Positive Early-Learning Professional Team in FDK

Elements of a Positive Early-Learning Professional Team in Full-Day Kindergarten Program

By

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A research paper submitted in conformity with the requirements For the degree of Master of Teaching Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

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Abstract

This study investigated the components of successful early-learning team in the full-day kindergarten classroom. Two teams, each consisting of a kindergarten teacher and an early childhood educator, who have worked together for at least one year in the full day kindergarten program in Ontario, provided strategies and insight on how to work collaboratively in a positive manner. Through interviews with the teams, three key components of a collaborative team were constructed as follows: one; understanding their roles and responsibilities in the classroom. Two; respecting each other’s roles and having a professional attitude and thirdly, sharing a common vision for the students and the program. All these components are essential to the collaborative team and have a positive affect in the classroom.

Key Words: Full-day kindergarten, Co-teaching, Early-learning Team, Kindergarten Teacher, Early Childhood Educator
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. INTRODUCTION

| Introduction to the Research Study | 7    |
| Research Problem                 | 8    |
| Purpose of the Study             | 9    |
| Research Questions               | 9    |
| Background of the Researcher     | 10   |
| Overview                        | 11   |

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

| Half-day to Full-day Kindergarten | 12   |
| Impacts of Full-day Kindergarten  | 13   |
| Collaborative Teams              | 15   |
| Co-Teaching Obstacles            | 15   |
| Teaching Structure               | 15   |
| Expertise                        | 17   |
| Benefits of Collaborative Teams  | 19   |
3. METHODOLOGY

Procedure 20
Instruments of Data Collection 20
Participants 21
Data Collection and Analysis 22
Ethical Review Procedures 23
Limitations 23

4. FINDINGS

Introduction 25
Background information of participants 25
Key Findings 26
Key Findings #1 27
Key Findings #2 31
Key Findings #3 36

5. DISCUSSION

Introduction 40
Summary 40
Connection to Literature 41
Connection to Literature – Key Finding #1 41
Connection to Literature – Key Finding #2 41
Connection to Literature – Key Finding #3 42
Implications/Recommendations 43
Limitations 44
Further Study 44

REFERENCES 46

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Letter of Consent for Interview 48
Appendix B: Interview Questions 50
Elements of a Positive Early-Learning Professional Team in Full-Day Kindergarten Program

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Research Study

Kindergarten is often a child’s introduction into scholastic activities. It is their first introduction to formal schooling. This entails spending hours away from their parents in a new environment, and is also the prime time for children to learn and develop many fundamental skills. In Ontario, Kindergarten has traditionally been half day schooling. However, in 2009, the Ministry of Education mandated that a full-day, early learning, child-centered play based program be incrementally implemented over the span of 5 years, beginning in 2010-2011. This new mandate in education, has been described by the past president of the Council of Early Child Development to be, “. . . one of the most significant improvements in education in decades” (Tozer, 2012, p. 1). The goal of the Full-Day Kindergarten extended program (FDK)\(^1\) is to “. . . establish the foundation for a life-long learning and academic success” (Callaghan, 2012, p. 2), and to “establish a strong foundation for the early years by providing young children with an integrated day of learning” (Ministry of Ontario, 2010, p. 1).

Although research about the recent implementation of the full-day program is limited, many schools have already started the process of phasing out previous half-day, or alternating full-day kindergarten programs, and implementing daily full-day kindergarten programs (Callaghan, 2012). Schools have also been working hard to fulfill the goals of the Full-day Early-learning Kindergarten Program outlined by the Ontario Ministry of Education.

\(^1\) For the purpose of this paper, Full-day kindergarten program will be abbreviated as FDK.
As part of the implementation process, FDK has created a new educational team for each Full-Day Kindergarten class. This team is called Early-Learning Team or ELT, which consists of a qualified classroom teacher and a qualified Early Childhood Educator (ECE). The purpose of creating this new team is to fulfill one of the goals of the full-day program, which is to create “a child-centered, developmentally appropriate, integrated, extended-day program of learning” (Ministry of Ontario, 2012, P. 1). As well, the term ‘educator’ will be used interchangeably to refer to the classroom teachers, early childhood educators or teaching assistants inclusively throughout this paper.

**Research Problem**

One of the new features of the Full-Day Kindergarten Program is the establishment of an Early-Learning Kindergarten educator team. Under the new program, each classroom will have a kindergarten teacher who is registered with the Ontario College of Teachers and an early childhood educator who is registered with the College of Early Childhood Educators (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010). Together the two educators, who are trained in two very different fields, are expected to create a collaborative, effective and positive working team in the classroom (Tozer, 2012). The rationale for establishing teams, as articulated by the Ministry of Education, is that two different educators with specialized backgrounds will bring individual strengths, perspectives and professional competencies, thereby creating a dynamic expert professional team to support children in the classrooms (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010).

In her research on the Early-Learning Kindergarten Teams, Callaghan (2012), nevertheless, discovered that “the collaborative structure in Full-Day Kindergarten is a complex structure, with many factors influencing the development of the structure” (p. 75). While the Ministry of
Education expects a kindergarten teacher and an early childhood educator to work together collaboratively, generating a positive working relationship can be challenging.

Since the existence of such a team in a FDK class is still relatively new, it is important for future educators to learn and understand the elements that make for a positive team and strong collaboration. This qualitative study investigated two collaborative teams who have worked together in a kindergarten class for at least one year. Using interviews this research paper investigated the components of a self-described positive and successful Early-learning Team and examined how the teams worked together in their programs as well as the range of factors and resources that supported them. Existing research suggests that the power dynamic between the two members of the team can pose particular challenges. In this study, I will underscore these teachers’ strategies with regard to their collaboration with each other.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to learn strategies used to create and form a positive working relationship between a kindergarten teacher and an early childhood educator, in a full-day kindergarten class. The objective of this study was to learn about challenges these educators faced when developing their working relationship. This study describes different strategies they used to overcome these challenges and understand the key components of a collaborative teaching team.

**Research Questions**

In order to understand the components of a positive working relationship of the Early-learning Team, the following questions guided this investigation:
1. What are the key components of a positive Early-learning Team in a Full-day Kindergarten Classroom?

Then sub-questions:

• What factor affects the development of the ELT at the beginning?
• What are some challenges ELT faces when developing as a team?
• What are some impacts developed by a positive ELT working in a FDK program?

Background of the Researcher

My background is in Early Childhood Education, through an undergraduate degree from Ryerson University. My strong belief in early learning and early years development in children has compelled me to choose this topic. My interest in this topic stemmed from the Ministry of Education’s announcement that the Full Day Kindergarten Program would begin in 2010. I looked into the opportunity to take a position in a kindergarten classroom, because there was a call for Early Childhood Educators to join the Toronto District School Board (TDSB). As I looked into the hiring requirements and roles of each of the educators, I discovered that the Ministry was looking for two different professionals to work together.

As Early Childhood Educators, we are well trained in play-based learning, theories in child development, and age-appropriate programing. My personal bias is towards early childhood educators because I understand their background. I feel that ECEs bring a strong base of knowledge and professional training to work as part of a collaborative team that may not always be recognized or appreciated. However, now as a Teacher Candidate in the Master of Teaching program, I grasped the skills a teacher requires in order to become a successful teacher in a classroom. I learned that teachers need to be equipped with the ability to plan curriculums
and lessons, have classroom management strategies, and be able to complete administrative work. As a researcher with experience in both roles, I felt uniquely positioned to elicit the perspectives of the participants in both roles.

Overview

Chapter 1 includes the introduction and purpose of the study, the research questions, as well as how I came to be involved in this topic and study. Chapter 2 provides a review the literature in the areas of research on full-day kindergarten programming and co-teaching in a team relationship. Chapter 3 describes the methodology and procedure used in this study, including information about the sample participants and data collection instruments. Chapter 4 identifies the participants in this study and describes the data as it relates to the research question. Chapter 5 reviews the limitations of the study, report conclusions, and articulate recommendations for practice, further reading and study. References and a list of appendixes follow at the end.
Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I reviewed the literature and research regarding full-day kindergarten education in other provinces and other countries. I also reviewed literature on collaborative teaching, and on the challenges and benefits of co-teaching.

Half-Day Kindergarten to Full-Day Kindergarten

By the school year of 2015, all schools in Ontario will have implemented the Full-day Kindergarten program, which will be fully funded by the Ontario government (Tozer, 2012). Presently, Junior and Senior Kindergarten classes either offer half-day or alternating full-day programs. This new Full-Day Kindergarten program combined JK and SK classes into a full-day learning experience. Tozer found “that students in the four full-day classrooms experienced significantly greater growth in the prerequisite skills for reading than children in the half-day program”. (Tozer 2012, pp.19)

The initial rationale for full-day kindergarten program, as presented from research by then Premier Dalton McGuinty, was to “close the gap in early learning” (Fine, 2008, pp. 19). McGuinty’s goal was to provide extended kindergarten programs to ease the stress for parents who were struggling to find half-day kindergarten spots for their children and to raise the standardized test scores of the students down the road (Fine, 2008). However, the answer to whether or not these goals have been reach will need further research and examination (Fine, 2008; Tozer, 2012).

The Full-day Kindergarten Extended Day Program curriculum document from the Ontario Ministry of Education (2011) states that the FDK program will “focus on age appropriate, developmentally appropriate, and culturally responsive program planning to
facilitate experiences that promote each child’s development and well-being” (pp.1). The purpose and arrangement to bring together a teacher and an early childhood educator in a FDK program is that both professionals would bring their “individual strengths and perspectives, as well as a set of professional competencies” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010, pp. 10) into developing a “high-quality, intentional, play based learning environment” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010, pp. 10) for the students. The FDK program was designed to provide Ontario students with a quality education program to set them on a road to success (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010).

**Impacts of Full-Day Kindergarten**

Research has shown that there are positive impacts on students who attend full-day kindergarten programs (Tozer, 2012; Warburton, Warburton & Hertzman, 2012). Tozer (2012) reported that the purpose of kindergarten is to prepare students for entry into first grade. She also reported that FDK prepared students for school by providing an understanding of school rules, routine and helped them to develop social-emotional skills. Tozer (2012) found that students in FDK do achieve higher scores in reading, science and math than students from half-day kindergarten programs. Tozer (2012) also reported that students “exhibited increased reflection, independent learning skills, classroom involvement and productivity in work with peers” (pp. 20). A factor that has contributed to these positive impacts is that FDK improved students’ attendance in school, which allowed students to have more time spent in an enriched learning environment (Tozer, 2012).

Warburton et al. (2012) conducted a study in British Columbia with Aboriginal and English Language Learners (ELL) students to investigate the impacts of FDK. He examined data
provided by BC Ministry of Education through a census of all the students in BC school system, provincial wide Grade 4 Foundational Skills Assessment in reading, numeracy, and writing, and data regarding changes in the school systems and census. The Warburton et al.’s (2012) study indicated that there were positive impacts on reading and numeracy skills and possible improved grade 4 test scores. He also noted that the study found a decrease in the likelihood of students being classified as having special needs in higher grades after FDK (Warburton et al., 2012). In conclusion, Warburton et al. (2012) reported that FDK improved outcomes for disadvantaged students at grade four and is consistent with other research in FDK. However, the long-term impact of FDK still needs to be investigated, as well as looking at results from a wider range of students and jurisdictions (Warburton et al., 2012).

Decicca (2007) conducted a longitudinal study to examine the impact of FDK on standardized tests scores as children progressed from kindergarten to grade 1 in the United States. He found that that FDK does substantially raise the math and reading achievement scores and provided positive and important effects on students, however, these impacts are short-lived and “fall dramatically over the course of an additional year, towards the end of first grade” (Decicca, 2007, pp. 1). Decica’s (2007) findings are consistent with Warburton et al. (2012) and Tozer (2012), who also found that the positive impacts from the FDK program faded in grade school. Decicca (2007) and Tozer (2012) both agreed that it is difficult to answer why the impacts fade so quickly, however they do provide some insight and reasons that contribute to it. One factor suggested by Decicca (2007) is that intervention ends or is disrupted after the end of the school term and fades over the summer months. Tozer (2012) also suggested that it could be the change in the teacher’s focus in the primary classroom, where the teacher focuses on bringing lower achieving students to level, instead of providing continuous support like the FDK. Decicca
(2012), Tozer (2012) and Warburton et al. (2012) all feel that further studies and investigation into the fading impacts of FDK will be needed to fully understand the reasons.

**Collaborative Teams**

Collaborative teaching is not a new phenomenon in education, but has been used in classroom settings for many years. These traditional co-teaching teams, consists of a classroom teacher and a teaching assistant, who may not necessarily be an ECE (Scruggs, Mastropier & Kimberly, 2007). In the new Full-day Kindergarten Educator’s Handbook (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010), it stipulates that teachers and ECEs work together in a collaborative team and jointly develop lessons and plan activities; effectively bringing their professional expertise skills into the class. However, placing two professionals into a classroom does not ensure collaboration (Austin, 2001; Callaghan, 2012). Many different factors such as the educator’s perception of co-teaching, their professional background, school administrators and a clear definition of roles and responsibilities impact how the teams work together (Peper, 2010; Austin, 2001; Scruggs et al., 2007; Tozer, 2012).

**Co-teaching obstacles**

*Teaching structure.* Although collaborative teams are called “co-teaching”, Scruggs et al (2007) found, in their study of 454 co-teaching participants, that none reported equally shared teaching responsibility for planning or instruction. The teams were working together in the same classroom, but teaching responsibilities were not clearly identified and teaching times were not evenly shared (Austin, 2001). Teachers in these settings reported that full-class instruction for students were delivered by only one main or lead teacher is still the current practice. The co-
teachers, whom are mainly special education teachers, usually rotate around the class to support individual students (Scruggs et al., 2007; Austin, 2001).

Research has identified a key obstacle for a collaborative team as educators’ perceptions of their role in the classroom. If one of the co-teachers feels less valued as a teacher in the class, it impacts their role and their perception of their responsibilities (Happo & Määttä, 2011; Scruggs et al., 2007). When two professional educators are placed together to collaborate, their individual expertise needs to be valued in order for the collaborative team to develop in a professional and practical way (Happo & Määttä, 2011). Teachers who reported that they felt like a subordinate to the lead teacher took less opportunity to lead in full class instruction and participated less in group activities, which led to frustration with the co-teaching process (Happo & Määttä, 2011; Scruggs et al., 2007). This is because they believed that they were not permitted to lead instruction but were restricted to working with small groups or individual students.

Austin (2001) found in his study that in co-teaching partnerships, assistant teachers felt that they were doing more work in the class than their teaching partners. The assistant teachers reported that the teaching partner felt that the teaching assistants have the expertise to adapt and modify curriculum on their own. Teaching assistants also reported working in more than one classroom, which increased their workload compared to teachers who stayed in a single classroom (Scruggs et al., 2007).

Teachers in the Scruggs et al., (2007) study suggested that a good way to solve the unequal responsibility in the class was to divide the class into two groups, however, there can be many limitations for that method (Scruggs et al., 2007). One limitation found by Scruggs et al (2007) in their research was that when two teachers are teaching at the same time, also known as
parallel teaching, the noise level increased because both teachers had strong voices, which resulted in the students being distracted.

**Expertise.** In a full-day kindergarten program, each educator have their own areas of expertise, which is important to understand in order to create a working collaborative team (Callaghan, 2012). Nonetheless, Early Childhood Educators have been viewed as less professional and lacking expertise compared to teachers (Happo & Määttä, 2011; Gibson & Pelletier, 2010). Yet, research has found that Early Childhood Educators require multi-levels of knowledge, as well as specific skills in child development, both characteristics required to be part of a professional team (Happo & Määttä, 2011).

Happo (2011) describes Early Childhood Educators through three competencies, which includes contextual knowledge, cooperation and communication knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. Contextual knowledge includes being aware that their work with children has a social significance and an influence in society. Cooperation and communications knowledge is acquiring the skills to interact, communicate and cooperate with parents and other professionals in the field. Pedagogical knowledge is divided into 3 subcategories, first, direct knowledge, which are the skills to interact with children. Second, indirect knowledge, which is the theoretical knowledge to do planning work to support education and thirdly, knowledge at the level of awareness which affects the implementation of education, for example, values and ethics. All three levels of knowledge are essential for early childhood educators to acquire and use in their expertise (Happo & Määttä, 2011).

Early childhood educators do have a high level of expertise (Happo, 2007) and should be treated and viewed as an equal teaching partner in a co-teaching relationship (Callaghan, 2013). Callaghan (2013) also noted that the purpose and development of the early-learning team, as
presented in the FDK program is meant to bring together two educators for a unique collaborative partnership. However, hierarchy relationships where the teacher acted as the lead teacher and the ECEs acted as an assistant were reported by some ECEs in Gibson & Pelletier (2010) study. Other research about co-teaching structures has found that in many co-teaching relationship, a hierarchal structure between the educators does exists (Callaghan, 2012 & Scruggs et al., 2007).

Toner (2012) reported that FDK ECEs were concerned about the lack of understanding of the role by teachers, principals and system administrators. One key factor that contributed to the lack of understanding of the role of early childhood educators was due to limited direct work with ECEs in the field (Tozer, 2012). Early childhood educators usually work directly with children in day care settings, where they work directly with other early childhood educators and not directly with teachers or administrators (Happo & Määttä, 2011). Teachers and educators who have worked in co-teaching or collaborative teams have reported that it is important for them to understand their roles and responsibilities in the working relationship and in the class (Scruggs et al., 2007; Callaghan, 2012; Gibson & Pelletier, 2010). In the Gibson & Pelletier (2010) study, looking at the working relationship between teachers and ECEs in a FDK class found that there are misunderstandings of each other roles in the classroom. The study also found that ECEs reported feeling unequal in the classroom because the teachers did not know or understand the training or background of the ECEs, resulting in difficulty cooperating, sharing ideas or sharing responsibilities. The study suggested more joint training between both educators is needed to improve mutual understanding and collaboration.
Benefits of collaborative teaching

Teachers who have participated in collaborative teaching teams have also reported many benefits of working together (Austin, 2001; Hanno & Määttä, 2011; Scruggs et al., 2007; Warburton et al., 2012). When teachers work together, they bring together special skills and experience and learn from each other (Austin, 2001; Hanno & Määttä, 2011). Research has found that collaboration with a co-partner, or group of teachers, not only help educators develop professionally, but also have a positive impact on their students (Hanno & Määttä, 2011; Jenkin, Ritblatt & McDonald, 2008; Scruggs et al., 2007).

Research has found that teachers and special education assistant teachers reported that they benefited professionally from co-teaching experiences (Scruggs et al., 2007). Both of the educators’ developed professionally with increased knowledge in many areas of curriculum content, gained classroom management skills, modifying lessons for students, and curriculum adaptations. The teachers also found that they benefited positively by learning from each other and through sharing ideas for their lessons. (Scruggs et al., 2007).

The teachers who taught in a co-teaching classroom also reported positive impacts on student attitude and achievement levels (Scruggs et al., 2007; Austin, 2001). Students displayed higher degree of participation, increased cooperation in the classroom, and tolerance of differences in inclusive classrooms (Scruggs et al., 2007; Austin, 2001). These positive impacts are the results of lower teacher-student ratio, providing more attention to each student, and students answers being responded to earlier (Scruggs et al., 2007; Austin, 2001). There may be challenges in collaborative teaching; however, research also shows many benefits and positive impacts on both the educators and students.
Chapter 3: METHODOLOGY

Procedure

This qualitative research included a review of literature and two face-to-face interviews with two pairs of Early Learning Educators. Each interview included one kindergarten teacher and their partner, an Early Childhood Educator. They discussed their working relationship in the classroom and their perceptions of the Full-Day Kindergarten program. The interviews were recorded on audio and transcribed. Different themes emerged through the interviews and were these were connected to the current literature.

Instruments of Data Collection:

The primary means of data collection was through informal, face to face interviews with two pairs of early-learning teams. The interview questions (see Appendix A) were open-ended and focused on understanding the relationship between the team (Creswell, 2013). An informal interview style allowed the participants to freely answer the questions and give responses from their own perspectives (Creswell, 2013). The interviews were semi-structured, and included guiding questions such as, “How long have you worked together in a full-day kindergarten class?” and “How would you describe your working relationship in this class?” Each pair was interviewed together. For the purpose of this study, I looked for strategies that contributed positively to the team’s relationship. Through interviewing the team together, they were able to provide collaborative and mutually agreed responses. They were able to discuss openly their working experiences together and contribute information collectively. They were also able to add on or build on each other’s responses regarding their work in the classroom. Interviewing the team together provided insight on how they communicated with each other as well as their team
dynamic. I recognized, as a researcher, that there were limitations to interviewing the educators together. They may have felt restricted on what they could share because they were sitting with their colleague. They may also have felt uncomfortable sharing about conflicts or problems that they may have experienced previously. However, due to the limitations of this research paper and time restrictions, the interviews were conducted with both educators present. Following the interviews a follow-up email was sent to the teams to provide them my contact information and give them the opportunity to provide further information regarding their team relationship if needed. Team one responded to my email with additional responses to the questions asked in interview. The responses from the email were included in the analysis of data for this study.

Participants

For the purposes of this study, I looked for strategies that teams used to create a positive relationship therefore, the teams needed to self-identify as a positive collaborative team. Prior to the interviews, each participant was asked through email if they perceived their working relationship as a positive one. Each team offered their past experiences and strategies of working together in a full-day kindergarten class. Recognizing that there may be conflicts and disagreements between the members of the team. This research also identified strategies used in resolving disagreements and working collaboratively in a positive way.

I used convenience sampling from my colleagues. One criterion required for this study was that the participants worked well together as a team. Referrals from my colleagues were helpful because they may have seen the teams working together or had heard of teams that worked well together. Therefore I used referrals of two kindergarten teachers’ from colleagues.
These referees spoke about their Early Childhood partners and professed that they worked well together.

For this research, I looked for two pairs of Early-learning Team who had worked together in a kindergarten class for at least one school year (or almost one year). Teams who have worked together for at least one school year gave insight on how they developed their working relationship. The following sampling criterion was used when recruiting participants for this study.

1. Two pairs of an Early-Learning Kindergarten team, who have worked together at least for one school year in a full-day kindergarten class.
2. Both professional educators had to agree and self-identify that they were a part of a positive, collaborative Early-learning Kindergarten Team.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

The two sets of interviews conducted were recorded using a personal laptop with the participants consent. The recordings were uploaded onto a Transcription Application design to assist in the transcription of audio recording. After the interviews were transcribed they were re-read numerous times searching for similar themes, patterns, connection to literature and relevance to the research questions. I highlighted different themes using different highlighters and categorized them into seven themes. After coding and reorganizing the themes into the table according to the relevance of my research, I consolidated the themes into three key findings. The key findings will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.
Ethical Review Procedures

I followed the ethical review approval procedures for the Master of Teaching program. Before the interviews, I contacted the class teachers through email to request participation in my research. Prior to the interviews, they were required to read and sign the consent forms (See appendix B). A copy of the consent form was also given to the participants for their own record. The interviews were conducted at that time and date provided by the participants; this was to ensure that the team was available and it was most convenient for them. Both interviews were conducted in their respective classrooms, where both educators were able to sit down and participate in the interview fully. Each participant was provided with all the necessary information about the research, consent and confidentiality. At the beginning of each interview, the topic of the research was reviewed and the participants were informed that they may withdraw from the research at any time and they could revise or add to their answers when they needed. Participants will have access to the findings I gathered from their interview and will be sent the final copy. Their names and schools will be kept anonymous throughout the research process and only pseudonyms will be used for the final submission.

Limitations

The limitation in this research is the small sample of teachers and early childhood educators involved. Valuable insights and information was collected through the two pairs of educators, but more content and deeper exploration about collaborative teamwork could have been explored if the the sample size was more copious. A second limitation was the inability to observe the participants in a classroom to observe first-hand how the team worked together and
how their interactions impacted the classroom and the students. Finally, there is a lack of students’ perspective on the Early-learning Team which limits the insight of this research.
Chapter 4: FINDINGS

Introduction to Findings

The findings collected for this study emerged from two interviews with two sets of Early-Learning Team. Both teams have worked together in a full-day kindergarten class using the new Full-day Early-learning Kindergarten Program in an Ontario school. Both teams described their team relationship as positive and were willing to speak genuinely about their experiences as a team. Provisions have been taken to ensure that participants remain anonymous. As a result, participants have been given pseudonyms and the names of institutions have been left out. This chapter will provide a thorough overview of the data collected as a result of the two interviews. These interviews were central to the study findings because they provided insight to the personal experiences of practicing Canadian educators. I will begin with a brief explanation of the participants and then discuss the key findings of my research.

Background information of participants

Two Early-learning Teams were selected for this study; each team consisted of one kindergarten teacher and one early childhood educator. The first team is from a Catholic school and has been working as a team for five years or since the first year that the full-day kindergarten program started. The teacher, Tiffany, has been teaching kindergarten for 15 years in a school setting. The early childhood educator, Laura, has 26 years of experience working with children from infancy to school-aged and also has been a supervisor in a childcare center. Laura started her kindergarten experience five years ago at the school and has been working with Tiffany ever since.
The second team is from a Public school and has been working as a team for almost a year. The teacher, Paula, has been teaching for 14 years and has been teaching kindergarten for five years. The full-day kindergarten program has been implemented at the school for three years and she has been teaching the FDK program since it started at the school. The early childhood educator, Angela, has worked in the school setting as an educational assistant for 10 years and started her position as an early childhood educator in a full-day kindergarten classroom towards the end of last year’s school term. This team worked together to finish off last year’s term and started the new school year together.

Both teams expressed that they work well together and have a positive working relationship in the classroom. The key findings shared in my research will reflect themes that have been extracted from the responses provided by my participants.

**Key Findings**

After close analysis of the interview transcripts, I have identified three key themes. Although I have categorized the findings under three separate headings, all of the themes connect and relate to each other. For the purpose of this study I will discuss each of the themes separately and provide support through the stories and experiences of the participants. Both teams shared the following 3 components in their experiences working together:

1) They learned about the roles and responsibilities and contributing to classroom responsibilities together.

2) They maintained a professional relationship with each other and professional attitude.

3) They have a shared a vision for their class, to have a positive affect on the students.
Key Finding #1: Learning about their roles and responsibilities and contributing to classroom responsibilities together

Both teams recognize that the development of the early-learning teams is new to the FDK program; therefore, they had to learn and develop their roles as they worked together. Both teams also expressed that at the beginning, when they started working together, the first obstacle was for each partner to learn and understand their roles and responsibilities in the class. Tiffany, the teacher, describes the issue like this:

I think some of the issues we had at the beginning was trying to understand each of our roles. In the classroom working as a team, I knew that I was the teacher and that Laura was to be my teaching partner. But exactly how that was to be implemented, we had to figure out. I was responsible for implementing and delivering the curriculum and Laura was there to support it with additional activities. Secondly Laura had to familiarize herself with the FDK document, the expectations and some of the resources we used in the program.

Even though Tiffany has been teaching kindergarten for many years, she was also learning with Laura about the FDK program. Laura has an extensive background in working with young children however when she started in this position at the school, it was her first time working in the kindergarten classroom. As their experience as a team progressed, she was able to understand her role as Tiffany describes it as, “We’ve been together for five years so, we kind of know what our roles are and what it looks like when we come to school and what we do or suppose to do”.

The second team also agreed that at the beginning they had to learn their roles as they worked together. Angela, the early childhood educator states:

…but when I did my ECE [Early Childhood Education studies], it was very directed towards daycare. There was no component of a school environment, so as far as that goes, I find a lot of times we’re learning from each other because like there are certain things done in a school setting that are not done in a daycare and vice versa. So I find a lot of times I seek knowledge from Paula because, some things as simple as them tracing
letters is very different then the way you would’ve taught it at daycare or the way I was taught to do it.

As they worked together, they better understood their roles and were able to learn from each other.

Describing their roles. Both teams are able to describe their roles and responsibilities in the classroom distinct from each other. Both teachers talked about delivering the curriculum and connecting with the parents. Whereas both early childhood educators described participating in observation and contributing to the assessment process. Tiffany, the teacher, described her role and Laura’s (ECE) role as this:

I would say that, I deliver the curriculum. I deliver the curriculum and Laura is sort of like, she helps support it. So, I mean, I support it too but she is like my right hand person. So she will help me plan activities, set up activities, she might take a small group. She doesn't do any of the assessment or evaluations but she does the formative stuff. She does the small group and works with them.

She went on to list and describe other responsibilities of the teacher, for example, assessing the students, writing report cards, and communicating with parents. Tiffany also described Laura’s responsibilities, which included observations, anecdotal notes, helping individual students when needed and participating in the parent-teacher interviews. Laura acknowledged by nodding and agreed with Tiffany in saying her role was to support the teacher.

Team two also described similar responsibilities in the classroom. Angela described it like this:

There are certain things, like, are teacher driven, it has to be the teacher to complete certain things. Not to say we don’t work together and collaborate on, like, certain things that will go into something like a report card. [O]ur dialogue is always opened, but there are certain things that are the teacher’s, I guess, duty if you want to call it. I mean… like as far as an ECE role…. our role is to collaborate with the teacher; our role is to help with observation. To then be able to give input for things like report cards and what have you. … Paula has a lot background obviously in kindergarten, she knows, the things that needs
to be addressed, like as far as, you know, like, I don’t want to say academic wise, but that idea... and then, I kind of put in the development part of it you know.

Each team was able to describe their responsibilities and specific roles in the classroom. As mentioned in Chapter 2, when teaching roles are not clearly understood it can affect the collaboration between the team and affect instructional practice (Tozer, 2012).

*Being flexible and willing to contribute.* Both teams were able to describe their specific, day to day roles as a teacher and as early childhood educator however they also expressed that even though they have responsibilities divided between them, the rules are constantly changing on a daily basis and not always set-in-stone due to the needs of the program. Both teams mentioned that they do not have allocated time together to do planning. Paula, the teacher, explained that the early childhood educator needed to be with the students when the teacher is on a preparation period, and the teacher will have assigned duty before and afterschool, therefore, leaving no time to sit down and plan together. However, both teams expressed how they were able to be flexible and still contribute to planning in the program even due to this restriction.

Tiffany and Laura states how they plan together:

Tiffany (T): We plan together. We have like all our activities like our sensory, our drama. We kind of go through what we want to put at the centres.
Laura (L): Puppet centre, block centre.
T: We just plan like that.
L: On the fly even... basically on the fly.
L: It works best that way, we really enjoy it.
T: We don't really get out our binders and plan.
L: We are just like, what do you want to do here.
T: We kind of take the lead from the kids too.

In the classroom, they were able to plan together in a way that worked for them as a team. The second team also described that their role changed in the class. Paula, the teacher states, “our roles, they vary, and they change, sometimes, almost on a day-to-day basis. And I think that is
one of the key parts is to be flexible”. When they need to plan or decide on program ideas, they both contribute, Paula explains it like this:

I think it’s the flexibility of both of us being willing to jump in. I think its, we both will come up with the ideas. I might start talking about something and Angela will think about it and come back with an idea and we listen.

They were able to find ways to communicate and participate in the class together despite obstacles such as lack of planning time. Both teams spoke about being flexible and being willing to contribute on a day-to-day basis. Both the early-childhood educators talked about being flexible when it came to contributing planning ideas. Laura reported sometimes having discussions with the teacher about program ideas in the morning when they were setting up the classroom or “bouncing ideas off each other” when they had a moment in the classroom. Angela also emphasized having short discussions with the teacher over the course of the school day or when they have a moment in the class. Angela stated that is important to be flexible, otherwise the planning will not be completed; she explained her thoughts like this:

That’s just the way it goes. So we literally have no time. And going back to your questioning with the conflict, I think that would create a huge conflict as far where your roles begin and end because really, by, I guess… contract or what have you… I don’t have to be here till my start time, and I don’t stay until after my end time. And if I chose to do those very strict lines or coming and going, we would have zero time.

Both teams were able to implement their own strategies to overcome these obstacles.

Both teams also reported that they were willing to share responsibilities in the classroom and these are not assigned to one or the other educator. Tiffany said:

Those responsibilities are shared between us. I don’t expect Laura ever… I never said to Laura, sweep the floor… do this, this, this. Kindergarten is very busy, glue bottles to fill…. like just maintenance. No one is going to do it, but who ever is in charge of that classroom, and I do not expect, its not the ECE role to, to cut out things, photocopy, sweep floors and just wipe noses. We both do!
Angela also echoed this saying:

Like if, one of us says forgets to put out something, the other will just notice and put it out. It’s not like, you know, I will go to her and says ‘well, Paula, you know, you forgot to do this’. It’s just a partnership, if she happens to forget something, I put it out, if I happen to forget, she does it. Its always a partnership, its never a distinct…. and… I also find that we work well together because we work as a team and we’re both willing to contribute.

Both teams agree that sharing the classroom also means sharing responsibilities.

**Key Finding #2: They maintained a professional relationship with each other and professional attitude.**

*Professional Relationship:* As mentioned in Chapter 2, the relationship between the co-teaching partnerships is very important and impacts how the educator perceives their value in the class. Both teams reported that they have a positive, collaborative and respectful relationship with each other. The first team uses words like “unique, collaborative, positive, flexible, partnership, team player, good friends, we like each other, and watch each other’s back” to describe their working relationship. Similarly, the second team uses words like “flexible, collaborative, patience, work well as a team, accepting, and partnership” to describe their relationship. Scruggs et al. (2007) also found that a co-teaching relationship has many aspects and include many components reported by both teams.

Tiffany, the teacher, talked about constantly having open dialogue, listening to each other, even at a personal level so they could fully understand and respect each other. In Scruggs et al.’s (2007) study, teachers and educators reported that some of their relationships with their co-teachers were compared to marriages. Just like in marriage, it requires effort, flexibility and
compromise for success (Scruggs et al., 2007). For example, Tiffany pointed out that their relationship is like a marriage relationship. She describes it like this:

T: Like we… we understand., we kind of read our ques. [Overlap with L] [talking in sync with each other]
L: Ya.
T: Its like, she’ll know when to leave me alone…[laughs] like right now… its like...[laughs]
L: [laughs] I know, ya… I always know [laughs] It’s like marriage. [Overlaps with T] I know when to bother my husband, he knows when to bother me [laughs].
T: It’s true, its like a marriage. ya.

They put an importance on understanding each other and respecting their personal space.

Both teams reported that they heard rumours or stories from colleagues and friends about teaching relationships that were not working out. Both teams also described what they feel are not examples of a collaborative team. Tiffany says: “I don’t like to say that I’m more up here [raises palm to eye level] and you’re like… you know [lowers hands and turns eyes to Laura]”.

Gibson & Pelletier (2010) found in their study that a hierarchy structure still happens in early-learning teams. In this example, Tiffany is implying that they do not have a hierarchy relationship.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the development of the Early-learning team is to bring together unique and individual expertise of the educators to form a partnership (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010). Both teams talked about their partner’s expertise, skills and strengths. They were able to recognize each other’s strengths and how those strengths contributed to the class environment. As in Scrugg et al.’s (2007) study, teachers reported that it is important to recognize each other’s skills so they feel valued and accepted in the team relationship. Paula, the teacher, talked about some of her partner’s strength, “we talk a lot about or own interest and our own strengths. Angela is really good at music, so when we come to the music part, she generally leads music and I follow”, “Angela comes with some great ideas and has some great approach
things and I go, that wasn’t my strength that follow this way, so I’m very fortunate that way”.

Paula recognizes Angela’s strength and follows her lead in some areas. Angela also shared her views on her partner saying, “She takes the role on things that she is strong in, and like you know, I will just support”. She continued to say:

“I kind of followed her lead and saw the ins and outs of everything. Then I slowly, in a way, integrated myself into the classroom, because I had no experience in kindergarten before this time. I look to her as, you know, like a model of what goes on in the classroom and then slowly, I took on her ideas of a classroom, a kindergarten classroom and then it became like a partnership.”

Tiffany and Laura projected a strong, happy and respectful relationship during the interview. They also reported many incidents where they recognized and valued the skills and strengths from each other. They would constantly complement each other, for example, Laura would say “she is amazing!”, Tiffany would answer “no! You are!”

Tiffany and Laura even talked about their relationship going beyond the classroom and having developed into a friendship. They described their relationship like this:

T: We love to laugh, we joke.
L: [uh huh] Yes, see! [laughs] [agreeing]
T: And that is so important. You have to...cause... You know our jobs are stressful.
L: Ya, Ya.
T: We, you know, watch each other’s back. We have each other’s back.
L: Yes. [agreeing]
T: um, but I think that’s really important. We’re just good friends. We’ve become good friends and stayed good friends.
L: Yes. [agreeing]
T: Since we started. I have to say, the whole division at our school is like that.
L: Ya. [agreeing]
T: Most of the teams are like that. We get together on a social level as well.
T: It’s not just a working relationship but we have become friends.
L: That’s nice. That’s so important.
T: Yes. That’s really important.
L: Cause you don't hear that a lot from other places.
T: And our principal praises us all the time.
As they worked together and were able to come to know each deeper and their working relationship flourished into a friendship. Research shows that many teaching partnerships benefit professionally in a co-teaching relationship (Austin, 2001 & Callaghan, 2012) but there are no reports that the working relationship can go beyond colleagues and become friendships.

*Professional Attitudes.* Both teams talked about the importance of their team relationship however, they also put emphasis on their personal attitude towards each other and in the class. Both teams suggested that it is important to bring a positive and open-minded attitude into the team relationship in order for it to be successful. Both teams agreed that the positive attitude included an open mind to listen and accept new ideas, willingness to share ideas, communication skills, and an emphasis on a good sense of humor and respect for each other. Tiffany says, “We’re almost the same personality too. We love to laugh, we joke. And that is so important”. Laura agrees multiple times that her respectful and playful personality played a big part in building their relationship. Paula also mentions, “And again, we both have a similar sense of humour which helps a lot… in kindergarten”.

Not only is personality important, but making a personal choice to make the collaborative team work. When Angela, the ECE, talks about solving conflicts with her partner, she says “It’s really your personal choice”, to choose to be flexible and or not. She really makes a point about attitude saying:

I guess, something that should be said is that, we’re not here to compete against one another. We’re not here to compete, who has the best idea or who has the best way of doing something. Like we’ve never taken that attitude.

She continues by saying:

I think you kind of also have to hang up your attitude at the door when you come in. I know a lot of people have really strong personalities and you know, like, it filters into
their work environment. And that’s not really not fair because really, you are here to work together and you are here to work for the kids.

Angela really emphasized the importance of bringing a positive attitude to the classroom. She also recognized that the team relationship and the classroom environment has a direct relationship to the children students.

*Respect.* Another important component of a positive relationship that had been mentioned by both teams multiple times was respect. When Tiffany and Laura talked about their team relationship the first thing they mentioned is that they have to respect each other. Tiffany said, “because there needs to be respect, your colleagues….and… it should be a partnership, it should be…” Laura echo her thoughts saying, “…again it comes into respecting her role and she respect my role. Cause I know some ECE who went in thinking they are going to take over the class.” and so she really feel strongly that it is important to respect like this, “I respect her as a teacher. I understand her role. I respect it”. Tiffany even mentions a few times, “Laura has never ever been rude to me, ever. She never, never, ever”. This team really emphasizes on the area of respect and had built their team relationship and friendship from respect. Pauline and Angela also talks about respecting each other in the classroom. They even make it a priority in their own classrooms with their students. Angela says, “The children know what is expected of them, they know respect is a big thing in the classroom”. Respect isn’t only between the two educators in the classroom but should be a priority in the classroom and to everyone who is in it. In Callaghan’s (2012) study about collaborative teams also showed that respect is an important component of a team.

There is one aspect of the team components that both teams do not agree on. Tiffany says, “well, you have to like the person you work with”. Angela does not agree and says:
It’s not a matter of liking each other, which helps, but it’s a matter of working together and I think, everybody who’s in this partnership is an adult. And I think, if we can all, if people can work and remember that, that goes a long way.

In team one’s experience, liking each other in the partnership helped them work together and build a strong relationship. Although, team two feels that liking each other is not an essential component of a working relationship, they do agree with team one that when the partners are able to like each other and work together, it does add to the working relationship.

Both teams identified many components that contributed to their positive working relationship. It certainly takes more then just being in the classroom. Developing a professional relationship with each other and bring in a positive attitude is the highlight of their strategy.

Angela is able to sum up importance of their relationship saying:

It’s a relationship like any other relationship in your life. So I think, you know, patience, flexibility, respect and you know, and having a good attitude, sense of humour type thing. It’s all about your attitude coming into it.

Both teams agree that they are working on their relationship on a daily biases.

**Key Finding #3: They have a shared a vision for their class, to have a positive affect on the students.**

*Shared vision.* Both early-learning teams also spoke about having a shared vision or being on the same “wave length” contributed to their positive relationship. As mentioned before when Tiffany and Laura started off in the FDK program together, they were unsure how to implement the new curriculum. However both of them spent time learning about each other but also learning about a new FDK program. Tiffany mentions that as they progressed working together, they were really able to build a fun and loving classroom together. They also said that “we are both on the same page” referring to their program and classroom. Paula and Angela also
echoed the need to have a shared vision in the classroom. They mentioned multiple times that sharing the same vision for the class and for the children not only contributes to their positive relationship but is also very helpful. Paula says, “We are very fortunate. I think we both have, as I said, the same kind of vision or picture of what children should be able to do and that helps a lot”. Similar to the first team, Paula feels that sharing the same vision with her partner helps shape the program and share responsibilities with each other. Paula says:

We think on the same wave length, we have the same general outlook of what we think kids should be able to do, what the program look like but we also bring different parts to the program so that’s somehow what, how the roles get divided.

Paula continued to say that sharing the same vision not only helps develop the working relationship it also helps set up an expectation for the students in the classroom. Paula says:

I really think that if a teacher and ECE is on the same wave length, it makes for a much smoother classroom. The children know that you have the same expectations. Children learn very quick how to play like, mom off dad and one off against the other. And they know in our room that if, you know, Ms. [Angela] has already said no, there is no point in coming and asking Ms. [Paula] cause its going to be the same thing.

Paul explains that it is also important for the students to know the expectations in the class. Both teams agree that sharing a vision for the classroom relates to understanding the full-day kindergarten program and has contributed greatly to building their positive relationship.

Positive affect. Both teams talked about different components that contributed to their positive working relationship. Through their description and discussion about their collaborative team they have revealed an important aspect of working in a team, which is the affect of their team on their students and their school. Research on collaborative and co-teaching teams also reports that a positive relationship in a classroom will positively impact their students and other teachers (Callaghan, 2012 & Scruggs, 2007). Tiffany talks about how their positive relationship is noticed and praised by the principal and other staff at the school. Tiffany and Laura also
shares that having a positive working relationship is not just between the two of them but is common at their school. Tiffany shares, “since we started. I have to say, the whole division at our school is like that. Most of the teams are like that. We get together on a social level as well”.

The positive relationship not only expressed by the team but also everyone who works with them. Tiffany even shares about that effect on parents, saying “Parents! It’s true though. Parents will say that, you know, they’re quite… they feel fortunate that their child is in our classroom because they can see that our relationship is a very positive one”. The positive and warm relationship is even experienced by the parents.

Paul and Angela also report that they’re positive relationship affects the students in the classroom. Angela says:

We found that this year we were able to move our kids along a lot quicker with certain things that, like activities or writing or reading things that we did, like, in like may in last year, that they are starting to do in January, we’ve seen that kind of a difference but it takes like a strong partnership, like you really have to work together and know where to go with it. We made our classroom rules and everything right from the beginning, the children know what is expected of them…And because we started this from day one, they’ve really excelled and come a long way since September. I think that has a lot to do with the way we work together.

This is consistent with Austin’s (2001) research that collaborative teaching teams do have a positive affect on student’s learning.

In the above, I have highlighted the key findings that were reported from both teams regarding their collaborative teaching relationship. It also provided an insight to the different components that builds an early-learning team. Finally, both teams agreed that they’re working relationship will continue to grow as they continue to work together. Angela gives final insight about the newly developed Early-Learning Team in a FDK classroom:
I think what needs to be thought of is that we come from two different backgrounds and it takes a little bit of time for it to, you know mould together to something that is going to be successful, its not just going to be like right off the bat, on the first day. It takes time and it takes patience and it takes work.
Chapter 5: DISCUSSION

Introduction:

This chapter will summarize the main focus of this study and how it is connected to the three key findings. Followed by a discussion connecting the findings to the literature and research on collaborative teaching. It will further discuss the implications of this study on full-day kindergarten programs and include a list of recommendations for further research on this topic. Finally I will discuss successes and limitations about this research and draw conclusions on my final thoughts.

Summary:

The purpose of the study was to better understand the components that contribute to a positive relationship in an early-learning team in a full-day kindergarten classroom. This paper set out to highlight and identify strategies used to develop a positive working relationship and identify components of a positive relationship from experienced ELT. The 3 key findings shared by the participants are:

1. They learned about the roles and responsibilities and contributed to classroom responsibilities together;

2. They maintained a professional relationship with each other and have a professional attitude;

3. They had a shared vision for their class, to have a positive affect on the students.

These insights are valuable for educators who want to better understand the ELT and to those who are in the field or classroom and want to improve their working relationships.
Connection to Literature:

Connections to Literature - Finding #1: They learned about the roles and responsibilities and contributed to classroom responsibilities together. Both teams shared that a big component to their successful relationship related directly to understanding the full-day kindergarten program. When the educators understood the essence of the FDK they in turn better understood the roles and responsibilities in the classroom (Happo & Määttä, 2011). Research demonstrates that when teaching roles are not clear in an early childhood program it can impact the instructional practice (Tozer, 2012). Both teams expressed that at the beginning they were unclear about the roles in the classroom but as they developed the program together they better understood each other’s role and how to fulfill their responsibilities, which resulted in a positive affect on their partnership. Callaghan (2012) also reported that it is important that each educator feels valued and important in the team. Both teams reported that they acknowledge their partners and respect the different roles in the relationship therefore contributing to the positive team.

Both teams also reported willingness to contribute and participate in the classroom. This is consistent with research by Scruggs et al. (2007) that shows collaboration happens when all educators make an effort to contribute to the partnership.

Connections to Literature - Finding #2: They maintained a professional relationship with each other and have a professional attitude. Both teams were able to provide multiple attributes and components that contributed to their positive working relationship. Some attributes had to do with the relationship between each other, and some attributes had to do with their own personal attitudes to the team. Scruggs et al. (2007) reported that co-teaching relationships are complex and have many contributing factors. Peper (2010) also found that there are multiple components of characteristics that contribute to a co-teaching relationship. Consistent with the
research both teams were able to identify multiple components and attributes related to their relationship. These include, being flexible, collaborative, positive, a team player, patient, accepting, and open minded. Peper (2010) found in her study the following characteristics where important components in a relationship, “personality compatibility, shared philosophy of education, willingness, positive attitude and perception within the literature” (pp. 14). Both teams also put a heavy emphasis on the topic of respect in their working relationship and in their classrooms. The teams reported that respect was one of the most important components of their positive relationship. However there is no in-depth research regarding respect amongst a collaborative education team.

*Connections to Literature - Finding #3:* They have a shared vision for their class, to have a positive affect on the students. Both teams expressed that having a shared vision for their class and for the children was important to their positive relationship. Their shared vision and positive relationship made an impact on the students, parents and other teachers at their school. There is sufficient research to show that co-teaching or collaborative teams have a positive impact in many different areas (Peper, 2010; Jenkin et al., 2008; Scruggs et al., 2007; Austin, 2001; Gibson & Pelletier 2012 & Callaghan, 2012). Austin (2001) found in his study that “co-teachers indicated that the generally considered co-teaching to have contributed positively to their professional development” (pp. 250). Scruggs et al., (2007) and Gibson & Pelletier (2010) also echoed in their studies that collaborative teaching or co-teaching resulted in positive professional development in pedagogical knowledge and providing quality education. Both interviewed ELTs also reported positive impact on their students’ emotional development and sense of belonging in the class. This is consistent with Austin’s (2001) study that found “co-teaching contributed positively to the academic development of all their students” (pp. 253). As mentioned in chapter
2, Tozer (2012) found in her research on FDK programs, the ELT relationship greatly impacts students’ participation in academic outcomes. Jenkin et al, (2008) found that there is “heavy emphasis on the teacher as a model because children are watching and learning” from the adults in the class. Both teams in this study also recognized that they are models in their class and the students are watching to see how they interact and how they work together.

The two ELT that participated in this study truly were able to demonstrate a positive team. Not only were they able to impact the students and their school they were able to provide insight and strategies through this study the impact of educators in this field. The information these teams were able to provide were supported by research, however there still many unanswered questions and many more aspects that require further investigation.

Implications/Recommendations:

This study has provided many important strategies and information about developing an early learning team. The information in this study is very valuable at this time because full-day kindergarten programs have just been fully implemented in Ontario this year. Many educators are stepping into a team relationship without any prior knowledge or experience. The strategies and information provided in this study could be a useful tool for new or developing early learning teams. Although this is a small study and the data has been collected from a small sample, there is value and significance in the results. This study can be a conversation starter or a starting block for educators who are thinking of teaching in a full day kindergarten class.
Limitations

Limitations to this study include the same small sample size of just two early-learning teams. Wider investigation with larger sample size from different areas in Ontario would provide a deeper understanding of the collaborative team. Another limitation is the time restriction. This study provides a limited view of the long term working relationship between the educators. A longitudinal study following new teams developing and growing together will provide more complex information and insight into early-learning teams. Finally, the lack of student perspective in this study is a great limitation because the FDK program and ELT were designed to benefit the students. Without student’s perspective in this study, it limits deeper understanding of the impact ELTs have in the FDK classroom.

Further study

Although this study provides some insight on how the teacher and early childhood educator work together in a classroom further study needs to be done on conflict resolution, decision-making and planning time in the early learning team. There is ample research on co-teaching in different education settings but there is a lack of research on early childhood educators in classrooms and even less in-depth research on the development of the early learning team. Other areas that could also be investigated are the impact of the early learning teams on student outcomes after the kindergarten program. There is currently research looking at student outcomes on test scores and academic scores but there is no research on the impact of the early learning team in their social emotional development. Finally, there needs to be a deeper examination of the qualifications, educational background, and pay difference between the
teacher and early childhood educator (Gibson & Pelletier, 2010). All these factors impact and contribute to the working relationship in an early learning team.
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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Letter of Consent for Interview

Date: _______________________________________

Dear _______________________________________

I am a graduate student at OISE, University of Toronto, and am currently enrolled as a Master of Teaching candidate. I am studying the relationship of an Early-learning Team in a Full-day Kindergarten classroom for the purposes of investigating an educational topic as a major assignment for our program. I think that your knowledge and experience will provide insights into this topic.

I am writing a report on this study as a requirement of the Master of Teaching Program. My course instructor who is providing support for the process this year is Mary-Lynn Tessaro. My research supervisor is Donna Duplak. The purpose of this requirement is to allow us to become familiar with a variety of ways to do research. My data collection consists of a 40 minute interview that will be tape-recorded. I would be grateful if you would allow me to interview you at a place and time convenient to you. I can conduct the interview at your office or workplace, in a public place, or anywhere else that you might prefer.

The contents of this interview will be used for my assignment, which will include a final paper, as well as informal presentations to my classmates and/or potentially at a conference or publication. I will not use your name or anything else that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications.

This information remains confidential. The only people who will have access to my assignment work will be my research supervisor and my course instructor. You are free to change your mind at any time, and to withdraw even after you have consented to participate. You may decline to answer any specific questions. I will destroy the tape recording after the paper has been presented and/or published which may take up to five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks or benefits to you for assisting in the project, and I will share with you a copy of my notes to ensure accuracy.

Please sign below if you agreed to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. Thank you very much for your help.

Yours sincerely,
Researcher name: Lili Lam   Email: lili.lam@mail.utoronto.ca

By signing below, you are indicating your willingness to participate in the study, that you have received a second signed copy of this letter for your records, and that you are fully aware of the conditions above.

Printed name: __________________________

Signed: __________________________

Date: __________________________

Initial if you agree to have your interview recorded ______
Appendix B: Interview Questions

Main Research Question:
What are the components of a positive Early-learning Team in a Full-day Kindergarten Classroom?

1. Can you tell me about your background and expertise in early learning education?
   a) How long have you been teaching?
   b) How long have you been teaching at the kindergarten level?
   c) What are some qualifications, or specialization do you have?

2. I have asked you to participate in this study because Full-Day Kindergarten is a program that has been implemented in the last 5 years, bringing together a teacher and an early childhood educator. You both of identified that you work well together as an Early Learning Team.
   a) Could you identify and explain your role in the Early-learning Team?

3. Working as a team is important in this classroom.
   a) How do you see yourself as a team?
   b) Can you describe your partnership with each other in the classroom?

4. The Early-learning Team is still a new concept for teachers and educators working in a Full-Day Classroom.
   a) What are some important aspects of your working relationship?
   b) What components of your team contributes to a positive working relationship?

5. When working in a team conflict will arise.
   a) What kinds of conflict do you encounter?
   b) How do you resolve these conflicts?

6. The Early-learning Team was put together to best meet the needs of the kindergarten students.
   a) How does your Early-learning Team perceive the impact on the students and their learning in your class?

7. What are some suggestions or tips you would give a new group or team starting up?

Thank you for your time and input!