Measures of Family Partnership in ECEC:

Building Practice, Policy & Knowledge

A Goodstart Discussion Paper
May 2015

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1. Introduction

- What gets measured gets done.
- Healthy development starts with a secure base of early family relationships.
- ECEC extends family relationships to support children's development, parents' goals for work or study, and family well-being.
- ECEC family partnerships can enhance the capacity of both families and quality ECE programs to contribute to healthy child development and to meet other family goals.
- Measures help on clarity of aims, actions, accounting & improvement of family partnership practice.
- Measures can make hearing from parents part of systemic service improvement.
- Measures can help individual children and families, as well as organizational practice and improvement, and ensure that no one falls between the cracks and that goals for inclusion are met.

1.1 Why measuring family partnership (FP) is important

Families come first. Parents are children's first teachers and caregivers. Family influence on early child development outweighs ECEC programming (Melhuish, 2010; Pascal, 2013). There is a long-standing literature showing that families contribute to early language (e.g., Snow & Dickinson, 1990) and literacy development (e.g., Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2001), while new science shows their contributions to early numeracy (Anders et al., 2012) and to shaping self-regulation through interactions with preschoolers that are sensitive but appropriately challenging (Bernier, Carlson, & Whipple, 2010; Cuevas et al., 2014). Families carry culture into the daily lives of infants and preschoolers. Families provide children with pathways into the community and ECEC services. Quality ECEC services build on families' contributions to the development of young children, both directly through daily centre programming for children, and indirectly by supporting families. Family support can enhance children's early learning and development though changes, such as improved parenting, family well-being, and work arrangements that allow parents to build family finances (Love et al., 2013). Family support in ECEC has the potential to contribute to later effects by strengthening families and their capacity to connect to schools and other community supports and services (e.g., Hayakawa, & Reynolds, 2014). Effects of ECEC on families' community connections, daily quality of life, and social support networks are measurable and demonstrable (e.g., Arimura & Corter, 2010; Patel & Corter, 2012).

For ECEC services, benefits to families may be aims in themselves, not only pathways to child development. "Full" family partnerships have explicit policy and

practice aims for family support, while attending to the diverse goals of families themselves through regular programming and intentional exchanges with parents. These interactions can go beyond good communication to build alliances that improve experiences and relationships in both the home and the centre, and improve continuity for children and relationships between parents and professionals. Family partnerships can take different forms that include respectful communication, parent education and even parent-staff alliances in designing and delivering programs (Duncan, & Te One, 2013; Pelletier & Brent, 2002).

Everyone talks about family partnerships, but there is ***more talk than action*** (Pascal, 2013; Prichard, 2015), and ***more talk than measurement*** (Patel, Corter & Pelletier, 2008; Ishimine & Tayler, 2014). Measurement can drive effective action and practice, but it is most likely to do so when it follows a conceptual framework that connects the collective organizational vision for family participation to clear practices, outcomes, and intervening processes (how you get from practices to outcome goals). The research and practice/policy literature, some of which is cited in this report, can help an organization build this working vision, sometimes elaborated as a logic model (Kellogg Foundation, 2004) or theory of change (Connell & Klem, 2000)] with associated measurement to guide implementation and continuous improvement of family partnership practices. The bottom line is that we have to know both "why" and "what" we are measuring.

And if family partnership is to be fully realized, it needs to be part of building the "why" of the vision, not just another dimension of practice to be improved and measured. In other words, ***families should have input into the development of family partnership models and measures***, as well as input into the implementation, operation, and improvement of existing practices for both child programming and for family partnership.

Attention to measurement can help build the working vision by forcing attention to concrete indicators of practice, process, and outcomes: How do we know if our practices match our intentions? What processes and experiences do these practices trigger for children and families? What tangible outcomes are achieved through these practice-process pathways?

And of course, the measures then become the way of assessing *whether* goals are being achieved (summative assessment), *how* they are, or aren't, being achieved and how they might be improved (formative assessment). Measurement also supports continuous improvement cycles where reflection on practice, process, and outcomes feeds back into practice improvement. The crucial role of measurement and the resultant evidence in service improvement is captured in the emerging approaches of improvement science (Lewis, 2015) and design research[2]. These approaches

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[2] "Design research" is somewhat akin to "action research" but includes quantitative measures along with narrative analysis of goals and process, and iterative improvement cycles through measurement, reflection and redesign.

allow us to look at more than "what works"; they also look at "how, when, and why it works" (Cobb et al., 2003, p. 13). These approaches are invaluable in adapting existing strategies to new contexts where fixed recipes may fail and "taste testing" is required (Wang, Christ & Chiu, 2014). The mixed methods of numbers and narratives in these approaches also support "evidence-based story telling" (Pelletier & Corter, 2006). Rich stories backed with quantitative evidence may do a better job of engaging stakeholders than numbers or narratives alone, and in turn, may be more effective in practice and policy improvement. As well, they may serve to engage the broader public and the media in important ECEC concerns.

1.2 Why using regular information gathering is important at the population level and individual level

Although the design, delivery, and improvement of ECEC/family partnership begins with the program/policy level, it has to work at the level of individual children and families in order to achieve overall outcomes, and it has to work for all children and families in order to provide equitable outcomes. Measurement provides a systematic discipline to the work of connecting to all families and their children. Records of who's attending, volunteering, reporting on their child, asking for help etc., show who is engaged at the centre, and who may need outreach and alternative forms of engagement. Beyond the practice level, these individual records can be aggregated to support monitoring and research aimed at questions such as whether Goodstart is achieving its inclusion aims, as well as its program level quality aims (Goodstart, 2014).

There is good reason to work actively on inclusion in FP development. Research shows that FP in ECEC happens less with families from low income levels, minority language and cultural groups (McWayne & Melzi, 2014; Patel & Corter, 2012; Poureslami et al., 2013), varying sexual identities (Janmohamed, 2014), and in families where parental depression is an invisible barrier affecting family partnership efforts (Duch, 2005). Families of children with special needs may also need special attention, not necessarily because they are less involved. For these families, FP may need to be accommodated to the particular needs of both parents and children (Kasari et al., 2014; Raghavendra et al., 2007).

Information gathering at the individual level also needs to be put to use by individual practitioners and classroom teams in order for them to see the relevance of FP measurement for the children and families they work with. This can be done in engaging ways that emphasize formative feedback and a community of learners approach with periodic growth-chart type summaries of progress towards FP goals (Patel, Corter & Pelletier, 2008).

2. Background

2.1 What do we know *about measurement > results > improved practice from literature, select research and best practice?*

2.1.1 The promise of family partnership (FP)

The positive expectations for FP are shown by how broadly the concept is being embraced in different service sectors around the world (Corter & Pelletier, 2005; Forry et al., 2011; 2012). For example in Australia, FP frameworks and principles are used in health and nursing practice (Lee, Dunston & Fowler, 2012) and in ECEC community service integration (Prichard, Purdon, & Chaplyn, 2010). The pervasiveness of the FP concept is also seen in the proliferation of related terms in the research and practice literature. Family partnership (FP) is kin to many other terms that can overlap in meaning and usage: family support or family centred practice (FCP); family or parent engagement or involvement; family relationships; and family-sensitive caregiving. These terms are roughly associated with different practice fields (Forry et al., 2011; 2012). Family support or FCP tends to be used in social work, early intervention and special education, and health care. The other terms tend to be used in child care and education. **When do support, involvement and engagement graduate to partnership?** The literature suggests that effective partnerships include actions such as: parents[3] having input into aspects of ECEC that are important to them (Patel et al., 2008), or working together with professionals in alliances to support particular aspects of children's development, along with attitudes such as mutual respect (Pelletier & Brent, 2002).

There are many societal forces pushing towards FP (Corter & Pelletier, 2005; Lee, Dunston & Fowler, 2012); among them is increasing policy recognition of the many-faceted value of supporting early child development, and, as a corollary, supporting family development. Many would argue that important aims of FP go beyond managing policy and progressive social change with economic benefit; it is a democratic right, regardless of any utilitarian benefits (e.g., Mitchell, 2007, citing Peter Moss).

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[3] The term "parent" supplies a useful actor in a cast including a child and a professional. It is used in this review to apply to any responsible adult such as grandparent who links the family to ECEC. "Family" partnership is used as the preferred umbrella term for a number of reasons: it recognizes the complexity and diversity of the family system, which in turn may be aligned with the ECEC system in ways that can benefit all the actors. Family "partnership" is also an umbrella term that can include activities identified as "engagement" or "involvement" (e.g., parent roles at the centre such as volunteering, attending events or committee service). By themselves, these activities fall short of the respectful, co-constructive nature of full "partnership" but they can be elements in more transformative partnership practice. Hence they are included in this paper under the FP banner.

However, not all of the forces affecting ECEC and FP are filtered through a rational policy filter and broad principles. As a prime example, social change led by information technology, the Internet and social media will present opportunities and challenges for FP in the traditional service delivery models of ECEC and rational policy planning. Such changes cannot be safely predicted but ongoing democratic exchanges within ECEC as well as society more generally will be necessary to direct the changes to social good (Saul, 1992). FP can bring these exchanges on the application of these new technologies into the intersection of family and ECEC realms. In the meantime as a story on an Australian website suggests, the dawning of UberCare or AirEnC may be upon us (see Appendix 1)

2.1.2 The Perils of FP

Sloganeering and rhetoric can paper over half-hearted or ineffective improvement efforts.   Ineffective FP efforts also waste time and resources, for ECEC providers and for families, which in turn cost opportunities to pursue other, potentially more effective, improvement efforts. Even "effective" efforts may not be effective for all and particularly for families facing more challenges. This means that initiatives may actually increase inequities and gaps that leave marginalized groups behind, as "the rich get richer" (Bakermans-Kranenburg, van IJzendoorn, & Bradley, 2005; Ceci, & Papierno, 2005). Even within seemingly homogenous cultural and economic groups, individual differences in parents and families need to be accommodated. Just as ECEC practice accommodates the individuality of children, there is no "one size fits all" for FP. In addition, hearing from parents with respect is needed to avoid deficit thinking about parents, their viewpoints and home practices (Cottle & Alexander, 2014; Tobin, Arzubiaga, & Mantovani, 2007

We also need to hear from children, in addition to building inclusive adult-to-adult communication and planning; otherwise we risk throwing out the baby with the FP bathwater. After all, children are members of families. Thus measures can include systematic ways of hearing from children (Pelletier, 2014 b, c; Press, Wong & Sumsion, 2012). Children's voices bring to the forefront the importance of family partnerships. Through playful finger puppet interview methodology (Pelletier, 2014c) and analysis of children's drawings (Pelletier, 2014a), we are struck by children's need to connect home and early learning settings. As one 4-year old stated, "the only thing I don't like about being here is that I can't see my Mommy and Dad" (Pelletier, 2014b). Bringing together staff and parents to reflect on measures of children's experiences would be an innovative input into ECEC and a new form of FP. Imagine the scope for discussion around findings on answers to the puppet's questions, "What do you like best here? What don't you like?"

Finally, FP, too broadly defined and indiscriminately implemented, should not be regarded as a panacea or a singularly magic pill (Corter & Pelletier, 2005). It has many dimensions ranging from tangible activities to attitudes and climate. Not all of the activities are equally appealing to all parents and not all are equally effective in

producing particular outcomes. Many forms of engagement or involvement have not been shown to produce direct benefits for children's learning. For example, attending centre events or serving on committees may be important to parents needs, but are not associated with children's learning outcomes (Forry et.al., 2012; Porter & Bromer, 2013; Kim et al., 2014). And "what works" and "for whom", also need to be viewed in the contexts of culture and community –"in what context?"

As noted above, strategic measurement and clear articulation of aims, practice, process and outcomes, should help to avoid the pitfalls and fulfill the promise of FP through continuous improvement. And as selectively reviewed below, the research and practice literature on ECEC can suggest effective approaches to FP practice and measurement.

2.1.3 The importance of FP in every-day ECEC practice

Family partnership, engagement or involvement in children's day-to-day ECEC is associated with benefits for both children and parents (Winder & Corter, 2015). Research has shown that children whose parents are more involved in their early care and education are better prepared for school, and that parents themselves may feel more empowered as a result of their involvement (Corter & Pelletier, 2005; Kernan, 2012; Pelletier & Brent, 2002; Seefeldt, Denton, Galper & Younoszai, 1999). The accumulating evidence has contributed to the embedding of FP in policy principles in Australia (Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace, 2009) and globally (e.g., NAEYC, 2014; Kernan, 2012; OECD, 2012).

Broad schemes for measuring everyday FP, engagement, or involvement often break it down into three categories: *family activities at the centre*, such as volunteering or attending events; *communication or conferencing between staff and parents*; and *activities at home* that engage parents with children's learning (e.g., Fantuzzo et al., 2013; Pressley, Fantuzzo, Tighe, & Childs, 2000). Interestingly, the literature suggests that the first category of centre-based activities may have less direct impact on children's learning and development than the other two (Fantuzzo, McWayne & Perry, 2004; Zellman & Perlman, 2006). Part of the issue here is that centre activities may not appeal to all parents and to lower SES families in particular. This is not to say that activities for parents at the centre are unimportant. They may be helpful to some parents in building connections and feelings of empowerment. And it should be noted that this conclusion does not apply to systematic programming for parents, reviewed below in the Section 2.1.6 on parent education, which may take place in the centre but may have wider effects through changes at home that support learning and development and through parental feelings of efficacy (Pelletier & Brent, 2002).

Regular, two-way communication between parents and day care staff has been shown to benefit children in a number of ways. One way is through the provision of

more sensitive, supportive, and stimulating adult-child interactions across both the home and childcare environments; good relationships between parents and staff travel with good adult-child relationships (Owen, Ware & Barfoot, 2000). In fact, an Australian study showed that children's stress, as indexed by cortisol levels, was lower in higher quality day care centres, particularly where quality was indexed by better parent engagement (Sims, Guilfoyle, & Parry, 2005). Healthy relationships between adults foster better knowledge of the individual child's daily experiences and increase continuity and adjustment of demands and opportunities across settings (e.g., OECD, 2012). They also recognize the complementary expertise of parents(Michael-Luna, 2013), who know the individual child, and early educators, who know the group of children and the collective arrangements and interactions to benefit all. And adults who regularly talk about a child they both care about, might themselves benefit from a better and more respectful understanding of each other. The adults would have opportunities to understand, in practical terms, each other's backgrounds, goals and realities and how these things are interpreted in daily life.

In spite of rhetoric, research, and policy support for reciprocal communication and relationships between families and day care staff, studies have also shown that the potential of partnerships is not always achieved. For example, observations of parent-staff interactions during drop off and pick-up at day care centres have shown that daily interactions between parents and day care staff are often brief (averaging 12 seconds in one study!) or non-existent, even when there are no cultural or language barriers (Endlsey & Minish,1991; Perlman & Fletcher, 2012). And when exchanges do occur, the content is often superficial and uninformative for parents and staff (McBride, Bae & Wright, 2002; Rentzou, 2011). Are effective two-way conversations about the child taking place regularly for all kids, as recommended in various policies? Measurement can help us answer this important practice and research question.

A lack of connection is also seen in the findings of a large interview study with 261 Canadian parents, which found that many parents' lacked knowledge about their children's childcare experience (Howe, et.al. 2013). As well, a number of international studies have reported that early childhood educators feel untrained and unprepared to build alliances, particularly with diverse families (Bernhard, Lefebvre, Kilbride, Chud & Lange, 1988; Cantin, Plante, Coutu & Brunson, 2012; McGrath, 2007; Reedy & McGrath, 2010; Rentzou, 2011).

With respect to measurement of FP in relation to day-to-day interactions, many research studies measure it, but not necessarily in ways that can be adapted to measurement in everyday practice. Thus some studies employ relatively time-consuming interviews with staff or parents that would be difficult to put into ECEC practice. For example, open-ended questions on what parents like/don't like (Howe, et al., 2013 might not invite openness if they come from the ECEC staff, and require labor intensive coding and analysis to summarize the results. Some studies do have relatively simple surveys for staff that could be adapted for self-assessment and improvement efforts through PD for everyday practice improvement etc. And of

course quality measurement, which may include families and parents as a dimension of "process quality" also suggest general ways of assessing FP at the program level, as discussed below in section 2.1.5. More time-consuming measurement approaches from research studies could be used in Goodstart's research strategy employing natural experiments, RCTs, or action/design research as discussed in Section 3.

2.1.4 The importance of hearing from parents in systematic and measureable ways

Beyond the everyday (yet important) two-way parent-practitioner conversations that may or may not be taking place, there are other possible provisions for family input at the centre level.   Governance and planning committee roles for parents have been a common avenue, but they don't include all parents and they have other limitations (Corter & Pelletier, 2005). Often the mandate or focus of these bodies is established by professionals and they do not address parent concerns. Governance or advisory bodies in centres implementing FP should not only have parent representatives, they should seek input from all parents as part of their mandate.

Another route for input is interviewing parents at intake to provide information about their child and about the parents themselves and their goals for the service (Patel, Corter & Pelletier, 2008).   Recording the information and revisiting it with parents over time shows respect and may lead to new ways to support family and child needs. Periodic surveys can be useful in registering views of parents but may not connect with many parents. Periodic focus group meetings that combine discussion with food, socialization, and child care are likely to reach more parents and provide a more open window to parental views and strengths as partners in achieving common family-centre goals. Tobin (2005) described an interesting approach to getting immigrant parents' views on what they want from child care by stimulating focus group discussion with video excerpts of daily life and interactions in a child care setting. In New Zealand, Duncan describes a full-blown partnership model in which family/Whānau and practitioners worked successfully together to co-construct curriculum.

The research on hearing from parents suggests that we can do more in an FP approach in ways that go beyond chance conversations and uninformative client satisfaction checks (see "positivity bias" in Section 2.1.5, p. 10; Zellman & Perlman, 2006).

2.1.5 The importance of FP in quality measurement

Research on quality rating systems is a major source of ideas and applications of measurement in ECEC. Quality ratings are generally carried out at the program level for purposes of monitoring, accreditation, informing parent choice or local program improvement/professional development (Ishimine, Tayler & Thorpe 2009). They

are rarely designed at the individual level, to apply to the work of individual professionals or to characterize the ECEC experiences of individual children and their families. And they are rarely designed to include parent input into the ratings or parent input into how rating systems are developed in the first place (Tobin, Arzubiaga, & Mantovani, 2007).

Nevertheless, other forms of FP are increasingly recognized in ECEC quality policy frameworks in many countries (Hujala et al., 2009), including Australia's National Quality Standard (ACECQA, 2013) the US NAEYC accreditation framework (NAEYC, 2014), and the OECD's policy documents and toolkits (OECD, 2006; 2012). In these documents, FP is a crucial part of "process quality"- the relationships and interactions that make up the supports for children's learning and development and additional supports ECED may offer to families. Process quality is distinct from "structural quality" – dimensions such as staffing and facilities.

Some quality rating systems have been developed to move government policies into practice, as is the case with Australia's NQF and NQS, but most approaches have been developed as research tools. For example, the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale-Revised Edition (ECERS-R) from the US is now being applied in policy and practice work around the world (e.g., Mathers, Linskey, Seddon & Sylva, 2007).

The Australian framework for National Quality Standard includes "collaborative partnerships with families and communities" as one of the seven key standards. This Standard 6 is detailed in the Table 1.

Table 1
Australian NQS Standard 6- Collaborative Partnerships

QA6	Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
6.1	Respectful supportive relationships with families are developed and maintained.
6.1.1	There is an effective enrolment and orientation process for families.
6.1.2	Families have opportunities to be involved in the service and contribute to service decisions.
6.1.3	Current information about the service is available to families.
6.2	Families are supported in their parenting role and their values and beliefs about child rearing are respected.
6.2.1	The expertise of families is recognised and they share in decision making about their child's learning and wellbeing.
6.2.2	Current information is available to families about community services and resources to support parenting and family wellbeing.
6.3	The service collaborates with other organisations and service providers to enhance children's learning and wellbeing.
6.3.1	Links with relevant community and support agencies are established and maintained.
6.3.2	Continuity of learning and transitions for each child are supported by sharing relevant information and clarifying responsibilities.
6.3.3	Access to inclusion and support assistance is facilitated.
6.3.4	The service builds relationships and engages with their local community.

The NQS process rates each element on a five point rating scale from "significant improvement required" to "excellent." Ratings are based on inputs from documentation, including quality improvement plans, and on observations from centre visits. The system is designed for both regulatory authorities and self-assessment. Note that the items in Table 1 are quite general and sometimes mix two different elements, making it hard to know what is being measured. Note too that several of the items stress information provision, which may be one-way, passive supply for "informed consumers", rather than a partnered activity.

In addition to policy-generated quality rating systems, there are many other measurement instruments, but few measure the more collaborative or co-constructivist facets of FP. Some are limited to structural elements or classroom interactions between professionals and children. Ishimine and Tayler, (2014) reviewed 11 existing instruments, including the ECERS-R, and only two touch on even limited aspects of FP (ECERS-R and High Scope's Program Quality Assessment Preschool Version: PQAP). Although recognizing the legitimacy of seeking parent perspectives on quality (c.f., Ceglowski & Bacigalupa, 2002) Ishimine and Tayler's review focused instead on researcher and professional perspectives, as do the instruments reviewed. No input from parents is used in the 11 instruments. Instead information comes from interviews with staff, observations, or documentation.

Zellman and Perlman (2006) reviewed several instruments that do include FP as dimensions of quality rating. The widely used US-developed ECERS-R scale has a handful of items pertaining to parents as part of one subscale labeled "provisions for parents". Items such as "whether parents are given written program information" and "quality of relationships with parents overall" are reported by the provider, and parents do not have input into any part of the ratings. Two other scales do focus on FP as a dimension of quality. The NAEYC Parent–Caregiver Relationship Scale (PCRS) rates parent-professional communication and parents' perceptions of their relationships with professionals. The Family-Provider Partnership scale (FPP) developed by Zellman and Perlman for the Rand Corporation's research, focuses on the provider's interactions with parents and support for parenting and child development. There are report forms for both parents and providers with items such as the frequency of the caregiver initiating talk about the child, offering information that helps in understanding the child, and whether the parent has changed her behavior as a result of modeling the caregiver.

A problem in measuring FP noted for all of the instruments reviewed by Zellman and Perlman is "positivity bias". On many items almost all parents rate their day care at the very top, even on five point scales, so essentially they provide no actionable information. Thus, "positivity bias" may limit the usefulness of parents' input into quality, but to some extent the same may apply to staff ratings. For example, in one sample of 52 centres, more than half of providers rated themselves as "excellent" in FP items—at the top of the 7-point scales on the ECERS-R. In fact, this issue also relates to "social desirability" (US FPRQ) and other technical issues in measuring FP as discussed below in Section 3. This issue is also said to be part of

the reason why parent surveys were dropped from the former Australian quality assessment approach used by the National Childcare Accreditation Council (Fenech, Harrison, & Sumsion, 2011). Because parents tended to overestimate centre quality, the surveys provided little useful evidence. Given that parents, according to some, focus on factors such as cost, flexibility and proximity of childcare, it has also been suggested that parents be educated about what "quality" factors ARE important to children's development (e.g., Cryer, Tietze, & Wessels, 2002)

Apart from the appearance or non-appearance of FP in rating scales, there are other interesting findings on parents' views on day care quality with some variations in reports on the aspects of quality most valued by parents. For example, an Australian sample of parents from lower SES backgrounds reported immediate concerns about safety, which outweighed their concerns about the standard structural and policy quality dimensions (Skattebol et al., 2014): "When it comes to early childhood services, we learned from parents in our study that safety and security can take precedence over access to formal education and care. Once families feel that their needs for safety from violence, secure housing, and financial stability are being met, they can focus on ECEC. If all children are to benefit from early learning, then policy needs to enable services to stay connected with families through difficult times…(p.1)". In addition to safety and security these parents also showed interest in community—that is, having networks of people and services that provide support for families and children. Finally, this sample worried about academic skills being overlooked in play-based ECEC programs.

Parents also had input into the 2014 government mandated review of the NQF (Woolcott, 2014). The Australian process included consultation with a small number of family participants weighing in via an online survey or in focus groups. Their responses showed that awareness of the NQF was extremely limited, but they supported the NQF goal of improving education and care through national standards and professional development. Some parents also reported the perception that quality had improved in the two years since the NQF was introduced. There were also parent submissions into the Productivity Commission's Report (Wingate-Pearse, 2014). The advocacy group "The Parenthood" conducted a large survey and reported, for example, that 95% of parent respondents would not send their child to a centre with higher child-educator ratios in exchange for lower fees.

What parents look for in good child care was also part of a New Zealand study surveying views of parents, educators, managers and parent committee representatives (Mitchell, 2008). This study was relatively unique in employing a nationally representative sample frame of 601 programs with a fair parent survey return rate of 35% from about half of these programs. Parents rated 14 elements of good child care as very important, important, or unimportant. Overall most parents agreed that all attributes were important with some being more important than others. Process-type items led the list; for example, 94% of parents said it was very important for educators to be warm and nurturing. Similarly, 90% said good

communication between educators and family was very important. Structural quality items were also important but somewhat less so; for example 64% said that educator qualifications were very important, with 27% more saying they were important. Finally, some parent involvement items were important, but least important in the list of 14 items. Being involved in planning children's learning was very important to 33% and important to 42 % of parents. Involvement in running the service through committee work and volunteering was very important to 19% and important to 31%.

These patterns are noteworthy—the finding that good FP communication is very important for all parents replicates overwhelming evidence from research and practice. The lesser importance for some of the other parent involvement items also replicates important points made elsewhere. Parent involvement activities such as volunteering and serving in governance roles may be valued by some parents but not by others and they are not top of list in what most parents want from good child care. Goals for child care may differ across parents (parents are diverse!) and not all forms of FP are going to work in every instance.

Research in other jurisdictions also shows a range of responses in what parents want from quality ECEC and a range of measures to find out. In the US, Barbarin et al. (2006) used in-home open-ended interview questions with hundreds of diverse families. They found that many parents endorsed the common structural and process quality items in existing scales (e.g., qualified staff and positive emotional climate). However, the parents also responded to the open-ended questions by talking about three dimensions rarely considered in existing quality measures: comprehensive service provision or connections, convenient location, and home-school partnership. The parents saw these dimensions as important in meeting their practical needs.

Another large US study also reported on maternal views of quality in a large low-income sample using both centre and family day care (Li-Grining & Coley, 2006). Findings show that practical aspects like flexibility and accessibility were very important to mothers and outweighed process quality outcomes. The researchers say that it is not surprising that flexibility and accessibility are import to lower income mothers since many do shift work or work in other arrangements that do not fit a long day model. Family day care was a preferred option for many because it was more flexible and accessible. Interestingly, standard quality ratings of the family day care and centres used by families in the sample showed that centres were higher quality, suggesting a tradeoff between what works for parents and what works for children (see also Skattebol et al., 2014). Also notable in this study is a method of hearing from mothers that combined a parent survey-type quality scale (Emlen, 2010; Emlen et al., 2000) and a more open-ended interview. This quality survey was developed in a research program examining flexibility of day care and parental work, so it was constructed with this dimension front of mind.

In summary, when given the opportunity to define good quality in day care, parents express a variety of attributes, some of which match standard definitions and measures of structural and process quality in programming for children, and some of which go beyond these measures in addressing practical family needs and issues such as flexibility, networks of support for parents and children, safety and security, and the need to be heard and respected. Some quality measures incorporate some of these dimensions, but most do not include FP. Some national and international quality standards do name FP as a cornerstone of quality with elements that may be important to parents and to parenting as a path to optimizing child development. But regular parental input into quality measurement is rare, whether in QRIS systems or other uses of quality rating instruments. A handful of scales do include parent input, but positivity bias in survey type responses is an issue.

2.1.6 Evidence on direct programming for parents in ECEC

Programming for parents is sometimes combined with child care and education. Where there is a consistent focus on parents, these programs are called "two generation" programs. Most of the research has come from programs targeted to low income families in the US. A variety of direct supports to parents have been tried, including income supports, job training and parent education (Grindal et al., 2013). Parent education (PEd) is the focus in this paper, since it relates to the aims of learning and development for children, and because some PEd programs have been shown to work effectively as a complement to quality programming for children. PEd offers the promise of improving the all-important home environment, leading to benefits for children and collateral benefits for parents. The importance of the home learning environment (HLE) is hammered home by UK EPPE research on ECEC, HLE and SES effects on learning and development (Melhuish, 2010); the power of HLE trumped all else and what happened in the home mattered more than the affluence of families. Beyond the promise of PEd, questions remain: what works, how does it work and for whom and in what context?

The Chicago Parent Center intervention is an example where lasting benefits for children from "risk" backgrounds have been demonstrated (e.g., Reynolds et al., 2010). Children age 3 to 5 attend quality ECEC programs half or full-day and parents are required to take part in a variety of activities intended to be educational. These include spending time in a parents' room at the centre with a supportive staff member, receiving home visits and enrolling in education courses. In multiple studies of this project (c.f., Reynolds et al., 2010) parent support added to the effects of direct programming for children in contributing to long term success including educational and occupational outcomes, and crime-avoidance. At the same time, this research does not specify how the various parent activities work in everyday practice (micro-processes) to achieve these long term successes (Hayakawa & Reynolds, 2014), and it does not use detailed measures of FP.

In a broader view of two-generation programs, a "meta review" of many programs shows that parent education doesn't always work, but some approaches are more likely to work than others. Grindal and colleagues (2013) examined 88 studies of PEd programs representing a variety of different delivery methods for PEd added to center based ECEC, mostly in targeted-to-risk programs. The meta-analysis showed positive effects for PEd that involved some form of modeling or "learning by doing" or active practice of skill, but not for PEd that simply provided information and opportunities for involvement such as volunteering. The effects of modeling and active engagement in skill were primarily on pre-academic skills of the child (e.g., early literacy rather than more general developmental gains in language) and on parenting (e.g., warmth and responsiveness). The findings here align with surveys of what parents want from ECEC supports: they don't particularly want to receive information (Raghavendra et al., 2007). This meta-review has important implications for practice in showing that parents and children may benefit when parent education is more active and when it includes the social relationships inherent in modeling and coaching.

What about PEd for early foundations of literacy and self-regulation? One form of parent education with active elements and demonstrated effects is family literacy programs, which may or may not be attached to other ECEC programs. For example, Pelletier developed a Family Literacy program (Pelletier, Hipfner-Boucher, & Doyle, 2010)[4] with evidence-based content and active engagement strategies that focus on both child and parent, bringing them together in joint parent-child sessions with coaching and support over 9 to 12 weekly sessions. Randomized control trials show positive effects (Graham, McNamara & VanLankveld, 2011) and that the effects of joint parent and child training are stronger than separate training for parent and child (Doyle, Pelletier & Zhang, 2014). Measures of the family literacy environment via survey items suggest that the processes leading to effects include parents' knowledge and confidence (Timmons, & Pelletier, 2014). The approach has been successfully adapted to diverse contexts including Chinese immigrant families in Toronto (Zhang, Pelletier, & Doyle, 2010) and in rural and urban Pakistan. As children's first teachers, parents play a key role in connecting language at home to language in out-of-home contexts such as child care and school (Snow & Dickinson, 1990).

Short of running a full family literacy program, long day care centres may be able to adopt some of the family literacy design principles in building alliances between what is done at home and the centre. Some design principles are based on the research literature on working with adults (see Pelletier et al, 2010 for a description). One principle is that parents bring knowledge and experience; everyone understands that s/he has an important contribution to make to the shared learning environment. This principle moves beyond the program as parents'

[4] Disclosure: The commercially available program manual developed by the co-author, J. Pelletier, generates royalties; all go directly to support the University of Toronto's Jackman Institute of Child Study.

feelings of general self-efficacy are enhanced. They can see the impact of their learning and active follow-up on their own child's motivation and learning. A second principle is that parents learn best through active experience. Thus, deep learning involves applying the messages of family literacy at home where the core principles are messaged in each family's unique context. A third principle is that parents understand their shared responsibility in the success of the program. Their own learning experiences help other parents; they share ideas for what works with their child and in turn, learn strategies from other parents. Further, knowing that what they do at home has powerful effects on their children's learning means that parents adopt the program principles in their daily lives. This internalization of principles has long-lasting effects on their parenting and on their children's learning (Timmons & Pelletier, 2014). Whatever form of parent education is undertaken, measuring process and outcomes is critical to achieving success. This idea is revisited in Section 3.3.

There is less research on self-regulation, but there are tested parent programs for behavior management that emphasize self-control, such as The Incredible Years (Webster-Stratton, & Jamila Reid, 2004). As with any program, particularly prepackaged ones, behavior management programs may not work in new contexts and may not work equally well for all parents (Theise et al., 2014). Nevertheless, existing programs may provide ideas and "design principles" for testing approaches adapted to local contexts. An interesting randomized control trial study in the UK combined behavior management parent education and family literacy and delivered the program using both centre group sessions and home visits to families of 5- and 6-year-olds (Sylva et al., 2008). Active elements included structured activities, homework, discussion of videos, and role-play. The training was intensive and delivered in weekly sessions over 28 weeks. Parent interview results showed positive effects on parents' literacy practices at home and improvements in children's behavior. Direct tests of children showed positive effects on reading and writing skills. As is the case with other successful programs for parents, this program included design features of active engagement, intensity, duration, and specificity (Cleveland et al., 2006). Specificity refers to the adage of "do fewer things well".

2.2 Who is doing what of note?

The Royal Children's Hospital (RCH) is an active source of ideas and research on FP. For example, it produces research-into-policy briefs on topics such as engaging hard-to-reach families (CCCH, 2010), and researchers at the RCH are also asking questions like "what would it take for our services to respectfully engage with disengaged families as co-planners, co-producers, co-implementers, co-managers, and co-researchers?"(Prichard, 2015). Prichard and colleagues are also applying the Family Partnership Model (FPM) (Davis & Meltzer, 2007) to improving practice in ECEC through community-level approaches to Community Child and Family Centres and service integration (Prichard, 2015; Prichard, Purdon, & Chaplyn, 2010;

McDonald, O'Byrne & Prichard, 2015); related FP ideas are being applied in health and nursing home visits (Lee, Dunston, & Fowler, 2012). The FPM developed in the UK by Davis is noteworthy because it provides a conceptual framework that integrates many of the complex dimensions that go into making partnerships work. This framework helps clarify the interactional processes and modifying factors (context, qualities, skills) in FPM that lead to outcomes. Although the framework does not provide measurement tools to operationalize these dimensions, it offers a way of thinking about what measures may be needed and how to interpret them as part of practice improvement. It also forefronts a continuous improvement model of reflecting on practice in FPM and how processes and moderating factors can be adjusted to improve outcomes.

Also at RCH, Lee and colleagues (2012) have put family partnerships under a critical lens while also putting them into innovative practice in nurse home visits to mothers and infants. These visits involved co-construction of understanding and goals between mothers and nurses based on co-viewing of video with the general aim of supporting the attachment relationship. Thus a tailored program is created by considering the child and family in context, while generating the goals and approaches. Importantly, family buy-in is created through the alliance between parent and practitioner.   Of course home visiting with a single nurse practitioner and single parent provides ready opportunities for co-constructivist approaches as compared with the complexity of partnering across multiple parents and staff in ECEC programs. Nevertheless, co-constructivist approaches are possible in ECEC, whether in building ideas about quality and what parents want through group discussion of videotapes (Tobin, Arzubiaga, & Mantovani, 2007), or in building curriculum through respectful exchanges with Whānau in New Zealand (Duncan & Te One, 2013).

The University of New South Wales Social Policy Research Centre (https://www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/research/projects/) also hosts a number of projects relevant to the policy context for FP. The Families at the Centre project (https://www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/research/projects/families-at-the-centre-negotiating-australias-mixed-market-in-early-education-and-care/)
 "was designed to deepen understanding of how ECEC fits into the lives of low-income families and to explore how well services meet the needs and reflect the values of low-income families" (Skattebol et al., 2014). Other projects include "A cross-country study of the effect of parental resources and public policies on inequality in early child outcomes". These policy level projects do not provide direct guidance on FP practice and measurement, but they provide valuable context, including insight about diversity in "what parents want".

Internationally, the OECD has been promoting FP as one of the five pillars of ECEC quality over the last decade and a half through various policy documents, papers and other supports. Nevertheless, the OECD appears not to have operationalized its policy work in terms of program-level FP measurement tools (OECD, 2012) and an international monitoring practices report appears to limit FP to client satisfaction

(http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/49322814.pdf). It has produced a brief country
level survey as a stock-take of FP (http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/49322727.pdf)

A long-running US project worth noting is the Harvard Family Research Project
(http://www.hfrp.org) focusing on Family Engagement in schools and early
childhood education. The HFRP is a broad ranging collection of research and
practice supports for involving, engaging, and supporting families HFRP also
touches on measurement of FP in ECEC services and supports for local "action
research" on practice. There are links to other sites including the Head Start
National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement
(http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family) and an interesting smattering
of brave new world initiatives such as virtual PD, which employs parent avatars to
give ECEC practitioners experience with interviewing parents. Presumably the
avatars are programmed for two-way communication! The resources on
measurement include an analysis of several FI measurement tools for ECEC
(http://www.hfrp.org/early-childhood-education/publications-resources/data-
collection-instruments-for-evaluating-family-involvement). An example is the
commercially available Parent Education Profile, a parent-completed survey for
parents of infants and young children with items tapping dimensions of learning at
home and interactive literacy supports, connecting to formal learning opportunities
for the child, and general parenting. The site also links to open domain Survey
Monkey parent involvement measures developed by HFRP. An interesting resource
is a case study tool kit to assist in the construction of local practice cases in FP for
reflection, professional sharing, and action research.

The zenith of FP measurement analysis and design in ECEC appears to be the large
partnered US project, Family-Practitioner Relationship Quality (FPRQ). The project
has been working over the last five years with the original aim of producing a tool
that could be used to assess relationships in Head Start and Quality Rating
Improvement systems. The intended applications of the tool have become
somewhat broader and the project name has morphed into Family Practitioner
Teacher Relationship Quality. The tool has just now been released in the form of
multiple surveys for different groups of respondents (parents, practitioners,
management). For example, the "short form" of the parent interview may be seen on
the project website (FPTRQ, 2014) and sample items appear in Appendix **3**. A useful
manual, which covers a number of conceptual and technical issues for this FP
measure, is also available (Kim et al., 2014), as is a spread sheet tool for processing
surveys.

What is instructive about the FPRQ is not so much the content of the survey items
but rather the steps that were taken in constructing them and the resulting coverage
and coherence. First the project began by building a conceptual framework or logic
model of how FPRQ affects outcomes for children, families and practitioners and
anchored it in the research evidence (Forry et al., 2012). The model is presented in
Appendix 1

In a second step, the team analyzed dozens of existing measures of FP relationships from different fields including health, special needs, education and ECEC, and in a variety of formats including self-surveys, interviewer administered surveys, checklists, and observational measures (Porter et al., 2012). They examined the psychometric properties of the tools and the unit of analysis (parent or family; program, professional, child, etc.). They identified gaps in the existing tools; for example work life balance issues were rarely assessed. And they assessed how the existing tools stacked up against their conceptual model with its categories of attitudes, knowledge, practices, and environment.

2.3 What are issues regarding best measures?

In the final analysis, best measures are those that actually improve practice and outcomes. As outlined earlier in Sections 1 and 2, FP measures are more likely to be effective in doing so if they:
- Are grounded in a conceptual framework linking programs to processes to outcomes.
- Are selective in which aspects of the framework they tap.
- Are sensitive to context, culture and difference.
- Cover levels of analysis from programs to individuals.
- Converge across individuals including parents, children and professionals.
- Are understood by and have input and buy in from families and professionals.
- Are efficient and attentive to measurement burden.
- Are used in a learning community approach to continuous improvement.

The points above mean that best measures rest on knowing *Why* measure FP and *What* about the many faceted concept is being measured. Best measures are also tested against the question of *How Well* they perform in terms of their technical or "psychometric" properties. From a technical measurement standpoint, best measures are said to be those that have demonstrated:
- Variability,
- Reliability,
- Validity and
- Anti-bias.

A full consideration of these issues is beyond the scope of this paper. However, it should be noted that these issues have been relatively neglected in the field of ECEC measurement, even in formal quality evaluation efforts (Ishimine & Tayler, 2014), although there are some exceptions (e.g., Fantuzzo et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2014). Nevertheless, important questions need to be asked beyond the starting point of answering the questions of Why and What is measured. Do the intended measures provide enough variability or range to be useful? Sometimes positivity bias in surveys means there is no variation in answers within or across centres because family/client satisfaction is at the top, as is self-rating of FP practice by staff. No

variance generally means no action. Is there reliability or consistency in the measures? This can mean many things. An important example is whether parents and staff agree in reporting the same thing, such as whether the various forms of two-way communication are realities for both. Another form is whether different staff raters would rate a classroom FP item in the same way. Inconsistency can be a technical measurement problem. It can also be an impetus for further analysis of different perspectives on what is being measured. And it can be an indication of where learning communities need to build a common understanding of what is being measured as part of implementing the measurement strategy. Validity can also mean many things. Construct validity means that the patterns found in the results from a measurement fit meaningfully with the patterns in other data from the conceptual framework being used. Face validity means that stakeholders accept the measure as meaningful, an important criterion in determining whether it's used well.

Bias is also a critical issue in defining best measures. Bias may be inherent in the content of a measurement or in the method of obtaining it. Content bias could come from items on family support for learning that ask about print at home and library use but not about cultural story-telling and oral language appropriate to and important in some families. Method bias might come from using email or on line surveys when some families don't have these channels. Bias in measurement collection contributes to biased samples of information- a problem for both practice and research design.

These measurement issues, which apply to surveys and checklists, also apply to some other measurement forms such as coding or rating from direct observations and to coding more open-ended questionnaires, interviews or focus groups. They may apply less directly to other alternative measurement forms that are more qualitative or narrative. For example, Tobin's (2005) collected parent narratives about videos showing everyday ECEC practice, using an "ethnographic" methodology. Such approaches may feed the refinement of easier-to-collect measures and the conceptual framework itself; they may be used directly in communities of learners and in action/design research, as noted in Section 3.3.

3. Implications/Options for Goodstart

3.1   Practice improvement opportunities across 642 early learning centres and measurement issues.

Under a banner of developing effective and authentic FP, and with measurement as an important tool in getting it done, Goodstart can look to ways of joining its existing inclusion and quality improvement efforts, such as professional development, to new ways of working in "communities of learners" across all centres, along with action/design research in some centres, and larger scale, organization-wide research, including natural experiments, randomized control trials and data mining of large data sets. The ways of deepening FP can make use of two organizational principles: "Top down/bottom up" and "doing double duty".

Top down begins with Goodstart central level clarification of the logic of FP improvement in benefiting children, families and staff. This step will also do double duty in terms of making the logic *connect FP to Goodstart strategic goals of inclusion and quality*, and it should also *connect FP to the other* Goodstart *measurement and improvement efforts in language/literacy and self-regulation*. This central organizational model building for FP practice should reference the literature on the effectiveness of various forms of FP, noting that not all forms have been shown to be effective for all child and family outcomes (e.g., Kim et al., 2014), and that context needs to be part of the model. *Cultural and community level differences need to be accounted for if FP is to serve the strategic goal of inclusion rather than exacerbate deficit thinking about families* (Cottle & Alexander, 2014).

The literature will also suggest measures of FP practice and expected outcomes, as well as measures of the processes that link practice to outcomes. Clarifying *WHAT* is to be measured within this conceptual framework is a key to developing useful measures; this will also bring clarity to *WHY* FP is a priority area for Goodstart. For purposes of moving the model into practice and stimulating research efforts, a relatively lean model may serve best, with room for bottom up input and revision as it is moved into centre practice and released to potential Goodstart research partners, in continuous improvement mode.

In addition to establishing the model, central Goodstart will need to provide supports for effective measurement. These include specifying what will be measured as *key indicators* of FP for broad monitoring that links to the NQS and Goodstart quality improvement efforts and to the literature, which may suggest where important elements of FP are not being measured in the NQS and where measurement might drive practice improvement at a broad organizational level. Key indicators will need to be limited in number and measurement cost, but they can provide a framework for additional*, tier two measures*.

Central Goodstart can also provide a starter list of tier two measurement items that give a deeper look at FP, which may involve more varied methods of data collection, and would be used in local practice communities, action/design research, and large scale studies. This step can go deeper on the meanings of important but ambiguous elements, such as "two-way communication" and "respect". For example, what is the picture of "2 ways" in a given centre in terms of parents' reporting about their children regularly, getting to talk about their goals for service use, having the chance to give input into planning, etc.?

Importantly, it will also need to move aggregated, program-level measures to the level of checking the experience of individual families. For example, is the critical dimension of two-way communication working for each family in this centre? Otherwise, at the centre level FP can mean that the rich get richer and it becomes a 'lever to maximize the potential of the already advantaged' (Hallgarten, 2000, p.18, cited in Cottle & Alexander, 2014). The lesson here is that the outcomes chosen by Goodstart, and the rationale for each, including FP, must be clearly understood and drive decisions and behaviours, not just at the central level, but, importantly, at the centre level. As well, all aspects of the organisation must support, learn from and adapt "systems" as a result of this outcomes measurement work.

In producing key indicators and tier two measures for FP, Goodstart can draw from existing measures in the literature, but it is unlikely that any of the existing measurement tools, such as surveys, will be an exact match for Goodstart's improvement aims and context. This means that the Goodstart likely will not be using the entirety of any established measurement tool such as the FPTQR surveys, with their multiple dimensions and subscale items, along with technical features such as having been trialed for reliability, validity and acceptable range.

In constructing or borrowing items from existing measures, particularly surveys and checklists, Goodstart will need to test whether the collection of new items "perform" by providing consistent, meaningful and unbiased results. Testing can mean pilot testing with small samples before the measures are released and/or testing in practice and refining or adding measures in continuous improvement mode. Continuous improvement in the measurement construction process naturally means bottom-up feedback from centres, staff and families on the initial set of measures (as well as the conceptual framework). There may be innovative ways to do this with focus groups of staff and parents discussing measures in application to actual videos or case studies of FP practice (c.f., Tobin, 2005). These techniques may feed the refinement of easier-to-collect measures and the conceptual framework itself; they may take the innovative route of putting staff and parents in alliances through co-viewing of practice, commenting and building common understanding of practice. Innovative approaches like this, tested in some centres in action/design research could perform double duty in developing both measurement and actual FP practice where alliances in planning and full-blown Family Partnership happen.

Finally, continuous improvement efforts require Top Down assessment of how and whether they are working in the longer term. Are the measures being put into practice and leading to improvement?

As noted above, bottom-up strategies include centre level input into the refinement of measures put out by Central Goodstart. Most importantly they include centre level buy-in to put the measures into practice improvement. Well-designed PD that highlights the use of measurement for improvement can support this, but *ongoing* engagement with measures must also be supported. The organizational change literature in education suggests the top down pressure and supports can work only if bottom up buy-in opportunities are provided (Fullan, cited in Arimura et al., 2011). In this case, opportunities could mean time for centre staff to meet regularly in a "community of learners" or "community of practice", preferably with parent input, to improve practice with measurement as a routine element of "doing business".

In summary, seizing the opportunities for transformation to FP and using measurement as a lever require a number of steps at both the Goodstart central and centre level:

The Goodstart *central* organization:

- Defines a lean conceptual framework for FP with room to incorporate bottom up feedback from centre staff and families.
- Develops a starter list of key indicator measures for FP for system-wide use that relates to the NQS but extends it to Goodstart's conceptual FP framework.
- Develops a starter list of tier two measures that go deeper in measuring focal aspects of the conceptual framework.
- Develops the management and technical tools to engage the centres in bottom- up input and implementation in practice. These may include a web-based platform for sharing ideas and findings from practice and research organization wide.
- Follows up to assess and improve the model, measures and implementation at the centre level, with research strategies outlined in Section 3.3.
- Follows through on assessing effects on FP through research strategies.
- Uses outcomes results to inform organizational systems change work

The Goodstart *centres*:

- Engage families and staff with the FP models and measures and provide input to central Goodstart.

- Establish communities of learners to improve FP and put measurement into practice by giving staff regular time to meet, as well as professional development, and
- Include input from parents and children as part of the communities of learners.
- Include input from Goodstart organization-wide research efforts
- Consider taking part in local action/design research as outlined in Section 3.3.

3.2 Capacity: Organizational and practitioner skills-

In order to make ongoing use of measurement results to improve practice, multiple skills and leadership is required in the organization at the central level and at centre level for early learning professionals.

At Goodstart *central* level critical organizational skills are:
- Leadership and understanding
- Launching the direction and support for articulation and measurement of FP improvement efforts.
- Modeling a central level learning community that receives and acts on bottom up feedback on the initial measurement approaches.
- Establishing and managing ways of monitoring implementation and results that feed communities of learners at both central and centre levels.
- Expertise to contribute to learning communities in knowledge areas such as understanding:
  - organizational change
  - professional work in ECEC
  - child development in the context of family and ECEC programs
  - diversity and engaging families and communities
  - measurement, mixed methods, large scale data analysis, and action/design research

At Goodstart *centre* level critical organizational and practitioner skills are:

Centre leadership that understands and models
- the uses of systematic assessment and reflection for practice improvement.
- how to facilitate a learning community among staff, including squeezing the system to make time to meet.
- having respect for families and systematically bringing them into the centre community

Practitioners who:
- Work respectfully with families and colleagues.

- Learn the value of measurement through bottom up improvement efforts they help to develop in communities of learners.
- Recognize the value of their efforts as part of multi-level measurement and improvement efforts (NQS, organization-wide research, local action/design research).
-

3.3 Research Community Opportunities *given the scale of Goodstart (e.g. laboratory of 642 sites)*

Goodstart has the opportunity to move beyond communities of learners at the centre and center levels by connecting centres with each other around key work on quality and inclusion through measurement. This can be done in a number of ways. Clusters of centres may work on the same action/design research project idea and share ideas and findings across virtual connections and meetings. All 642 sites may work on instituting common measurement practices around a focal area of FP improvement and share reports and ideas across an internet platform designed to host knowledge building conferencing. In addition some centres may choose to go deeper in measurement and research; centres may opt to:

- Use action/design research approaches to <u>develop</u> FP measurement approaches with parental participation (and children?) and pilot implementation trials of the measurements across a cluster of early leader sites. As the design and implementation rolls out, sites can connect with virtual sharing/ knowledge building through video conferencing across sites, with pithy reports going to all 642 sites. These efforts can also provide information on technical issues and How Well the measures perform, although this would not be the focus.

- Use action/design research approaches to test centre-level practice changes in focal areas of FP, such as respectful two-way communication and its various meanings. The work would include simple conceptual models of practice-process-outcome to guide the changes, measurement and reflection. This could also be done in clusters with virtual connections across sites as above. Particular aspects of systematic 2-ways for practice change and measurement might include:
    o Noting day-to-day conversations between staff and parents for content and coverage (which parents aren't taking part) and looking to include all parents and parental interests.
    o Using intake interviews to hear parents' goals for the service, showing respect, and noting common ground with centre goals. Checking back periodically with parents and joining up with staff meetings/PD to discuss areas for alliance
    o Using reports from children, documentation, and/or videos of children for joint parent-staff discussions of practice aspects. Following through to measure effects.

- o Making Learning stories an effective part of 2-way. Getting input from parents on both the content of learning and on how learning stories work for them as a starting point. Use learning stories as an opportunity to learn from parents.

  Use action/design research approaches to test centre-level practice changes in the focal area of parent education, adapting effective design principles to the centre care context. In the Goodstart context, the model of weekly parent child sessions over many weeks would not be feasible but design principles for parent education could be put to work in other ways. These design principles include active learning and hands on/minds on learning activities for parents with their children along with opportunities for coaching and alliances between what is done at home and in the centre. For example, in family literacy:
  - o Families are supported in active home activities such as: Parents and children engage in environmental print treasure hunts in home. Children take photographs of favorite things at home that begin with alphabet letter sounds and discuss with parents; children's reports on the pictures are turned into books at the centre, for example, a personalized alphabet book.
  - o Explicit alliances connect what parents and practitioners are doing in literacy; parents understand the importance of what they do at home and are invited to have general input on family strengths such as oral language and story telling or songs. Families are also invited to report what they are doing in the "home literacy environment" in face-to-face communications, evening focus groups and/or on survey-type items. In true alliance fashion, the centre reciprocates by sending home an itemized report on what is being *emphasized currently* in the centre literacy environment (e.g., print awareness) and what is *not being emphasized currently* (recognizing the value of specificity), so that the parent survey is not framed as deficit assessment.
  - o With a focus on literacy, learning stories, documentation, and video are used as material for discussion and alliances of action at home and at the centre, potentially through evening focus groups at the centre.

- Refine the NQS in local practice by introducing in-depth measures of Key NQS indicators at all 642 sites. The indicators will be one of the inputs into each centre's community of learners.

The findings from investigations like these across centres should directly improve FP practice across the organization. The aspects of practice changes in two-way communication noted above, for example, would be tested in practice through action/design research and then implemented more widely in practice, if successful.

For example, the widespread use of Learning Stories in Goodstart means that making them a more effective instrument of FP practice would have immediate and

widespread practice impact. The philosophy of Learning Stories embraces FP (Carr, 2001; Mitchell, & Carr, 2014). An important question is whether the reality in everyday practice matches the philosophy. There is anecdotal evidence in the literature, but is there solid evidence from Goodstart that it is working? In what ways? For all parents? Can learning stories using photographs without text be effectively used with parents who have literacy challenges? Do the parents contribute to as well as admire learning stories? Can we use children's own contributions to learning stories (e.g., puppet interview with "what you did at the centre today?") as material for parents and staff to rally around? And importantly, how can learning stories support processes that achieve the desired outcomes of FP? The widespread use of documentation in Goodstart could also be put under a similar FP lens with special attention to how it may work as a crucial tool to engage the parents of children with developmental disabilities.

3.4   Sector influence in Australia-possible opportunities.

Goodstart can help to lead the Australian ECEC sector:
- By modeling a "learning organization" approach to ECEC services, treating centres as communities of learners that include families
- By contributing to the improvement and performance of the NQS, for example by clarifying some of the general terms in concrete ways that move towards recognizing full partnership and not just particular involvement or engagement activities.
- By exploring and identifying ways of reintroducing effective parental input into the NQS.
- By knowledge mobilization including design principles determined from action/design research.
- By continuing to be open to testing Australian approaches in FP against international research and development, for example the OECD country stock-take.

In fact Goodstart has the potential to help lead the ECEC sector internationally in these areas. As noted, outcomes measurement in ECEC and in FP in particular is in its infancy. The Australian national ferment in ECEC provides an exciting context for this project. Furthermore, Goodstart's unique array of strengths - size, organizational youth and vigor, and most of all its stance of defining itself as a research-oriented organization open to learning - can drive FP practice and policy forward, well beyond the organization itself.

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Appendices

Appendix 1
UberCare/ AirEnC ?

'According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the need for child care services is set to increase as the number of children aged 0-12 years is expected to rise to half a million by 2020.
.....
For many parents "Long day care, family day care around our area is not flexible for us. It's not an option really for us to go to work because our needs for day care are different each week."
....
What solutions are being proposed to meet the demand?
....
Liz Graham was looking to get back to work last June and was sharing a child-minding service with a friend when her idea turned into a space where other parents can rent a desk with complimentary (sic) childcare. Ms Graham calls her business Bubs and Boardrooms a "labour of love" which was "borne out of desperation". "We ... don't fall under the childcare or long day care service facilities, even though we try and operate as closely to it as possible." "So the child minding's free, the parents rent the desk and therefore, if you're a small business owner or you work from home, you consult, basically if you have an ABN it becomes a 100 percent tax deduction because it's an office space with free child-minding and that's how we've operated it," Ms Graham says.'

from SBS insights 17 March 2015
http://www.sbs.com.au/news/insight/article/2015/03/17/childcare-new-ideas-parents-and-kids

Appendix 2
FPTRQ Theory of Change

FACTORS THAT MAY INFLUENCE FAMIY AND PROVIDER/TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS

Parent/Family/Child Characteristics
- Demographic characteristics
- Personal characteristics
- Health and/or mental health
- Attitudes, values, roles, and expectations
- Characteristics of parental employment
- Stressors
- Resources

Community Characteristics
- Features
- Norms, dynamics, and social networks
- Differences between characteristics of the family's community and the provider's/teacher's community

Provider/Teacher/Program Characteristics
- Personal and professional characteristics
- Physical and/or mental health
- Values and expectations
- Characteristics of the organization, program, or home-based setting
- Stressors
- Resources

Provider/Teacher Professional Development
- Opportunities for training coursework on such topics as family functioning and culturally responsive practices
- Opportunities for training/coursework on developing and maintaining relationships with families

ELEMENTS AND CONSTRUCTS OF EFFECTIVE PROVIDER/TEACHER FACILITATION OF FAMILY AND PROVIDER/TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS*

Attitudes
- Respect
- Commitment
- Openness to change
- Understanding context

Knowledge
- Family/child-specific knowledge

Practices
- Family-focused concern
- Communication
- Responsiveness
- Connecting to services
- Collaboration

Environmental Features
- Welcoming
- Communication systems
- Culturally diverse materials
- Information about resources
- Peer-to-peer parent activities

*Cultural responsiveness and empowerment are central in each of these constructs and elements

OUTCOMES / EFFECTS

INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

Other High-Quality Practices in Early Care and Education
- Sensitive caregiving of the child
- Positive classroom climate
- Effective instructional practices
- Planful transitions within and across settings

Intermediate Provider/Teacher Outcomes
- Positive attitudes toward families and knowledge of and responsiveness to the unique situations families are facing
- Broader and deeper repertoire of knowledge and skills for promoting child and family development
- Self-efficacy
- Sense of professionalism
- Positive feelings about position

Intermediate Child and Family Outcomes
- Family engagement in the program
- Positive feelings toward child's early care and education provider/teacher and program
- Family empowerment and enhanced capacity
- Continuity of care

EFFECTS

Effects on Children
- Academic/pre-academic
- Cognitive development
- Social-emotional development
- Health

Effects on Families
- Family well-being
- Facilitation of work-life balance
- Positive parenting and parent-child relationships
- Parental perception of peer and community support

Effects on Providers/Teachers
- Job longevity and reduced turnover

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Appendix 3
FPTRQ Parent Survey sample items

1. Since September, how often have you met with or talked to your childcare provider or teacher about the following?

   [MARK ONE BOX IN EACH ROW.]

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Very often
a. Goals you have for your child.	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. What to expect at each stage of your child's development.	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Your vision for your child's future.	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. How you feel about the care and education your child receives.	☐	☐	☐	☐

2. How comfortable would or do you feel sharing the following information with your childcare provider or teacher?

   [MARK ONE BOX IN EACH ROW.]

	Very uncomfortable	Uncomfortable	Comfortable	Very comfortable
a. Your family life.	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. The role that faith and religion play in your household.	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Changes happening at home.	☐	☐	☐	☐

3. How often does your childcare provider or teacher:

   [MARK ONE BOX IN EACH ROW.]

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Very often
a. Offer you books or materials on parenting?	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Ask you about the cultural values and beliefs you want him/her to communicate to your child?	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Ask about your family?	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Provide you with opportunities to give feedback on his or her performance?	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Remember personal details about your family when speaking with you?	☐	☐	☐	☐