

Integration of Early Years Programs and Services

Literature Review of Four International
Jurisdictions: B.C. Ministry of Children & Family
Development and the B.C. Association of Family
Resource Programs

Leanne Seddon-Howell

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of early years program service delivery in British Columbia (B.C.) and examine the integration of early years programs and services in other jurisdictions. The report examines the following research question: *Based on experiences described in other jurisdictions, what are the key enabling elements for promoting and maintaining successful integration of early years programs and services?*

Early Years Programming and the benefits of service integration

Early years programming includes the following three service areas: (1) **Early childhood development**; aims to empower parents, families and service providers in a holistic manner to provide the best possible start for B.C.'s children (ages 0 – 6 years); (2) **Early Learning**; supports the social, emotional, and cognitive development of young children from birth to school entry; (3) **Child Care**; includes a range of options, such as licensed; registered or licence-not-required family child care; licensed group child care; licensed out-of-school child care; licensed preschool; and child care in the child's own home.

When programs are co-located and fully integrated, families with young children experience significantly reduced barriers to access. For the purposes of this document, 'integration' of programs and services may include programs and services delivery that are: (1) physically co-located under a single governing entity; (2) co-located services, with multiple governing entities; (3) virtually integrated services under a single governing entity; or, (4) collaborated partnerships between multiple services, at multiple sites, with multiple governing entities.

The current state of early years service integration in B.C. and Cross-jurisdictional scan

The cross-ministry nature of early years programming addresses the varied individual, cultural, socio-economic, and developmental needs of B.C. families and requires provincial ministries to collaborate and work together to deliver programs and services. Throughout this literature review, a focus is placed on the degree to which the selected jurisdictions integrate various components of early years programs and services. The following list of jurisdictions selected for this review was developed in partnership with the B.C. Association of Family Resource Programs (B.C.-FRP):

- **New Zealand**: represents a successful model of the complete integration of early childhood education and care services, with a strong emphasis on "diversity, equity and bi-culturalism ... and proper training for ECE staff" (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2002).
- **Province of Alberta**: provides a Canadian-based model of community-planned and community-based integration of parent education/family support services and early childhood education and care programs through the Parent Link centres.
- **Sweden**: provides a successful example of the integration of early childhood services seems more like early learning and child care through universal programming and a national curriculum.
- **New Jersey**: recognized leader in the development of high quality, effective universal preschool programs.

Analysis and Recommendations

Each of the reviewed jurisdictions presents learning opportunities for policy makers to learn from the experiences of other national and international early years service delivery systems. The following three recommendations have evolved from the jurisdictional scan, including: Establish an adaptable

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overarching vision; Incorporate multicultural perspectives into a provincial framework; and Build supporting infrastructure to promote integration across service delivery areas.

Section 1: INTRODUCTION

Early years programs in British Columbia (B.C.), encompassing early childhood development (ECD), child care and early learning programs, aim to assist parents, families, service providers and communities in providing the best possible start for children from ages birth to six-years-old. The Province supports healthy child development through investments in a wide range of integrated, community-based programs and services for young children and their families. These programs and services aim to improve parent/caregiver and child outcomes by providing supportive, preventative, and evidence-based services, founded on the principles of choice, quality, access, inclusion, and cohesion.

For the purposes of this report, “early years” programs in B.C. include the following three service areas:

1. **Early childhood development (ECD)** – programs aim to assist parents, families and service providers to provide the best possible start for B.C.’s children (ages 0 – 6 years). Programs are designed to improve outcomes across four priority areas: (1) Promoting healthy pregnancy, birth and infancy; (2) Improving parenting and family supports; (3) Strengthening early childhood development, learning and care; and (4) Strengthening community supports.
2. **Early learning** – Early learning programs are designed to support the social, emotional and cognitive development of young children from birth to five-years-old (school entry), encompassing a range of quality early learning environments including child care, preschools, StrongStart Early Learning centres, Ready, Set, Learn initiatives to meet the diverse needs of children and families across B.C.
3. **Child care** – Child care programs in B.C. encompass a range of quality options to support the diverse needs of families and children, including licensed, registered or licence-not-required family child care, licensed group care, licensed out-of-school care, licensed preschool and child care in the child’s own home. Programs are designed to provide healthy, developmentally-appropriate environments for children to learn, play and grow, while also supporting families to seek employment, work outside the home, or attend school.

Background: Importance of the Early Years

A child’s experiences in the first six years of life have a profound impact on their future cognitive, social, physical and emotional development. Research indicates that these early years are crucial for the long-term development of life-skills and future success in life (Young, 2007; Shanker, 2007; Kershaw, 2009). During this time the child’s brain is optimally programmed to benefit from stimulating, appropriate and enjoyable experiences. Brain architecture and developing abilities are built from the bottom up, with complex skills building on the more basic foundations that preceded them (Friederici, 2006).

Objectives

The purpose of this literature review is to provide an overview of B.C. early years program service delivery and examine the integration of early childhood and family support services in other jurisdictions. Of particular interest are jurisdictions in which these programs and services are delivered in a coordinated, collaborative and community-based manner. Four jurisdictions were chosen for review: New Zealand, the Province of Alberta, Sweden and New Jersey. Due to lack of available literature on jurisdictions that mirror the B.C. context specifically, a selection of jurisdictions were

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chosen based on timeliness of available information and the potential for relating that information to the B.C. context. The report aims to examine the following research question:

Based on experiences described in other jurisdictions, what are the key enabling elements for promoting and maintaining successful integration of early years programs and services?

Structure of the Report

The remainder of this report is divided into six sub-sections. Section I provides context for the literature review and background information about the importance of early years programs and services. Section II offers a definition for the different levels of successful integration and discusses the benefits that may be derived from successful integration for families, children and communities. Section III describes the current state of B.C.'s early years service integration, including a description of the cross-ministry nature of early years programming in the province. In Section IV, presents a cross jurisdictional scan of four jurisdictions identified as strong examples of successful integration in early years service delivery. Analysis and recommendations are presented in Section V, with final conclusions located in Section VI.

Section II: BENEFITS OF SERVICE INTEGRATION

Definition of Successful Integration

Parents are universally recognized as the primary caregivers for their children, providing support and family connections to children in their early years; however, extended family, friends, communities and government may also play roles in supporting children (Butler, 2010). When programs and services for children and their families are administered on a collaborative, collegial basis, philosophical and theoretical contexts will be consistent across the various 'types' of services, such as child care, early learning and family resource programs.

For the purposes of this review, 'integration' of programs and services may include program and service delivery that is: (1) physically co-located under a single governing entity; (2) co-located services, with multiple governing entities; (3) virtually integrated services (e.g. outreach/satellite sites, etc.) under a single governing entity; or, (4) collaborated partnerships between multiple services, at multiple sites, with multiple governing entities.

Benefits of Integration for Programs

Smaller, discrete programs may achieve enhanced stability and sustainability by "joining forces" with other well established early years programs and services. Further, successful integration results in philosophical, practice and leadership content that remains consistent across services. Program evaluation may be more easily achieved and reliable, thereby making quality assurance efforts more meaningful for funders.

Benefits of Integration for Families and Children

When programs are co-located and fully integrated, families with young children experience significantly reduced barriers to access, including reduced transportation costs, lower fees, and easier, centralized access to resources and information. In addition, families benefit from service integration through reduced service gaps and/or duplication, and a more cohesive system of services and supports.

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Section III: CURRENT STATE OF B.C. EARLY YEARS SERVICE INTEGRATION

In B.C., early years programs and services aim to promote optimal health and development and provide children with opportunities to succeed throughout life. In line with the principles inherent to the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, the Government of Canada committed to improve and expand early childhood development (ECD) programs and services via the September 2000 Early Childhood Development Agreement (2011). The B.C. Government has continued to support and invest in a range of programs and initiatives that promote the healthy growth and development of young children province-wide. Further, increased involvement by communities, businesses and non-traditional partners in early years promotion has raised public awareness and provided children and their families in B.C. with greater access to services.

There are many different players acting to support families with young children in B.C. Early years services are housed within various levels and departments of government, community organizations and private operators. Development and delivery of early years programs and services are often shared among these players, or are managed and delivered in distinct delivery streams.

Early years programs and services support children and their families to grow to their full potential by addressing physical, cognitive and social development needs. These programs also aim to nurture healthy interactions between children and their parents in supportive environments (MCFD, 2011). These programs and services include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Family Resource Programs,
- Home Visitor Training Initiatives,
- Infant Development Programs (IDP), Aboriginal IDP,
- Supported Child Development (SCD) Programs, Aboriginal SCD,
- Parent-Child Mother Goose,
- Neighbourhood hubs,
- Aboriginal Seeds of Empathy, Seeds of Empathy,
- Early Years Refugee Pilots, and
- Immigrant Settlement Services Agencies.

Children First community development initiative facilitates cross-sectoral partnerships and builds community capacity to support the healthy development of children ages birth to six-years-old. Children First has forty-five initiatives across the province and uses a collaborative, inclusive, community-driven approach to identify and plan for the unique needs and priorities of their communities. Children First collaborates with other ECD community partners such as Success By 6, the Human Early Learning Partnership, and Community Action Program for Children.

As an internationally branded United Way initiative, Success By 6 (SB6) supports communities working together to improve outcomes for children, ages birth to six-years-old, by ensuring access to resources and programs that support healthy child development and growth. In BC, the Early Childhood Development Provincial Partnership leads SB6 and includes the following partners: the United Way, Credit Unions of BC, and the BC Government. The SB6 Aboriginal Engagement Strategy employs Aboriginal SB6 Coordinators – in collaboration with the Aboriginal community – to focus on increasing representation in SB6 initiatives, strengthening community capacity, increasing cultural awareness within the context of Aboriginal early childhood development, and promoting awareness of the

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importance of the early years. See Appendix A for a complete listing of early years programs and services in B.C.

Cross-Ministry Nature of the Early Years Programming

Provincial ministries in B.C. offer a wide range of early years services geared at supporting all children and their families. The varied individual, cultural, socio-economic, and developmental needs of B.C. families require provincial ministries to collaborate and work together towards an integrated system of early years-related policy. For instance, families requiring support services for a child with special needs may turn to MCFD for assistance programs such as Supported Child Development. The same families may also require assistance accessing affordable child care through MCFD, or wish to access available early childhood screenings for their child through the Ministry of Health. Many of the programs overlap between two or more ministries, usually with one ministry taking the “lead” on the initiative, and others taking more of a “partner” role, including funding support, collaboration, and/or policy development. Given the range of individual and family needs, the social services ministries continually strive to integrate existing programs and initiatives to better serve B.C. families (Butler, 2010).

Section IV: CROSS-JURISDICTIONAL SCAN

A cross-jurisdictional review of early years programs and services was conducted to address the research question: *“Based on experiences described in other jurisdictions, what are the key enabling elements for promoting and maintaining successful integration of early years programs and services?”* By reviewing and analyzing how other jurisdictions’ early years programs and services are structured and delivered, B.C. might learn how existing early years policies could be further advanced.

The list of jurisdictions selected for this review was developed in partnership with the B.C. Association of Family Resource Programs (B.C.-FRP). Jurisdictions were selected based on specific aspects of service integration, early years policies, or particular relevance to B.C., as follows:

- **New Zealand:** represents a successful model of the complete integration of early childhood education and care services. It has been identified by the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs (2009, p. 203) as a “world leader in an integrated early childhood and care system, while also integrating the culture, beliefs and needs of the Maori peoples into its national programs and strategies.”
- **Province of Alberta:** provides a Canadian-based model of community-planned and community-based integration of parent education/family support services and early childhood education and care programs through the Parent Link centres.
- **Sweden:** provides a successful example of integrated early childhood services through universal programming and a national curriculum. The National Commission of Child Care was created in 1968 to oversee the union of care and pedagogy, which is how the 1998 National Curriculum for pre-school was founded.
- **New Jersey:** recognized leader in the development of high quality, effective universal preschool programs.

New Zealand

The New Zealand Government’s vision for the early childhood education sector is to lift the educational achievement of all New Zealand’s children (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2002).

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In 1986, New Zealand became the first country in the world to situate both their child care and early childhood development systems under the Ministry of Education. This shift in policy was attributed in part to the long-standing tradition of parent-led preschools which mended and prevented the “rift” between education and care that is often experienced in other nations from forming. The newly merged system was innovative, with a strong emphasis on “diversity, equity and bi-culturalism ... [and] proper training for ECE staff” (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2002).

To complement the tenets of this newly formed and integrated system, the New Zealand government supported the development of a new joint curriculum and ten-year strategic plan through extensive consultation with families, parents, communities and Maori culture. The Te Whāriki is intended to “share a common vision of what success looks like” to anyone working with children in New Zealand.

B.C. could learn from the New Zealand experience, especially in light of our growing Aboriginal and immigrant populations. Towards achievement of this vision, New Zealand has identified in its Strategic Plan for ECE to achieve the following three core goals over the next 10 years:

- Increase participation in quality early years services;
- Improve quality of early years services; and
- Promote collaborative relationships among programs and services for children and families (Standing Committee on Social Affairs, 2009).

The New Zealand model works to achieve better co-operation and collaboration among early years services, parent support and development programs and education in order to encourage parents’ to be involved in their children’s early learning. Components of New Zealand’s early years system that are of particular interest in the current context include:

- Education and Care Centres which provide either sessional, all day, or flexible hours programming;
- Parent Support and Development Programmes which aim to improve health, social and educational outcomes by helping to build parenting capacity and address families’ vulnerabilities (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2011).

Efforts to achieve coordinated and collaborative service delivery in New Zealand are on-going. In particular, there have been efforts to strengthen the relationships between various support service providers who might be working with the same family. In this context, child care is regarded as an educational service, not a welfare service. Government responded to this with a single framework to combine requirements for welfare and learning and development of all children: The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS, 2011). This tool aims to accomplish the following:

- Set standards for children’s learning, development and care;
- Improve quality and consistency in the early years sector;
- Lay a secure foundation for future learning and development planned around the individual needs and interests of each child;
- Provide quality and opportunity; and
- Create the framework for partnership.

The EYFS determined added benefits of decreased bureaucracy helped create equal provision of service regardless of the families’ community and the type of setting that the children attend (EYFS, 2011).

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Further, increased engagement and a higher likelihood of follow through with parenting strategies demonstrated/explored in groups focused on child development occurs when parents and caregivers work together (EYFS, 2010).

Province of Alberta (Canada)

In April 2003, the Province of Alberta created new boundaries for their Child and Family Service Authorities by reducing 18 regions to 10 (Government of Alberta, 2007). This move followed recommendations by the Commissioner of Children's Services that communities should have a direct say in planning and delivering services. A framework was established that provided for the redesign of Children's Services based on four strategic objectives:

- Community-based Services;
- Early intervention;
- Integrated services; and
- Improved services to Aboriginal Children (Government of Alberta, 2004).

Core business of Alberta's Child and Family Services Authorities focuses on partnerships which promote healthy communities for children, youth and families. The mandate of Alberta Children and Youth Services includes delivery of services in accordance with varying provincial legislation, including the *Child Care Licensing Act*, *Family Support for Children with Disabilities Act* and *Child and the Youth and Family Enhancement Act* (Government of Alberta, 2007; 2003; 2000).

Collaboration amongst services under these legislations was the basis of two innovative early years practices in 2009/10. The Government of Alberta developed specialized child care spaces to address families' varied needs such as foster families and children with special needs; as well, child care professionals' opportunities for networking, skill development and sharing of best practices contributed to the collaborative efforts in the child care sector (2007).

Alberta's Regional Authorities have a mandate which includes the following:

- creating child care spaces;
- working with the child care workforce to increase opportunities for both the sector and families in need of services; and,
- working on a project to coordinate services for children aged two and a half to six who receive both Family Support for Children with Disabilities specialized services and Program Unit Funding through Alberta Education (2007).

Alberta's Parent Link Centres: These community based, family serving agencies support and strengthen families, improve parenting skills and foster optimal child development. In order to most effectively serve families, Parent Link Centres are closely connected to their communities. Networking and building partnerships with schools and community agencies that provide a wide array of family services are the cornerstone of Parent Link Centres' operations (Alberta Children's Services, 2004).

Collaboration and coordination of early years programs and services as they apply to the Alberta Parent Link Centres provides many benefits previously outlined, such as:

- Familiarity with the wide array of early years programs and services available in the community;

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- Gaps in services are identifiable and duplication of services minimized, thereby minimizing cost inefficiencies; and
- Families get services they need through a coordinated, integrated, community-based approach (2004).

Child care services are not provided through Parent Link Centres, however, information and reference services are widely available through the community-based, collaborative approach to serving families that Parent Link provides (Alberta Children's Services, 2004).

Sweden

Today, integrated early childhood services are an entitlement of Swedish society, provided through universal programming and a national curriculum. In 1968, a National Commission on Childcare (the Commission) was created to consider how pedagogical, social and supervisory elements of child care could be integrated. Its report, published after four years of deliberation, concluded that services to young children could best be provided if they linked care and healthy development for all children (Gunnarsson, 1999).

The Commission formalized the integration of child care and early education and the Swedish "Preschool" was created, providing full or part-time services designed to serve children of mixed age groups. They were built principally on centre-based models that regarded parent engagement and close relationships between children and adults, where children's self-esteem and independence were key elements (Skolverket, 2001). In 1975, a *National Preschool Act* gave local authorities the responsibility for expanding public child care and providing all six-year-olds with at least 525 hours of free pre-schooling. By virtue of the *Preschool Act*, all preschool services and child care for school-age children became the full responsibility of the municipalities and financed by central government grants, local tax revenue, and parental fees (Gunnarson, 1999; Skolverket, 2001; UNESCO, 2003). The state now establishes the goals, the guidelines, and the financial framework for early years programs and services, while municipalities tailor programmes to meet their unique priorities and needs. The ability for Sweden's early years system to cut across levels of government and political lines is what makes the system so effective (Gunnarson, 1999). Municipalities decide the appropriate balance between family day care homes and centres, a balance that varies tremendously depending on geographic locales. In addition, devolution has given the municipalities the discretion to privatise services as they deem fit (Gunnarson, 1999). Municipalities are responsible not only for the provision of early years services, but also for monitoring quality and allocating resources to those services.

In recent years, the structure and organisation of Swedish early childhood services has been heavily influenced by two major trends: First, the transition of services from the Ministry of Health and Social Services to the Ministry of Education and Science, and second, the devolution of authority to the municipalities and related privatisation efforts (Gunnarson, 1999; Korpi, 2007).

The National Agency for Education is responsible for follow-up, evaluation, data collection, development, and supervision at central and regional levels. In Sweden, unlike many other nations, services for young children are lodged in the Ministry of Education and Science alongside other universal educational services. Although the current system has successfully integrated early years services, tensions exist between early years programs and services as a pedagogical experience versus 'preschool' since the preparation for the future results in dual strategic directions (Korpi, 2007).

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Changes associated with the devolution of funding to municipalities for family support services caused considerable change in the amount of fees Swedish families paid for services, which resulted in questions arising over equity of access and availability (Korpi). In recognition of this challenge, the Social Democratic Government put forward a parliamentary proposal for the introduction of a flat-rate set fee in September 1999. From January, 2002, all municipalities have agreed on maximum fees for early years programming recommended by the government, these fees are calculated according to family income and hours of child's attendance at program (UNESCO, 2003).

In addition to the above mentioned, Swedish early years programs benefit from personnel working in teams across programs, drawing from each other's expertise and strengths to meet varying challenges presented across areas of service delivery; also a better developed sense of a family's strengths and challenges can be derived, and services and supports can be tailored to meet specific needs (Korpi, 2007).

New Jersey (United States)

New Jersey has been a national leader in the development of high quality, effective early years programming (New Jersey Council for Young Children, 2010). In 2010, nearly 43,000, three- and four-year-olds enrolled in fully-day, high quality early years programs. Perhaps in response to this phenomenon, the New Jersey Council for Young Children was created by Executive Order on January 8, 2010 to serve as the State Advisory Council for Early Education and Care (New Jersey Council for Young Children, 2010). The Council is charged with assuring collaboration and coordination among the various early childhood programs in the state for children from birth to age eight. The Council's vision is to align and improve New Jersey's numerous and complex initiatives into one streamlined system of early education and care that reaches all infants and young children in need of services. This system focuses on the whole child, optimizing all aspects of learning and development, including child care services (New Jersey Council for Young Children, 2010).

Members of this council include representatives from the education system, local providers' organizations, Head Start agencies, with 25 percent of membership being of the public at large (with no particular relationship to service delivery in their community). Ensuring that families are engaged in policy and program decisions and mounting a state-wide education campaign on the importance of early childhood development and learning for all families and the public is a major component of these awareness raising efforts. An Advisory Council helps assure state wide collaboration, coordination and quality among the various early years programs and services for all children from birth to school entry (State of New Jersey, 2011).

In its efforts to provide coordinated, comprehensive services, the Council has focused on the development of a system of evaluation and improvement to help achieve the council's mandate (New Jersey Council for Young Children, 2010). This unified data system provides the capability to track children across ages and over time, encompassing data on home, school and community environments. This data collection provides a set of fulsome demographic data on participants and child and family outcomes across developmental domains that can be linked across sectors, agencies and programs (New Jersey Council for Young Children, 2010).

Further, these efforts to provide coordinated services to all children in the early years and their families, the sector also strives to strengthen the early childhood workforce by investing in the preschool years through professional development of its educators. This professionalization of the early childhood sector helps improve the quality of the overall early years programs and service delivery system.

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The inclusion of four core service domains creates a comprehensive system for program and service delivery. This 'system of systems' would include the following:

- Physical, oral and mental health services ;
- Family support and services-including safe and stable housing, family literacy and parenting education policies that support healthy child development and sound family engagement;
- Early education and child care services; and
- Early intervention services (New Jersey Council for Young Children, 2010).

Presently, no single governmental department or agency exists in New Jersey with the authority to manage, coordinate and evaluate an early years system. It could be suggested that accountability and strong relationships are key to the mission and operational principles of all levels of government.

Section V: ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Analysis & Recommendations

This review of literature across jurisdictions outlines various approaches to early years service delivery. Each of the reviewed jurisdictions presents opportunities for policy makers to learn from the experiences of other national and international service delivery systems. There cannot be, however, direct inference of applicability from these experiences to the B.C. context. Limitations to such comparison include differing definitions of 'early years programs and services,' philosophical differences of populations served, and differing models of service integration.

The review did, however, reveal some elements common amongst the jurisdictions who have successfully integrated early years programs and services. These elements help inform recommendations for B.C.'s delivery of programs and services to young children and their families.

From New Zealand we learn of the benefit of including Maori culture and heritage in the nationally accepted pedagogy and we see their regard for child care as an educational service, thereby sharing their pedagogical frameworks among early years programs and services. The Province of Alberta's early years programs and services provide a made-in-Canada example of successful family services integration. Oversight of such programming falls under the regional auspices of the Child and Family Service Authorities. Under their system of governance, communities have direct say in planning and delivering services to children and families; therefore, the benefits of integration of early years and family support programs are apparent. Parent Link Centers are service delivery hubs which meet many of families' needs together in one place helping to support positive outcomes for young children and their families. Although child care services are not directly provided, referral information can be obtained through the Parent Link Centers.

Sweden's system shows that government profile enshrined in policy and in a regulatory Commission facilitates beneficial outcomes for children and families. The Swedish *Preschool Act* provides for all children's entitlement to free early years services including child care. In 2009, the Report on Child Wellbeing across the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the UNICEF analysis of 2007 names Sweden at second highest in education, health and safety, family and peer relationships and subjective well being.

From New Jersey, USA, the adoption of the philosophy of the whole child (in terms of their educational, physical, social and emotional development) together with the mandate of the New Jersey Council for

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Young Children to provide coordinated, high quality early years services across the state, results in a system of strong relationships among service providers and all levels of government.

How can these lessons guide B.C.'s service delivery of early years programming? Certain practices that can be gleaned from this review have potential to be applied to and strengthen the current system in B.C.:

- Establish an overarching vision to guide development and delivery of early years programming to span across the three categories of programming: early childhood development, early learning and child care. This vision must embody flexibility and adaptability to meet community needs and to be applied across B.C.'s vast variety of cultural, economic and social demographic lines, as well as an expansive geography.
- Incorporate multicultural and aboriginal perspectives into the provincial framework, with input and collaboration from stakeholders.
- Build supporting infrastructure to promote integration across service delivery areas, focusing on the holistic needs of children and families.

Section VI: CONCLUSION

The historical rifts among child care, early childhood development, and early learning programs are not helpful to families. Cooperation and collaboration among service providers working with children and their families, amongst many benefits, helps assure that families' needs are holistically addressed, that gaps in service do not develop, that resources are not underutilized by services being duplicated, and that funding is distributed into service delivery as opposed to multiple administration systems overseeing multiple governing agencies.

"Integration" takes various forms. Each of the jurisdictions has embraced "integration" in their unique way. The benefits of integration of early years programs and services include: stability and sustainability by "joining forces" with other established service providers; consistent philosophic underpinnings enhance the desired values and principles embedded in programs and services; also, program evaluation is meaningful when like program outcomes are being compared amongst services.

In B.C., Early Years services are housed within various levels and departments of government, community organizations and private operators. Development and delivery of early years programs and services are often shared among these players, or are managed and delivered in distinct delivery streams.

Provincial ministries offer a wide range of early years services geared at supporting all children and their families. A cross-ministry approach to programs and services for young children and their families may create complexity which may act as a barrier to families wishing to access services (Butler, 2010).

Acknowledging that all families living in communities have varying needs is critical in any delivery of programs that support children and their families. A system based on common values, and a clear, comprehensive approach where any family could arrive, describe their needs and be directed towards the appropriate support seems most helpful in supporting all families in B.C.

Further review could perhaps reveal other models of early years programs and service delivery that could lend themselves to comparison to the B.C. context. For example, England's Sure Start Children's

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Centres offers early education, child care, family support and health services for families, as well as job search and training information and advice to families with children aged under five years old.

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Appendix A: Early Years Programs in B.C.

Ministry of Children and Family Development	
Program	Description
Aboriginal ECD Regional Initiative	Supports Aboriginal communities in the delivery of culturally appropriate ECD services, both on and off reserve, through 43 Aboriginal agencies across B.C.
Aboriginal ECD Strategic Planning	A steering committee made up of Aboriginal, First Nation and Métis representatives working with a host agency (B.C. Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres) to fund community initiatives that focus on ECD – with the ministry’s support.
Building Blocks	Provides a range of community-based services to support children, up to six years of age, and their families. Programs are designed to increase parents capacity by focusing on enhanced parent/child relationships, lay home visiting, early literacy and language development and healthy growth.
Children First Provincial Initiative	Community development initiative designed to facilitate cross-sectoral partnerships and build community capacity to support the healthy development of young children, birth to six years. There are 45 initiatives across the province led by early childhood leaders and local early childhood steering committees.
B.C. Council for Families	Non-profit organization contracted to maintain the Parent Child Mother Goose Program, the Home Visiting Initiative, and the B.C. Alliance for Young Parents.
Success By 6® (SB6)	Twenty regional SB6 initiatives reach an estimated 400 communities, to support local ECD community tables or coalitions; build public awareness about the importance of the early years; conduct research into community needs of young children and their families and establish funding priorities; expand the scope of community partnerships and collaborations; and leverage funding and resources.
Family Resource Programs (FRPs) & Aboriginal FRPs	Community-based programs designed to strengthen parenting skills, promote family and community engagement, and provide stimulating environments for children.
B.C. Association of Family Resource Programs	Represents approximately 270 FRPs across the province through leadership, resources, and professional development support, including implementation of a Provincial Standards of Practice.

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Aboriginal Seeds of Empathy	Designed for early childhood settings to foster social and emotional competence and early literacy skills in children three to five years of age, while providing professional development for their educators.
Shaken Baby Syndrome Prevention Program (Period of PURPLE Crying)	Prevention program designed to bring about a cultural change in understanding infant crying and reduce the number of cases of traumatic brain injury due to shaken baby syndrome by 50 per cent.
UVic School of Child & Youth Care	Develops and delivers professional development to support good practices and the implementation of the B.C. Early Learning Framework.
ECD Evaluation Project	In collaboration with the United Way of the Lower Mainland, the Public Health Agency of Canada, MCFD, and the Human Early Learning Partnership, the project focuses on developing and delivering a province-wide evaluation system for ECD across four long-term outcomes.
Human Early Learning Partnership	A collaborative, interdisciplinary research network that contributes to new knowledge in ECD and enhances the quality of children's early years. Contracted to implement the Early Development Instrument, a research tool that assesses the state of children's development at kindergarten by gathering data on five areas of child development. HELP receives funding from three ministries: Children and Family Development, Education and Health.
Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder	A Key Worker and Parent Support Program assists families in understanding FASD by providing education and information specific to the needs of the child and family.
Infant Development Programs & Aboriginal Infant Development Programs	Provides a range of integrated, family-centered prevention and early intervention services and supports for families of young children who have - or are at risk of developing - a developmental delay.
Early Intervention Services	Provides community-based physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech-language pathology and family support worker services for children between birth and school entry who have, or are at risk for, a developmental delay and/or disability.
MCFD 2010/11 ECD (excluding child care programs & services)	
Child Care Operating Funding Program	Assists eligible licensed group and family child care providers with the cost of providing child care. Currently CCOF funds over 5,000 licensed child care facilities and supports over 99,000 total spaces across the province.
Child Care Subsidy Program	Supports low- and moderate-income families with the costs of child care. In 2010/11, approximately 54,000 children were supported by child care subsidies per month.

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Child Care Resource and Referral programs	Provides support, resources and referral services for child care providers and parents across the province.
Child Care Capital Funding Programs (Minor & Major)	<p><i>Minor Capital:</i> Funding is available to assist licensed, group non-profit child care providers with emergency repairs or upgrades, replacement of equipment and furnishings to meet licensing requirements, or to assist with moving costs.</p> <p><i>Major Capital:</i> Supports child care providers to purchase equipment, build, renovate or expand existing child care facilities to create new licensed child care spaces.</p>

Ministry of Education (MEd)	
Program	Description
Ready, Set, Learn	Early years initiative providing opportunities for elementary schools to influence the early development of three-year-olds, in partnership with participating community-based early childhood service providers and other community agencies.
StrongStart B.C. Early Learning Programs	Early years programs that support the physical, cognitive, language and social-emotional development of children by providing free programming for children (birth to before school age) accompanied by a parent or caregiver.
Human Early Learning Partnership	A collaborative, interdisciplinary research network that contributes to new knowledge in ECD and enhances the quality of children's early years. Contracted to implement the Early Development Instrument, a research tool that assesses the state of children's development at kindergarten by gathering data on five areas of child development.
Ministry of Education (MEd) Early Years Education Program	
Kindergarten in public schools (half school day and full school day)*	In 2010/11 government began phasing in full day kindergarten over two years. Approximately 60% of kindergarten students attended full day kindergarten in 2010/11. As of September 2011, full day kindergarten is now available for all five-year-olds in the province so funding for 2011/12 will be greater.
Ministry of Health (MoH)	
Program	Description
Aboriginal Maternal and Child Health - Doula Initiative	A project designed to facilitate Aboriginal women to receive doula training, in order to support the emotional and physical comfort of Aboriginal pregnant women. Curriculum was developed, and in February and March 2009, twenty-six Aboriginal women in two communities in the Interior received Aboriginal doula training.
Childhood Immunizations	Comprehensive immunization program provided through Child Health clinics conducted by public health or by family physicians. Implementation exceeds national expectations in immunization coverage and service.

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B.C. Nurseline (HealthLink B.C.)	Provides an opportunity to engage a nurse, anytime of the day or night, 365 days/year for non-emergency health information.
Child Care Licensing Program ¹	Ensures the provision of child care services that meet health and safety requirements in over 6,000 child care facilities providing approximately 99,000 licensed child care spaces.
Early Childhood Hearing Screening Program	Universal hearing screening is offered to all babies born in B.C. to ensure that children birth with congenital hearing loss receive early intervention and treatment.
Early Childhood Vision Screening Program	Universal vision screening is occurring by trained public health practitioners with referral to vision specialists for diagnostic testing and follow-up. Some health authorities screen children in kindergarten; some are screening three-year-olds.
Early Childhood Dental Health Program	Provision of public health dental services through registered dental hygienists and certified dental assistants, through health authorities is occurring to increase prevention of early childhood cavities and improve identification of higher risk, more vulnerable segments of the population.
Newborn Screening Program	Universal screening is offered to all babies born in B.C. for early diagnosis of 19 treatable disorders, including metabolic disorders, endocrine disorders, hemoglobinopathies, and Cystic Fibrosis.
Parent Resources	<p><i>Baby's Best Chance Book/DVD</i> - provides up-to-date information on healthy pregnancy, infant/child care, and early parenting available free of charge to pregnant women in B.C..</p> <p><i>Toddler's First Steps</i> - provides practical information on nutrition, safety, child development, health and wellness, and parenting available free of charge to parents of 6 to 36 month old children.</p> <p><i>Child Health Passport</i> - immunization, growth monitoring and child health record provided to all infants born in B.C..</p> <p><i>Best Chance Website</i> - provides up-to-date and practical information, useful tools and resources for women, expectant parents, and families with babies and toddlers up to 3 years of age.</p> <p><i>Safe Sleep Initiative</i> – development of safe sleep education materials for First Nations communities and Aboriginal organizations, as well as parent/caregiver materials based on the provincial safe sleep guidelines.</p>
Midwifery Program	Midwifery is integrated into the full spectrum of obstetrics, providing care in community, home-based and hospital settings for healthy pregnant women and their babies.
Perinatal Depression	Health authorities have developed Perinatal Depression plans based on the framework - <i>Addressing Perinatal Depression: A Framework for B.C.'s Health Authorities</i> .
Autism Diagnosis & Assessment	The B.C. Autism Assessment Network (B.C.AAN) provides diagnostic Assessments for children throughout the province.

¹ This program is integrated with child/youth/adult/residential care community care program in the health authorities; unable to delineate program from larger budget.

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Consultation for Complex Developmental Behavioural Conditions	The Complex Developmental Behavioural Conditions Network (CDB.C.) is a partnership among the five regional health authorities, together with and responsible to, the Provincial Health Services Authority. The CDB.C. is designed to provide a standardized assessment for children with possible FASD and other complex developmental behavioural conditions.
Human Early Learning Partnership	A collaborative, interdisciplinary research network that contributes to new knowledge in ECD and enhances the quality of children's early years. Contracted to implement the Early Development Instrument, a research tool that assesses the state of children's development at kindergarten by gathering data on five areas of child development.

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Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation (MARR)	
Program - Initiative	Description
Preschool Language Nest Program	Preschool total immersion programs designed to restore and enhance the use of Aboriginal languages by young children, as well as by their parents and other family members. Through these programs, children are exposed on a daily basis to everyday words, concepts and traditional practices in their Aboriginal language of origin. There were 10 language nest programs operating in 2010/11. This program is delivered by the First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council.
Imagination Library	Provides age-appropriate books to First Nations and Metis children aged 0-4 years in 12 communities across B.C.. Each participating child receives a monthly book in the mail until their fifth birthday.

Ministry of Social Development (MSD)	
Program	Description
B.C. Health Kids Program	Provides basic dental and optical services for children in low and moderate income families in receipt of premium assistance through MSP. Program also bridges those families moving from income assistance to employment by allowing the families to retain some benefits previously associated with income assistance.