

# Enhancing Interactions Initiative

## Guidelines

The purpose of the Enhancing Interactions Initiative is to provide knowledge and training on language development and positive interactions with children. The initiative offers in-depth support for effective learning and implementation of a language-rich program which supports the vision and principles of *Play and Exploration: Early Learning Program Guide*.

## Objectives

### 1. To Enhance Educator Knowledge of Language- Rich Environments

The initiative will provide training and on -site supports to early childhood educators to enhance understanding of high- quality practices related to language- rich programs and environments for young children.

### 2. To Implement Best Practice through a Focus on Interactions

Early childhood educators will examine, refine and expand their practices in order to support positive language and social emotional development through a focus on educator- child and child - child interactions.

### 3. To Provide Feedback and Guidance to Make Positive Change

Early childhood educators will engage with feedback regarding effective language practices and program design through reflection, guided discussion, video-recorded observation and hands- on experience.

### 4. To Sustain Growth in Enhancing Interactions

Early childhood educators and program leaders will implement continuous improvement and reflective practice in order to sustain high- quality programming around enhancing interactions.

## Description and Schedule

Sites selected to be part of the Enhancing Interactions Initiative will be assigned a facilitator. The facilitator will contact the project leader and together they will arrange dates and times for learning sessions over a period of approximately four months. The learning sessions will include The Hanen program® *Learning Language and Loving It* with supplemental materials making connections to *Play and Exploration*.

The project includes:

- Eight interactive and instructional large group sessions of approximately 3 hours. It is possible to merge a few sessions into full day sessions, if preferred.
- At least four video feedback sessions (recording a short interaction of the educator with children and then reviewing and reflecting with the facilitator).

Projects will run from September 1 to January 31 or January 1 to May 31.

### Number of Participants

This professional learning initiative requires a minimum of 10 participants and can support a maximum of 15 participants per project. It is recommended that you include your part-time staff or other staff who interact with the children daily, such as the cook.

It is required that all full-time educators as well as the director and assistant director/supervisor, even if not on the floor regularly, participate in the project. Leadership involvement and support is vital to continued success.

If you have more than one facility, you must submit more than one application if you wish to train more than 15 staff. For example, you may wish to submit an application for each centre, or you may wish to submit one application for the infant/toddler staff and another for the preschool staff.

If you have a small staff, you may need to partner with another group. Additional groups are not required to be licensed child care centres, although this is a possibility. You may wish to partner with additional early learning programs in your community such as a private preschool, Prekindergarten program, family child care homes, or even unlicensed child care providers. For example, you may have a staff of nine and choose to partner with the local preschool which has three staff and two family child care homes in the community to bring the total number of participants to 14. Connecting with other early learning programs in or near your community not only ensures the maximum number of participants but also indicates you recognize the value of this training in your community and the positive outcomes for the children.

The child care facility must be the primary applicant and the other partners must complete and attach their applications to create one joint application.

### Funding

The Ministry of Education will cover the cost of the facilitator fees and expenses for the initiative. The ministry will also award a grant of up to \$2,000 per licensed child care site (dependent on number of staff) to assist with additional staffing costs which will be incurred as a result of the initiative.

The site will be responsible for any additional staff costs over the grant amount as well as providing a meeting location and the cost of any refreshments (coffee, snacks etc.).

### Roles and Responsibilities

This initiative is a partnership between the Ministry of Education, assigned facilitator, and the selected centre. Each partner contributes to the success of the initiative. The following descriptions summarize the expectations for the roles and responsibilities of each partner:

#### Ministry of Education

The Ministry of Education oversees the Enhancing Interactions Initiative.

#### **The Early Years Planning, Education and Evaluation Unit will:**

- Provide funding for the Enhancing Interactions Initiative;
- Develop Enhancing Interactions Initiative guidelines;
- Select and train facilitators;
- Review applications and select project centres;
- Provide required documents and professional learning supports; and
- Obtain feedback and recommendations on the Enhancing Interactions Initiative from facilitators and sites.

#### **Early Learning and Child Care Consultant's Role**

The consultant plays an important part in supporting the operation of the child care centre and program. The consultant will:

- Assist with site selection by providing input (compliance of regulations as well as identifying strengths and cautions) of short listed site candidates;
- Maintain contact throughout the project with the director and/or project leader to discuss the enhancing interactions project; and
- Follow up and support the facility to extend the impact of the project on the child care site and staff.

#### Facilitators

Facilitators are certified to facilitate The Hanen program® *Learning Language and Loving It*.

The facilitator will:

- Participate in an initial meeting with the ministry to review the initiative purpose and objectives;
- Meet with the site over approximately a 20 week period at mutually agreed upon dates to assist the project leader and site staff to:
  - gain knowledge and examine best practices;
  - examine educator interactions with children through video observation between sessions and provide feedback to the educators;
  - implement practices, reflect on results and refine practices; and
  - establish procedures for continuous reflection and evaluation.

- Discuss and reflect with the other facilitators throughout the initiative (in person, email, telephone);
- Arrange and attend a six week follow up meeting with the project site; and
- Provide feedback to the Ministry of Education regarding recommendations for any future enhancing interactions initiatives.

### Site

Sites must demonstrate a commitment to the project and ensure that all staff are willing to participate.

The site will:

- Brief the board of directors about the initiative. The board of directors agrees to the application and to support the initiative if selected to participate;
- Understand there is approximately a 20 week time commitment to participate in the project;
- Cover any additional costs, over and above the grant provided by the Ministry;
- View this project as a professional learning experience, meet with the facilitator at mutually agreed upon dates and participate fully in activities;
- Identify a project leader (director, assistant director or whomever has responsibility for the learning program and staff professional learning) ;
- Leadership is to ensure that educators are supported to attend learning sessions and complete between session activities;
- Ensure that all staff are aware that:
  - This project requires on site involvement of eight, three-hour sessions outside of regular work hours;
  - Video observation is a part of the learning experience; and
  - There will be assigned readings for meeting preparation.
- Participate in a debriefing at the end of the project, including successes and challenges, and the site's plan for continuous growth and next steps; and
- Consider how to share the learning with ELCC sector locally, regionally, and provincially.

### Selection Criteria

Sites will be selected based on interest, readiness and commitment as well as funding and facilitator availability.

In order to be eligible for this program, your site must meet the following criteria:

- Demonstrate interest and commitment to learning more about children's language development and the educator's role in facilitating this development;
- Be in compliance with *The Child Care Regulations, 2015* including staffing certification levels. ELCC Consultants will be contacted for verification;
- Display awareness and basic understanding of the vision and principles of *Play and Exploration: Early Learning Program Guide*; and

- Demonstrate that the board, director and staff are committed to program improvement and are interested and willing to participate in this project.

A limited number of sites will be awarded Enhancing Interactions Initiative experience each year. Sites that are not chosen for the initial deadline are invited to reapply for the next application deadline.

### How to Apply

1. Complete the Enhancing Interactions Initiative Application. The application is available from your ELCC consultant.
2. Submit the application to:  
  
Enhancing Interactions Initiative  
Early Years Branch  
Ministry of Education  
2-2220 College Avenue  
REGINA SK S4P 4V9  
  
Fax: (306)787-0277  
Email: [ece@gov.sk.ca](mailto:ece@gov.sk.ca)
3. Applications must be received by the Ministry of Education by the deadline of July 15.
4. Applicants will be notified by August 31 if their site was selected to be part of the Enhancing Interactions Initiative.