THE EARLY YEARS

Career Development for Young Children

— A Guide for Educators —

Mildred Cahill | Edith Furey

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A Guide for Educators

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A Guide for Educators

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Preface

Educators[1] are uniquely positioned to inspire, motivate, and support children in their academic, social, emotional, and career development.

We are indebted to the educators, parents[2], and children who so generously shared in our study.

Today's workplace is dynamic and ever changing, filled with a dazzling array of diverse opportunities for work and employment for youth. However, many young people experience difficulty navigating their way through a career path that fulfills their needs.

Typically, youth and young adults are the ones concerned with the serious questions about career development and the future. Yet the roots of career development begin early in a child's life. What do we mean when we talk about career development for young children?

Adults will often reflect back to their own childhoods as the early beginnings of their interests and abilities. For adults, career development is about the past (their childhood), the present, and the future. For children, it's all about their present lives and their dreams for the future. These dreams are often based in fantasy, but are very real to children.

As children mature physically, they grow socially and learn to relate to other siblings, family, peers, and playmates. So too, they develop cognitively, increase their critical thinking skills, and formulate

1. In this document, *educators* refers to *pre-school* and *primary teachers, early childhood educators,* and *day-care workers*.
2. In this document, *parents* refers to *parents and guardians*.

their values, ideas, and preferences. Career development for young children (preschool, primary, and early elementary) is about helping them in the here-and-now, the present, to develop a healthy sense of self and the competencies that will enable them to reach their full potential. Children of the future will have the same biological, social, emotional, and educational expectations of children of the past and present, but their worlds will be very different.

In our research, we set out to determine what, if any, knowledge young children (ages three through eight years) had of career and work behaviors/concepts. Children shared their worldviews through mini stories and artistic depictions. We engaged with parents and educators through focus groups and surveys and asked them what they thought about young children's awareness of career development concepts. Participants shared their observations of children pertaining to their interests, abilities, hopes and dreams, as well as their opinions on career development for young children.

- **Is it too early (ages three to eight years) to think about career development?**
- **How is career development different from child development?**
- **How do children learn about work through play?**

From this work, we analyzed data from all three groups: children, parents, and educators. We sifted through those focus groups and surveys and put together our findings. We then carefully combed the literature to compare our findings with what had already been compiled by earlier researchers and writers.

The most exciting aspect about our study was that we obtained evidence from the children that the seeds of career development were apparent. They were interested in various activities, doing chores and, the work of adults, and were quite capable of sharing their hopes and dreams.

Ignoring the process of career development occurring in childhood is similar to a gardener disregarding the quality of the soil in which a garden will be planted.

—Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2017, p. 276

This booklet is one of the products we developed based on our research findings. The information presented here is intended for educators to reflect upon the career development process of young children in the here-and-now. This booklet presents educators', parents,' and children's perspectives about young children as they grow and make sense of their world, which includes the world of family, community, school, work, and the media, as well as children's interests, hopes and dreams, hobbies, values, and preferences. This booklet is not meant to be followed in order — all themes, while presented as separate sections, are interconnected and flow into each other.

Hopefully, the research articulated here will help inform your work with children and embed career development within the context of education for young children. The next section is an overview of the study.

Research Study of Career Development: An Overview

This booklet has resulted from a research study conducted from 2014 to 2016 on young children's (ages three to eight years) career development. The ideas and information contained within came from surveys completed by parents and educators, as well as from focus group meetings with children, educators, and parents. In our research study, 1194 parents and 136 educators completed surveys. Focus groups were held with 436 children, ages three to eight years, and with 41 parents and 51 educators of children, ages three to eight years.

In our research, we aimed to examine the early career development of children and to garner the perceptions of parents and educators in this process. Through surveys and focus groups, both parents and educators indicated their perceptions or understanding of the content and process of young children's career development and their roles in supporting the developmental process. Educators and parents responded to questions such as: Who is today's child? What is children's career development? What influences career development of children? What is the role of the family, the school, the community, and the media?

Survey questions explored educators' and parents' understanding of, and their attitudes and beliefs

about, the context and developmental process of young children's career development. Questions sought information about educators' perceptions of how they intentionally and unintentionally influenced children's career development in essential career development areas of self-confidence, self-esteem, decision-making, problem-solving, attitudes towards work and school, and personal aspirations. The educators' focus groups complemented information obtained from the surveys and provided opportunities for more in-depth discussion, reflection, and examination of their perceptions of children's career development.

In the focus group meetings with young children, we set out to examine children's knowledge and attitudes regarding career development. Through the medium of art and storytelling, children were provided with opportunities to illustrate and express: their interests, hobbies, and extracurricular activities; knowledge and attitudes towards work, including awareness of their parents' and significant others' work; and their personal dreams for future selves, as well as their contributions to families and communities.

Throughout this booklet, we emphasize the important role that educators play in children's career development. We shared examples of educators' understandings and descriptions of children's career development, as well as how they support and influence it. In addition, children's stories about real life experiences and relationships are told. As the topics throughout this booklet illustrate, children's career development is not a structured, preplanned process whereby children are taught about jobs, work, and careers. Instead, we invite you on a journey of reflecting on the many ways in which you already support and influence children's future aspirations and career decisions.

It is our hope that the shared stories, real-life experiences, and perceptions of children, educators, and parents will guide you as you continue your valuable work with young children in career development.

Educating the Child of Today for Tomorrow

The Changing World of Work

The world of work has changed dramatically beginning with the Industrial Revolution (1820-1870) through to the digital revolution which began around 1980 and accelerated since the development of the Internet. Much has been written by educators, economists, and job futurists about the workers of the future. The vast explosion and transformation of information has sent shock waves throughout the world of work and its corresponding workers. The physical borders of the workplace have become malleable. People work from homes, cars, everywhere, and anywhere they have access to the Internet. People work collaboratively, provincially, nationally, and internationally, on projects and assignments. Information processing has become automated; many refer to present day as the knowledge economy, and more recently, the conceptual age and/or innovative era. New descriptors — for example, the gig economy, referring to a labor market characterized by short-term contracts and free-lancing — creep into our lexicon depicting changes occurring within the economy and occupational landscape.

We are living in an interconnected society. From a young age, children are harnessing and sharing information via cell phones, personal computers, and devices. Competing social media provide new facts, fake news, statistics, and advice. Every day they have numerous messages bombarding them, arriving directly through their devices.

Interestingly, while we are awash in copious information, making sense of this data and messaging introduces new challenges. The paradox of the innovative age is that more information may not be better if we do not know how we assess and use it. Children and youth need to acquire the skills to be able to discern credible sources, penetrate content, discard irrelevant and fake information, and seek more evidence before accepting the voluminous data conveyed to them. How can we prepare our children and youth in the present for the world of their future?

Teaching and Learning

Within schools, goals in teaching and learning aim to be holistic, typically, articulated in academic, career, social, and emotional objectives. Academic objectives address multiple literacies in reading, writing, speaking, as well as quantitative, scientific, and technological literacies. Equally important are: critical thinking and problem solving; ability to apply basic knowledge and concepts; understanding of relationships (personal, local, and global); and the ability to access, manage, and evaluate information to solve complex problems. Correspondingly, social and emotional objectives speak to how important it is for children "to know, understand, and appreciate themselves" (Schultheiss, 2008, p. 188), and build healthy relationships. Conversely, while acknowledged in vision statements and general goals, in practice, career objectives are oftentimes viewed as the purview of the last years of schooling.

Nonetheless, when students graduate from school, it is assumed they will have some idea of who they are and where they will go career-wise. This has become increasingly difficult, as occupational aspirations and choices are not separate, but are interrelated to one's personal and social identities — relationships

with family, friends, peers, school, and community. These relationships and identities begin in early childhood and continue throughout youth and across the lifespan.

The world of work today is dynamic and requires flexible, adaptive, creative, and multi-faceted problem-solvers. Occupations in digital spheres, bio- health, clean environmental industries, agri-foods, and advanced robotics are just some of the areas requiring workers with quantitative, scientific, and technological proficiencies. Additionally, children learning today need to become original thinkers, to think outside-the-box — learning that stimulates imagination, uses discovery-based thinking, and synthesizes and weaves together information conceptually.

A child's play is his talk and toys are his words.

—Ginott, 1994, p. 33

Career Development for Young Children: What is it?

Career development, like other kinds of development (e.g., intellectual, physical, social, and emotional) is a lifelong process that involves constant growth, change, and adaptation. Career development is not just about jobs, work and careers, rather it is about life stories. Children actively explore their worlds and begin to construct possibilities for present and future selves. These life stories include a sense of self (self-identity), life roles, skills and knowledge, and are shaped by everyday events and experiences, as well as by interests, attitudes, beliefs, and role models.

Through play, young children explore their environments as they move through various life roles (child, student, adolescent, worker, parent, and others) and adapt skills to cope with educational, career, and personal tasks. The roots of adaptability start early in children's development and play a large part throughout their life adjustment and career planning, and are ingredients of risk-taking, problem-solving, decision-making, planning, transitions and change, and overcoming obstacles and setbacks.

From a very young age, children envision themselves in possible roles for future selves. Children talk about, express, and 'try on' their hopes and dreams for the future. These aspirations change often and are influenced by many personal and contextual factors, including:

- Relationships with family, educators, friends, peers, and significant others;
- Self-knowledge, including, self-esteem and self-efficacy;
- Interests, experiences, values, attitudes, hopes, and dreams;
- Education/learning, knowledge, and skills;
- Cultural and other contextual influences, for example, gender, ability level, and race or ethnicity.

Flum and Blustein see the process of career development in the early years as a process of helping a child discover who they are. They state, 'The core outcome is self-construction… the process of developing a coherent and meaningful identity and implementing that identity in a life plan.'

—Herr, Cramer, & Niles, 2004, p. 335

Hopes and dreams for future roles change, vary from fantasy to reality, reflect traditional and non-traditional roles, and stereotypical and non-stereotypical gender roles. As children age and mature, they develop a greater sense of control over their futures. Children benefit from making choices regarding many aspects of their lives, including decisions about experiences, play, friends, peer groups, foods to eat, and clothes to wear.

Children's sense of control over their futures is shaped and supported by positive role models. When they feel safe and secure in their environments, they can develop a positive sense of self and become more secure about taking healthy risks. They can overcome obstacles and setbacks as they receive support and encouragement. This in turn fuels their belief in self and willingness to persevere and work through difficulties to achieve goals.

Children, by nature, are curious and inquisitive about experiential, educational, career, and work options. They have countless dreams and hopes that reflect diversity of interests in nature, art, learning, and people in their adult worlds. Worlds of fantasy and mythical heroes are sometimes interchanged with reality

and real-life people.

Children have an awareness of their parents' and significant others' work roles; this awareness increases and broadens as children age. Children are exposed to career, work, and jobs in many ways, including, media, TV, books, games, and other everyday life activities and experiences. They are aware that adults work, and can also discuss their own work for which they have responsibility (e.g., putting toys away, looking after clothes, cleaning up, helping with gardening, and looking after pets).

From an early age, children often identify with workers in their immediate environments, for example, clerks, bus drivers, teachers, doctors, truck drivers, community workers, and the occupations of their parents and various family members. Children care about their world and are excited about exploring what adults do in various jobs and roles.

> *Career-related learning at an early age is not intended to have children make premature choices over future careers; rather it is a process that encourages children to broadly consider a multitude of options that are available and not to restrict or limit their possibilities for their future aspirations.*
>
> —Herr, Cramer, & Niles, 2004, p. 332

As children develop self-identity, interests, and skills, they begin to envision themselves in various career roles. Age-appropriate experiences and reinforcement from loving, caring adults help foster a positive self-identity, often manifested through development of confidence and risk-taking skills. When adults encourage and support children day-to-day, they are nurtured and sustained in their love of learning, natural curiosity, and belief in self.

Valuing childhood does not mean seeing it as a happy innocent period but, rather, as an important period of life to which children are entitled. It is children's right to be children, to enjoy the pleasure, and to suffer the pains of a childhood that is infringed by hurrying. In the end, a childhood is the most basic human right of children.

—Elkind, 1988, p. 202

Conceptual Framework

This study builds upon the important research and development evidenced in the existing career development literature. Prior to the construction of both surveys designed to measure the perceptions and beliefs of parents, guardians, and educators (preschool and primary teachers, and daycare workers), an extensive review of the literature was conducted. This review resulted in an accumulation of data on both traditional and contemporary theories, models, and frameworks of career development. A sizeable literature exists on career development as a broad, life-span construct that begins in early childhood and continues throughout adulthood. Numerous developmental and contextual theorists have accentuated childhood as important in a child's career development, including awareness and understanding of self, development of self-efficacy, knowledge of world of work, and engagement in both present and future problem-solving and choice-making. Nonetheless, in practice, career development in early childhood is often downplayed and under-researched, even neglected. Schultheiss (2008) refers to the fragmented nature of its theory, research, and practice.

The masters of developmental theory (e.g., Erikson, Vygotsky, and Piaget, among others) acknowledged and described childhood as a period of dramatic changes-physical, social, cognitive, and psychological. Children achieve independence, adapt to physical changes, learn to relate to family, friends, peers, and others, develop self-worth and self-efficacy, and master cognitive, social, and psychological tasks.

Similarly, many career theorists and researchers from the 1950s to today highlight the formative years of childhood as integral to overall career development (e.g., Ginzberg, Ginsburg, Axelrad, & Herma, 1951; Havighurst, 1951, 1964; Roe, 1956; Tiedeman & O'Hara, 1963; Super, 1957, 1990). Hence, there has been wide acknowledgement of the importance of childhood in life span development

While the literature authenticates childhood as integral to career development, early childhood has been largely overlooked in practice. Why is this so? Hartung, Porfeli, and Vondracek (2004) point out that career development has "overemphasized adolescence and early-to-middle adulthood" largely a result of a societal emphasis on childhood as a period to "let children be free of the responsibilities and concerns ascribed later" (p. 386).

We know that childhood is a period of play, fun, and fantasy. We also know that there are critical developmental processes taking place — for example, identity development, motivation, and prosocial development, to name a few. Children are growing up in a dynamic ever-changing world characterized

Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory of development:

BIRTH TO ONE YEAR:

- **Learn to trust (or, conversely, mistrust) that others will attend to their basic needs of food, warmth, cleanliness, and physical contact**

ONE TO THREE YEARS:

- **Learn autonomy (or, conversely, shame and doubt) as they master tasks such as, feeding themselves, walking, toileting, and talking**

THREE TO SIX YEARS:

- **Take initiative (or, conversely, experience guilt) as they carry out activities in an adult-like manner, often asserting themselves in an independent way**

SEVEN TO ELEVEN YEARS:

- **Learn industry (or, conversely, inferiority) as they master skills and competencies in family, and school, and with friends, peers, and adults in their worlds**

by fundamental shifts in technology, information, and globalization. These and other interactional environmental forces, such as family, school, peers, community, and the media, shape children's development.

This study is guided by the career development theories and models by prominent researchers, including (but not limited to): Bandura (2012); Cinamon & Dan (2010); Gottfredson (1981; 1996); Lent, Brown & Hackett (2000); Magnuson & Starr (2000); Nurius & Markus (1986); Savickas (1997, 2012); and Howard & Walsh's (2011) career choice and attainment model.

There are numerous definitions of *career* emanating from the theory, research, and practice. For our purposes, career is a lifelong journey that begins in early childhood and takes place over the course of one's life. We like to validate the work of Savickas (1997), Peavy (1994), and Cochran (1997), and others on *career* as *story*. Children write their own stories. There are many co-authors along the way-family, school, peers, community, and the media. Parents and educators are significant co-authors, integral in the whole process. The roots of career development begin early in a child's life. Young children need parents, guardians, educators, and significant others to support and encourage them.

In our study, guided by the literature and research on child and career development, we aimed to look up close at what is happening regarding children's career development. How do children learn about their world? How do they develop attitudes, beliefs, values, abilities, hopes, and dreams? These processes, integral in career development, begin early and continue throughout middle childhood, through adolescence, and into adulthood. We asked children, parents, and educators what they thought.

The next part of this booklet is divided into seven sections based on our study's emerging themes:

- Is it too early to focus on career development?

- Construct of Self
- Influences on Children's Career Development
- Adapting to Change, Making Decisions, and Solving Problems
- Importance of Children's Involvement
- Hopes, Dreams, and Aspirations for Future Selves
- Construct of Work and Parents' Work
- What Educators do

These themes are not intended to be separate and distinct, but rather should be considered as interrelated and connected. A healthy sense of identity, self-efficacy, and self-awareness, for example, are integral to all of these themes. Each section includes commentary based on research findings, as well as direct quotes from participants.

Is it too early to focus on career development?

When we posed the question, 'Why focus on career development at an early age?', we found both educators and parents had lots to say. These valued opinions are discussed in this section.

Parents noted that from a very young age, children talk about growing up and have dreams and hopes for the future. As well, educators expressed that it is never too early to talk about career development as career choice and career decision making are complex processes. Both parents and educators felt a need to start early with a natural process appropriate for the children's age and developmental levels. They also emphasized how important it was for children to be exposed to multiple opportunities for careers and work roles.

Parents noted that career development is not an integral part of the curriculum and certainly not a fluid process. Educators believed they have a powerful influence on children's development of knowledge and exploration of careers, as they influence the exploration of jobs and occupations across genders and stereotypes. Parents saw that most of the activities related to career development at school are isolated instances and occasional events connected to special days (e.g., Education

No, it is not too early. We need to provide children with opportunities to use their imagination. The possibilities are endless for their futures and we need to allow them to imagine those possibilities. We have community workers come to our daycare: nurse, firefighter, recycling. (educator)

I think we should start talking about the concept as early as Kindergarten. My child has talked about the concept for a long time — that is, 'so I have to go to elementary school, then high school, then college, how many years is that? Then I have to get a job, what does that mean — I have to go to work'…. So, as a concept it should be appropriately talked about at a young age, just like we would talk about any life concept, like physical development. (parent)

Week, graduation, and guest speaker days). Parents talked about dress-up centres at preschool, play groups, and daycares as great ideas for career development.

Educators identified the need to have more intentional goals pertaining to career awareness. They emphasized the need to focus on broader skill development, such as character development, not just career or work options. During focus group sessions, some educators noted that the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) project in schools provides opportunities for children to explore careers in respective fields. They readily saw the connections of academic subjects to career development skills and abilities.

Educators also felt that parents increased children's awareness of career possibilities by talking to their children about their work and work roles, and the work and work roles of immediate family and people in the community. As well, educators believed that children should have an appreciation for the work of others; it can start with the workers in a school community — for example, cafeteria staff, maintenance staff, the nurse, etc.

Resoundingly, both parents and educators felt that career education ought to start early for children. They emphasized the importance of age-appropriate activities and sustained programs and interventions.

At a very young age, we should be talking [to our children] about the occupations we see in the community. The earlier we talk about it the better. The more children know about the possible occupations, the earlier they can start and learn new skills, and learn about themselves. (parent)

Yes, it is important as they will change their minds many times. I think play is really important but with the right resources…doesn't seem to be a lot being done in school from my children's experience. Hands-on activities, crafts, and travel seem to really help broaden their minds. (educator)

They do it indirectly; they do from time-to-time–bring in community workers and show different jobs/ careers. (parent)

No, it's never too early, but we need more concrete materials. We need more puzzles and games that talk about careers and more hands-on activities.... (educator)

No, it is not too early. Children are like sponges and they are soaking everything up. The more they are exposed to people in different jobs, the better it is. We ask open-ended questions in circle time, and we do dramatic play. (educator)

In our study:

- 94% of educators either strongly or somewhat agreed that teachers and daycare workers are aware of their impact on children's career development.
- 100% of educators strongly or somewhat agreed with the importance of children viewing and learning about workers in their communities.
- 96.3% of educators either strongly or somewhat agreed that young children learn skills very early in life that will help them manage their lifelong learning, careers, and work.
- 88.9% of educators either strongly or somewhat disagreed that children's career development unfolds naturally and schools don't need to influence it.

In our study:

- 77.7% of parents believed that children should learn about the world of work at preschool and primary school.
- 96.6% of parents believed that children should learn about workers in their communities.
- 70.4% of parents believed that children learn early what they are good at and not so good at.
- 88.9% of parents felt that preschools and primary schools do a good job of developing children's self-awareness and confidence.
- 97.7% of parents responded 'yes' or 'sometimes' that their child likes school and learning.
- 99.1% of parents responded 'yes' or 'sometimes' that teachers try to make school and learning fun.

Ingredients for Children's Career/Life Development

Construct of Self

At a glance

- How children feel about themselves (self-esteem) and how confident they are about their abilities (self-efficacy) are influenced by many factors, particularly, their relationships with parents, teachers, peers, friends, and others.
- Children who have positive self-esteem and self-efficacy are able to initiate and maintain healthy relationships with others.
- Educators and parents teach children self-regulatory behaviors, such as, how to: delay gratification, calm down, exert control over their emotions, and monitor their behaviour.
- Children who feel confident try new tasks, and are motivated and engaged in learn-

Children's beliefs about themselves and their ability to learn and to master new skills and challenges begin in early childhood. These beliefs are not fixed; rather they are dynamic and ever changing. These beliefs require nurturing throughout life as the child grows, changes, and adapts to different experiences.

Children's beliefs about themselves are shaped by their interests and abilities. They discover who they are and who they can become as they play, explore, and indeed, master their environments. More importantly, children's beliefs are influenced by experiences and events, and through support and feedback from interactions and relationships within the family, school, and community (including peers). When children have positive experiences and feel loved and valued, they adapt, adjust, and thrive socially, emotionally, and cognitively. Additionally, they develop healthy self-concepts and the confidence to try out and master everyday challenges.

Parents, schools, peers, and the larger communities are interconnected, and play important roles in the building of children's beliefs about themselves (self-efficacy and self-esteem).

At home and in school, children learn to follow age-appropriate rules, cooperate with peers and siblings, and over time, acquire work habits (e.g., doing homework and helping tidy up). As higher expectations are applied, children step up to meet challenges that can either build or decrease their self-confidence.

Henniger (1995) remarked that play could serve as the antidote to childhood stress.

Children hear messages, some explicit, others implicit, that convey direct and subtle information, attitudes, and expectations about their behaviours, achievements, and importance. These messages help, or hinder, the child's sense of self-efficacy.

Children need to practice, rehearse, and try out new behaviours, including self-regulatory and self-monitoring skills. These skill sets are best learned within the natural settings–home, school, playground, and other contexts. Through play, they rehearse rules, break rules, and take on roles of adults who administer consequences. Learning self-regulatory and self-monitoring skills yields huge dividends for children in school, in their social and emotional relationships, and later, in work and careers.

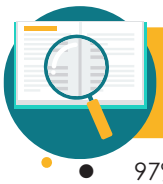
Children's needs are vital to their healthy development. These include the need for self-esteem (to value oneself and to be valued), belonging (to be loved and to love), and autonomy (to be independent and self-determining). Children with low self-esteem may be more likely to anticipate failure and will often shrink back or resist challenges. They may attribute failure to their own personal inadequacies. Conversely, children with high self-esteem are more apt to approach new and challenging tasks. They demonstrate initiative, trust in self, have a more balanced stance on failure, and tend to exert more effort in the future.

In our study, parents and educators recognized the important role they play in helping their children develop positive beliefs about themselves (self-efficacy and confidence) and become caring, innovative,

and engaged citizens of the world. When children receive age-appropriate support from significant adults like parents and educators, and from peers, they are more likely to succeed and thrive in their current and future education and careers.

According to educators, children appear to be more self-confident and sure of themselves at younger ages; children in the three-and-four-year age group, and even kindergarteners, were seen as more confident than older primary children. Self-confidence is noted by some of the teachers as lower in grade three (age eight years); only one third of the students were seen as self-confident.

Many factors influence self-confidence, including: presence of exceptionalities; peers and classmates;the extent to which children feel valued; and their involvement in extracurricular activities. It is important to draw children's attention to their strengths and provide opportunities for them to enhance, explore, and demonstrate strengths. Children who are involved in extracurricular activities have higher self-confidence — for example, children, mostly boys, who play hockey were reported to have higher self-confidence and self-esteem.



In our study:

- 97% of educators either strongly or somewhat agreed that self-confidence and self-esteem influence career choices.
- 82.8% of educators either strongly or somewhat agreed that they are able to give sufficient attention to building children's self-confidence.
- 69.2% of educators either strongly or somewhat agreed that there is sufficient emphasis in the curriculum on helping children develop self-awareness and self-esteem.
- 79.7% of educators either strongly or somewhat agreed that young children are confident with school.
- 84.5% of educators either strongly or somewhat agreed that young children are confident with making friends.

In our study:

- 96.8% of parents responded 'yes' or 'somewhat' to the statement: 'I feel my child is confident in trying new things and is open to change.'
- 99.8% of parents responded 'yes' or 'somewhat' to the statement: 'As a Parent/Guardian, I play a huge role in building my child's self-confidence.'

Self-esteem and self-efficacy are different constructs:

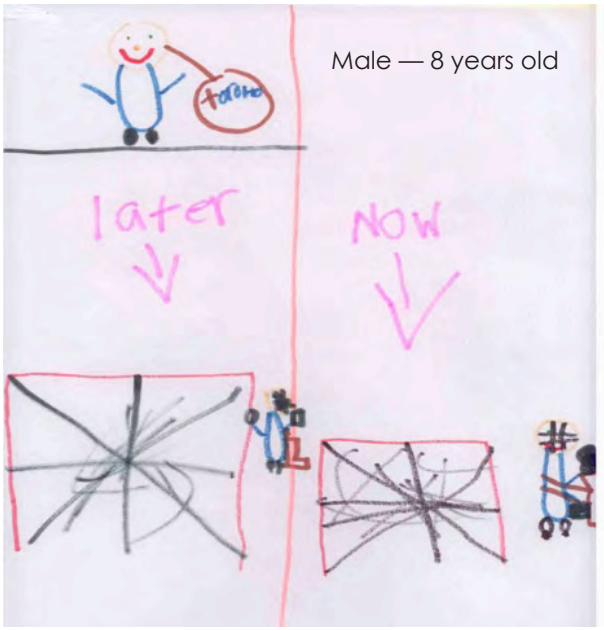
- **Self-esteem is a judgment of self-worth.**
- **Self-efficacy is a judgment of capability.**

—Bandura, 2012

I find there is a range of abilities and self-esteem within my classroom which appears to be fairly equal between the girls and the boys. There are natural leaders in the classroom and some children are heavily influenced by them. (educator)

Most children are confident and have good self-esteem. I think this develops naturally — it is the personality — not influenced by parents, peers, etc. Educators should be good role models and encourage children. (educator)

Children are influenced by educators and we can do a lot to support development of self-confidence. We work on self-confidence. (educator)



I play hockey now. I will play hockey when I am older.

I love helping Mom bake cookies.

How would you respond?

1. You have a child whose interest is in dinosaurs but has difficulty changing focus when needed. How do you support this interest while encouraging the development of new interests?
2. A child does not want to be part of the group in which they are placed, or does not want to continue with a group he/she has joined? How do you address this?
3. A child who is experiencing difficulties with reading exhibits a talent for drawing. How do you use this knowledge to increase their self-esteem?

VIGNETTE

Ms. Joe notices that Max does not enjoy participating during story time. He becomes very inattentive, fidgets a lot, doesn't follow along with the story, and refuses to read. However, when Max has the opportunity to draw, Ms. Joe notices that his work has great detail and appears to be much happier and focused. During story time, Ms. Joe encourages Max to pay close attention to the illustrations and, during follow-up activities, she encourages Max to draw a picture about the story to take home to his Mom. Ms. Joe has also communicated to Max's parents that he has a special talent with drawing. As a result, she has noticed a significant improvement in Max's attention during story time, and he also appears to be more settled and more willing to engage in all activities.

1. How are diverse interests/activities recognized and valued in your setting?
2. How do you value each child as an individual member of your setting?
3. How do you encourage and support each child's exploration and development of self?
4. What activities/experiences do you incorporate to increase children's self-awareness and self-esteem?
5. How do you support children in coping with challenge and frustration (resiliency)?

Influences on Children's Career Development

At a glance

- Exploring diverse activities and interests provides children with important self-knowledge and factors into their hopes and dreams for future.
- Children love: exploring things on their own; asking questions and figuring out the answers; interacting with others; trying new things; cultivating new interests; and acquiring new skills.
- Educators nurture children's love of learning through both structured and unstructured play. They learn best when they're relaxed and having fun.
- Children need diverse images, role models, and experiences to help counteract possible entrenched perceptions pertaining to gender, social class, and ability.

Young children are highly enthusiastic, lively, curious, and ready to learn. Their interests, likes or preferences, and abilities are central to career development and to their overall well-being and sense of contentment. Sometimes, interests begun in childhood are sustained throughout adulthood. They provide the early seeds or roots of competence.

As children take on and master activities and build their interests, they develop a sense of accomplishment which improves their self-confidence. When children have fun, laugh, are drawn in, and engaged, learning becomes intrinsically motivating. As they succeed in areas of interest, they will grow from these positive experiences and become motivated to try new things.

Engagement in leisure roles improves skills and competence and helps children feel more positive about themselves. In our study, parents observed that as their children practice control over activities and tasks, they build capacity to sustain attention; they become engaged and welcome opportunities to problem-solve and make decisions. Additionally, they increase their creativity, competence, self-confidence, self-acceptance, and independence.

Children's capacity for self-awareness of their ability level increases with age and developmental level. Younger children (ages five and six) are more optimistic and enthusiastic about their abilities in extracurricular activities and are more likely to rate themselves quite high on various abilities (sports,

Home life is very important. Having opportunities for social interaction is important. Peers are very influential. Often if they do not like something or it is too difficult, they will do it because their friends are. Media and the video games they are playing are also influential in terms of their interests. We monitor those things. (parent)

Yes, guest speakers — parents' talking about their careers and those of family members, the media- YouTube and movies, even those like Mall Cop give kids a perception, rightly or wrongly, of what a career might be. Yes, I think there is still a lot of stereotyping that goes on and sometimes we are not even aware of it…my students still look at some jobs as 'boy jobs and girl jobs'. (educator)

music, etc.), whereas older children (ages nine and ten) are less likely to do so. Younger children are less realistic than older children. After initial exploration of a diversity of activities and interests, children opt for fewer, and may want to stick with what provides them with more enjoyment. Sometimes, intrinsic motivation determines which ones they stick with; sometimes, their friendships sway them. So too, as children experience setbacks and frustration, they become more doubtful about their abilities. They will often hesitate to join activities when they feel they will not do as well as their peers.

Many parents talked about the importance of the influence of positive role models, mentors, family values, and exposure to the media and a variety of social settings on career development. Parents also noted the impact of peers as role models and their influence on children's experiences. As well, parents identified the influence that rich experiences have on the development of "soft" (*parents' description*) skills and the importance of these skills, such as, team work, positive social skills, moral development, and determination.

Educators believed that children's aspirations for future roles are influenced by a number of factors, including: gender; knowledge of their parents' and immediate family members' careers; field experiences; travelling; and extracurricular activities. Educators shared their observations about the impact of gender on children's choices in play, and aspirations for future roles. Media, such as YouTube and TV, are major influences on children. Children's choices for future selves often reflected what they were seeing in the media. As well, children are influenced by experiences, current events, and happenings in their lives. Children in our study readily talked about their interests. Children's interests included the following theme areas: games/toys, television shows, movies, books, and activities/sports.

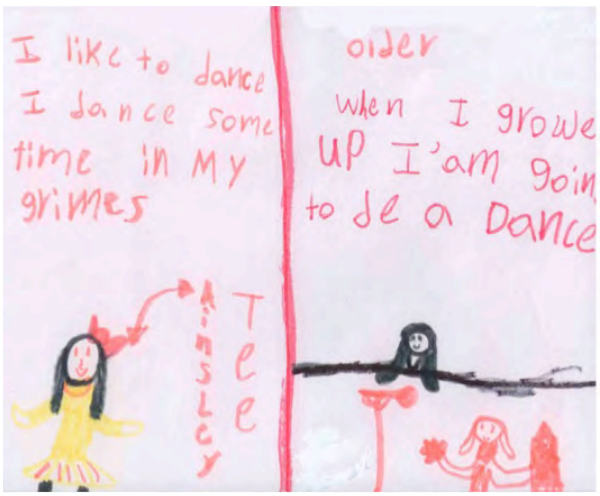
In our study:

- 97% of educators either strongly or somewhat agreed that TV and social media can influence future career choices.
- 96.2% of educators either strongly or somewhat agreed that play can influence career choices.

In our study:

- 99.2% of parents responded 'yes' or 'sometimes' that they supervise what their children watch on TV.

Most parents in the study were attuned to their children's love of learning, and readily talked about their children's specific interests. Many of the extra-curricular, out-of-school, and leisure activities or hobbies in which children partake during early childhood sustain them through middle childhood and are linked to their later educational, social, and career preferences. Parents in our study felt that participation in extracurricular activities had a life-long impact on their children. They felt it supported the development of: team work, social skills, physical development, self-esteem, and self-confidence. Most parents addressed the importance of children's self-awareness; many parents connected children's self-awareness to awareness of interests and abilities. According to parents, children know what they like and don't like as their interests are quite evident and diverse. Even in the case of siblings, parents remarked that interests are unique. Some parents noted that interests change and are influenced by the peer group as children are more likely to try something new in the company of peers.



Female — 6 years old

I like to dance sometimes. When I grow up, I'm going to be a dancer.

Field trips, travel, and organizations such as Boy Scouts, Brownies, Cadets, and Rangers can expose kids to different careers. Yes, there are still different expectations for boys and girls, but it is changing. (educator)

I love to paint pictures. My favorite TV show is Batman, *my favorite book is Batman. I like to read books and play at school. I would like to be a better batman. (child)*

Being involved in experiences and activities exposes them to mentors and role models who demonstrate working through challenges and difficulties. They need to see life through people who have challenges and have succeeded. (parent)

Her involvement in these [interests/activities] supports an active lifestyle. It teaches her about balance in her life and prioritizing her schedule. It teaches her to make a commitment and stick to it. I think that the performance aspect of the activities is connected to the development of her self-esteem. It certainly gives her more confidence. (parent)

I like to play basketball. I will be a police officer when I get bigger.

I love picking flowers with my Mom. No, boys and girls cannot play with the same toys.

The Influence of Gender

At a glance

- It is important that children do not prematurely dismiss or limit options for future possibilities based on gender stereotyping.
- Activities, games, and toys during the early years of a child's education may play a role in the development of skills necessary for later achievement in math, mngineering, technology, and science.
- Girls with high self-esteem make less traditional career choices and these choices are established in the primary years of school.
- Girls are making more non-traditional career choices, but boys are less likely to choose non-traditional careers.

An extensive literature (e.g., Fitzgerald and Harmon, 2001) exists on the importance of gender socialization and its impact on career aspirations and choices. Stereotyping, discrimination, and biases, conscious and unconscious, are still evidenced in major arenas and institutions of society today, including sports, pop culture, the media, and the workplace. Some occupations and careers are under-represented, while others are over-represented by one gender.

Gottfredson's theory of Circumscription and Compromise outlines four stages of occupational aspirations, three of which describe young children — the fourth describes adolescence. She views career development as a process of implementing one's self concept. She contends that occupational aspirations and choices are often compatible with self-images and self-efficacy. Children often eliminate options based on social class, gender, and perception of ability. Accordingly, children restricted career aspirations and choices based on who they perceived themselves to be.

Career-related learning that addresses the issue of gender stereotyping during the early years of a child's education will help to ensure that children are provided with accurate and relevant information to support the belief that they have a wide array of occupational options available to them regardless of gender. Research (e.g., Fitzgerald and Harmon, 2001) indicates that children's impressions of the world of work and the occupations that are available and suitable for them develop early, often prior to school entrance.

Children make choices based on their views of the world. They eliminate choices (circumscription) based on gender, social prestige, personal interest, and attainability (compromise). (Gottfredson, 1981)

Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise:

Stage I: Three to five years of age, grasped the idea of adulthood, and restricted aspirations, based on their orientation to size and power.

Stage II: Six to eight years of age, restricted aspirations/choices based on orientation to gender.

Stage III: Nine to thirteen years of age, restricted aspirations/choices based on their orientation to social class.

Stage IV: Youth, beginning at age fourteen years, became oriented to their perceived unique self — occupational choices inconsistent with their self-concept were eliminated.

Educators play an important role in helping children formulate and refine potential career aspirations, and ensure that children do not limit their options because of gender stereotyping. Educators play a large role in developing children's attitudes, self-esteem, and confidence. Educators need to ensure that all children are provided with resources, information, role models, and a learning environment that supports a belief in infinite possibilities for future careers. Hence, there is a need to work to prevent children

from narrowing their career choices before having an opportunity to thoroughly explore the world of work and gain an understanding of their self-interest.

In our study:

- 85.7% of educators responded 'strongly, or, somewhat agree' that at a young age, children develop ideas of jobs for males and other jobs for females.
- 63.9% of educators responded 'strongly, or somewhat agree' that young children rule out a possible career choice or type of work because they think it is gender inappropriate.

In our study:

- 78.7% of parents responded 'yes' that children develop ideas of jobs for boys and other jobs for girls.

What did children say?

Children's interests and aspirations for future selves sometimes reflected sensitivity to gender identity as they identified gender-specific interests and activities. Often, when children talked about family activities, they most often referenced helping their mother or grandmother with cleaning and cooking activities. Activities involving fathers reflected outdoor and building tasks. From a young age, children have stereotyped ideas of what girls, boys, and mothers and fathers can do.

In our study, while all children across age groups (three to eight years) identified gender-neutral toys and games of interest to both girls and boys (Minecraft, iPad, video games, painting, board games, and riding bikes), they also demonstrated sensitivity to gender identity and identified gender-specific interests. This was particularly true for the younger children, who were more likely other than children to show gender-stereotyped interests. There was some evidence that girls identified interests in such toys as, trucks, cars, trains, Super Mario, and wrestling, whereas fewer boys expressed interests in such toys as, dolls, princess-

Last week my Daddy took me for a cook-out. I help Nanny and Mommy clean floor and do dishes. I watch TV with Mommy. (child)

I helped Dad put together a dresser drawer. I help Mom put Easter bunny stickers on windows. (child)

I have to do school work, clean my bedroom, make bed, and help Mom clean the living room. I love playing soccer with my Dad. (child)

Dad cannot be a nurse. Dad cannot be a teacher. Mom can work in garage. (3 year old)

Yes, they [moms and dads] can do the same job; yes of course. (5 year old)

A girl can be a soldier and a firefighter and a cop. (6 year old)

Boys draw cool stuff and have swords. Girls do yucky stuff, like Barbies. (7 year old)

Yes, they can play with the same things, but boys like hockey. (8 year old)

es, My Little Pony, dancing, and necklaces. Many of the boys, ages six to eight years, discussed interests in games and sports characterized by action, competition, strength, heroes, and occasionally, violence.

Girls' interests, ages six to eight years, were more diverse than boys. Young girls' depictions and stories revealed interests, such as, dolls, books, and movies about animals, and activities such as drawing and painting. Many girls were also interested in physical activities, such as, dancing, soccer, swimming, gymnastics, and skating. Some games and toys were chosen by both girls and boys, for example, Legos and Minecraft.

There was evidence of boys citing hopes and dreams for the future, based on their father's work. This is consistent with findings in the literature. There were not as many instances of girls choosing the work of their mothers.

When asked about their hopes and dreams for the future, or when they got older, most male choices tended towards masculine stereotypes such as, hockey players, wrestlers, police officers, race car drivers, soldiers, athletes, or the occupations of their fathers. Most aspiration for future selves involved action, and some boys expressed a desire to be in control.

Many girls chose occupations that were related to helping others, such as, teacher, nurse, doctor, and vet. Teacher was the most frequent choice among the six to eight year olds. Other interests from girls' stories and depictions included: artist, model, doctor, fashion designer, and musician.

My favorite video game is Grand Theft Auto. My Dad lets me play this game. (boy)

I like Xbox. I like the killing games and killing ghosts. I am good at baseball and football. (boy)

My favorite book is Star Wars*; I like the battles. (boy)*

My hobbies are soccer, dance, and gymnastics. (girl)

Career learning has the potential to provide children with accurate and relevant information, to challenge restrictive, negative, and stereotypical notions about themselves and to keep their options open.

—Herr, Cramer, & Niles, 2004, p. 334

What did Educators say?

Educators observed many instances of gender-stereotyped interests and activities.

My favorite TV shows are Barbie *and* Pearl Princess. *I am very good at dancing and soccer. (girl)*

My favorite games are Minecraft and Disney Infinity — I like them because I fight the bad boys and try not to get killed. My favorite toys are my teddy bears. (girl)

I would like to work with my Dad in the mines. (boy)

I want to be a construction worker like Dad. I want to build houses. I like building stuff with Legos. (boy)

Mom is a teacher; Dad works at computers. I want to be a dance teacher because I love to dance. Also, I want to be a Brownie leader. (girl)

I want to be a music teacher and work at Fisheries and Oceans like Mom and Dad. (girl)

I want to be a nurse like Mom. (girl)

I want to do many jobs – scuba diver, paleontologist, fisherman, truck driver, and marine biologist. (boy)

I want to be the mayor and make the rules. (boy)

I want to be a policeman and put the bad people in jail. (boy)

I want to work in a hair salon. (girl)

I want to be an artist and a dance teacher. (girl)

I want to be a designer. I love fashion and I want to be a daycare worker.

I want to be a teacher. Girls can be hairstylists.

(girl)
A little boy in grade two, whose favourite toy was a male doll, was accepted by the others when the connection was pointed out by the teacher that this would be a great experience for helping him become a good dad when he is older. It is important for educators and parents to be aware of their own biases. A female student in class was going to dress up as a police officer and her Mom was going to give her a 'mustache'. (educator)

A Dad did not want a young boy to have a kitchen set since he considered it a 'girl toy.' The educator changed his attitude by pointing out that many famous chefs are male. (educator)

Gender does have an impact. We hear the children say that a toy is for boys and a toy is for girls. When we put out toys, boys will choose the construction blocks; girls, the dolls. We even, one day, had one pink bike helmet left — a boy chose not to ride the bike because he refused to wear the pink helmet. (educator)

Boys and girls both like the kitchen, and boys like the vacuum cleaner because it moves! Both are into books, but more of the girls like the crafts. Parents certainly influence the children's choice of toys. (educator)

VIGNETTE

Mr. Jenson overheard some boys in his class tell the girls they could not play games that involved fixing cars and they could not be mechanics, as that was work for men. Mr. Jenson felt that it was important to address this issue of gender stereotyping with his class. Mr. Jenson gathered books and films on males and females in non-traditional roles, and presented these to the children over a period of time. He also encouraged discussion as to why and how roles change. Mr. Jenson also invited a series of guest speakers to come and present on their work to his class, such as, female and male mechanics, sea captains, doctors, and nurses. Mr. Jenson was pleased to discover that during playtime both girls and boys were playing with a variety of toys and engaging in roles that were not stereotypically gender-based.

1. Are all children offered and encouraged to play with toys both gender-neutral and otherwise?
2. Are limiting attitudes about gender addressed with students as they arise?
3. Are the books, films, and other resources in your setting respectful of gender?
4. Do children in your setting see role models that reflect both genders in multiple occupations?

Adapting to Change, Making Decisions, and Solving Problems

At a glance

- Coping and adapting to change, making decisions, and problem-solving are skills that can be learned.
- Educators empower children to manage change, make decisions, and problem-solve.
- Learning to deal effectively with change, to make decisions, and to problem-solve increases children's control over situations and helps reduce anxiety and stress.
- Educators encourage children to take risks, take on challenges, and turn mistakes into learning opportunities.
- Through play, children rehearse, practice, and learn decision-making and problem-solving strategies.

In our study:

- 92.5% of educators either strongly or somewhat agreed that children should learn to solve problems on their own.
- 94.1% of educators either strongly or somewhat agreed that children need help in developing confidence to try something new.
- 79.2% of educators either strongly or somewhat agreed that when children make mistakes, they bounce back and will try again.

In our study:

- 97% of parents responded either 'yes' or 'somewhat' to the statement *'I let my child solve problems on their own'*.
- 96.8% of parents responded either 'yes' or 'somewhat' to the statement 'I feel my child is confident in trying new things and is open to change'.

Many career researchers and theorists (e.g., Super, 1997; Savickas, 1991) accentuate the importance of adaptability and resiliency in one's ability to make decisions and solve problems — key ingredients in career development. The seeds of adaptability and resiliency that begin in early childhood need to be nurtured throughout middle childhood and adolescence. How children engage in change and everyday decision-making and problem-solving will impact their future selves. Certainly, workplaces and employers score adaptability and resiliency as high on their list of qualities and competencies required for workers and employees.

Savickas (1991; 2002) elaborated on adaptability in childhood. He defined adaptability as the readiness to cope with educational and career tasks, choices, and adjustment. His model has four components: i) concern about the future; ii) control over their lives; iii) curiosity about occupations and work; and iv) confidence in the ability to construct a future and cope with challenges. We felt this model addressed several of the observations made by all three participant groups in our study — children, parents, and educators, and shed light on the construct of adaptability in children

There is great overlap between adaptability, high self-efficacy, a supportive environment, resiliency, and overall well-being. None of these ingredients are static; they change over time, and are influenced by the interaction of protective factors from family, school, peers, and larger community. Resilience, flexibility, and adaptability are core skills needed in everyday life, including education, careers, and work.

Young children are creative; they enjoy solving problems and learning to adapt to changing situations and events. They observe, imitate, and mirror their parents', siblings', educators', and peers' everyday problem-solving and decision-making skills.

There are times when children find themselves in situations that overwhelm them. On such occasions, they may hesitate, struggle, and fail, and need the support and encouragement of their parents, family, and educators. This support and encouragement will be an essential ingredient in the development of resilience.

Transitions are difficult. For the first few weeks of back to school, he struggles to adjust. I focus on the positives of the situations. I help him look ahead on what is going to occur and to keep moving. (parent)

I try to teach him about what he is going to learn from the situation, and give him positive reinforcement for being able to do it. I talk to him about the new skills that he has learned and how he can help others who are in those situations. (parent)

Sometimes parents want to shield their children from possible failure in decision-making and problem-solving — they may even step in and complete the task for the child. Educators and parents can encourage children to learn from their errors and become less fearful of mistakes. A child who is comfortable with making mistakes will engage more willingly in problem-solving strategies.

Educators and parents suggested various strategies to support children's ongoing development, decision-making, problem-solving, and resiliency as they journey through school, work, and careers. They generally give children choices, for example, over the clothes they wear, snack foods they eat, books to read, and play materials. Many educators and parents in our study noted that before change occurs they give children plenty of advance notice, and support them through the change while providing posi-

Constructs of adaptability (Savickas, 1991; 2002)

1. Concern about the future
   - Future orientation — feeling optimistic about the future (hopeful, motivated, and planful)
   - Possible selves — shaped by role models (familial, school, community, peers, images, and media)
   - Key question: Do I have a future?
2. Control over their lives
   - Children need secure attachments and relationships with responsible adults.
   - They learn self-regulation and to trust in a predictable world — manifests as decisive and assertive.
   - Autonomy and self-reliance emanate from control.
   - Indecision, wavering, and uncertainty result from underdeveloped concern.
   - Key question: Who owns my future?
3. Curiosity about occupations and work
   - Children are curious, inquisitive, inquiring, and willing to explore the future.
   - Appropriate risk-taking and reality-testing enable children to advance and progress through educational and personal pursuits.
   - Lack of curiosity limits and thwarts aspirations and opportunities, and evokes unrealism.
   - Key question: What do I want to do?
4. Confidence to construct a future and cope with barriers
   - Self-efficacy, empowerment, ability to problem-solve, self-assurance, industriousness, and persistence.
   - Lack of confidence manifests in uncertainty, inhibition, self-consciousness, and reluctance to take risks or to act.
   - Key question: Can I do it?

tive reinforcement. Educators and parents reassure children and encourage them as they problem-solve by helping them break the problem or decision into small manageable steps. Opportunities for play enable children to experiment, explore, and gain a sense of hope which helps them to be proactive in creating their future. Young children's hopes, dreams, goals, aspirations, and values are key ingredients of education, and career development.

It is critical for us to focus on character development, risk taking, problem solving – skills that will transfer to any type of work or career. (educator)

She is more hesitant. She looks to us for guidance. We do encourage her to make her own decisions and will guide her to do that by helping her look at her options. (parent)

VIGNETTE

On Wednesday, a new student from another country will be transferring into Mr. Knox's class. This child's linguistic and cultural practices are very different from the other children in class. Mr. Knox recognizes the importance of preparing children to meet the new child. Additionally, he recognizes the benefits of the inclusion of this child into the setting. Mr. Knox prepares ahead of time for this child's arrival. As a result, the children in his class are very excited about meeting their new classmate and are looking forward to learning more about him and his country.

Mr. Knox provides the children with some background information on the new child's country and culture. He encourages the children to ask questions and to brainstorm how they can welcome this student and help him feel comfortable.

He teaches the children to say 'hello' and 'welcome' in the language of the new child.

1. How do you increase children's awareness of upcoming changes?
2. How do you prepare children for changes that will occur within your setting?
3. What coping strategies do you discuss and model for adapting to change?

VIGNETTE

Ms. Chang wants to encourage the children in her early learning centre to become more aware of their uniqueness by increasing their awareness of their own personal preferences and dislikes. She also wants them to become more adept at making decisions and thinking independently. She knows this will increase the children's self-esteem and self-confidence as they gain more awareness and control in their environments.

- She provides opportunities for children to choose their seats at story time.
- She gives children choices over what books she will read to them.
- At snack time, children choose their snacks; at game time, they choose the games they play.

Initially, some of the children were reluctant to make choices or would choose items like their friends. However, with encouragement and praise, many of the children are becoming more comfortable with making choices that reflect their true preferences. She notices the children appear to feel very positive about making their own choices.

1. What decisions and/or problems do you make/solve in a group setting?
2. What decisions/problems are children able to respond to on their own?
3. How do you encourage children to make decisions and solve problems?

Importance of Children's Involvement

At a glance

- Helping others gives children a sense of accomplishment and pride.
- Through engagement with their families and communities, children gain knowledge about work and the benefits of team work and collaboration.
- Children's self-esteem and self-efficacy are enhanced through involvement and the appreciation they receive for their contribution.
- When children engage in volunteer activities, they learn about civic responsibility, leadership, giving, belonging, and intrinsic rewards.

Children develop a personal identity. They formulate interests (likes and dislikes), preferences, strengths, abilities, values, beliefs, attitudes, aspirations, hopes, and dreams. Correspondingly, children develop their social identity. This social identity forms in an interactive way within their social environment. As educators know, ability and self-identity are not fixed, they are malleable.

They learn from relationships and from the feedback from others within their social environment – parents, family, teachers, friends, and peers, the school, and the larger community. Healthy relationships support children's exploration of their worlds, aids the development of confidence in themselves, and builds trust in others.

Children increase their self-efficacy as they participate in family and community life by trying things out and experiencing the joy of becoming engaged in activities. These experiences help children, figure out who they really are and who they want to become. Furthermore, their self-efficacy increases as they experience success and accomplish their goals.

Educators in our study stated that children's engagement in and contributions to their settings are routine in early childhood centres and primary schools. Chores and tasks were noted as important, for all children as a way of understanding responsibility, engaging in leadership roles, and increasing self-esteem and a feeling of belonging. Educators noted that children like doing classroom chores and tasks, and frequently will 'fight' over having a particular task. Accordingly, they felt both boys and girls were equally positive about completion of class chores and tasks. Educators observed that children who were given responsibilities at home appear more confident, generally. Educators noted they could easily discern which children have responsibilities for chores and tasks at home.

In our study:

- 96.3% of educators strongly or somewhat agreed that young children learn skills very early in life that will help them manage their lifelong learning, careers, and work.

Most parents indicated their children have chores or tasks to perform at home. Children readily talked about the chores or tasks they had to perform. The nature of the chores include such tasks as, making beds, putting dishes in the sink, cleaning up after play, and helping with pets and younger siblings. Predictably, some parents noted that children sometimes express their reservations towards chores/tasks, and often need encouragement and support for completion. Nevertheless, most children and educators reported that children were motivated to complete them. Some parents noted that children do better with completion of chores if they are rewarded. Similarly, some of the children talked about monetary rewards for completion of tasks.

Parents and educators talked easily about the long term benefits of children having chores and tasks at home. Lifelong lessons were discussed, such as: responsibility, respect for other members of the family, independence, persistence (hard work), organization, understanding and development of responsibility,

engaging in leadership roles, and increasing self-esteem/self-efficacy, belongingness, and a sense of accomplishment. Both educators and parents alike accentuated the significance of such expectations for children's character development and career development, including: the importance of working together, relationships, teamwork, collaboration, and effort.

When asked about their chores and responsibilities, children talked about them in a very positive light. Children referred to their chores and responsibilities as important work they had to do.

We give our students a lot of work to do such as, setting up band equipment, buddy reading, lunch orders, emptying garbage, computer lab set up, and setting up book fairs. They all can't get enough to do! One boy said last week, 'Miss, it feels good to do this'. (educator)

It teaches them the value of routine, organization, work ethic, and responsibility. (educator)

I think the activities such as prefecting, morning announcements, and helping with book fairs and sports days gives our students a lot of experience in leadership roles. (educator)

She loves helping and knowing that she is helping. Sometimes she may not like to dress herself or make her bed, things like mow the grass, etc. They teach her responsibility and independence. She learns that she has to care for others within the family, and she learns team work. (parent)

The six year old daughter tidies her room every day. She loves to help at everything. The three year old, because of autism, is being taught to comply with requests. They [chores] provide structure and teach responsibility. (parent)

She likes to help and says, 'Mom will be so proud of me'. She gets a quarter for the vacation jar when they clean up. (parent)

My Mom made a list of chores for me and my brother. It's important to help around the house and clean my room. (child)

VIGNETTE

The annual Coats for Kids campaign is approaching. All the children are very excited about participating in this event. The children will get involved in activities such as, bringing home flyers, setting up a collections area, and bringing coats from home. Mr. Rideau recognizes the importance of children's involvement in this kind of activity. He ensures that all children participate in a meaningful way, and feel positive about their contribution.

1. How do you value the contribution of children within your setting?
   - Educators value the sense of pride and responsibility children demonstrate when given tasks and chores.
   - Educators ensure that all children have an opportunity to contribute in their setting.

2. How do the children contribute in your setting?
   - Children are provided with age-appropriate and meaningful tasks that are beneficial to the setting.
   - Educators establish schedules of duties so all children are fairly treated.

3. How does your setting enable the children to contribute to their community?
   - Educators are aware of activities happening in their community, such as clean-up campaigns which provide children with an opportunity to contribute in a meaningful way.

Hopes, Dreams, and Aspirations for Future Selves

At a glance

- From a very early age, children have a vision of how they see themselves in the future.
- Aspirations and dreams are expressed through play in role-playing, dress-up, art, and verbal expression.
- Children who are supported in their dreams and visions for the future are likely to explore a diverse range of future career options; they don't rule out possibilities prematurely.
- TV, media, games, and significant events often influence children's aspirations for present and future roles.
- It is important for children to be exposed to positive role models, mentors, and a wide range of experiences across diverse environments and settings.
- Children's aspirations for future selves change frequently and reflect their experiences, interests, the life roles of parents and significant others, and activities/roles based in reality and fantasy.

In 1986, Markus and Nurius published their research on possible selves theory. They described multiple, dynamic, and subjective visions of one's self in the present and the future. They described present selves (*Who am I*?), hoped-for selves (*Who I wish to become*?), and feared selves (*Who am I afraid of becoming*?). Later, in 1991, Cross and Markus elaborated on the relation of possible selves to how one aspires or hopes to fulfill and attain goals, purpose, and plans. As a child grows (cognitively, socially, and physically) and becomes autonomous, these hoped-for selves operate, or act, to impact attitudes, values, emotions, and associated decision-making strategies and career goals.

Possible selves include both personal and social components, or identities. Young children play, experiment with new things, and interact with their parents, siblings, teachers, coaches, and peers while growing and developing a sense of themselves and their world. As they perform tasks, both challenging and straightforward, they affirm their identity as a learner — for example, "I can do this;" or "this is fun;" and conversely, "I can't do this." Children also compare themselves with siblings, friends, and peers — for example, "I can do this better than my brother, or my friend." Young children's social identities take shape quite early; they want to "fit

Children's dreams for possible selves include both fantasy-and reality-based aspirations.

in" with a group. Later, pre- and throughout adolescence, their affiliations with the social group (negative and positive) become paramount — for example, "this is what I do" or "this is who we are."

Children's hopes and dreams for their futures are fuelled by their experiences and relationships in the present. In supportive learning environments, they make decisions, solve problems, and develop positive beliefs about themselves. This sense of self in the present will expand into their future selves, their aspirations, and goals, which are very important in career development.

Parents are central to their children's present and future selves, but educators are especially influential in children's constructions of academic selves, which are specific to a domain, such as mathematics, science, writing, and other subject areas. Your reassurances and focus on effort, strengths, positive accomplishments, and progress foster and sustain a sense of hope and optimism for the future.

According to Prince & Nurius (2014), when children experience academic success, "their academic self-concept is enhanced, as is their motivation, drive, and academic accomplishments." (p. 145) On the other hand, when children experience repeated failures, negative messages invade their thinking — e.g., "I'm a poor student" or "I'm a failure." Undoubtedly, it is important for children to experience success, but it is also important for them to encounter challenge, to risk, and to learn from such opportunities. Children with high self-efficacy, or positive selves, will not be afraid of failure.

> *Research indicates that many students who drop out of school in their teens have dropped out psychologically as early as grade three and do not see school as having an important place in their life.*
>
> —Herr, Cramer, & Niles, 2004, p. 344

In our study, we adopted possible selves theory in our children's narratives and mini stories. We discovered that children were able to describe themselves in the present and were able to manifest/paint their hopes and dreams for the future.

According to children, parents, and educators in our study, there is much evidence of children's aspirations, hopes, and dreams for the future. According to both parents and educators, children's aspirations for future selves change frequently and reflect their experiences, and interests (real-life and fantasy), and the people in their lives.

Educators noted children's aspirations for future roles are influenced by a number of factors, including: gender, knowledge of their parents' and immediate family members' occupations, field experiences, travelling, and extracurricular activities. Educators observed the impact of gender on children's choices in play, aspiration for future roles, and choices of toys and games. Media, such as YouTube and TV, are major influences on children as choices for future selves often reflect what they are seeing in media. As well, children are influenced by experiences, events, and happenings in their lives.

Educators observed children's aspirations and dreams for future selves through means such as, role-playing, dress-up centers, art, and verbal expression. Generally, children's aspirations for future selves changed frequently and reflected their experiences and the people in their lives. Future roles were frequently traditional, based on fantasy and reality, and, generally, gender- based, such as: prin-

cesses, nurses, and teachers for girls; hockey player, police, and firefighter for boys. However, it was noted that while some girls expressed interest in roles not traditionally associated with females, such as, police officer, hockey player, truck driver, most boys did not express interest in roles traditionally identified as female, such as, teacher, secretary, or nurse. In dress-up centers, children can be seen role playing scenes from home as moms and dads; restaurants where they play patrons and servers; and hospitals where they assume roles as doctors and patients.

Children represented their aspirations and dreams for future selves through their stories, drawings, and paintings. During the focus groups, children were asked questions related to their future selves, reasons for their interests, and their main source(s) of influence. They frequently envisioned future roles as enjoyable and the roles they chose reflected their personal and social experiences. Accordingly, their aspirations of future roles were also related to their current activities and sports — for example, a hockey player, a video game designer, or a car engineer.

Children's awareness and understanding of specific responsibilities of work roles influenced their depictions of future selves. One six-year-old child explained that he wanted to be a construction worker because he likes to build houses, and likes "building stuff with Legos." Another child described his dream of becoming a chef based on knowledge that "to be a chef you have to ring the bell, work the stove and learn how to cook." Younger children will often focus on concrete components such as tools and instruments. Not surprisingly, occupations of parents and significant adults in children's lives were frequently

In our study:

- 94.8% of educators recognized that young children want to talk about their future.

cited, and also influenced their own future aspirations —for example, truck driver, teacher, doctor, carpenter, and marine biologist.

It was observed by both parents and educators that, from an early age, children talked about aspirations. Many children envisioned a future with multiple roles as they talked about more than one choice for future self. This was particularly evidenced in the stories and paintings of older children (ages six to eight years). Hopes and dreams for future roles varied from fantasy to reality with children aspiring to take on roles of their 'idols' and 'heroes' in media, books, TV, etc. (a doctor like Dr. McStuffin, an astronaut like on TV, a rock star, go to Spain and learn Spanish like Dora). There was strong evidence of how future roles were related to their current activities and sports (a hockey player, a video game designer, a car engineer); and awareness of work roles and occupations of parents and significant adults in their lives (e.g., a teacher, a carpenter, a marine biologist). Samples of narratives, drawings, and paintings reflected varying levels of children's understanding of the career process. Older children linked their hopes and dreams to their own interests, and were able to talk about how they would accomplish their goals.

Parents recognized the importance of allowing children to explore, fantasize, and make connections between their current experiences and future lives. Most parents encouraged children to imagine many possibilities for future selves. They recognized the importance of children's awareness of, and opportunities to explore, diverse possibilities and options.

I want to be a basketball player, song writer, and scientist. Since I was three, I got the idea from Dad to be a scientist. To be that I have to get really smart, do well on the CRTs (Criterion Reference Test), and don't rush. (child)

I want to be a marine biologist. My brother wants to be a paleontologist. I love sharks. My brother is older. He told me all about marine biology because I love sharks. Work makes everyone happy. (child)

I want to be a bus driver. I would like to be better at drawing. (child)

...talks about being a rock star. I think the influence comes from TV. TV is great and awful at the same time. It does have a great influence on what children think. (parent)

She play acts that she is a princess. I think she gets this from programs that she watches on TV. (parent)

She loves animals. She always talks about wanting to help animals or people when she grows up. (parent)

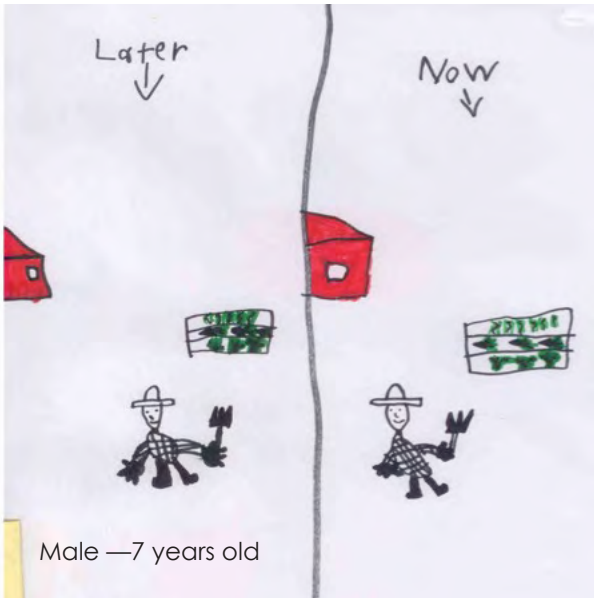
As well, educators talked about children's aspirations for future selves. They saw children imitating the roles of moms and dads, and take on roles that they experience through play and real-life. Current events, such as Chris Hadfield in space and major sporting events like NBA or NHL playoffs, were reflected in children's hope and dreams for the future.

The parents appear to be their main role models ... many children want to do what their parents do. (educator)

Future roles change a lot, based on their experiences. See them playing out the restaurant role quite a bit; taking the orders, etc. (educator)

Future selves change based on others' interests. Students role play the teacher's role quite a bit. You see them in the play centre taking turns as the teacher. They role play Santa and the Easter Bunny; whatever is happening at the time in their lives. (educator)

I am going to be a vet and a doctor.



I like farming and I want to be a farmer when I grow up.

VIGNETTE

Ms. Dove frequently hears children talking about what they would like to be when they grow up. Many of the children are very enthusiastic about this. She observes children talking about such things as: a doctor like Doctor McStuffin, an astronaut, a fireman, a teacher, or a hockey player like Sydney Crosbie. However, she has a few students who don't readily talk about their hopes and dreams for the future. Ms. Dove recognizes the importance of engaging children in opportunities to imagine many possibilities for future selves:

- She sets up a bulletin board with pictures of all the workers in their school and in the community, and engages the students in a discussion of their work.
- She ensures children are aware of the multitude of jobs and workers in their families and communities, and in the books and media.
- She collects a number of costumes and props for playtime that will enable the children to act out diverse work roles.
- During and following field trips, she ensures that the diverse work roles of workers are explored.
- A recent media event — for example, Olympics — has captured children's attention and interest. She engages children in play-based activities that encourage exploration of workers and work roles.
- When children come back from holidays, family adventures, etc., she provides them with opportunities to reflect on and share their experiences.

Throughout the year, a number of guest speakers visit Ms. Dove's setting. This provides opportunities to increase children's knowledge and awareness of various work roles.

1. How do you encourage children to connect knowledge of workers, jobs, and careers to possibilities for their future selves?
2. How do you encourage children to reflect on how their unique skills, abilities, and interests can be incorporated into possibilities for future selves?
3. What opportunities do you provide for children to be exposed to a diverse range of role models in media, books, and other resources?
4. How do you engage children in discussion and reflection on the games, books, TV, videos, etc. to which they are interested and exposed?

Construct of Work and Parents' Work

At a glance

- Children learn very early that work is a very important part of life.
- Community helpers and workers are part of children's everyday lives.
- From an early age, children become knowledgeable about work and workers through exposure within the home, school, media, and community.
- Discussions with children about the diversity of work and workers increases their curiosity, interests, and knowledge.
- Exposure to occupations and careers occurs via a variety of media, including, books, videos, field trips, and guest speakers.
- Play is a child's work — through play, children explore many different roles.

Children are aware of work concepts and roles at a very early age. They are interested in what the adults do within their families and communities. Parents, uncles, aunts, grandparents, close family friends, and community members present a wide range of careers, jobs, and occupations. The media, including television, expose them to jobs and occupations, sometimes accurate and other times less so. Children become motivated and interested in these jobs and occupations. Frequently, they act out roles in their play- and fantasy-based activities.

By the time children begin school, they have had wide exposure to diverse work roles. They are beginning to develop interests, formulate attitudes, and express their preferences. As they grow and mature cognitively, they begin to grasp and understand the interrelationships among the various jobs and occupations.

In our study:

- 99.2% of educators strongly or somewhat agreed that it is important for parents to talk about their work with their children and family.
- 100% of educators strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that children need opportunities to view and learn about workers in their communities.

In our study:

- 96.6% of parents felt that it is important for children to learn about workers in their community.
- 77.7% of parents agreed that children should learn about the world of work at preschool and primary school.
- 95.7% of parents said they talked to their children about their work.
- 78.3% indicated they would bring their child to work if they could.

Ages	Children's Awareness of Work
3 and 4	• Grandmother and Pop work to make money to buy me toys. • They go to work to make money to go shopping to buy food. • Mom and Dad work all the time. • Work is not fun because Mom and Dad have to go.
5 and 6	• They work because it is important, so they can get rich. If they don't work they can't get rich. • People work to give us food, clothes, and toys. • People go to work to make money to buy BMX bike. • My Dad does not like going to work. • Mom works at a desk; I would not like that.
7 and 8	• People work to get money to buy us food, to keep me in my house, and buy shampoo. • People work to get money to go on vacation. • Depends whether people have kids as to whether they like work. They might miss the kids and want to go home. • I think people like work. Some get frustrated and some don't. • Sometime people get fired because they don't do the job well.

Children learn about the world of work from:

- **the context (familial, school, community, and media)**
- **parents and educators**
- **role models**

She has a very good understanding of my work role. She asks me questions about what I do and we talk about it. She also has a good understanding of the work roles that she has experienced, for example, doctor, teacher, zoo worker, etc. However, she does not know much about a welder or other trades persons. (parent)

He knows that I had a stressful job where I had difficult people to work with. I talk to him about how that happens from time to time, and how we still have to learn to get along with people. We might not like them or hang out with them, but we have to get along. (parent)

My Dad works at construction. He is a handyman; he builds houses. (child)

In our study, children's perception of the purpose of work generally focused on the need to make money to pay for the necessities of life. Young children's responses often put themselves at the center of why parents and others needed to work. These included buying a home and paying for vehicles, food, vacations, and extras such as toys. In addition, children's responses reflected a degree of awareness of parents' commitment of time to work, varying attitudes of parents towards work, and the stress of work. Younger children (ages three and four years) talked about the 'time' factor of work. Older children (five to eight years) demonstrated a greater awareness of parents' work and their feelings and attitudes about work.

Children also reported they have learned about work from the various television programs they watched, and from social media. Visitors and speakers within early learning centres and school environments also increased students' knowledge of diverse workers. As an example, one primary school teacher reported that every Friday she provided time for a parent to share knowledge of his/her hobbies or work with the children.

Parents noted that children have a general awareness of their work roles and this awareness increases as children age. Parents see children as interested and curious about their work. Only some parents noted they talk to their children about their work and conversations certainly vary — more detail is discussed with older children regarding specific work tasks and responsibilities. As well, many parents indicated that their children had been to their place of work and that the visits are positive experiences for their children.

In our study, children represented their attitudes and perceptions of work through verbal expression, painting, and drawings. Children ex-

My Dad does not like his work; I don't think that he wants to be at work. I hear him say that. (child)

Mom is a nurse, Dad is a lawyer. Dad is at a conference in Whitehorse. My Grandma works at Coleman's. My Mom works to save lives and Dad keeps people's money. (child)

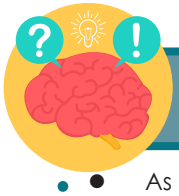
Pop had two jobs; he worked at the beach and the fire department. My Dad is a pipefitter and works with metal. He is on the coast of Labrador. I miss him. (child)

pressed their attitudes and perceptions of: their parents' work roles, parents' commitment of time to work, parents' attitudes about work, and the nature of parents' work. This awareness increases as children age. Younger children are able to name their parents' careers, particularly in cases of more familiar careers, for example, teacher, doctor, and truck driver, but generally they tend only to identify the parents' workplace. By grade three, most children know where their parents work, the names of their occupations, and are able to talk about some of the work responsibilities. Children generally equate working with making money that supports lifestyles, for example, buying things, having a house, and traveling. Younger children (ages three and four years) recognize the time that parents have to be away for work. Older children's attitudes and perceptions of work reflected more insight into how their parents feel about their work and the nature of work. Children eagerly shared their depictions and narratives.

Educators' responses reflected strong support for the need for children to be exposed early to a variety of careers, work, and jobs. Educators believed that children need exposure to diverse careers through awareness of workers in their communities and through parents' sharing of knowledge and information regarding their work.

Children have lots of ideas and often place no limits on what they would like to be. Many chose the occupations of their parents when asked. (educator)

Most are traditional. I do hear them talking about popular TV programs — Dr. McStuffin is a common one. Boys mostly want the building roles; girls are into the dolls and babies. (educator)



How would you respond?

- As a result of recent events related to space exploration, some children have expressed an interest in the work of those involved? How do you discuss and support exploration of careers and work related to this field?
- What do children know about the workers involved in getting food to the farmers' market?
- Some of your children have a stereotypical perception that careers related to police work, as one example, are primarily suited to boys. How do you support discussion and exploration of this perception and other perceptions of gender stereotyping?

VIGNETTE

Ms. Lyon observes that a number of the children can identify their parents' and family members' work, but many cannot. She thinks it is important for children to know their parents' and family members' work. She recognizes this is an important component of career education.

She decides to initiate a project whereby, on Friday afternoons, parents are invited into the classroom to share some aspect of their work, a hobby, or activity they enjoy. Parents who cannot participate are encouraged to send along another family member, pictures, or objects from their work.

The students eagerly look forward to these presentations and are increasing their knowledge of the multitude of jobs, as well as what their parents' work involves.

Ms. Lyon knows that this activity provides children with opportunities to:

- Increase their knowledge of workers and helpers who are a part of their lives.
- Reflect on some of the purposes of work.
- Reflect on the diverse range of work and workers within their setting and the larger community.
- Interact with many different workers.

What Educators do

According to educators, career development activities need to be age-appropriate and ought to be incorporated through a natural and fluid process. As stated by one teacher, enrichment activities should be used to support career development: "we need to seize opportunities, not force them. We need to use props and role playing for exploration activities — for example, costumes, tools, and signs."

Parents' visits, guest speakers, field trips, and engagement in volunteer activities are ideal ways to expose children to a variety of careers. As well, educators believed it is important for parents to talk to their children about their work and to take children to their work settings when appropriate.

Through survey questions, educators were asked their opinions on emphasis of specific career development concepts within the curriculum.

In our study:

- 85.9% of educators either strongly or somewhat agreed that helping children understand their strengths and limitations is an important part of the curriculum.
- 97% of educators responded that self-confidence and self-esteem influence career choices.
- 69.2% of educators either strongly or somewhat agreed that there is sufficient emphasis in the curriculum on helping children develop self-awareness and self-esteem.
- 57.9% of educators either strongly or somewhat agreed there is sufficient emphasis in the curriculum on helping children to explore and apply their interests.
- 76.8% of educators either strongly or somewhat agreed that the curriculum for young children is adequately connected to the real world.
- 72.4% of educators believed that career development is as important as other subjects.

Educators felt that career development is complex, and children's engagement in career development activities and opportunities supports development and enhancement of their knowledge about career-related concepts. Educators also felt that parents increase children's awareness of career possibilities by talking to their children about their work and work roles, and the work and work roles of immediate family and people in the community.

Educators identified the need to have more intentional goals regarding career awareness and the need to focus on broader skill development, such as character development, and not just career or work options. Educators also talked about the need to make connections between careers and life style choices — for example, "Is the salary going to allow you to support life style choices?", "Is travel for work going to allow you to support life style choices?" Educators talked about the importance of helping children con-

nect their acquisition of knowledge and skills to careers and work. For example, a grade one teacher talked about the impact of having a vegetable and herb garden in her class. It afforded the opportunity to talk about related careers and invite guest speakers. So too, it is a practical way for children to engage in work roles related to gardening, preparation of food, etc. The STEM project in schools was noted as providing opportunities for children to explore careers in respective fields.

Educators believed they have a powerful influence on children's development of knowledge and exploration of occupations and careers across genders, and in reducing stereotypes. They identified the need to have more intentional goals pertaining to career awareness. Some educators addressed the need to focus on broader skill development, such as character development and not just career and work options.

They need opportunities to hear about workers in communities, through role playing, dress-up activities, books, reading, and community outings. We have community partners that come and talk about their work. We do an All About Me program. Children do activities related to their future roles and dreams. It is helpful for parents to talk to children about their work. Books, TV, social media, iPads, and games all influence their beliefs and their knowledge. (educator)

Many times children are not aware that what people do is part of their career. They think we live here (in the daycare centre). (educator)
I think children need to know more about the ways that they are intelligent, and look at the big picture, and consider all the things they are able to do rather than focus on specific careers. (educator)

[We need] Role-playing activities, age-appropriate discussions on different careers, more intentional goals of creating more awareness about what people do at work, activities that stimulate creativity; also, activities which give them a chance to reflect on themselves. (educator)

We can talk about careers and work, and make the connections between what they are learning and what they are interested in to careers and work. (educator)

I do it through songs, such as "What do you want to be when you grow up?" and we had Ryan Snodden [local news Meteorologist] visit today and he really made an impression. (educator)

Play in Kindergarten and grade one are critical experiences — children can try on different roles and see different versions of themselves. Role-plays and using different props are important. (educator)

You can always set up fun activities in your setting –provide costumes, props, and signs through play mostly, and incorporated into the day in a natural way. (educator)

I want to travel the world to draw and design buildings.

I would like to work with my Dad's company and own it. Dad owns his own construction company.

Highlights

Educators...

- Are role models.
- Teach, monitor, and coach children throughout critical social, psychological, and academic processes.
- Inspire children to believe in themselves and their ability to succeed.
- Facilitate children's development of critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills.
- Praise children's effort, work, and the process.
- Foster an appreciation of diversity and promote the development of strengths, interests, and abilities.
- Encourage children to imagine, create, dream, and enjoy life and learning.
- Foster acceptance, caring, and love of themselves, others, and nature.
- Enhance children's confidence by encouraging them to try new things and to be open to change.
- Communicate that change is a normal part of everyday life, and discuss possible changes that occur in children's lives.
- Expose children to a variety of social settings and environments in their communities and beyond.
- Encourage children to imagine many possibilities for future selves.
- Counteract bias in books, texts, other resources, and the media.
- Draw attention to the roles of diverse workers and helpers who are a part of children's everyday lives.
- Encourage exploration of a variety of occupations through books, TV, media, and games.
- Create opportunities for children to contribute in a meaningful way in their settings and communities.
- Infuse career development concepts into teaching and learning (curriculum).

Note to Educators

You encourage, motivate, and teach children in preschool, daycare, and primary school as they discover themselves and their world. You play a significant part in their journey for personal, academic, and social competence.

Academic, social, emotional, and career developmental tasks are not separate, but intertwined. In this study, we adopted the perspective that career development is life development. Career is a life story that begins at birth. Children create their own stories, but not in isolation. They have many co-authors. Educators, along with parents, peers, friends, the media, and the larger community influence this process.

Educators often underestimate the importance of their role in children's lives. Those words of encouragement, praise, and recognition do not go unnoticed by children. Within our study, both children and parents pointed to educators as role models.

The influence you exert in children's lives should leave you both challenged and humbled. You inspire children as they seek answers to such important questions, as: Who am I? How do I matter? What is my purpose? Who do I want to become? You empower children to imagine and grow into their hopes, dreams, and careers.

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THE EARLY YEARS

Career Development for Young Children

— A Guide for Educators —

Every child dreams about what they will be when they grow up…

The roots of career development begin early in a child's life. Through play, young children explore their environment, learn to problem solve, make decisions, and adjust to change. From a young age, children envision themselves in possible roles for their future. They talk about and try on their hopes and dreams. During these formative years, young children are influenced by family, school, and media – and need to be supported in their career development.

Based on research conducted at Memorial University, this guide explores the influence that educators have on the career development process of children, aged three to eight years. It empowers educators to support young children during this critical period of play, fun, and fantasy. The guide provides practical tips, activities, and examples that educators can use to help children develop a healthy sense of self in the early years, and enable them to reach their full potential.

A guide for Parents/Guardians is also available.

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