

Food Literacy in Childcares: Summary Report



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Report: May 24, 2016



Campus Alberta HOPH Meeting Grant Outcomes Report

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Thank you to everyone who keenly participated in the planning meeting on March 7, 2016 in Red Deer, Alberta - thank you for taking time from your busy schedules. We heartily acknowledge the caring work of frontline staff in early learning and care programs (ELCPs) - your voice in this exchange is the most important, and for this, we are thankful. This was an important day for the ELCP sector and we are hopeful this meeting represents one of many future opportunities for continuing this dialogue. The intent of the meeting was to set priorities and build momentum in areas of research and practice and to continue collaborating and building towards a common goal of promoting healthy eating environments in ELCPs.

As well, we thank Victor Moisan for facilitating the events of the day and keeping us all on track. A special thank you is warranted for Carlota Basualdo-Hammond and Sheila Tyminski who are strong champions for our vision. And finally, we would like to express our gratitude to the graduate students: Marjorie Rafaela Lima do Vale, Alejandra Arguelles Lopez and Sabrina Lopresti for their help with collecting and collating the information in the report. Of note, a special thank you to Marjorie for preparing and formatting a draft of the report and preparing the graphics.

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AUTHORS AND AFFILIATIONS

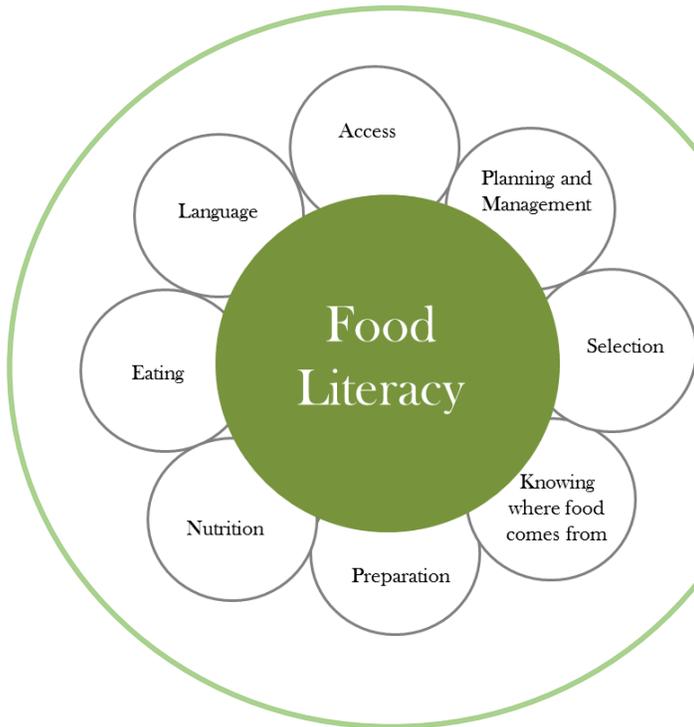
Dr. Anna Farmer (University of Alberta), Marjorie Lima do Vale (University of Alberta), Sheila Tyminski (Alberta Health Services), Carlota Basualdo-Hammond (Alberta Health Services), Brenda Goodine (Ministry of Human Services), Sabrina Lopresti (University of Alberta), Alejandra Arguelles (University of Alberta) and Dr. Lynne Lafave (Mount Royal University).

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1 INTRODUCTION

Food literacy is a new and emerging concept that has been explicitly or implicitly used in policy, practice, research and in the public arena. There is no shared understanding of food literacy meaning yet, but overall, it represents the knowledge, information and skills needed to develop and maintain a healthy lifelong relationship with food (1). Although there are a variety of definitions for food literacy, we have adopted a definition by Vidgen, Gallego (2014)(2) which is one that includes several factors: access, language, eating, nutrition, preparation, knowing where food comes from, selection, and planning and management that come together to define food literacy. The individual component is connected to the complex social, ecological, and cultural environment where it is layered (1,3).



“Food literacy is the scaffolding that empowers individuals, households, communities or nations to protect diet quality through change and strengthen dietary resilience over time. It is composed of a collection of inter-related knowledge, skills and behaviours required to plan, manage, select, prepare and eat food to meet needs and determine intake” (Vidgen, Gallego, p.54, 2014)

Figure 1: A Conceptual Model of Food Literacy. Adapted from Vidgen HA. Food literacy: what is it and does it influence what we eat, p.262, 2014.

The need for improved food literacy in Early Learning and Care Programs (ELCPs), including parents, program staff and leadership, and the community, is evidenced by the significant short- and long-term impact that the ELCP environments have on the development of children. For a young child, eating nutritious foods and engaging in physical activity on a daily basis are essential for their well-being and development. Moreover, ELCPs also play a critical

role in modelling health behaviours and creating and supporting healthful habits and physical activity patterns in young children (4). And lastly, recognizing that children can play a role as change agents, even in the early years, and equipping them with the information about how food choices impact their health, the environment and the community is an important investment (5) that positively impact not only their health outcomes, but also environmental sustainability (3).

2 BACKGROUND

The cross-sectoral Healthy Eating Environments in Child Care (HEECC) Provincial Advisory Committee formed in 2014 to address food literacy in the childcare (i.e. early learning and care program, or ELCP) setting, to work synergistically to: improve the nutritional intake of children; enhance the food/nutrition knowledge of providers; and increase positive role modelling by staff and parents. The HEECC Provincial Advisory Committee is composed of government policy makers (i.e. childcare regulation and population health nutrition); University of Alberta and Mount Royal University researchers; ELCP educators and resource agencies; ELCP providers; and leaders/decision-makers in population/public health (including dietitians, a health promotion specialist and a public health inspector).

ELCPs have expressed strong interest in collaborating to advance the food literacy agenda. The HEECC Provincial Advisory Committee had met only online; and therefore, a face-to-face meeting that included additional stakeholders was intended to generate a robust discussion to understand how all sectors can contribute to the shared goals and to build an action plan based on priority needs of the ELCP sector, the current policy environment, evidence/best practice, and opportunities.

The meeting was planned collaboratively by Dr. Anna Farmer (University of Alberta), Sheila Tyminski (Alberta Health Services), Carlota Basualdo-Hammond (Alberta Health Services), Brenda Goodine (Ministry of Human Services), and Tania Brudler (Ministry of Human Services). Plan for the agenda aimed to inform future actions to be led by the Healthy Eating Environments in Child Care (HEECC) Provincial Advisory Committee.

3 OBJECTIVES OF THE PLANNING MEETING

The objective of the Food Literacy in Childcare planning meeting was to bring together the members of HEECC and other stakeholders involved in some capacity in the ELCP sector to include: practitioners, policy makers, childcare operators to focus on areas to improve food literacy, including the ELCP environment, food provision, high needs programs, provider training, parent involvement, and knowledge translation. Aim was to understand how all relevant sectors can contribute to the shared goals and to build an action plan based on priority needs of the Early Learning and Care Program (ELCP) sector, the current policy environment, evidence/best practice and opportunities.

Given this was the first meeting of its kind initiated and hosted by the HEECC Provincial Advisory Committee where multiple stakeholders from the childcare were brought together for a planning meeting, it was important to ensure that participants were engaged using a participatory approach. We had a busy day composed of presentations and knowledge café and round table discussions made up the day's agenda (Appendix 1). The day was facilitated by a professional facilitator, Victor Moisan, Community Development Office at the Government of Alberta. A total of 31 people were invited to attend. This included 4 graduate students who participating in note taking.

4 BRIEF OVERVIEW OF OPENING PRESENTATIONS

4.1 Welcome and Introduction:

Sheila Tyminski,
Nutrition Services,
Alberta Health Services (AHS).

- Sheila welcomed everyone to the meeting and provided an overview of the day. The meeting was hosted by the Healthy Eating Environments in Childcare Provincial Advisory (HEECC) – a relatively new cross-sectorial committee in Alberta.
- The members of the HEECC Provincial Advisory Committee were introduced. The purpose of this committee was communicated as ‘to bring together stakeholders from various sectors,

including government, non-profit, early learning and care programs (ELCP), health and research, to work synergistically to: improve the nutritional intake of children; enhance the food and nutritional knowledge of ELCP providers; and increase the positive role modelling by childcare staff, as well as parents in the home.”

- Sheila also thanked the University of Calgary O’Brien Institute for Public Health, who provided funding for the meeting.
- The facilitator for the day’s events, Victor Moisan (Community Development Officer at Government of Alberta), was introduced.

4.2 Overview and Definition of Food Literacy:

Dr. Anna Farmer,
Department of Agricultural, Food & Nutritional Science,
University of Alberta.

- Introduced Food Literacy concepts and framework developed by Cullen et al., 2015; As well as the Impact of ELCP environment on social, emotional and behavioural development of young children;
- Presented a quick overview of the recommendations set by the Alberta Nutrition Guideline for Children and Youth (ANGCYY) (Government of Alberta, 2008);
- Shared current research findings in the childcare setting and insights regarding Early Childcare (ELCP);
- And lastly, reinforced HEECC Advisory group goals.

4.3 Overview of Alberta Human Services:

Brenda Goodine,
Early Childhood Development Branch (ECDB),
Ministry of Human Services, Government of Alberta.

- Introduction: Overview of childcare Licensing Act and Regulation; Statistics about childcare (programs and staff) in Alberta.
- ECDB activities: overview of childcare licensing; early childhood services; childcare staff certification; accreditation standards and funding, and childcare payment processing.

- How their work contributes to food literacy in childcares: providing information on licensing and regulation; family day home standards and post menu; and setting accreditation standards.
- What they would like to see different: supporting childcare programs to increase children's access to healthy, fresh, wholesome and safe food every day; creating a positive eating environment for children on a daily basis; and educating children, early childhood educators, parents and other stakeholders about early childhood nutrition and recommended feeding practices.

4.4 Overview of Alberta Childcare Association (ACCA):

Susan Garrow-Oliver,
Alberta Child Care Association

- Introduction: Overview of ACAA and composition of membership and activities
- ACCA activities: liaise, communicate and collaborate with stakeholders on topics/issues related to ELCPs; develop and facilitate initiatives to strengthen the ELCP workforce; and advance a unified early learning and care profession by providing support, education and recognition of their members
- How their work contributes to food literacy in childcares: providing resources, connections and ongoing professional learning to help educate their members; keeping members informed of local and province wide initiatives; and bringing the voice of their members to political conversations.
- How they are connected to others: ACCA Board of Directors consists of professionals from across the province in various sectors; establishing partnerships with the Alberta ELC Leaders Caucus; face to face monthly meetings with the Government of Alberta's Early Childhood Development (ECD) branch; and ongoing conversations with sector affiliate partners.
- What they would like to see different: children's culture represented in menu options; increased budget for childcare provide more fresh whole foods; increased education requirements for Early Childhood Educators (ECE's).

4.5 Overview of Alberta Resource Centre for Quality Enhancement (ARCQE):

Corine Ferguson,
Accreditation Support, Coaching Services, & Project Information,
Alberta Resource Centre for Quality Enhancement.

- ARCQE activities: supporting childcare across Alberta by providing coaching & mentoring support, professional development and resources.
- How their work contributes to food literacy in childcares: ARCQE support Alberta Health Services initiatives by communicating and disseminating information to them; and delivering professional learning sessions and developing resources.
- How they are connected to others: involvement in provincial contracts, such as Accreditation, American Society for Quality (ASQ), and compliance support work. Involvement in projects such as the Early Learning & Child Care Curriculum Framework and neuroscience training.
- What they would like to see different: outdoor play/physical literacy strategies for children and Health & Wellness of Early Childhood Educators.
- What she would like to see different: resources/supports for educators to focus on their personal nutrition and physical activity as role models for the children. And curriculum conversations and review of how, what and where we are addressing nutrition within the ELCC curriculum.

4.6 Research: Food environments in the childcare setting

Dr. Anna Farmer, PhD, MPH, RD
Department of Agricultural, Food & Nutritional Science,
University of Alberta.

- Dr. Farmer's current projects in the childcare setting: examine how childcare environments and early childcare educators (ECE) influence preschool children's eating and physical activity; development of an evaluation tool to assess childcare's organizational capacity and readiness to change (i.e. adopt Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth for childcare centres); and the development and implementation of a pilot multicomponent intervention to increase 3-5 year old children's consumption of vegetables and fruits.

- How her work contributes to food literacy in childcares: improving the nutritional intake of preschool children; Enhancing the food/nutrition knowledge of providers; increasing positive role modelling by staff and parents; and increasing organizational capacity and readiness to change.
- How she is connected to others: Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services end-users regarding the use and implementation of the Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth; Dietitians of Canada; and many organizations across Edmonton, and University of Alberta outreach activities (e.g. nutrition student field practicums, student research, media); partnerships and collaborations with researchers (ACCFCR, SPH, Pediatrics, Mount Royal University).
- What she would like to see different: best practices in role modeling at meal times by childcare educators and improved nutritional quality of meals and snacks.

4.7 Research: Creating Healthy Eating & Activity Environments Survey (CHEERS).

Dr. Lynne Lafave,
Department of Health and Physical Education,
Mount Royal University.

- CHEERS activities: Evaluate childcare environments with Creating Healthy Eating Environments Survey (CHEERS) tool. This online survey includes four dimensions - food served, healthy eating environment, healthy eating program planning and physically active environment.
- How their work contributes to food literacy in childcares: providing a valid and reliable assessment tool for ELCPs to measure their food environment.
- How they are connected to others: AHS – Healthy Eating Starts Here Childcare Resources; Childcare Accreditation Standards and ANGCY recommendations.
- What they would like to see different: regular use of the CHEERS tool in ELCPs to support ‘best practices’ that inspire preschool aged children to make healthy food choices.

4.8 Education of Childcare Providers:

Dr. Catherine Smey-Carston,
Department of Child Studies and Social Work,
Mount Royal University.

- Dr. Catherine Smey-Carston's current activities: Early Learning and Childcare (ELCC) Certificate program across Alberta.
- How her work contributes to food literacy in childcares: providing knowledge regarding nutrition, safety and developmental needs of children.
- How she is connected to others: ELCC Provincial Coordinators group, Program Advisory Committees, Practicum Placements (and mentor/ supervisors), Alberta Childcare Association (ACCA), Alberta Resource Center for Quality Enhancement (ARCQE); Accreditation of Early Learning and Child Care Services (AELCS), Alberta Ministry of Human Services, and provincial, national and international research connections (i.e. Lethbridge College and Ryerson University).

4.9 The Health System and Childcare:

Theresa Riege,
Nutrition Services,
Alberta Health Services.

- AHS activities: plan and implement evidence-based strategies and activities to promote healthy growth and development in children and youth, positive health behaviours to reduce chronic disease risk throughout the life-cycle and also to promote safe health practices and behaviours; support alignment of messages across all areas within AHS; and collaborate with stakeholders who have a shared vision and interests.
- How their work contributes to food literacy in childcares: Supporting the ELCP sector through provincial and zone strategies and activities; engaging Nutrition Services, Healthy Eating Environments in Childcare Working Group; and regular meetings in the Edmonton Zone with an ELCP multi-disciplinary group for public health coordination.
- How they are connected to others: providing consultation to childcares and sector related associations and organizations; development and dissemination of evidence-based tools

and resources; Training and professional development; research collaborations; and networks, coalitions and other ongoing/ad hoc partnerships.

4.10 Nutrition Services and Childcare:

Theresa Riege,
Nutrition Services,
Alberta Health Services.

- Nutrition Services activities: consulting and collaborating (Raising Our Healthy Kids Video series and AHS and childcare sector stakeholders); developing tools and resources; providing education and professional development; and conducting research and evaluation.
- How their work contributes to food literacy in childcares: developing tools and resources (e.g. HealthyEatingStartsHere.ca); providing consultation to and support AHS and non-AHS partners as they strive towards promoting and creating healthy eating environments in child cares.
- How they are connected to others: research collaborations through post-secondary institutions such as the University of Alberta and Mount Royal University; HEECC Provincial Advisory Committee; and dietitians work with local childcare groups to promote healthy eating environments.
- What they would like to see different: childcares in Alberta have a culture that supports healthy eating and have the capacity to implement what is necessary to create a healthy eating environment.

5 MAIN MESSAGES

In summary, *Food Literacy* is a new concept that represents the ability of individuals to understand and develop a positive relationship with food, including food skills and practices that enable them to navigate, engage, and participate in a complex food system. Participants referred to emerging themes on several occasions during the day which included knowledge, functional skills and cultural appropriateness; these themes fit well within the Food Literacy concept.

By the end of the day's planning meeting, it was evident from those in attendance that they shared the same enthusiasm, ideals and goals – that is, a tremendous desire to improve and unify food literacy efforts across ELCPs. But despite their hard work and good intentions to provide optimal care and service, the group recognized the existence of several barriers that are preventing them from being able to maximize their efforts. Most notably, there was still an appreciation of the sector's fragmentation and disconnectedness between the multiple stakeholders and organizations. The consequence is lost opportunities to collaborate and create synergies. It was also recognised there was a need to find more and better ways to disseminate information on new initiatives, opportunities and resources that can help them with their respective roles. And most notably, childcare centers should be informed and aware of the resources and support made available to them through these bodies.

Figure 2 represents a summary of the concepts that arose from the presentations and discussions during the day's events. As illustrated in Figure 2, there were several themes, ranging from the importance of role modeling by the Early Child Educators (ECE) to the differences in culture of childcares. The emergent themes were summarised as a graphic and the importance was evaluated relative to each other which were then exemplified by the size of the text. For instance, the more often a theme was mentioned and emphasised, the theme was represented with larger-sized text. The most notable central theme was the importance of the ECE's pivotal role in improving food literacy in childcares. Another important theme related to a perceived ECEs' need to increase their food literacy skills, so they in turn, are able to promote children's food literacy. And finally, ECEs' self-care, continuing education and technical support were seen as key areas to be considered along with other key points and common themes

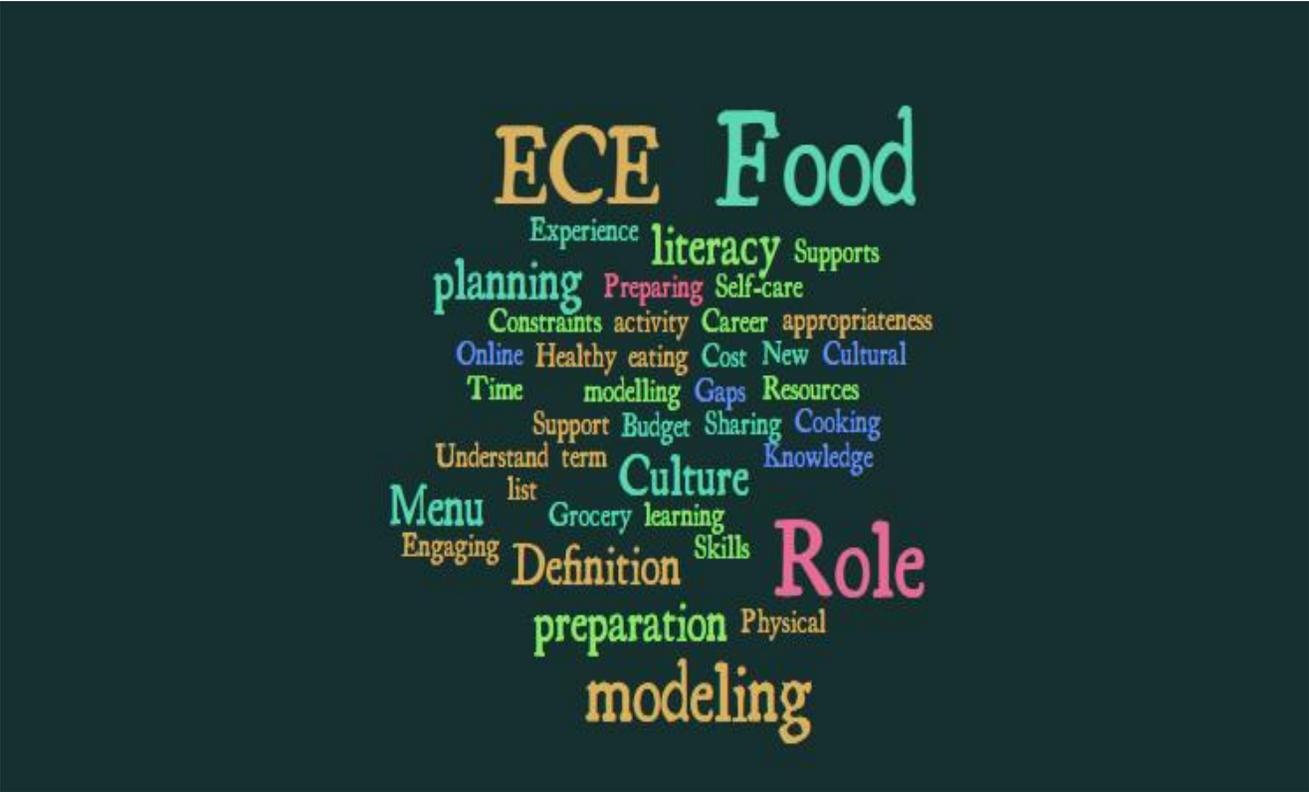


Figure 2: Concept map of emergent themes. Red Deer, 2016.

6 KNOWLEDGE CAFÉ

Knowledge café or world café is a useful method for connecting people to generate new thinking and ideas by sharing lessons learned across sectors, departments and organisations (NHS Improving Quality, 2015). For the Knowledge Café, the room was divided into four groups; each group was visited by four facilitators, who rotated through the four groups. The facilitators posed one initial question to be discussed in the small groups. The composition of people making up each group was pre-arranged by the meeting planners and they were represented by participants from diverse sectors and backgrounds. Each of the four groups had approximately 20 minutes to discuss their perceptions and experiences of the day's events. Once the timed session was over, the facilitators rotated to another table, and introduced the same question to a different group of people. At each table, there was also an additional person recording all conversations held.

Conversations that took place in the Knowledge Café were facilitated by Victor Moisan, Community Development Officer at the Government of Alberta.

The four questions addressed in the Knowledge Café were:

1. What does food literacy look like in childcare settings and what are we doing well?
2. What are the gaps and what are the barriers to improving food literacy for you, your organization and your community?
3. What are the benefits and/or opportunities to improving food literacy to others, your organization and your community?
4. What resources (i.e., tools, information, people) are you aware of that are being used in childcare settings to support food literacy?

Café #1: What does food literacy look like in childcare settings and what are we doing well?

Overall, there was the sense that ELCP's were doing a "good job" in addressing food literacy components in childcares, through their respective lens. It was noted there was a range of practices performed in ELCPs, and such differences in practice arose from the diversity in personal beliefs, knowledge, resources and other factors. The information gathered from the Knowledge Café is summarised below according to the layers of the Social Ecological Model to include:

- **Addressing constraints related to food availability, access and affordability:**

ECEs do a lot of research to provide nutritious meals and accommodate children's different needs.

Example 1: Bulk buying or drive around the city looking for grocery stores offering the best deals.

- **Supporting staff positive role modelling**

Example 2: Healthy snacks are provided to childcare's staff as well, so they eat the same healthy meals provided to children; Childcare staff should not be allowed to eat unhealthy snacks in front of kids.

- **Enhancing individuals' and collective's knowledge**

Working collaboratively and engaging parents, families and ECEs in conversations about food and food preparation as a way to increase knowledge and revisit bias. Adults who eat better will translate to children who eat better.

Example 3: A workshop related to picky-eaters was delivered by a registered dietitian. Parents and others childcare were invited to join the meeting. Different recipes and ways to prepare food were shared and discussed.

Example 4: Delivering pamphlets with strategies on healthy eating to "fast food" parents.

Providing creative and fun opportunities to children explore, enjoy and develop a positive relationship with food.

Example 5: Children participate in gardening activities (kale, pepper, carrots, potatoes, beans, lettuce, tomatoes, beets, radish, etc.). Children will become more respectful to food when they eat their own grown foods.

Example 6: Children are engaged in food and nutrition education activities such as history telling, finger play, group discussion (e.g. what does food do to your body?), songs, baking activities, etc. There is the perception that when people cook their own meals they are more likely to eat healthier.

- **Promoting local food systems**

Building community capacity and increasing perceived value of local food products.

Example 7: ELCPs engage children in gardening activities that are supported by parents and communities (e.g. Families give their opinion about what to plant, ELCPs build partnerships to share knowledge and also receive donations to sustain gardens).

- **Integrating children's and families' social and cultural practices in the childcares daily routines and activities**

Example 8: Parents and children are invited to provide culturally relevant recipes or dishes. Dishes are prepared at home or at the childcare. (e.g. bannock, dumplings, etc.).

Example 9: Foods, artifacts and behaviours of newcomers (immigrants) are kept present on children's daily routine to facilitate the transition to ELCP's environment and routine.

Café #2: What are the gaps and what are the barriers to improving food literacy for you, your organization and your community?

- **Individuals' characteristics**

Attend to children's nutritional needs, preferences, food restrictions and allergies.

Personal values (e.g. how one is raised) and the lack of training affecting ECE's practices.

- **Structure, Resources and Support**

- Limited affordability and budget to purchase and serve healthy foods.
- Challenging routine and low value attributed to cooks in childcare facilities: time constraints, high turnover, low support for creating creative menu plans and no wage enhancement.
- ELCP resistance to change (e.g. centers already structured in a routine, therefore bounding the implementation of new ideas proposed by early learning graduates).
- ECE's low knowledge about food literacy. They need to be more cognizant of the importance of role modeling.
- Lack of value attributed to professional development (e.g. Early Child Educators are paid less than their usual wage while attending professional development courses).

- Deficiency of technology and connectivity in childcare facilities (e.g. childcare centers may not have internet access or familiarity).
 - Inequity in childcare centers resources (e.g. one has a budget of \$300 for food and another has 3 times that amount).
 - Challenge in the sector – rural and urban centres face different financial challenges but face similar challenges overall.
 - There are no public funds available. Accreditation subsidies are only for the ratio of childcare time - lose wage enhancement for non-ratio hours.
- **Curriculum and continuing education**
 - There is no specific curriculum for childcare – the current document is a framework – it is not mandatory, more of a way of practice considering the view of the educator and the view of the child.
 - Inconsistency and lack of value attributed to education requirements to work in childcare centers.
 - Lack of support, training and coaching (e.g. support to implement/ make the change happen, not just information to read and see).
 - Absence of professional development opportunities for cooks (e.g. they only get wage enhancement when they are in childcare ratio. Their wages are less than early child educators of any level of training).
- **Dissemination of information and practices orientation**
 - Lack of dissemination, recognition and value attributed to childcare’s positive practices.
 - Policy makers need to know about food literacy.
 - Lack of food literacy knowledge among those in the food industry (e.g. unavailability of healthier prepared foods in the market place).
 - Absence of understanding of roles and responsibility among sectors (i.e. whose roles, how to get a broader reach within same sector, and between sectors, and how to work together).
 - Lack of synergy among different bodies and sectors that work with childcare facilities.

- Absence of participatory approach. “To-do’s list” rather than an interest in building partnerships with childcares. Childcare facilities and workers are not given a voice or listened to or represented in political discussions: What do they know? What would they like to see differently? How do they want all of this being done? What’s their perspective?
- Lack of regulations, lack of pay, lack of professional development days and compensation, and lack of childcare centre worker evaluation.
- **Evidence based practice.**
 - Absence of evidence-based practices/best practice guidelines.
 - Societal misinformation and misconceptions about what constitutes good and nutritious meals.
 - Difficulty to navigate and find helpful, meaningful and useful resources and support made available through different sectors and organizations (e.g. professional support, tools, etc.).
 - Discrepancy between practices adopted at home and at childcare centers.
 - Inconsistency in licensing requirements and best practices (e.g. self-serving of food by children is recommended by the ANGCY but this practice increases probability of germs transmission and infection, which is not recommended by health inspectors; and families want to bring in food into the childcare but they are not allowed.

Café #3: What are the benefits and /or opportunities to improving food literacy to others, your organization and your community?

- Children are change agents: teaching them how to eat healthy will produce healthier citizens who understand the food system, respect the food and are environmentally conscious.
- Increasing children's food literacy will positively impact their parents, the community and everyone.
- Food literacy is a way to explore our own values and practices (self-reflection), and to engage in conversation with others.

Café #4: What resources (i.e. tools, information, people) are you aware of that are being used in childcare settings to support food literacy?

- **Organizational incentives for professional self-care and development**
 - Self-care is really important for ECEs (i.e. How can ECEs model behaviour when they are too busy? How can childcare owners support ECEs? Can they provide extended lunch time for more self-care?)
 - Childcare subsidies for staff to attend professional development sessions.
 - In some areas, professional development is now held during the evening to allow for childcare provider attendance; however, allowing time during the day as professional development days would be preferable.
- **Collaborative relationship and partnership**
 - There is a variety of parties, departments and organizations that work for childcare and that share the same enthusiasm, ideals and goals.
 - Establishing networks and partnerships (Evergreen nursery, Green Calgary, community, parents, etc.). Establishing learning communities and communities of practice.
 - Fundraising to increase childcare budget and support staff professional development.
- **Educational Resources:**
 - Books and Guidelines: Canada's Food Guide; Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth (ANGCY); Growing Miracles: The first six years with your child; Play, Participation, and Possibilities: An Early Learning and Child Care Curriculum Framework for Alberta; Nutrition Handbook for Early Learning and Child Care (Manitoba); Eat Well Plate; Low literacy recipe cards; CHEERS tool.
 - Websites and portals: Healthy U website; Healthy Eating Starts Here website; My Health Alberta; 3 CHEERS for the Early Years; Online cookbooks;
 - Organizations: Little Green Thumbs; Alberta Child Care Association (ACCA);
 - Courses and workshops: Food Handling Course; education sessions provided by Registered Dietitians; AHS workshops; Videos: Raising Our Healthy Kids.

7 GROUP DISCUSSIONS

What can we do individually and collectively to change children's attitudes and behaviours towards food and lifelong eating habits?

▪ Individually

- Increase parents' and family involvement: foster family interaction, reduce screen and cell phone during meals, combine healthy food and the pleasure of each other's company. If good practices are not cultivated at home, they are unlikely to happen in the childcare.
- Make healthy eating fun and enticing (e.g. age appropriate cooking, learning about food, picking food from a garden, etc.)
- Support the creation of a culture of childcare – staff, parents and children – where healthy eating is valued.

▪ Collectively

- Create curriculum opportunities to support the Early Learning in Child Care framework philosophy (i.e. create curriculums that aligns with attitude, behaviours and life-long learning understanding; ensure that minimum standards and best practices are being taught; and collectively create common modules for training and professional development).
- Promote more collaboration and face-to-face meetings in order to discuss and leverage what we have in the sector and improve awareness of what is going on, what is available and avoid duplication of services. And also include childcare facilities in the discussions (e.g. what is going to help them? how can we best meet their needs?).
- Acknowledge the barriers – internet access, financial resources, staff turnover, and professional development.
- Advocacy for this sector aiming to increase overall funding made available and support for childcare roles (including training in nutrition education) and also the recognition of importance of the services provided by childcare facilities. Just supporting implementation of best practices isn't enough.

- Creating a culture of best practices and ensure that parents, coordinators and workers share the same perspective.

How can we overcome the barriers and embrace opportunities to move forward?

- **Learn from health promotion strategies in schools.**
 - A lot of experiences from health promotion strategies within schools have been documented and evaluated from the last 20 years (e.g. put together consortiums, promote regular groups meetings, building across the province and finding the synergy). So, childcare settings should benefit from these examples and build on it in order to eventually get together to work and evaluate strategies within their context. Look for a comprehensive childcare model similar to the comprehensive health model used in the school setting. And consider particularities of childcare setting (e.g. schools and childcares are different – they are like apple and oranges).
- **Work collaboratively.**
 - Reinforce the idea to work with childcare, not for childcare, aiming to ensure that all participants are engaged in these conversations. Give childcare workers a place and time where they can speak up. Engaging childcare workers will make they feel more inclined to be a part of it.
- **Share, communicate and support.**
 - Share the success stories and make people more aware of what is going on. For example, perform an environmental and comprehensive scan of what is happening (i.e. recognizing different activities across the province in health zones and regions). Perform better and broader communication and dissemination strategies and use different vehicles to communicate;
 - Evaluate whether the community of support among different operators is sufficient or whether and what additional support might be needed (e.g. being able to put in practice and evaluate the model of best practice sharing where cooks share information with other cooks etc.).
 - Not just communicate, but coaching through change, use knowledge translation strategies. Support people to make sense of the information and include in daily

practices. Consider this through the lens of the staff with the most barriers – time, pay for work, planning time, etc. Provide professional development and education to providers in the evenings when they are available to attend (due to limited ability for childcare programs to allow staff to attend during work hours).

- Regulation drives change – if this is important, it should be in the regulations (e.g. there is little control over what children bring to the childcare). Provide more resources to the childcares on the ways to supervise children’s eating and also to include a wider list of foods that are healthy.
- **Create evidence to support decisions.**
 - Conduct more research in this area in order to evaluate which resources would promote the most impact and sustainable change (e.g. registered dietitian regularly consults for a specified number of hours with childcares or use coaching models). And collect information to create evidence to support decisions that are made.
- **Promote self-care time for childcare workers.**
 - Promoting self-care spaces for childcare workers might positively influence their practices and duties (e.g. role modeling will be less likely to be perceived as an added task, may be more intuitive, a practice that they can model).

8 SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

In this final section, you will find a summary of the day's closing remarks and the next steps for the HEECC group. Figure 3, depicts the barriers and the resources that would be needed to fulfill some of the goals for the next steps.

To begin, the resources at the top of the framework represents some of the issues and the resources that may be required to deal with these concerns that were raised in the dialogue to improve food literacy in childcare. Professional self-care was a recurring theme that emerged throughout the day, however, it was also recognised that few resources exist and there is little guidance to assist childcares. One way to tackle this issue is to have incentives and educational resources childcares may use for promoting professional self-care and development for staff and to inform the early childcare curriculum. It was universally recognized there is a common need to further develop new collaborations and to strengthen existing and new partnerships across the childcare sector. There was a strong willingness expressed by the group to follow up on both formal and informal relationships which would strengthen communication to reach stakeholders at the organizational and community level.

Several barriers were highlighted as issues that need to be resolved as a way to move the food literacy agenda. Issues related to curriculum development and training and continuing education of childcare staff was mentioned in different contexts; a better understanding of the childcare educators' roles and responsibilities and personal values; childcare educators knowledge about children's food and nutrition; society's perceived value of the work performed by childcare staff; lack of information technology and connectivity across the childcares and the knowledge and awareness to implement change.

The next steps will be formulated by the HEECC Provincial Advisory Group. Some of the issues that are worthy of consideration and there several lessons that can be learned from the many years of research and practice of school health promotion. There is great collaborative work underway, but there was also the recognition there are many windows of opportunity to strengthen and expand on these networks. One of the priorities that came from this meeting is the need to

support childcare staff self-care and the development of these resources to support this important initiative.

Another is the need to improve communication channels between the various ELCP stakeholders, and particularly to engage with and share new information with ELCPs themselves.

And finally, there is a need for developing guidelines related to evidence-based practise that includes resources to facilitate the implementation of such guidelines at the organizational and community level.

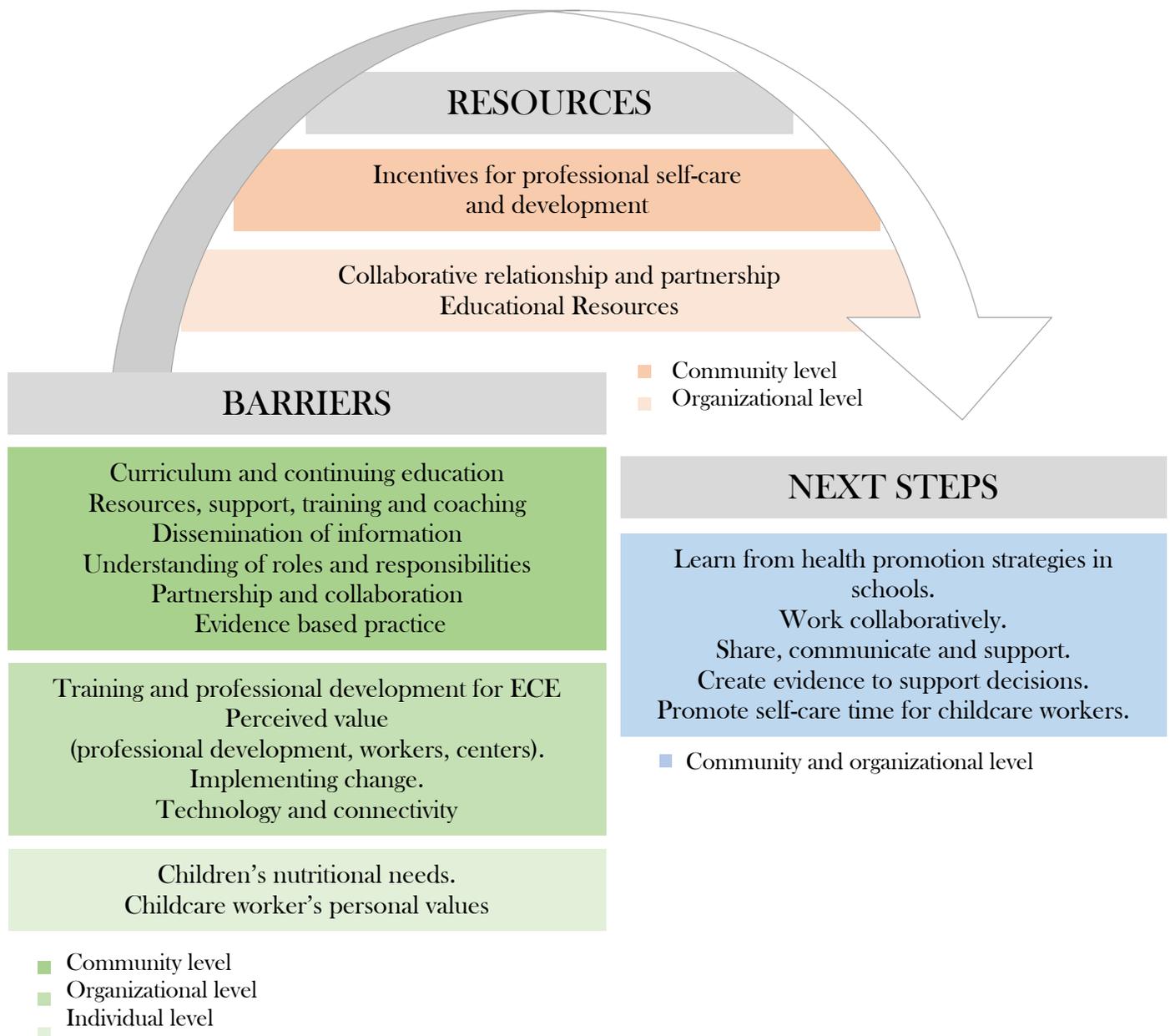


Figure 3. Summary of perceived barriers, resources and next steps to improve food literacy in child care settings. Red Deer, 2016,

Glossary of Terms

Best practices: commercial or professional procedures that are accepted or prescribed as being correct or most effective.

Chronic disease: A chronic disease is one lasting 3 months or more, by the definition of the U.S. National Center for Health Statistics. Chronic diseases generally cannot be prevented by vaccines or cured by medication, nor do they just disappear.

Communities of practice: A community of practice is a group of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do, and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.

Comprehensive childcare: A system of high quality, developmentally appropriate early education programs and support services for both young children and their families.

Evidence-based strategies: An evidence-based practice can be defined as an instructional strategy, intervention, or teaching program that has resulted in consistent positive results when experimentally tested.

Food system: network that integrates sustainable food production, processing, distribution, consumption and waste management in order to enhance the environmental, economic and social health of a particular place.

Knowledge translation (KT): a dynamic and iterative process that includes synthesis, dissemination, exchange and ethically-sound application of knowledge to improve the health, provide more effective health services and products and strengthen the health care system.

Organizational capacity: In the context of organizational change can be defined as the organization's total workload for running current operations and conducting change activities.

Organizational readiness to change: State of preparedness of persons, systems, or organizations to meet a situation and carry out a planned sequence of actions.

Role model: A person who serves as an example of the values, attitudes, and behaviors associated with a role. For example, a father is a role model for his sons. Role models can also be persons who distinguish themselves in such a way that others admire and want to emulate them.

Figure Reference

Figure 1. A Conceptual Model of Food Literacy. Adapted from Vidgen HA. Food literacy: what is it and does it influence what we eat? 2014 [cited 2016 May 25]; Available from: <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/66720>

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Additional Resources

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Source: <http://www.health.alberta.ca/documents/Nutrition-Guidelines-AB-Children-Youth.pdf>
3. Alberta Health Service. Growing Miracles: The first six years with your child, 2010.
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4. Makovichuk, L., Hewes, J., Lirette, P., & Thomas, N. Play, participation, and possibilities: An early learning and child care curriculum framework for Alberta (2014)
Source: <http://www.childcareframework.com/>
5. Manitoba Healthy Living and seniors. Nutrition Handbook for Early Learning and Child Care. 2015.
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Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-eatwell-guide>

7. Alberta Health Services: Healthy Eating Starts Here Website.

Source: <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/nutrition/Page12598.aspx>

8. Alberta Health Services: My Health Alberta.

Source: <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/nutrition/Page12598.aspx>

9. Little Green Thumbs.

Source: <http://www.littlegreenthumbs.org/>

10. Alberta Child Care Association.

Source: <http://albertachildcareassociation.com/>

11. [Video]: Raising Our Healthy Kids.

Source: <http://www.raisingourhealthykids.com/>

APPENDIX 1: Agenda



Food Literacy in the Childcare Setting: Planning Meeting

AGENDA

Date: Monday March 7, 2016

Time: 10:00 am to 4:00 pm

Location: Michener Centre, Red Deer, Alberta

9:30 am	Registration. Coffee and refreshments	
10:00 am	Welcome and Introductions	Sheila Tymnski
10:10 am	Overview of the day	Facilitator Victor Moisan
10:15 am	Presentations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Food literacy - Overview of Alberta Human Services - Alberta Child Care Association - Alberta Resource Centre for Quality Enhancement - Research: Dr. Anna Farmer - Research: Dr. Lynne Lafave - Education of Childcare Providers - The health system and Childcare - Nutrition Services and Childcare 	
11:45 am	Lunch Break – Lunch provided	
12:15 pm	Conversation Café: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What does food literacy look like in the childcare setting to you? What do you see happening in childcares around food literacy now? What resources are being used that you are aware of (or where do people go for information)? 2. What the gaps and what are the barriers? 3. What are the opportunities? 4. What do you think should focus on as a provincial advisory and in your sector? For further research? 	
2:15 pm	Break	
2:30 pm	Large group discussion	
3:45 pm	Wrap up	Carlota Basualdo-Hammond
4:00 pm	Adjourn	