to balance their academic learning outcomes with inquiry-based Standards of Experience, or a similar statement of non-academic learning goals. These will be experiences that the school district wants all kindergarten children to have in order to build higher-level thinking skills. Katz describes the importance of kindergartens replacing academic outcomes, as much as possible, with Standards of Experience describing the experiential outcomes the District’s children will have.

If the focus of program evaluation and assessment is on ‘outcomes’ such as those indicated by test scores, then evaluators and assessors would very likely emphasize ‘drill and practice’ of phonemics, or rhyming, or various kinds of counting, or introductory arithmetic. While in and of themselves such experiences are not necessarily harmful to young children, they overlook the kinds of experiences that are most likely to strengthen and support young children’s intellectual dispositions and their innate thirst for better, fuller, and deeper understanding of their own experiences. A curriculum or teaching method focused on academic goals emphasizes the acquisition of bits of knowledge and overlooks the centrality of understanding as an educational goal. After all, literacy and numeracy skills are not ends in themselves but basic tools that can and should be applied in the quest for understanding. In other words, children should be helped to acquire academic skills in the service of their intellectual dispositions, and not at their expense. Katz (n.d.)

Katz posits an experience list for kindergarten children that happens to look very similar to those throughout the new Ontario kindergarten curriculum:

“Young children should frequently have the following experiences:

- Being intellectually engaged, absorbed, and challenged.
- Having confidence in their own intellectual powers and their own questions.
- Being engaged in extended interactions (e.g. conversations, discussions, exchanges of views, arguments, planning).
- Being involved in sustained investigations of aspects of their own environment worthy of their interest, knowledge, and understanding.
- Taking initiative in a range of activities and accepting responsibility for what is accomplished.
• Knowing the satisfaction that can come from overcoming obstacles and setbacks and solving problems.
• Helping others to find out things and to understand them better.
• Making suggestions to others and expressing appreciation of others’ efforts and accomplishments.
• Applying their developing basic literacy and numeracy skills in purposeful ways.
• Feelings of belonging to a group of their peers.” Katz (n.d.)

The challenge is that we are accustomed to measuring and reporting to parents and taxpayers, and staff will need support to see how they are already implementing many of these experiences. When school districts are clear on what their new kindergarten outcomes are, they can build on those to provide an inquiry-based learning environment.

**Policy changes to reflect early childhood philosophies**

School Districts can support the recognition that kindergarten is not an elementary school program, but rather a preschool program nested in the school system, by recognizing all the developmental needs of 4 and 5 year olds. They can do this by being clear about ‘no-touch’ policies or practices as they apply to kindergarten while still recognizing the safety of young children. Gananathan’s (2011) work noted the importance avoiding ‘schoolification’ of social and emotional stages of development of kindergarten-aged children who benefit from physical help and comfort much more often than upper-grade children. This was reflected in the current study as well when Emma was unsure of whether to apply her ECE training or anecdotal school policy when zipping up a JK’s pants for them. This is one area where school districts should allow themselves to be influenced by ECE philosophy.

The results suggest that the program would benefit from both pedagogical support and ECE support from the principal. Principals’ demonstration of administrative confidence in the FDK program supports the development of teaching team relationships (Desimone et al., 2004; Corter et.al., 2007; Shipley, 2009). For example, Luba, the principal at Radcliffe, held back
funds so that the whole team could work together to select dramatic play supplies, water tables, books and other equipment whereas the other principal purchased most of the new resources herself.

Principals can ensure strong support of the ECEs role through orientation, evaluation, meaningful staff meeting participation, and by informing herself about the skills that ECEs bring to the school team. The principal at one school in Toronto had an all-staff champagne breakfast on the first day of school, with much fanfare, in order to introduce FDK as a ‘whole school’ revolution. FDK does affect curriculum in the upper grades. It is recommended, therefore, that principals provide an overview of the FDK program to all staff, not just kindergarten and grade one teachers. Identifying the ways that the ECEs role differs from Education Assistants will be an important component of this.

The principal can also provide clear supervisory support for the ECE by being the one to provide the initial orientation to the school and School District policies, rather than leaving that to the teacher. Evaluation of ECEs similar to teacher evaluation, following provisions set by the Ministry and School District head office, would also improve the sense of support for ECEs. Principals may underestimate the skills of ECEs unless they make themselves aware of ECE university or college curriculum and training. Principal expectations of ECEs need to be high in order to support each FDK team members’ full participation in team teaching.

Finally, evidence suggested that principals are wondering how to include ECEs in staff or committee meetings. There are challenges because staff meetings take place outside of ECE paid hours. Principals should consider ECE participation only on those staff committees that are highly relevant to ECE work (Desimone et al., 2004), such as school professional learning communities where ECEs can contribute to evidence-based goal setting.
Recommendations for stakeholders

Based on the findings of the study, this section describes the recommendations for principals, School Districts, Colleges and Universities with ECE programs, government practice and policy, teachers and ECEs.

For Principals

Principals may find it useful to become familiar with team development theory such as Tuckman’s progression through forming, storming, norming and performing. Recognizing that the teacher-ECE teams may go through a predictable process of development and that debate (much more than a courageous conversation) is a healthy component of team building would make them better able to support the process for their Early Learning Teams. Principals can also take courageous conversations to a new level and watch for (or facilitate) teachers and ECEs giving voice to professional debate in order to promote team development.

Principals that are responsible for direct hiring of ECEs could take advantage of the recommendations under School Districts (below) regarding Hiring Committees in order to take into consideration ECE attributes that will particularly complement the specific kindergarten teacher. Developing a school orientation for ECE staff which includes manuals and access to district policies will reduce the amount of orientation that their teaching partner would have to undertake. Principals should also introduce ECEs to all school staff and ensure that each ECE sees the staff room as a place where he or she belongs on an on-going basis. Whenever possible, principals should consider using school resources to provide co-planning time for FDK teams in order to increase collaboration, accelerate team development and reduce the amount of supervision that teachers would otherwise find themselves doing.

Principals should continue to visibly support their FDK teams. Both FDK principals had the names of both the teacher and ECE affixed to the kindergarten door, as well as both names
on school newsletters, and they referred to the classroom with both names. Principals may also consider other visible support of FDK teams such as a shelf and desk space for the ECE in the classroom for his or her professional references.

Including ECEs on professional learning committees, and (only) relevant staff meetings provides ECEs with authentic participation in setting evidence-based goals. Care should be taken that ECEs are not required to attend meetings where they learn little they can use in their practice.

Principals who are best at facilitating the new full-day kindergarten program will complete performance appraisals of ECEs as frequently and thoroughly as they do for teaching positions. They may also use tools such as RISE (see end of chapter) to track how well teams are developing, aiming high.

For School Districts
Hiring Committees: School District human resources staff, Hiring Committee members, and principals responsible for hiring new ECEs need to inform themselves that ‘child care’ experience on a résumé may mean working solely with infants and toddlers. ECEs who have direct experience creating daily programs for 4 and 5 year olds, interacting and managing their class will transition more quickly into working in kindergartens. Hiring ECEs who have worked almost exclusively with infants, toddlers, or school-aged children (6-12 year olds in before/after-school care), is like hiring a high school teacher to teach grade one – they can build on their skills to do it eventually but they will have a steep learning curve. Many ECEs have extensive experience working on teams in their childcare classrooms, and hiring committees may ask references about prospective ECEs’ ability to get along with other professionals and their personal initiative.
Human Resource issues: If School Districts hired ECEs as permanent employees, rather than signing them to a 10 month contract as they do now, these new staff members could lose their anxiety that they would not be re-hired to a new contract every September, and the job security would help them integrate into the school culture and confidence in their teamwork.

School Districts need to keep FDK teams that are promising together for longer than two years in order to provide time for team development. This may mean avoiding union collective agreement provisions where ECE seniority determines which school they work in (every year). This ‘bumping’ has the effect of breaking up successful FDK teams which have taken time to build.

Also, hiring a new teacher graduate (who also happens to have previous ECE experience) as an ECE may work out well for the teacher graduate, but not for the FDK program. With the current surfeit of newly certified teachers in Ontario looking for job experience, one can see why these young teacher graduates would be happy to use FDK as a stepping stone to gain experience in a classroom as a full time school employee until a certified teaching position becomes available (with a significant salary increase and job security). The FDK teaching pair however needs to be built over time with ECEs dedicated to the FDK program for more than two years.

School Districts should also consider dividing dysfunctional FDK teams at Christmas or Spring Break (before the year ends) if that is in the best interest of the children. Finally, every School District needs to have standard ECE Performance Appraisal policies, administrative practices, forms and ‘look fors’ to guide performance measurement by principals for new and experienced ECEs similar to performance appraisal requirements for teachers.

Standard Orientation and materials for ECEs: ECEs would benefit from a clear District orientation (policies, supervision practices, parent communication, yard/hall duty) including their
own manuals for relevant kindergarten program requirements of the school district rather than the teacher having the only copy.

Extra support for former-EA FDK teams: Some School Districts gave priority to Education Assistants (EAs) who were already working with special needs students in the District’s schools to be interviewed for the new ECE positions if they had the credentials. School Districts should consider providing extra support to teams with an EA who has been re-assigned as an ECE in order to ensure that both team members understand the importance of the ECE showcasing her skills, the type of collaboration critical to the success of FDK, and the differences between the EA and ECE roles.

ADK Teachers need more information: Because of the 5 year roll-out to all schools in the province, there is ample time for misconceptions to develop amongst ADK teachers who are concerned about the unknown. This study heard the misconception that FDKs would lose additional support for special needs children (EAs removed from FDK classes), and anxiety that schools will have to accommodate FDKs without any physical changes (such as renovations) to the school or classroom. School Districts should provide regular updates to non-Full Day kindergarten teachers and regular in-service workshops for principals of any school with a kindergarten to reduce change-anxiety, address their many questions, and improve morale by reducing the spread of misconceptions.

Developmentally appropriate kindergarten policies: Clear directions need to be provided to teachers and ECEs who work with JK and SK children regarding the use of touch. Kindergarten-specific policies can continue to keep kindergarten children safe while also affording them the comfort and physical assistance that is developmentally appropriate for their age group.
Play-Based Training: The change in philosophy to the play-based curriculum is a significant shift for kindergarten teachers. They may, however, make the assumption that because children do have play time in their class that they are ‘already doing play-based’. Underestimating the differences, feeling that play-based and reading achievements are mutually exclusive, and the pendulum notion that the curriculum will swing back again anyway are all invisible resistance to change in the classroom. This is particularly challenging because some kindergarten teachers have no training in the continuum of child development which drives the move towards the play-based curriculum. School Districts need to provide much more specific information about the difference between the kindergarten classroom practices of the past decade and play-based curriculum through workshops, in-services, newsletters and other resources for teachers, ECEs and principals. As one of the six concurrent changes to kindergartens, following through with very clear expectations to shift to inquiry-based practice in each classroom is important to establishing mutual goals for the teaching team.

Team training: It is recommended that School Districts provide in-service regarding each of the stages of team development to principals, FDK teachers and ECEs in order to facilitate their progress through the stages, increase dialogue, and reduce stress.

ECE Training: School Districts should consider providing group training for their ECE staff on practical reading, numeracy and printing instructional strategies, as well as completing district-required literacy reports. Further training would enhance the ECEs’ ability to support important literacy goals in the classroom, increase her professional confidence, and improve the options for small group work shared with the teacher (and more students) which would improve student outcomes.
ECE Resource Library: If they have not already done so, School Districts could consider creating an ECE Resource Library of resources, or adding to the kindergarten resource library and ensuring that ECEs know how to access it. Early Years resources recommended by the ECEs themselves could then be borrowed by ECEs from the school district’s central resource library for use in their programs, rather than being borrowed from their former childcare employer or Ontario Early Years centres as they may be doing now. An example might be the Second Step social planning program.

For Colleges and Universities with ECE programs

Literacy instruction in ECE curricula: ECEs need to begin their FDK team relationship by bringing basic literacy instruction skills to the kindergarten classroom which they do not currently learn in Ontario ECE college and undergraduate university programs. Providing ECE students with didactic methods of teaching reading skills as well as very basic knowledge of how children learn to read does, indeed, have a place in a play-based philosophy and practice.

Certified teachers should continue to be the reading specialist of the kindergarten teaching team, but ECEs need to be able to successfully support children in small groups as they practice their reading skills. ECEs who understand the strategies of guided reading will be more valued in the school system and by their teaching partner from the outset. This will eliminate the necessity of the teacher having to choose whether to instruct the ECE on reading strategies herself, or decide to do all the reading instruction herself while the ECE manages non-academic activities. Examples of reading strategies that ECEs need to learn in college or university include: reminding children to use the illustrations as cues, to start with the first letter, cross-check with the picture to see what word would make sense, and to look for parts of the word (chunks) that they already know. ECEs do not need to be well versed on the science of literacy, that is the teacher’s competency, but they do need the practical knowledge to meaningfully
instruct their own small group (or individual children) in reading, numeracy and printing.

Colleges and ECEs should provide this as part of the ECE curriculum for those who are interested in working in kindergartens. ECEs who have practical literacy, numeracy and printing instruction skills from their college or university program will experience accelerated team development as the ECE will not start off as much in an apprentice role and she will be able to showcase her other skills.

**For government policy**

**Planning Time:** Although finances are limited, providing funding for ECE planning time at least weekly is critical to kindergarten teachers and ECEs working as a team. If ECEs continue to be funded to work in schools only from ‘bell to bell’ (only when the children are there) they will have difficulty attending meetings and participating in planning.

**Training:** It is recommended that the Ministry of Education partner with School Districts to provide comprehensive play-based training to teachers and ECEs for all five years of the FDK program on a similar magnitude to the 3-year literacy training provided several years ago when benchmarks were introduced. Roles will become clearer through a focus on curriculum. School district staff, principals and teachers may understand it much less the Ministry thinks.

**ECEs as policy analysts:** If there are not already ECEs in key senior positions in the Ministry of Education’s Early Learning branches that directly affect kindergarten policy, they would be a valuable addition to the full-day kindergarten policy team.

**Performance appraisals for new and experienced ECEs:** The FDK program would benefit from the Ministry of Education developing a ‘New ECE Induction Program’ and other components similar to the ‘Teacher Performance Appraisal System’ for both new and experienced ECEs in order to standardize provincial requirements for orientation, professional development, mentoring and two evaluations in the first year for ECEs.
Measures that reflect curriculum values: It is further recommended that if the Ministry and School District value other skills as outcomes of play-based FDK, they should require measurement of them as well, recognizing the challenge that measuring standards of experience is not as quantitative and politically compelling as literacy and numeracy. A better balance of accountability for quality FDK programs would facilitate the team relationship by establishing common goals, fostering a sense of interdependence between team members, and increasing motivation to use reciprocal mentorship to achieve success. Consider whether changes in required reporting by school districts to the Ministry should change (beyond literacy benchmarking) to reflect the values of the inquiry-based curriculum.

For Teachers

Kindergarten teachers who are open to learning from the ECE in a reciprocal mentorship (a significant adjustment for a sole-charge classroom teacher) and who regularly co-plans with their ECE partner will learn more, reduce stress, reduce the amount of planning and supervision they have to do, and share the workload of a larger number of students. It is also critical that both teachers and ECEs recognize that teams go through predictable stages of development and that debate is a healthy part of team development.

For ECEs

After the first few weeks of getting to know each other and respecting the teacher’s routine if she has been a kindergarten teacher before, ECEs can contribute to team development by taking the initiative rather than having to be asked by the teacher to complete tasks. In this way the ECE can showcase her skills and knowledge in the classroom, and find opportunities to mentor the teacher using her ECE-specific experience and training. Recognizing that teams go through predictable stages of development will facilitate a faster progression through the stages for ECEs and teachers. When there is a comfortable environment for the ECE to disagree with
the teacher in a respectful way, and that debate facilitates team development, stress will be relieved and the team will be able to take advantage of developing creative learning opportunities for their students.

**Four Components of a Collaborative FDK Team: RISE**

Classroom observation and multiple interviews provided us with the opportunity to hear the voices of four full-time kindergarten teaching team members (in two teams) and two kindergarten teachers anticipating implementation in their classrooms as they told us about the challenges and successes they were experiencing, but also the reasons why they felt these were arising. Despite what would be considered a small sample size in quantitative methodology, their rich descriptions are a strength of qualitative inquiry. Inductive analysis uncovered patterns that would have been difficult to discover in surveys of a much larger sample of FDK teachers because we would have had to know what problems to ask about in the first place. School Districts may employ the insight gathered from qualitative studies to look for patterns in their own FDK teams. Principals could make use of specific, observable characteristics of successful full-day kindergarten pairs as they look for ways to help the new teams continue to develop. I would propose the mnemonic ‘RISE’ to describe the attributes of a successful early-learning team in FDK. The RISE attributes would be evident in teams with a high level of collaboration consistent with the Ontario government’s vision of the FDK program.

1. **Reciprocal Mentorship between Team Members**

   Evidence that each team member is learning from the other through reciprocal mentorship is a strong indicator of a collaborative FDK team. The knowledge transfer inherent in reciprocal mentorship is a support for professional growth, it facilitates the School District’s progression through change, and it builds capacity. Reciprocal mentorship is much less challenging when it aligns professionals of equal importance. Cross-sectorial mentoring of
Ontario’s FDK program is more of a challenge than two certified teachers mentoring each other. In this first year of the program the FDKs in the study had a one-way apprenticeship pattern of mentorship as the teacher instructed the ECE. With reciprocal mentorship, cross-sectorial professional training affords opportunities for the teacher to learn from the ECE as well and facilitates early acquisition of teaching and ECE strategies for both team members. A truly collaborative team thrives on reciprocal mentorship. The following paragraphs outline two attributes that may contribute to the development of reciprocal mentorship: accepting diversity of teaching skills, and early knowledge of each others’ skills.

Principals can look for signs that kindergarten teachers and ECEs retain their own distinct competencies. There has been some suggestion that new kindergarten teachers should be required to take a number of child development courses. Synergy would be lost if the focus of additional qualification courses or pre-service requirements had the effect of providing the teacher with all the skills and knowledge that an ECE has, or transforming the ECE into a teacher. Both FDK teachers in the current inquiry did, in fact, mention that the ECE ‘could be a teacher’ or ‘I want to teach her to be a teacher’. They meant this as a compliment, but it may be a signal for the principal that the team needs a better understanding of the importance of accepting the diversity of teaching skills. Valuing the diverse knowledge bases without attempting to transform either one is a trait of a collaborative FDK team. (One exception discussed earlier, however, is that ECEs would benefit the FDK program if they are able to add basic guided reading instructional strategies to the skill set that they bring to the classroom.)

The second attribute that may accelerate the development of the team to the point where they frequently engage in reciprocal mentorship is early knowledge of each other’s skills. Teachers are challenged with making use of the skills of the ECE when they only learn what
those skills are through day-to-day experience working with an ECE. Teachers and principals in the current study were clear that they do not know what ECEs can do. They may tend to think of ECEs as childcare workers as opposed to early years specialists. The school system is still learning about this new type of professional on their staff. There may be a tendency to have low expectations of ECEs as seen in the response of one teacher when asked what the ECE contributed to their FDK classroom: “I rely on her for cut-and-paste ideas”. Teachers and principals may be embarrassed to seek detailed information on what ECEs learn in college and in their previous training. School Districts could facilitate the understanding of teachers and principals through in-service workshops with speakers such as early childhood education professors. ECEs may need similar assistance to gain foreknowledge of the competencies of teachers before they begin working in the classroom. Each team member learning as they go is not good enough. An FDK team will reach a higher level of collaboration more quickly when they each recognize the other’s strengths, preferably before their first day together in the classroom.

Principals can look for signs that each team member has sound knowledge of the training their partner brings to the team, that they value the synergy of two working parts, and that they share their knowledge with each other regularly through the discussion and action of reciprocal mentorship.

2. Interdependence

Collaborative FDK teams have a sense of positive interdependence with each other. They feel assured that they can rely on each other, and that together they sink or swim. Although they may establish a comfortable sense of one team member having ultimate responsibility (probably the teacher), School Districts and principals can facilitate team development by ensuring that
both team members are accountable for student outcomes - both academic outcomes and meeting standards of experience established by the school district. Indicators of interdependence demonstrate a collaborative FDK team

3. Storming

The business and industry practice of actually promoting opportunities for ‘fair fighting’ is a significant cultural change for School Districts. Principals need to recognize that storming between FDK members indicates team building, and that it advances change and builds trust. This trust, in turn, leads to creative solutions. FDK teaching teams will become stuck in the development of their relationship unless they reach a comfort level with the safe opportunity to argue and debate when necessary (Main, 2007), far beyond ‘courageous conversations’. It may take more than a year before teams reach the storming stage. FDK teams are unique in the school system and because the work in one room together every day they will need, more than any other educators, to cultivate open dialogue with each other. FDK teams are collaborative when they both feel comfortable and listened to whenever they express divergent views.

4. Experiential expectations

Collaborative FDK teams are creative and they have high expectations in the learning experiences they design for the class for higher level thinking skills. Evidence that teams are creating experiences for children that can be seen in the classroom, not just stations, would indicate that the team is working collaboratively.

A critical predecessor of experiential expectations is total clarity of common pedagogy. Mutual understanding of the Ministry of Education’s vision of change in the kindergarten establishes shared goals for the team. What does ‘play-based’ mean? How is it different from what each of them was already doing in their practice? Confusion about the implications of play-
based practice contributes to role confusion whereas establishing a shared practice that is built on clear pedagogy builds collaboration.

When talking with their ECEs and kindergarten teachers, principals can listen for evidence that the team has agreed on a clear understanding of the important changes inherent in play-based practice. When looking into their FDK classrooms, principals should have high expectations of curriculum delivery being delivered through rich experiences in action.

**Future challenges for FDK teams**

The School District where the current study took place have kindergarten classes during the traditional school day (about 8:30 am to 3:00 pm). However the province may be moving in the direction of extending hours in the kindergarten classroom from 7 am to 6 pm by adding before- and after-school programs right in the classroom. The premier’s special advisor on Early Learning, Dr. Charles Pascal, strongly espouses a teaching team of three professionals for every FDK, with staggered hours to accommodate an extended school day, not just one ECE and the teacher. The ‘seamless day’ would have one ECE in the kindergarten from 7 am until 2 pm, a different ECE in the classroom from 11 am – 6 pm and a teacher in the same classroom from 9 am to 3 pm. From the kindergarten child’s perspective, this would mean 4 and 5 year olds will be in their same kindergarten classroom and school all day, with adults making the transitions rather than children travelling to one or more childcare arrangements besides school each day (there is a fee for the before-school and after-school hours comparable to childcare fees, but not the school hours).

In Pascal’s vision, the teacher would be team teaching and building relationships with two ECEs. It is his expectation that all school districts in the province will evolve into the extended day model with three kindergarten staff. A number of School Districts in the province have adopted the seamless model from the outset of implementing their FDK programs, with
three relationships to build in each classroom instead of one team teaching relationship. For
seamless day school districts, the importance of understanding the relationship of complex team
relationships to instructional strategies, the effect of internal and external factors, and the
significance of recognizing RISE components are even more acute.

Future Research

This qualitative inquiry provides deeper insight into the lived experience of FDK
teaching teams and the challenges of principals, but, like all case studies, it does not boast that
the findings are generalizable to all FDKs. Additional research into the whether the factors found
in this study (both external and internal) are evident in other Early Learning Teams of ECEs,
kindergarten teachers and principals in the first year of implementation would build on this
research. As well, further research is needed into whether teaching teams working in FDKs
experience stages of team development similar to business teams (using the Tuckman model)
and whether stakeholders view RISE as a useful tool to gauge kindergarten teaching team
collaboration.

The current study focused on the first year of implementation of full-day kindergarten;
future research investigations could extend into the second year of implementation or later to
determine whether the model (figure 1) continues to explain FDK effects on learning after the
first year of school operation. Similarly, do the schools that enter FDK in its second year of
operation in the District experience the same processes as the schools that entered in the first
year?

It would also add to the research literature if an investigation of this nature were extended
to find out what happens to these schools in the second year of implementation or later. Would
the model (figure 1) continue to explain FDK effects on learning when the context changes after
the first year of school operation?
Conclusions

This is an exciting time in Ontario’s kindergartens in more than 4,000 schools, and the world is watching. With the many changes to Ontario’s kindergarten policy (curriculum, double instructional time, new team, new employee and larger class size), Gurleen, the FDK teacher at Radcliffe, recalled a comment at one of the Ministry of Education’s presentations:

They told us at one of the very first meetings that they did not even know how anything would look [yet because it is rolling out so fast]. They said it was like building a 747 [plane] while it is flying. (laughs). Yeah! (she nods)

The Ministry’s expressed vision for the teaching team is to blend the academic skills of the kindergarten teacher with the inquiry-based teaching skills of the ECE to create a synergy that is greater than the sum of its parts. The reality, however, is that because the education system is large and complex, when the door closes on the kindergarten classroom, it all comes down to the small team of two individuals working to create something that is fundamentally different.

The current study provided additional insight into the lived experiences of teachers and ECEs learning together in the kindergarten classroom. Like all case studies, there is no intention that the findings can be generalized to every teaching team in every full-day kindergarten classroom, however the challenges of changing the philosophy of the curriculum, the way one plans, the number of students, the number of hours with those students, and teaming with a new colleague will be evident in some ways in all classrooms. Although the integrated staffing model is an exciting innovation, ECEs and kindergarten teachers will need to work through some challenges.

Kindergarten teachers are under enormous ecological pressure to try to make curriculum and role changes that are not clear to them and because their principals are also still learning what needs to change, the support may not yet be fully in place. The ECE may arrive without knowledge of school policies such as yard duty and how schools communicate with parents, as
well as little knowledge of how to teach children to read and print. These are highly valued skills in kindergarten so now the kindergarten teacher has an adult in the classroom that needs instruction as well as a larger class size, and, because the ECE has very limited planning time, the teacher may be the one to plan what the ECE will do each day as well as plan for the children.

Kindergarten students come under all the regulations of the rest of the school system. The skills of each 4 year old are permanently documented on their school record. The alphabet letters they know and what words they can read are reported twice a year to the School District office, and the Ministry of Education keeps track of each kindergarten class’ reading skills as a measure of how well the entire education system is doing. The Grade One teacher wants to know what abilities his class next year will bring from their kindergarten experience. The reading skills of each school’s kindergarteners are linked to the performance of the grade 3 (8 year olds) classes on standardized provincial tests. School improvement is measured by those tests. As they focused on meeting literacy benchmarks over the years, some kindergarten teachers may have wandered into the frequent use of instructional strategies that are as similar to Grade 1 as their 4 and 5 year olds would tolerate. The kindergarten teacher feels the weight of the responsibility of all those requirements to higher authorities.

Because, up to now, the teacher has been meeting all these requirements with the methods she has been using, it is difficult to consider that there might be more she could borrow from the practices of a stimulating, engaging child care centre than from the instructional strategies of Grade 1 as the new curriculum suggests. It takes a leap of faith for a kindergarten teacher to take a chance on producing the same results through something called ‘play-based’. It takes enormous trust to risk a loss of classroom management by trying something new to her but
has worked in child care centre classrooms. It takes significant self-confidence to accept a paraprofessional’s changes to the way she has always taught and the physical set-up of her classroom.

Teachers, the principal, other grade teachers, and the school system have traditionally valued kindergarten graduates who have socially acceptable school behaviour, can read better than other kindergarten grades before them, print well, know their numbers well enough for Grade 1 and be reasonably happy with school life. The revised curriculum, in contrast, values independent problem solving and the kind of higher-level thinking that encourages kindergarteners to challenge and debate ideas. Those skills are developed through an inquiry-based curriculum. Principals, teachers and ECEs are clearly struggling to understand what this means and how to apply it in the classroom. They may think it means that reading and math are not explicitly taught anymore. The use of the phrase ‘play-based curriculum’ seems to reduce the importance of this major shift. How can curriculum and play used in the same phrase be taken seriously? Although ECEs do not seem to know it, the kinds of activities they have been setting up in childcare centres for 4 and 5 year olds for years are inquiry-based. Good ones are. Early childhood professionals are specialists at it. They debate different kinds of inquiry-based curricula such as Reggio Emilia and emergent curriculum, but those words are not used in the education sector. It is the same thing, but because curriculum discussion is in Ministry of Education language now, ECEs may not recognize it and so they are at a disadvantage.

Early childhood specialists may feel honoured to be part of a large organization, but they may feel like foreign visitors in formal school settings. They may struggle with trying to figure out how to share their knowledge with teachers who were trained to instruct students from 4 to 13 years old (JK to grade 8). In the absence of strong, consistent direction from the top down,
ECEs by themselves cannot be expected to be the catalyst to make the big steam engine change tracks so that 4 & 5 year olds are taught like preschoolers.

ECEs are thrown into the deep water of academic values in new FDKs. They may accept whatever the teacher tells them is play-based because the school system seems like a different world. In the findings, teachers reported that play-based means ‘more fun’ to balance the important academic goals that they sneak in or disguise. ECEs who were hired for their years of childcare experience (with other age groups), but almost no recent experience programming for 4 & 5 year olds, are particularly vulnerable to believing that the most important part of their job is to support the teacher teaching children to read, and to provide fun cut & paste ideas when they can be fit in, in order to balance the ‘serious work’ that is being done.

Although they recognize the importance of having an adult to direct dramatic play themes (a store, for instance), some teachers may have become accustomed to valuing free play as a time to pull children who need more one-on-one reading help, or time for them to prepare materials for other activities, since they do the planning. A key component of an inquiry-based curriculum, however, is that the ECE or teacher needs to be down on the floor participating, and when they listen carefully to the children’s play they will divine the ideas that children need help to expand upon. ECEs may be discouraged from ‘just playing’ with the children when there are so many other things that need to be done.

In one of the FDK rooms I observed, for example, there was a child who spontaneously used a thick glue stick as a microphone and started an impromptu rock song he was making up. The teacher was busy doing one-on-one reading assessment with two or three children during this free play time but noticed him, smiled to herself and shook her head. The ECE had been circulating helping get out paper, occasionally talking to children, but mostly keeping things
moving. She had stepped out of the room for a minute and when she stepped back in, the boy had started doing his rock star act. He had caught the researcher’s laugh when he started and now was encouraged. The ECE and teacher looked at each other across the room, the ECE said ‘There he goes again’ and she re-directed him to return to his art idea. This was a lost opportunity in inquiry-based learning.

When this FDK has a better sense of freedom to try some inquiry-based ideas, when the teacher builds more confidence that the ECE can successfully manage noisy activities, when the ECE has had a chance to showcase her skills (so the teacher knows what new skills she brings to the class), when the school system accepts that in kindergarten not every activity has to have an academic learning outcome, and when the teacher and ECE have a bit of planning time to discuss how to expand on some of the new ideas that arose that week, only then will that FDK class be able to have, over the course of the next week, an American Idol contest with a real microphone, each child who chooses to participate helped to write the words to their own song, perhaps with some dance moves and their own backdrop they painted, some duets, and a video recorder children can operate themselves, all with at least one teacher actively participating. That would be an inquiry-based FDK with a collaborative teaching team. It even has literacy hidden in there. The integrated early learning team concept in kindergarten has enormous potential but teams need continued support to thrive, especially when they are managing complex change in a number of areas. Understanding that team development is a process may help facilitate reciprocal mentorship and collaboration between team members, especially in cross-sectorial teaching teams.
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from http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/earlylearning


Appendix

Interview Questions

Principal Questions

1. Tell me about your background. (prompt: How long have you been a principal? What grades did you teach?)

2. Tell me about a situation when Full-Day Kindergarten worked well. (For non-FDK principals: What do you see as the advantages of implementing FDK at your school?) prompt: can you give me an example of that?

3. Tell me about a situation when it didn’t work as well as hoped. (For non-FDK principals: What do you see as the challenges to implementing FDK at your school?) prompt: can you give me an example of that?

4. What are the roles of the teacher and ECE in Full-Day Kindergarten?

5. What do you see as the advantages of an ECE in the classroom?

6. What advice would you give to principal who have not yet implemented FDK? (For non-FDK principals: What advice would you like from principals who have not yet implemented FDK?)

7. Is there anything you would like to add?

FDK Team Questions

1. Tell me about your backgrounds. (prompt: How long have you been a teacher/ECE? What type of setting did you work in (ECE)? What grades have you taught (teacher)? At this school board or others?)

2. Tell me about a situation when Full-Day kindergarten worked well. (prompt: can you give me an example of that?)
3. Tell me about a situation when it did not work as well as hoped. (prompt: can you give me an example of that?)

4. What is the role of the principal for the classroom?

5. How do you do planning for the classroom?

6. How do evaluation (assessment) in the classroom?

7. What do you see as your roles? (prompt: what are the strengths of working with the other team member?)

8. Is there anything you would like to add?

FDK Individual Questions

Questions for each FDK Teacher

1. Is there anything from our last talk that you thought of later and would like to add?

2. What have you learned from the ECE? What are the advantages and disadvantages of having an ECE in the classroom? How is it different from an EA? (For Gurleen at Radcliffe Public School: You mentioned that the relationship is a dance; can you tell me more about that?)

3. Some people wonder what teachers are going to do with double the instructional time in kindergarten. What is your response to that?

4. What happens at parent interviews? Does the ECE attend?

5. (For Usha at Elm Valley Public School: Can you think of a time when the ECE’s musicality helped you?)

6. You mentioned that the curriculum seems to be coming full-circle back to what you had experienced in earlier years, for instance with dramatic play centres. Was there as much emphasis on literacy back then as well? As you return to play based, will that impact your literacy goals?

7. What’s the difference between the new play-based delivery and what you were already
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doing? (prompts: Is the new curriculum much different from the previous one? Was there as much emphasis on literacy back then as well? As you return to play based, will that impact your literacy goals? What literacy goals do they have to report to the board, and when? What other standard kindergarten measures are reported to the board?)

8. When you ‘divide & conquer’ into small groups, do you both instruct?

9. What about team teaching? What does that mean to you? You mentioned that it says that it in the book, do you mean the Ministry’s draft curriculum? Do you feel you work well as a team?

10. What literacy goals do they have to report to the board, and when? What other standard kindergarten measures are reported to the board?

11. Regarding the store dramatic play area that you and the ECE developed to provide instruction about [coins/store or veterinary centre]: how did that all come about? (Prompt: What aspects of the idea met your instructional goals?)

12. Would the dramatic play activity have happened at the beginning of the year like this? How do you negotiate a curricular task? (prompt: How does your relationship translate into practice?)

13. Why was the ECE’s play activity better than direct instruction? Did you tweak it? How and why?

14. Does the ECE ever bring you any ideas you don’t accept? (prompt: Did you begin to trust her more? Why?)

15. You mentioned that you did the planning on your own at the beginning of the year until you got to know the ECE better; what happened? (prompts: Did you begin to trust her more? Why? Would the coin activity have happened at the beginning of the year like this? How do you two negotiate a curricular task? How does the relationship translates into practice?)
16. To what extent do you find yourself supervising the ECE? Would you call it ‘supervising’?

17. Is there a difference between assessment and evaluation? Teaching ECE assessment – any
   patterns? (eg ECE does JKs, teacher does SKs?)

18. When you have taught the ECE literacy strategies, what did you start with? (prompt: For
   example, phonemic awareness? Is there a predictable continuum?)

19. How is what you do for instructing the ECE the same or different from what you do to
   instruct a student teacher? (prompt: How is the same or different from what you do to instruct an
   EA?)

20. What measures ‘student success’ for you in your kindergarten? How do you know you’ve
   achieved student success for your class at the end of the year? (Prompts: How do you know you
   have achieved student success for a child? You have named X measures of student success, what
   order of importance would you put them in, and why?)

21. Will the play-based curriculum affect how you gauge student success?

22. What skills or attributes would you look for if you were hiring a pool of ECEs for the whole
   school district?

23. I wonder whether the fact that you trust each other enables you to do things you would not
   normally have done? (prompt for examples)

24. How has having ECE experience yourself made you different from other kindergarten
   teachers? What do you think ECEs learned in college that they don’t teach in Teacher’s College?

25. Do you qualify for R- ECE?
25. What did you think about the way your principal arranged the one-time FDK capital funding ordering for you and the ECE? (prompt: would you have preferred more or less direction from the principal about how to spend the money?)

26. What kinds of parent communication does the ECE do?

27. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Questions for each ECE

1. Is there anything from our last talk that you thought of later and would like to add?

2. How did you learn about what the roles of the ECE and the teacher are supposed to be in the classroom? (prompts: from the principal, union, board office, on-line documents, newspaper articles, commercials?)

3. What have you learned from the teacher?

4. When the teacher taught you literacy strategies, what did she start with? (prompts: phonemic awareness? Is there a predictable continuum?)


6. What about the assessment skills she has taught you? What are they? What other ones would you like to learn?

7. How do you get evaluated? (prompts: How does that affect your job performance? What is the impact on your self confidence? How do you know you are doing a good job?)

8. There are a lot of school rules about how teachers and staff do things such as school policies; who taught you these? How did you learn them?

9. Did you have an orientation to working for this school board? Did you have an orientation to working in this school?
10. What happens at parent interviews? Do you attend? How do you participate?
11. How did you use to get planning time in childcare?
12. Is this the first year you have worked with 4 and 5 year olds in your career?
13. Have you changed the layout of the classroom? How?
14. When you ‘divide & conquer’ (divide the class into two smaller groups), do you both provide instruction?
15. What do you not do in the classroom that you thought you would? (and reverse)
16. I wonder whether the fact that you trust each other enables you to do things you would not normally have done? (prompt for examples)
17. What do you think ECEs learned in college that teacher do not learn in Teacher’s College?
18. What measures ‘student success’ for you in your kindergarten? How do you know you’ve achieved student success for your class at the end of the year? For a child? You’ve named X measures of student success, what order of importance would you put them in, and why?
19. Will the play-based curriculum affect how you gauge student success?
20. Were you involved in Report cards? How?
21. Were you involved in parent-teacher meetings? How?
22. Do you use the Teacher Staff Room?
23. Do you do any parent communication? (prompt: such as phone calls, notes home to parents)
24. You seem to be quite self-confident in the classroom when [provide example from classroom observation]. What else makes you feel self-confident in the kindergarten as a teacher? What makes you feel less self-confident?
25. Does the teacher trust you? I wonder whether the fact that you trust each other enables you to do things you would not normally have done? (prompt for examples)
26. You mentioned that the [name specific play activity] was your idea. How did that all come about? What aspects of about the idea met your instructional goals? Why was this play activity better than direct instruction? Did the teacher tweak it? How and why? Do you ever bring her ideas that she does not accept? Does the teacher trust you to have good ideas that work? Why? Would this play-based activity have happened at the beginning of the year like this?

27. You mention the importance of routines and consistency each day for children. Why is that important?

28. What is the role of the principal in FDK?

29. What skills or attributes would you look for if you were hiring a pool of ECEs for the whole board?

30. Is there anything that you would like to add?

**ADK Teacher Questions**

1. Tell me about your background. (prompt: How long have you been a teacher? What grades have you taught?)

2. Tell me about a situation when you looked forward to getting Full-Day Kindergarten at your school.

3. Tell me what aspects of Full-Day Kindergarten you are concerned about. (prompt: can you give me examples of that?)

4. Is there anything that you would like to add?