

Rooted in Possibilities

GRASP

*Guiding Responsive Approaches
to Strengthening Practice*



“

*We keep teaching
children what to do...
they keep mirroring
back who they are.*

(Lee, 2016)



Rooted in Possibilities

Project Report 2016-2017

GRASP *Guiding Responsive Approaches
to Strengthening Practice*



“

Children know in a 1,000 ways how we are with them by what we say and do and if we remember that then we can make a difference. (Lee, 2016)



Contents

06 | Introduction

The Creation of the GRASP Project

10 | Exploration

Current Guiding Practice

16 | Engagement

Engagement of Agencies

20 | Training

Agenda & Timelines

22 | Implementation

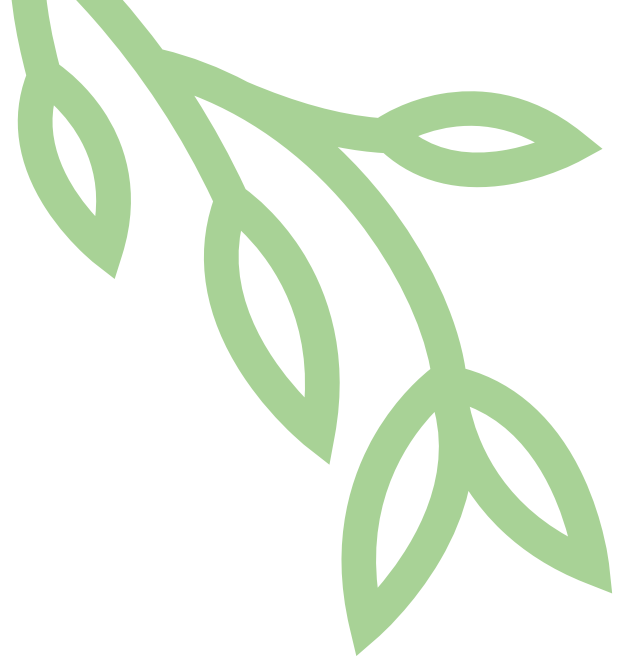
Goals, Results & Feedback

30 | Evaluation

Furthering Implementation

34 | Appendices

Glossary & References



A Journey of Learning

The Creation of the GRASP Project

The Alberta Resource Centre for Quality Enhancement (ARCQE) has a long history of supporting Alberta Parent Link Centers (PLC's) in capacity building using the Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ-3) and Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Social and Emotional (ASQ-SE-2) tools. In 2013, ARCQE worked in partnership with ministry to expand facilitation of ASQ Train the Trainer sessions to include delivery of regional ASQ orientation sessions to support access and implementation

of formal screening tools for the broader child care community. Frequently however; as trainings and orientation sessions concluded and implementation with programs was revisited, participants often commented: *"I took the training some time ago, but I do not use it because I don't have time to, do not understand, or have forgotten what to do."* Some also noted, *"I feel nervous about scoring, I am afraid to talk to families about a delay."*

“A small but growing body of empirical evidence suggests that professional development is more likely to be effective and enhance teaching and learning when opportunities are intense, sustained over time, and include guidance and feedback on how to apply specific practices through methods such as coaching, consultation, or facilitated collaboration.” (Fleet & Patterson, 2001).

In response to implementation challenges, Human Services (now Children’s Services) and ARCQE explored a vision for what further support and implementation of these screening tools could look like in the future. With a substantial cadre of trainers prepared to initiate screening across Alberta, it became increasingly evident that in order to enhance efficacy of agencies with screening and follow up support, increased mentoring and site specific support would be beneficial.

It was determined, given smaller intimate day home environments, and organizational structure of Family Child Care agencies having home visitors (consultants), that perhaps the FCC sector may provide an effective coaching model process to administer support. It was agreed that a

pilot featuring a variety of FCC settings (geographically-reflecting rural and urban) would be identified across Alberta to inform a practice model that could potentially be replicated further with other programs.

In April 2016, ARCQE received a grant to engage a project coordinator to support the development of coaching strategies as part of an initiative known as the GRASP Project. To reflect the nature of the project scope, the initiative has aptly been named Guiding Responsive Approaches to Strengthening Practice (GRASP). The intent of the project is to support family child care providers to use the ASQ-3 and ASQ-SE-2 with more intentionality and purpose in creating developmentally stimulating and more responsive environments.



Primary goals for this initiative addressed the following:

- 1 Develop an annual training plan to include a coordinated and intensified approach to enhancing capacity of program consultants and providers in agencies employing the ASQ screening tools in implementation and application of strategies supporting developmental outcomes and social/emotional outcomes for children following screening.
- 2 Identify and work with a pilot group of up to 30 Family Child Care agencies. To include the development of coaching and mentoring strategies for the ASQ agency trainers to support with development and implementation of an agency wide screening program.
- 3 Annual Training Supports include:
 - A) Continue to support virtual communities of practice. Ryan and Whitebook (2012) advise that "models of professional development have shifted from one-shot decontextualized workshops to more individualized approaches such as learning communities and coaching that provides supports for teachers to try out new ideas in practice. These new approaches, described as professional learning, actively engage the early childhood educator in critically reflecting on why and in what ways new practices work in a particular program context." (Muttart Foundation, 2014).
 - B) Coordinate one Train the Trainer session and up to (12) Regional Orientation Sessions on ASQ-3/ASQ: SE-2
 - C) Procurement of Developmental Screening Tools
 - D) Purchase of Brookes Publishing data collection
- 4 Knowledge Transfer: Support for facilitating regional program showcases on innovative practice strategies. "Whether informal or more carefully planned, communities of practice have been proven to be a powerful force for professional learning and growth in a variety of work environments. Regardless of the setting, positive change is more likely to happen and be sustained in moments when people doing the same work engage together over time with what Alma Fleet and Catherine Patterson (2001) describe as 'waves of related ideas.' (Curtis, Lebo, Cividanes, Carter, 2013).



Project Phases

Initial work focused on mapping out an implementation framework based on four project phases based on the following:





Exploration

Current Guiding Practice

At the start of this project (April 2016), it was reported that there were 71 Family Day Home agencies across Alberta as indicated by agency contracts formalized with Children's Services. This number fluctuates due to the ever changing creation and evolution of family day home agencies across the province.

Approved family day home agencies operate as contracted agencies according to Ministry Family Day Home Standards. Licensing regulations and provincially approved family day home standards set the mandatory requirements of basic health, safety and well-being of children that must be met by the licensed and approved child care agencies. Child care accreditation standards of excellence are above and beyond these mandatory provincial requirements. The standards

focus on criteria and indicators that define a higher level of quality, enhancing positive outcomes for children, as well as their families, community and the child care staff working in the program. Participation in child care accreditation is voluntary (aelcs.ca).

FDH consultants and providers work within an agency to help support administrative responsibilities, to employ day home consultants to visit individual day homes and providers, and to provide support in meeting contracted agency and accreditation requirements (Human Service, 2013, Family Day Home Standards Manual for Alberta).

The Alberta Family Child Care Association is an affiliation of contracted family day home agencies in the province. As an affiliate of the Canadian Child Care Federation the association is involved in national efforts to promote standards and equity in the child care field. Provincially the association seeks to be a voice for families in developing standards that support quality child care. Two recent notable projects are the creation of the

Family Child Care Consultant's Resource Guide with its accompanying mentor program and the highly successful Family Child Care Professional Conference held annually. Members of the association give of their time on a volunteer basis to further the vital work of advancing the quality of child care in the day home sector (**afcca.ca**).

Creating Common Language

Throughout the document there may be use of interchangeable terms referenced with the same intent or meaning. These are particularly applicable as it relates to the relationship of government or contracted agencies participating within the GRASP project. The following is provided to support further clarification of these terms.

CS/HS Children's Services – At the start of this project the contract was with Human Services, but then effected a name change to Children's Services in January 2017 which is now reflected throughout the report.

Family Child Care/Family Day Home – Government of Alberta documents, licensing, accreditation refer to agencies providing care in homes as Family Day Home Agencies whereas the agencies sometimes self- identify as family child care, as represented by the Alberta Family Child Care Association.

There are also a number of acronyms referenced throughout the document which relate to organizations and/or groups relative to the early learning sector. At the back of the document a glossary of terms have also been included providing further context of those that appear throughout this document (pg 34).



The educational level and training of day home providers is very diverse. Contracted agency requirements do not provide specific direction as to the minimum level of education attainment for a provider, but some agencies have policy guidelines that stipulate a level one is a minimum requirement. For some, agency providers may vary in qualification from any of the following:

Qualification	Title	Education
Level I	Child Care Assistant	50 Hour Orientation
Level II	Child Care Worker	1 Year Certificate
Level III	Child Care Supervisor	2 Year Diploma or equivalent

Some of the attributing factors for these variances include an early childhood educator with Level 3 providing in home care when on maternity leave, or in other circumstances employing Level 1 providers who may be newcomers to Canada learning English as a second language with an expressed interest in working in child care (AFCCA Communication, July 2016). The diversity of educational attainment, culture and language all contributing factors that were important to reflect and consider relative to an implementation plan that would fit the context of the family child care sector.

Typically, most family day home agency consultants have a minimum of Level 2 or 3 educational attainment.

Current Practice Guiding Use of ASQ-3 & ASQ-SE Developmental Screening Tools

Over the past few years, some day home consultants have taken the ASQ-3 and ASQ-SE-2 Train the Trainer sessions as part of a province-wide initiative to support the creation of a network of trainers. In other instances, consultants and/or providers may have attended regional ASQ orientation sessions delivered by ARCQE as a means of supporting awareness and information about screening tools as part of professional development. In either instance there has been no systematic process for consultants to formally implement and/or support day home providers in the use of the tools nor any systematic way to engage use of ASQ-3 and ASQ-SE-2 screening tools with parents. Additionally, at this time no formal process for gathering or utilizing information gleaned from screenings to:

- Guide enhancement of environments as a means of optimizing children's developmental potential,
- Support building of capacity relative to day home provider strategies focused on best practice relative to developmental outcomes, nor

- Provide access to formal coaching and on-site support specific to use of and possible referrals arising from implementation of ASQ tools.

Situating the Project Within Provincial Context

While focused on family day homes, this initiative is one of several projects that are currently influencing early childhood educators in the province of Alberta.

Play, Participation and Possibilities is an Early Learning and Child Care Curriculum Framework developed for Alberta by members of MacEwan University to provide a pedagogical practice model of early learning and care. Relative to situating practice in Alberta, the framework has been particularly noteworthy of reflection as it engages educators to consider our knowledge and understanding of children beyond the developmental perspective to that of a socio-cultural context that supports looking at the child as a "mighty learner" with educators supporting responsive environments that meet dispositions of each individual child. In light of the number of providers within Alberta with Level 1 educational attainment, it was

important to consider how developmental context, often the common basis of knowledge children providers' share, could be situated within the provincial context of evolving theoretical perspectives. The Curriculum Framework also illuminated reference to the importance of an effective coaching practice model which was a model of implementation reflected within the GRASP project (childcareframework.com/play-participation-and-possibilities).

Documentation through Learning Stories (Lee, 2015) is also a concept and practice that is being embraced in the ELCC community and was being employed in a FCC site who has been exploring both socio-cultural practices as well as developmental perspectives from which the GRASP project took inspiration.

Access, Support and Participation (ASaP) is a project delivered through the Edmonton based *Getting Ready for Inclusion Today* (GRIT Program). The Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children is a conceptual framework of evidence-based practice (challengingbehavior.fmhi.usf.edu/do/pyramid_model.html).

This project also uses a very specific coaching model based on the TPOT that has very specific strategies for supporting coach/educator interactions and measures. We referenced this project's findings in our conceptual development of this project.

Early Childhood Mapping (ecmap.ca) and the Early Development Instrument (EDI) scores in Alberta gave communities a common language for child development and population level data that often indicated that many children are not reaching developmental milestones in terms of social and emotional development, communication, etc. Many communities have Early Childhood Coalitions that are mobilizing greater understanding of the importance of early childhood development subject to findings that have been populated about child development in their respective communities.

The GRASP project also recognizes this work in providing valuable insight that can inform types of support needed and subsequently responsive practices that may be best suited to the developmental needs of individual community needs across Alberta.



When educators engage in a practice of relationships, they create places of vitality in early childhood communities.

(Makovichuk, Hewes, Lirette, Thomas, 2014)



Engagement

Engagement of Agencies

The process for identifying and confirming participating sites for this project was complex and required a significant time commitment. The following highlights information that was considered in enlisting agency engagement.



June

- Reviewed the list of family child care agencies that had taken part in ASQ-3 and ASQ-SE-2 training to date.
- Established a list of family child care agencies that may have already had established relationships with ARCQE relative to prior coaching involve mentor as a result of other trainings or professional development engagement.
- Consulted with ARCQE coaches relative to assessing agency readiness and receptivity to external support subject to effectiveness of coaching experience with accreditation.



July–September

- Children’s Services provided support by forwarding names and contact information for regional CFSA managers to guide further recommendations of possible agencies that demonstrated efficacy for engagement in this project.
- Impact of seasonal changes created unanticipated delays with response rates and subsequent challenges confirming agency participation.
- Formal information about the project was further communicated as part of a scheduled provincial meeting between ministry and Child and Family Service (CFS) staff.



August

- Information about the GRASP project was shared with ARCQE coaches as part of a provincial meeting in Red Deer as a means of enlisting regional coach involvement to support participating agencies.



October

- Individual agency contact is ongoing.
- Two-day ASQ training with Brookes Publishing Co. trainer Sue Yockelson is coordinated to in Edmonton to support provision as necessary for participating agency staff in obtaining Train the Trainer status with ASQ developmental screening tools.
- Continued focus on supporting broader project interest and awareness through delivery of a series of conference presentations across Alberta:
 - October 15** – Grande Prairie Child Care Conference
 - October 28** – Breathe of Fresh Air Conference in Calgary. Human Services presents outline of project to managers and family child care agency directors. ARCQE also hosts an information booth at the conference to further inform and possibly recruit additional agencies.



November

- **November 2nd & 3rd** – ARCQE Coaches & consultants from selected agencies attend two-day training with Dr. Cathy Smey-Carston on Coaching and Effective Communication.
- **Mid November** – Coaches are given names and contact information for agency consultants and participating sites.
- **November 19th** – One day training with Wendy Lee of New Zealand, author of Learning Stories takes place with coaches and consultants of participating sites as part of an ARCQE pre-conference event.
- **November 20th** – Focus on supporting broader community interest and awareness continues with delivery of yet another project presentation at ARCQE's National Child Day conference.



Engagement of Coaches

ARCQE has coaches and mentors located all across the province. Consideration for involvement in the project was based on a series of the following:

- Coach expression of interest in project participation.
- Previously trained on use of ASQ-3 and ASQ-SE-2 developmental screening tools or willingness and availability for coaches and agency staff invited to attend training in October.
- Time available to support additional contract/project work.

Coach Criteria

As a means of effectively supporting the work of the GRASP project, the following coach criteria was reflected:

- Minimum 5 years experience working directly in the early learning & care sector.
- Minimum 2 year diploma and/or equivalent education and qualification as a Level III educator.
- ASQ Trainer status with ASQ screening tools (ASQ:3 & ASQ: SE II).
- Prior experience supporting programs and relationship-based practice as a Coach with ARCQE.
- Knowledge of and/or experience with current practice trends in ELCC in Alberta (i.e. Curriculum Framework, Accreditation, Neuro-Science, etc).
- Familiarity of regional issues & communities being served.

Regional Representation of Coaches & Agencies in Grasp Project

As it relates to formal engagement and geographical representation of agencies participating in the GRASP project, the following highlights the regions and communities involved in the project during the first year. While there was anticipation of having higher numbers of agencies participating, unfortunately due to unforeseen delays relative to process of site selection, and need for further formal clarification from ministry about the project only 20 sites were initiated during year 1.

Region	Communities	Programs
Northern Alberta	Manning, Fairview, Peace River, Fort McMurray	4
North Central	Barrhead, Vegreville	2
Edmonton area	Parkland, Edmonton, Strathcona, Flag Staff	4
Central area	Red Deer, Flagstaff	3
Calgary area	Airdrie, Calgary	3
Southern Alberta	Medicine Hat, Lethbridge	4



Training

October 13th & 14th – ASQ-3 and ASQ-SE-2 with Dr. Sue Yockelson, Brookes Publishing Co. CA, USA.

November 2nd & 3rd – Communication and Coaching training with Dr. Cathy Smey-Carston, Center for Child Well-Being, Mount Royal University, Calgary, AB.

November 19th – Developing Learning Stories with Wendy Lee, Educational Leadership Project Ltd (ELP) New Zealand.

February 9th – Communication and Coaching with Dr. Cathy Smey-Carston, Center for Child Well-Being, Mount Royal University, Calgary, AB.





Virtual Communities of Practice Sessions for Coaches:

December 1st – Meeting with coaches using Adobe connect, ARCQE's E-on line platform.

December 22nd – Meeting with coaches using Adobe connect, ARCQE's E-on line platform.

January 19th – Coach training with Dr. Cathy Smey-Carston re: Increasing Reflective Capacity using GRASP reflective journaling forms.

March 16th – Meeting with coaches using Adobe connect.



Implementation

A primary goal of the GRASP project is "to enhance capacity of program consultants and providers in agencies employing the ASQ screening tools and implementation of supporting strategies to enhance developmental outcomes and social/emotional outcomes for children following screening."

As outlined in this document, the journey to creating the GRASP project has been organic and developmental in nature. In order to create a meaningful and effective coaching model it was important to understand and thoughtfully consider the current state of practice. In order to build further capacity we also needed to engage FCC agencies and ascertain what their individual current state of practice involved. Recognizing the vast experience and expertise that FCC consultants and providers bring to this specific practice area project development was also influenced by a process of "Spirals of Engagement" from sector staff noting.

"Recognition of staff as owners of professional knowledge, with intellectual and emotional investment in possible contributions to their own development."

(Fleet & Patterson, 2001)

To obtain current practice information from agencies, a variety of strategies were employed as follows:

Agency Baseline Survey Results

Once an agency agreed to participate in this project, they were given a letter of invitation outlining what to expect in terms of coaching contact and what was expected of them as a participating agency. The agency consultants were then asked to complete an on-line survey reviewing the following questions:

- Does your agency do regular developmental screening (at prescribed times with each child) using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)?
- Who most often fills in the screening tool?
- How long have you been supporting family child care providers in using the ASQ-3 and ASQ-SE developmental screening tools questionnaire?

- Briefly describe how you help providers to complete the developmental screening.
- Briefly describe how you or the provider involves parents/ caregivers in completing the developmental screenings.
- What, if any, are some of the challenges to doing the developmental screenings?
- Approximately what percentages of completed screenings require a referral and where are referrals made?
- Please provide any other comments that you think would be beneficial to this project.

Fourteen of the 19 agencies completed the online survey between October 2016 and February 2017. Of those that responded to the on-line survey, 35% (5) did conduct regular ASQ screenings and only 29% (4) regularly administered the ASQ-SE-2. In many instances parents and/or caregivers often filled out the screening questionnaires, as well as family day home providers and/or consultants. The question; however, as to whether this process is one that is done together or separately is unknown. Consultant experience with screening tools ranged from 1 year to 10 years and shared reflections such as, "we have just begun receiving consent from parents to begin using

the ASQ screening tools," or "as long as it has been around, we used to submit results to Alberta Health Services years and years ago."

There is also great diversity in how consultants provide support to providers with implementation of screening tools. Some noted having worked with parents to complete questionnaires while others completed the screenings at the request of the provider. A number of consultants also commented on using the Nipissing Developmental Checklist as a first measure and then using the ASQ tools if a concern arose, or in one agency's case, they send the ASQ questionnaire out on children's birth date.



When asked about challenges encountered with implementation of developmental screenings the majority of consultants indicated the following as barriers and among the top four challenges:

- Time (77%),
- Fear of being tested (62%),
- Language barriers for the parents (46%) and
- Lack of understanding about child development- either the parent or provider (38%).

When asked what percentage of screenings require a referral it was rather worrisome that percentages reported were very low ranging from 0 to 5% "maybe one or two a year" or none. Cause for concern subsequent to low referrals relates in part to inconsistencies of developmental delays reported under the ECMapping project, as well as uncertainty relative to experience of those implementing and/or interpreting results of screenings conducted. Others also expressed uncertainty subject to referrals and not being sure where to direct families with referrals while some had clear pathways of referral support options and indicated their list of referral agencies.

The last question the survey explored was consultant receptivity subject to involvement in the GRASP project to which many noted being eager and looking forward to support with implementation of the ASQ-3 and ASQ-SE-2.

Coaches Connecting with Agencies

When coaches were matched with agencies, they were given copies of completed on-line surveys to review relative to current practice within individual agencies they would be supporting. Through the guidance of Dr. Cathy Smey-Carston, they were also supported with information regarding 'Situational Coaching' as an introductory strategy for connecting and supporting building of relationships highlighting awareness that coaching can only take place at the readiness of the individuals.

"Situational Coaching contends that there is no one best style to coach people. The most effective style depends upon the needs or readiness of the learner. Theory: To synchronize the coaching style with the Learners' developmental level" (Adapted Hersey and Blanchard, 1992, within Smey- Carston 2017).

Coaches were asked after each agency visit to complete a GRASP reflective journaling form that outlined what the focus of each visit was, what the consultant needed to move forward, what the coach needed to move forward, what goals were identified and what materials or resources were reviewed or accessed. A critical aspect was a question for coaches to reflect on: "When I reflect on our coaching session today, it makes me think about..."

Much of the initial contact with agencies was based on what situational coaching would refer to as a directing level of coaching by the coach providing specifics of: "who, what, when, where, how, defining roles, incremental instructions, requiring close supervision and keeping direction simple and specific" (Smey- Carston, 2017). This is needed when the learner or "coachee" may not be performing a task to an acceptable level, are intimidated by a task, are unclear about directions or asking questions about a task (Smey- Carston, 2017).





Review of the coaching reflection forms and conversations with coaches via telephone or via adobe, online meetings indicated a high level of questioning by agencies: *"How are we going to do this all, we do not have time, anxiety about provider engagement, etc."* Coaches spent a great deal of time supporting consultants and providers in getting comfortable with the tools. Many agency ASQ-3 and ASQ-SE-2 orientations were held, discussions about providers using the screens with their own children, incorporating the suggested activities into daily routines helped consultants and providers see a strong alignment with using the tools and their existing practices. Many of the coaches also supported agencies by aligning the use of the ASQ-3 and ASQ-SE-2 with accreditation standards already informing this work, (i.e. indicators that were focused on documentation of child development). Consultants and providers were also encouraged when implementation of the screening tools were also highlighted as possible evidence that aligned and/or supported goals identified within part of their QEP's. The coaches also frequently reflected on the broad range of 'readiness' within agencies across the province commenting on various strategies employed by individual sites.

As coaches, consultants and the GRASP project grew in their understanding of the project and scope of practice required; so too did ownership of educator knowledge and leadership strength of what the coaches felt confident to implement. Situational coaching refers to this as an "explaining phase," where the agencies moved from a *"little less anxious to more interest and responsiveness, indicating their abilities and more being more receptive to input"* (Smey- Carston, 2017).

One coach's comments reflect her experience with situational coaching which she is now able to reflect more deeply on now as she observes consultants coaching providers.



When I reflect on this coaching session it makes me think about how important it is to allow people to be vulnerable. (GRASP Coach, 2017)

The opportunity to discuss the interaction between consultants brought forward some very important information that we needed to consider. Some people need statistical data for buy in, some people will be more passionate about different areas of their work and some people need hands on experience and the opportunity to have someone walk them through the process. It has become evident through this process that we need to have some understanding for everyone moving through this process. I also suggested that the consultants share with everyone else the lengths they went to consider how this would impact their workload. I think it is a huge asset to have these two ladies on the ASQ team as they are very sensitive to making the process as easy to follow through on and as clear as possible.



One coach's comment supported coaches being able to "explain in more detail the how, what, where, and when of offering direction and facilitating increased" opportunity for clarification. Subsequently, there was more opportunity for two-way dialogue (Smey-Carston, 2017). This became evident as coaches/agencies started sharing more ideas about ways that the ASQ tools and screening process could be combined with elements such as "Learning Story" techniques.

As such, several agencies are now interested in exploring "Story Park" as an application for developing learning stories.

Another coach's reflection offered this developmental journey...



What other approaches could we take in homes to ensure the return rate is higher? (GRASP Coach, 2017)

February 13 – Reflections: The success rate of getting ASQ returned is low. We have minimal surveys back from parents even with clear deadlines. I wonder what other approaches we could take in homes to ensure the return rate is higher? I wonder if there is a more welcoming way to introduce the screen or a way to highlight it in a different way that appeals to parents more? I also wonder if parent/provider relationships affect rate of return?

Feb. 22 – Focus of Our Coaching Session: To review scores in (providers) day-homes. We found that B was scoring low in communication with a 30. After reviewing the ASQ, mom voiced concern and the provider discussed with her the importance of talking to the health nurse at her next immunization appointment. Mom was curious if it was too early for a referral.

I asked (provider) what she felt was her next step and how we could support her in the language development and encouragement for B. We agreed that our first step would be trying 5 basic signs with B; milk, please, thank you, more, all done. (Provider) believes this will be successful.

March 2 – I also had an extensive conversation with (provider) in regards to how the first week had gone with doing the sign language with the child in her care. Provider informed me that little B is a very smart little soul. She told me that she taught her the first word (milk) and she repeated the gesture immediately after (provider) did. (Provider) then decided to introduce please and thank you and she did the same thing.

March 9th – The child signed for two days and then quit. The child has started making a psssh sound for things she would like. She is not melting down as much since (provider) walked her around her house and showed her things that were accessible to her. She also showed her how to point to things she wanted which she is doing consistently. The older children in care have begun signing.

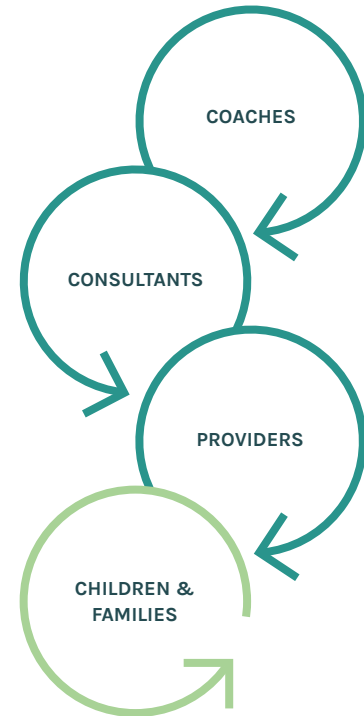




Evaluation

As noted, in order to support the further implementation of the ASQ-3 and ASQ-SE-2 with families while their children are in family child care agencies, the focus has first been on building capacity of coaches to support consultants, who will then (and are) support family child care providers to support parents to complete ASQ's. As a primary goal of the GRASP project, our hope is that increased awareness about the ASQ tools, and information gleaned about individual children, providers will be able to use this information in ways to create developmental appropriate, responsive and stimulating environments for the children in their care.

In her February workshop on communication, Dr. Cathy Smey-Cartson illustrated the GRASP project levels of impact and influence in this way: coaches, then consultants, then providers with ultimate impact on parents and children and their environments. To measure impact we engaged with Community University Partnership (CUP) at the University of Alberta to complete an interview evaluation with the project coaches.



Here is a summary of their findings:

In March 2017, the Community-University Partnership for Children, Youth and Families (CUP), conducted a qualitative evaluation for the Guiding Responsive Approaches to Strengthening Practice (GRASP) project. The purpose of the evaluation was to ask, "What can we learn from the experiences of the GRASP project coaches?"

In order to understand areas of strength and possible improvement, semi-structured interviews were conducted with GRASP coaches. The questions for the interviews were co-developed by CUP and the coordinator of the GRASP project. A PhD student working at CUP conducted the interviews over the telephone. Six of the seven GRASP coaches were interviewed. Five themes were developed through a thematic analysis of data from the interviews: **1) Understanding and Activities, 2) Perceived Benefits, 3) Project Strengths, 4) Project Challenges, and 5) Recommendations for Improvement.** These themes represent the feedback from coaches and provide an overview of project activities, benefits, strengths, challenges, and recommendations for improvement.

Overall, coaches felt the project resulted in an improved understanding of the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ), the Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Social and Emotional (ASQ-SE), and Learning Stories. This improved understanding not only increased the use of the screening tools, it empowered providers and improved communication between consultants and parents. The success of the project was largely due to the relationships between the coaches and the project coordinators, training opportunities, coaching calls, and the flexibility of the activities (e.g., the ability to tailor activities based on individual needs).

Despite the success of the project, coaches did experience some challenges. The majority of the challenges were logistical (i.e., having the right materials, tracking time, scheduling visits with agencies and providers, working between rural and urban agencies). Other challenges resulted in questions around who should deliver the ASQ (parents, providers, or other community agencies) and how to support providers when developmental concerns are identified and day home practices are in need of change.



Recommendations for improvement varied but were also primarily logistical. Specific recommendations included:

- 1 Clearly communicate expectations,
- 2 Clarify processes for coach reflection and accountability,
- 3 Allow coaches to track travel and administration time,
- 4 Develop a handbook for coaches and agencies,
- 5 Develop eligibility criteria for agencies,
- 6 Develop a shared drive for materials,
- 7 Increase the availability of the GRASP coordinator,
- 8 Increase the length of time the project runs, and
- 9 Gather evaluative data from agencies and providers.

In addition to the logistical recommendations coaches also emphasized the need for more networking opportunities for both coaches and consultants.

Overall, the information collected from the coaches would indicate the initiation of the GRASP project was beneficial. Certainly many of the points identified are common to project start up uncertainties, especially due to the organic nature of relationship-based practice. Despite the need to review a few areas of the project, the supports provided by the coaches increased the understanding and use of the ASQ, ASQ-SE and Learning Stories in day homes across the province. Most importantly Coaches' noted benefits of support that were beginning to evolve with the onset of onsite support for agencies, providers and parents as participants in the GRASP project and stressed the need for its continuation.



“

I truly believe there is value in this program and the benefit for day homes is substantial. (GRASP Coach, March 2017).



Glossary

ACCA/AECEA	Association of Early Childhood Educators of Alberta (formerly known as the Alberta Child Care Association)
AELCS	Alberta Association of Accreditation of Early Learning & Care Services
AFCCA	Alberta Family Child Care Association
ARCQE	Alberta Resource Centre for Quality Enhancement
ASaP	Access, Support and Participation
ASQ:3/ASQ:SE 2	Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ-3) and Ages and Stages Questionnaire Social and Emotional (ASQ-SE-2)
CCCCF	Canadian Child Care Federation
CFSA	Child and Family Services Authority
COP	Communities of Practice
CUP	Community & University Partnership
EC Mapping	Early Child Development Mapping Project
EDI	Early Development Instrument
ELCC	Early Learning & Child Care
ELCC-CF	Early Learning & Child Care Curriculum Framework
ELP	Educational Leadership Project Ltd
FCSS	Family & Community Support Services
GRASP	Guiding Responsive Approaches to Strengthening Practice
GRIT	Getting Ready for Inclusion Today
PLC	Parent Link Centers

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The most powerful thing anyone can be is in the moment with children. (Lee, 2016)

For more information visit grasp.arcqe.ca

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