



# The ASaP Continuum Project

## Access, Support and Participation

(2015-2017)

Understanding Coaching  
and Well-Being  
Through the Experience  
of Educators

November 2017



## Table of Contents

An overview of ASaP Continuum Project .....	Page 3
Monitoring Data: How ASaP contributes to the capacity building of educators .....	Page 5
Centre-Based Leadership Development.....	Page 6
Research Questions (2016-17).....	Page 10
Going Forward and Sustainability .....	Page 14
Appendices .....	Page 16
References .....	Page 23

## Overview of ASaP Continuum Project:

Initiated in 2012, the GRIT Program (Edmonton) has led the implementation and scaling of the ASaP Continuum Project (Access, Supports and Participation) beginning with 5 early learning and care programs in Edmonton. As the project completes its fifth year, ASaP expanded its implementation to 43 licensed child care, preschool program, or family day home agencies, across five regions of Alberta. The expansion included: Edmonton- 20 sites, Calgary- 12 sites, Central – 4 sites, North Central- 4 sites, and the South region with 3 sites.

Over the past five years the learning obtained from across the province has been fascinating and it continues to drive the implementation. We have learned about regional differences, about how to use data to implement the project more effectively, and about how to monitor successes of our project goals. We are pleased to know that our data shows that ASaP is successfully achieving its mission of building upon the skills, knowledge and confidence of Early Learning and Care (ELC) educators in Alberta.

Building on ASaP's 2015 research report, this summary report highlights three unique project activities that have been our focus over the past two years: 1) continued monitoring for capacity building of educators, 2) facilitating ELC leadership development, and 3) capturing educator's experience of what it feels like to be coached.

### ***Mission:***

By providing educators and families with access to the right supports at the right time, ASaP builds upon the skills, knowledge and confidence of early childhood educators to ensure the meaningful participation and inclusion of all children.

The ASaP project has adopted and enhanced the evidence based Teaching Pyramid Model (TPM) from the Center for Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning to the Alberta context (Hemmeter, Snyder, Fox, & Algina, 2011).

The TPM is an adult capacity building framework to ensure quality professional practices to support the social and emotional development for all children and the prevention of challenging behavior.



The TPM is grounded in evidence informed practices of universal design and inclusion and delivered through a blend of high quality professional development that has been adapted to the Alberta context. The implementation of TPM is supported by a process of practice-based coaching that emphasizes active educator engagement and professional goal setting.

Three primary intended outcomes of ASaP are:

- Capacity building of the early childhood educator
- Navigation of cross-ministerial systems to access supports
- Sustainability through leadership development, family engagement, and inclusive policy

The implementation of the ASaP Project includes an interconnection between five primary activities and processes to meet the project's intended outcomes:

**1. Professional Development** – 12 hours of learning modules delivered through workshops on content of TPM include:

- **Universal Practices** - nurturing and responsive relationships and creating high quality supportive environments, for all children
- **Targeted Practices** - intentional teaching of social and emotional skills, for all children with additional targeted support for some children
- **Intensive Practices** - positive behavior supports for responding to challenging behavior, for a few children

1. **Practice-based coaching** – an intentional process of engaging educators, approximately twice per month, to bridge the learning from professional development modules, to support identification of professional goal setting and create an action plans needed to implement TPM (Fox et al, 2011).



2. **Monitoring** –the Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool -TPOT- (Hemmeter, Fox, & Snyder, 2008) a two-hour observation and interview process of an educator by a certified TPOT administrator approximately twice per year. The tool measures the fidelity of the educators' use of TPM practices in their day to day interactions with children, families and team members. TPM practices are grouped into 14 categories: universal (7 indicators), targeted (6 indicators) and intensive interventions (1 indicator).

3. **Leadership Development** – An ongoing process of supporting centre teams to gain the skills, knowledge and confidence to work towards Program Wide Implementation (PWI) of the TPM across their centre. This includes activities and goals for participating centres such as: participation at regional monthly reflective practice meetings, increased attention to family engagement, navigation process to access supports for individual children, and inclusive policy.

4. **Research** - Ongoing community based research in collaboration with the University of Alberta to inform and influence knowledge and scaling of ASaP.

## Monitoring how ASaP contributes to the capacity building of educators

As the TPOT is our evidence based tool to monitor and measure capacity building of educators, provincial training was offered to certify TPOT administrators in Spring 2016. Forty-four individuals completed the training (e.g. ASaP coaches, site leads and directors from participating centres, licensing officers etc.), and thirty-eight participants met the 80% reliability for certification. To date, approximately 20 individuals actively engaged in completing TPOT observations across the province. To ensure consistency /fidelity of scoring each observation, each administrator completes inter-observer reliability (2 individuals observing the same educator), once per year. In addition, to be prepared to support educators working with very young children, two ASaP coaches have been certified on the Teaching Pyramid Infant Toddler Observation Scale (TIPITOS), in Spring 2017.

This phase of project implementation asked educators to identify professional learning goals based on their TPOT summary, and guided by their strengths and possible areas for new growth. In collaboration with the University of Alberta, the aggregated data on goal setting reveal that the average length of time learning goals are worked on is around five months (range from 2 months to 10 months) and that most educators focus on two learning goals at a time. A summary of practice indicators most often chosen as goals is represented in figure 1, (dark grey = emerging sites; clear = established sites).

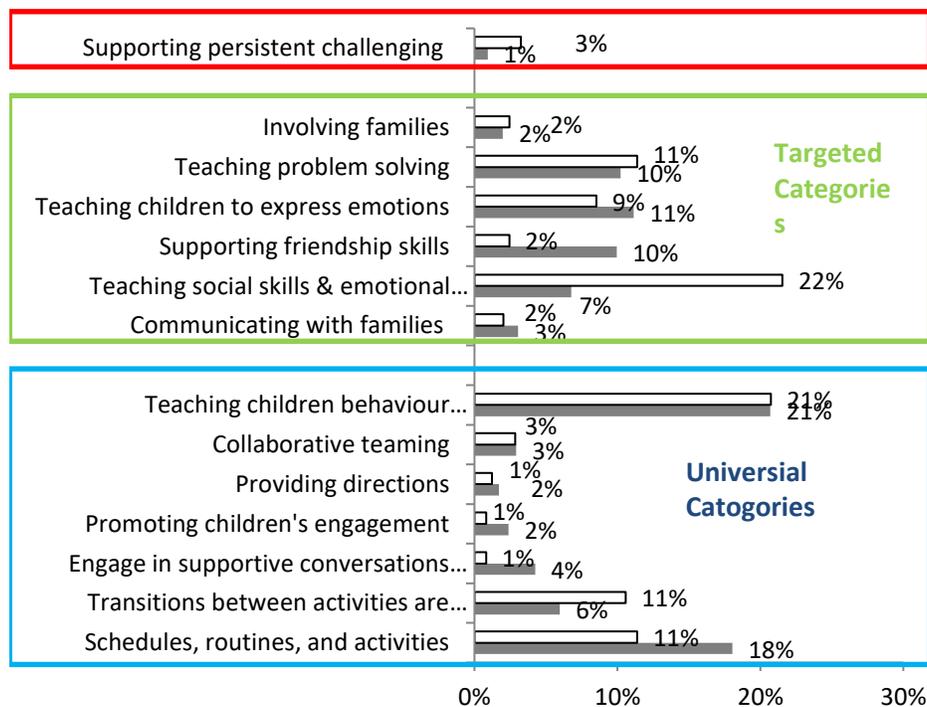


Figure 1. Distribution Patterns of Learning Goals from September 2015 to June 2017

Over the duration of the project to date, significant data has been accumulated that helps us better understand the impact of ASaP in relation to educator capacity building. The graph below (Figure 2) captures the baseline TPOT score of 71 educators and the increasing trend of growth in an educator’s capacity to create high quality, responsive environments to support children’s social and emotional learning. A snapshot of change over approximately 3 ½ years (TPOT 7), illustrates that the overall increase across all tiers of the TPM is increased by 20%. **Universal** practices increased by 22%, **targeted** practices increased by 19%, **intensive** interventions increased by 37%.

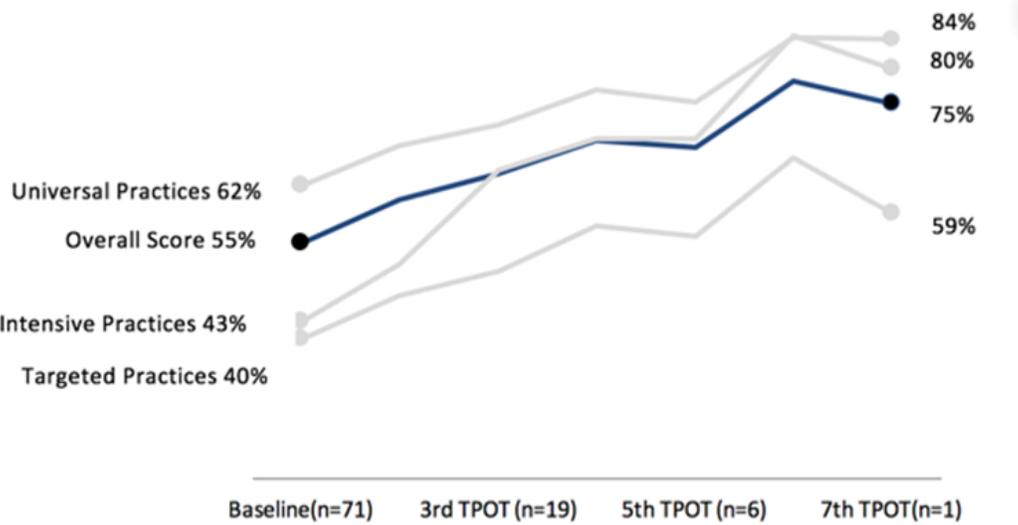


Figure 2. Monitoring of Educator Capacity Building Over Time

**Centre-Based Leadership Development:**

**Phases of Program Wide Implementation (PWI)**

As we aim to enhance the readiness of centres to respond to the needs of all children and families, the development of a leadership team to support TPM implementation across their entire centre, the development of a written plan to support PWI and sustainability is critical. In doing so, we draw upon monitoring data to better understand the phases of implementation across centres and how best we can achieve better outcomes.

We have identified that centres move through four distinct phases on the way to PWI:

**Phase One: New** – Centres who have participated in the project for less than one year.

**Phase Two: Emerging** – Centres who have an emerging leadership team (i.e. minimum of 3 staff attend TPM professional development, participation in the leadership module, support educator’s time to debrief with coach out of ratio etc.).

**Phase Three: Established** – Centres have an established leadership team (i.e. leadership team members are active participants at ASaP reflective practice meetings, are beginning to implement their PWI plan, and are exploring peer coaching based).

**Phase Four: Demonstration Site** – The site lead educator within the centre has successfully met the criteria for implementing TPM practices with fidelity, measured by the TPOT. TPM practices includes:

- Overall TPM practices at 75% or higher
- All TPM practices above 50%

In addition, the leadership team is developed and are actively taking steps to implement their detailed PWI plan that includes: family engagement activities, creating a culture to sustain TPM practices through peer coaching, increased independence in applying the navigation flowchart to access needed supports/ resources etc.

Figure 3 represents the status of PWI to date, including 19 centres in the *New Phase*, in their first year of the project, 7 centres in the Emerging Phase, 9 centres in the Established Phase and 5 centres who are actively moving towards PWI. The image also highlights the continuity of the site lead’s participation over time as influencing PWI.

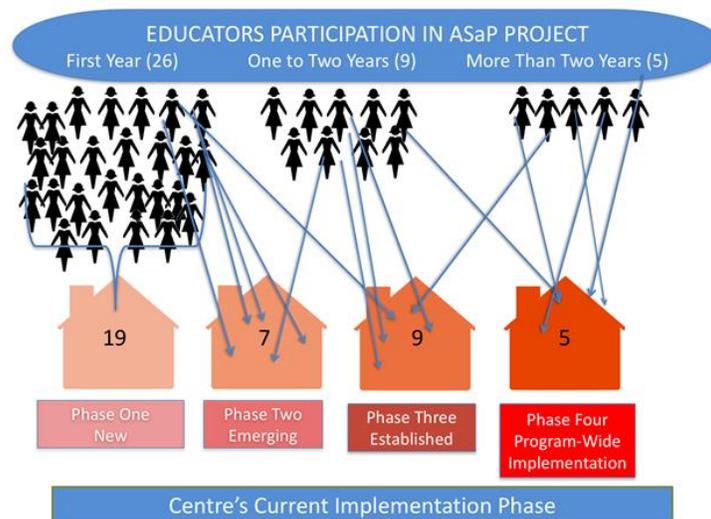


Figure 3. Program Wide Implementation as of June 2017

In June 2017, four participating ASaP centres were recognized for their success in achieving “demonstration site” status. These centres are models for others (e.g. parents, educators, coaches, licensing officers, etc.) in demonstrating intentional social and emotional supports to ensure the inclusion of all children and leadership in engaging families.

The recognized centres have been participating in the project for a duration ranging between 2.5 years - 3.5 years include:

- Sunny Start, Edmonton
- Child Study Jr. K, Edmonton
- Brite Beginnings, Edmonton
- University Community Early Learning and Care

### **Navigation Process to Access Additional Supports**

Alberta Inclusive Childcare Review (Wiat, 2015), identifies navigation as the greatest challenge for educators and families in accessing the right supports for children. ASaP’s commitment to work differently includes the ASaP coach providing a continuum of support to walk along side educators and families to better understand the individual needs of children to maximize their participation and inclusion. The navigational flowchart was revised with an aim to simplify and to clarify three primary steps to determine the right support to ensure their meaningful participation in child care routines.

The process, captured in appendix 1, includes:

Gathering - focus on information gathering, family involvement, and observation of universal TPM practices in place.

Responding - focus on recommendation of targeted TPM practices, data collection and involving multi-disciplinary team members to support, as needed.

Collaborating - focus on bringing all team members together, formal assessment and development of a plan

In addition to using the navigation process, ASaP coaches started to track additional requests for information/ support pertaining to individual children who are having challenges in their participation in the daily routines of the early learning environment, and/ or challenging behavior.

Individual concerns about children are tracked in the coaching visit log, using the child’s initials.

Concerns classified into five categories based on The Ages and Stages Questionnaires-Social Emotional (ASQ-SE; Squires, Bricker, & Twombly, 2002). In the past year, 148 children were discussed.

More specifically, 50% (n= 20) centres discussed approximate 1 to 3 children; 20% (n=8) of the centres discussed 6 to 10 children and 8% (n=3) of centres did not have any concerns expressed. In addition, 3% (n=2) of targeted children were discussed 10 or more times during coaching visits. According to the coaching visit logs, emotional regulation was the highest concern expressed; child and adult interaction was the lowest (See Figure 4).

The coach provided each educator with TPM strategies in the targeted tier and may have included support (e.g. phone or e-mail contact) from an external multi-disciplinary team member (e.g. Occupational and/ or Speech and Language Therapist).

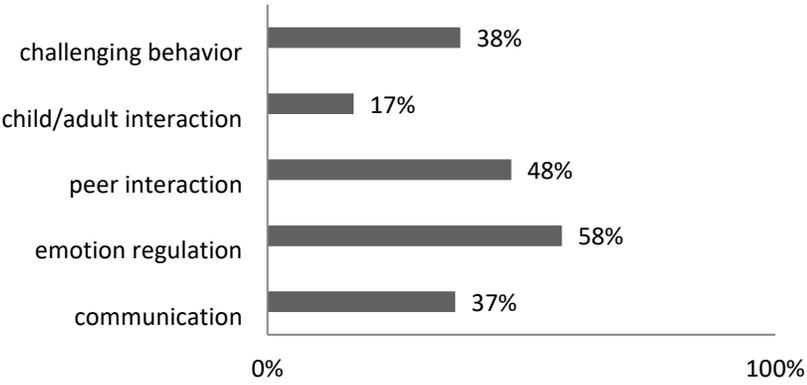


Figure 4. Percentage of concerns among children targeted for additional support

ASaP coaches requested additional services for 18 children by a multi-disciplinary team member (e.g. Speech Language Pathologist, Occupational Therapist, and/ or Behavior Consultant) for joint visits, observations and/ or assessment. Most children resided in the Edmonton region. The regional differences may be in part due to the coordination of supports that the ASaP staffing model has in place.

**Family Engagement**

Family engagement activities in centres may have included some or many of the following activities: educators accessing resources from their ASaP coach and sharing handouts with families, posting information in a newsletter or bulletin board, inviting families to an evening workshop with a focus on social and emotional development, etc. Recently, an infographic poster was created to support centre leadership teams in communicating with families about what ASaP means to their program and to their child’s social and emotional development (see appendix 2).

Effective fall 2017, all participating centres will have access to a family engagement workshop series with corresponding resources. Information from the family series can be shared informally (e.g. handouts) or formally (face to face workshops) with families. An overview of family workshops includes five topic areas:

1. Building the Foundation: Positive Relationships
2. Supporting Your Child Through Predictable Environments: Schedules, Transitions and Clear Expectations
3. Giving Children the Words: Emotional Literacy

4. Positive Interactions and the Power of Problem Solving
5. Supporting Children through Challenging Behavior

Going forward, as centres develop through the implementation phases, the need for a systematic process of how leadership teams could actively support family engagement will be the focus of community based research, with pilot sites receiving the full parent engagement series.

## Research Projects (2016 – 2017)

We are extremely enthusiastic about our continued partnership with the University of Alberta as we capture how centres are changing the culture of how they work and reflect on their professional practices. During the granting cycle of 2015-17, two research projects were conducted.

### Research Study One: What is the experience of educators who are being coached?

Seven educators ranging in age from 39-55 years engaged in an interview process regarding their experience being coached in the ASaP Continuum project. The seven educators were all female and employed in either urban and rural centres across Alberta. The educators' early childhood experience ranged from 4-30 years and their participation within the ASaP project ranged from 1-4 years. Educators were sampled using convenience sampling, in which all educators participating within the ASaP project received notice of the study and all interested educators were selected to participate. Semi-structured interviews were used to capture educators' experiences within the ASaP project.

From these interviews three common themes emerged and are explored in more detail in Appendix 3.

1) **Change takes time** – Educators within the ASaP project frequently recognized that changing their practice in the early learning and care environment takes time. Whether it be getting comfortable with being observed, adopting new tools and using them as their own, or building relationships, educators found that change was not immediate, but gradual.

2) **Recognition as a child care professional**- Educators within the ASaP project felt coaching provided them with the tools, resources, and knowledge to assist fellow coworkers and parents, to solve child behavioral concerns and to promote social and emotional skills in ways that are developmentally and culturally appropriate. Furthermore, educators felt a shift in not only how they perceived their own professional identity, but how others perceived it, as well.

**3) Children benefit-** An overwhelming number of educators agree that children benefit from the coaching educators receive within the ASaP project. Educators attribute strengthened relationships with children, a deeper understanding of children, and more patience with children to the coaching they received through the ASaP continuum project.

Overall, educators report the ASaP continuum project to be a process of growth and learning that occurs over time. Additionally, educators acknowledge the role the ASaP project has played in the shifting of their professional identity as childcare professionals. Lastly, educators recognize the impact ASaP coaching has on enhancing the lives of the children in their care.

### **Research Study Two: Bolstering Wellbeing Among Early Learning and Care Educators across Alberta**

Today's teachers, including Early Learning and Care (ELC) educators, face ever-increasing stress that easily leads to burnout and turnover (Billingsley, 2004). In particular, working with children who have challenging behaviours, especially those with poor regulation of emotions, has become a major stressor for educators and may impact their own well-being leading to increases in mental health problems (Roberts, LoCasale-Crouch, Hamre, DeCoster, 2016), high rate of turnover (Wells, 2015), and unhealthy relationships (Hamre, Halfield, Pianta, Jamil, 2014).

In the present study, we reviewed the small base of research literature in this area and selected burnout and positive/negative affect as the outcome variables to examine educators' emotional wellbeing. We wanted to explore whether educator's beliefs and endorsement of teaching children about emotions was associated with the Educators' own wellbeing. We hypothesized that if Educators felt that teaching children about emotions was important, their own wellbeing would be positively impacted. That is, they would have greater understanding about how emotion regulation contributes to wellbeing, healthy development, and supports children who have challenging behaviours. In addition, we wondered if teaching efficacy, or confidence in their ability to support children's development, was related to teacher wellbeing. Further, we were interested in exploring whether participation in the ASaP Continuum Project bolstered ELC Educators beliefs about the importance of teaching children about emotions, was related to teacher's sense of efficacy, and their overall sense of wellbeing. Thus, the current study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What is the current state of ELC educators' personal emotional wellbeing (i.e., positive and negative affect, and work burnout) and perceived social and emotional competence (i.e., self-efficacy, collective efficacy, and emotional beliefs)?
2. Are there differences between educators based on country of origin or level of education?
3. What, if anything, predicts and emotional wellbeing?

4. Are there group differences between ASaP and non-ASaP participants regarding the predictors of emotional wellbeing?

### *Method*

Four research validated self-report measures were used to survey the ELC Educators across Alberta. A web-based platform (i.e., REDCap, its server that host the survey is located in Canada) was used so that Educators around Alberta had access to the survey.

The five measures include:

The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (Watson et al., 1988) was used to examine participants' current negative and positive feelings.

The Teacher Efficacy Scale (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1990) was used to measure educators' efficacy in teaching and general settings. The TES includes two subscales: "teaching efficacy" (five items, such as "The amount a student can learn is primarily related to family background"), and "personal efficacy" (five items, such as "When I really try, I can get through to the most difficult students").

The Collective Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer, Schmitz, & Daytner, 1999) was used to test participants' sense of efficacy towards the climate and co-workers in school settings (such as "I am certain that we can create a positive climate through our shared efforts, even if this causes a tremendous workload for us").

The Caregivers' Beliefs about Feelings (Hyson & Lee, 1996) was used to explore participants' attitudes about teaching children about emotions (i.e., that young children were developmentally ready to learn about emotions, and that emotions knowledge could be taught/modeled).

The Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educational Form (Maslach et al., 1996) was used to assess burnout, as characterized by high level of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and low level of personal accomplishment. (items, such as "I feel like I am at the end of my rope"; "In my work, I deal with emotional problems very calmly").

### **Who participated in the survey?**

From January 2017 to June 2017, 446 ELC educators across Alberta (e.g., Edmonton, Calgary, Red Deer etc.) participated in the survey. Most of the participants (97.5%) were females, the average age was 38.58 (SD=10.98). Among all the participants, 73.3% were working in urban areas. 74.1% of the participants were born in Canada, and 20.9% foreign participants were born in Philippines. Corresponding to the birth place, 78.3% participants speak English as their native language, and Filipino/Tagalog is the most popular foreign language of this study (21.2%). Among foreign participants, 55.5% of them completed the university degree, while 60.3% Canadian participants completed college diploma or certificate as the highest education level. Regarding work background, 72% participants

work in child care, 17.9 work in preschool program, and 10.1 work in family day home. Years of experience ranged from one to 48 years, and an average of 13.16 years. Participants held different levels of certification: child development assistant (14.8%), worker (20.0%) and supervisor (63.1%). 27.5% of the ELC educators who completed the survey (n = 122) had participated or are currently participating in the ASaP Continuum project.

### **Key Findings: What is the current state of Educator wellbeing?**

Descriptive analyses showed that ELC Educators in Alberta were, on average, feeling more positive and less negative day to day than the general population. They reported high levels of teaching efficacy and collective efficacy (i.e., sense of positive climate in the workplace). In addition, most participants tended to agree with the importance of modeling and engaging children in emotion socialization practices.

A series of statistical tests showed that participants who were born in Canada reported higher teaching efficacy than those who were not born in Canada. In addition, Canadian-born participants were more likely to agree that children are developmentally ready or “old enough” to control emotion displays and to talk about causes of emotions.

Furthermore, participants who held supervisor level of certification were more likely to agree that educators should describe and talk about children’s feelings and provide direct adult instruction in the appropriate expression of emotions. Moreover, participants who worked in preschool, rather than daycares or day homes, were more likely to agree that educators should express emotional closeness with children, educators should describe and talk about children’s feelings and provide direct adult instruction in the appropriate expression of emotions.

Interestingly, when exploring belief about the importance of teaching young children about emotions, survey respondents who had participated in the ASaP Continuum Project were more likely to agree that educators should be emotionally close with young children in ELC, that young children are developmentally ready or “old enough” to control emotion displays and to talk about causes of emotions than non-ASaP participants.

Respondents to the survey reported, overall, that they experienced quite low levels of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and lack of personal accomplishment, indicating that very few of them felt ‘burned out.’

### **What predicts Educator wellbeing?**

Path analysis was conducted to examine the relationship among self-efficacy, collective efficacy, emotional belief, affect and burnout. Some interesting findings emerged and are summarized as follows:

- Educators who felt a stronger sense of teaching efficacy reported greater positive feelings, more likely to believe the teaching of emotions was important and reported lower levels of burnout.
- A further group comparison revealed that educators who participated in ASaP held a stronger belief in the importance of teaching emotions, which was associated with lower levels of burnout.

### **Summary and Future Research**

This exploratory study examined the status of wellbeing, potential antecedents of wellbeing, and the role of ASaP on wellbeing among ELC educators. The results suggest that it is crucial to help educators build teaching self-efficacy, collective efficacy and emotional beliefs, which were identified as antecedents of their wellbeing. The findings point to clear benefits of the ASaP Continuum project in bolstering Educator wellbeing in building their teaching efficacy and beliefs about the importance of teaching about emotions in ELC.

Further study is needed to determine (a) whether there is reciprocal relationship between teaching efficacy and wellbeing; (b) the association between work environment, such as working conditions, professional development and wellbeing; (c) what coping strategies are efficient to reduce burnout and increase positive affect.

### **Going Forward and Sustainability**

As the ASaP project continues to scale provincially, the findings presented in this report demonstrate continued data based decision making to apply new learning to support scaling and sustainability.

Going forward, navigation to access the right supports at the right time continues to be an area of high need and further exploration. Much more work needs to be done to better understand the role of developmental screens, and clarity in the role and responsibility of regional Inclusive Child Care supports, other community partners (e.g. multi-disciplinary team members) and all government ministries (i.e., Alberta Education and Alberta Health Services) to collaborate in policy and service delivery to support children and families in the early years.

Two key implementation decisions have been made because of our data analysis on the professional goals sets by site leads. First, as we prepared to support inclusive practices in the \$25.00/ day pilot sites, role clarity with the pedagogical partners implementing the Alberta Early Learning and Care Curriculum Framework (Makwichuk et al, 2014) will be required. Consequently, going forward, ASaP coaches will intentionally target only those universal practices that were most commonly identified as learning goals. In turn, educators would move more quickly to implementing the targeted TPM

practices most needed for the inclusion of all children. Secondly, as ASaP strives to create online refresher modules to support leadership teams, the most frequent goals that were chosen served as a place to focus this significant task.

Furthermore, leadership development including family engagement, inclusive policy, program wide implementation and sustainability, regional partnerships and linking educator's capacity building with child and family outcomes continues to be a significant priority requiring attention.

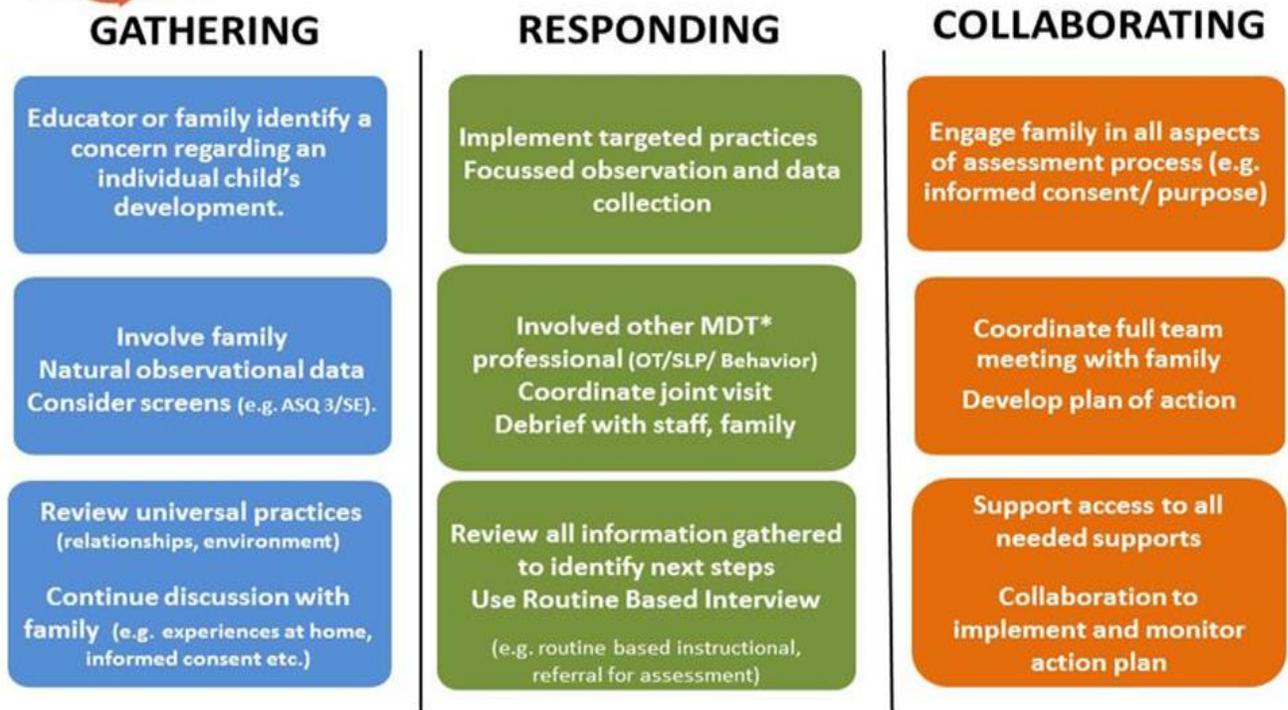
Over the past years of implementing ASaP Continuum Project, much has been accomplished. Through the intentional provision of the five project activities (i.e. provision of quality professional learning, practice-based coaching, monitoring of capacity building, centre leadership development and community based research), ASaP continues to demonstrate substantial movement towards the intended outcomes.

Appendices:

Appendix 1. Navigational Flowchart Process



## Flow Chart for Navigation of Supports



\* MDT - Multidisciplinary Team Member G: ASaP Continuum Project/Navigation/ASaP Navigation Flowchart (Jan. 2017). pptx

## Appendix 2. ASaP infographic for families



## Appendix 4: Interviews of Educator's Experience with Being Coached:

### Theme 1- Change takes time.

Educators within the ASaP project frequently recognized that changing their practice in the early learning and care environment takes time. Whether it be getting comfortable with being observed, adopting new tools and using them as their own, or building relationships, educators found that change was not immediate, but gradual. One educator reflected that, for her, it took time just to get comfortable with having someone observe her at work in her childcare setting. Overtime, a trusting relationship between the coach and educator developed, creating a sense of security and comfort for the educator being observed.

*So, the first time was a little bit awkward having somebody watch you. I think just knowing that somebody is there watching you, you're a little bit more aware of what you're doing and you're aware that somebody is there. ... the more often it happens the more you're just like, "Oh hey, how are you?" and then they [Coach] walk in and it's just like almost like they aren't there anymore until the very end and you're like, "Okay". You kind of develop that relationship where you're like, this is a safe space, you're not actually judging me [laughs], yeah you get used to it.*

Another educator reported that she began to look to the coach as a guide who was committed to co-constructing solutions to issues that educator was facing in the classroom.

*At first it was very nerve wracking. But now it's like I go to [Coach] with, "Okay this week we've been struggling with this. What can we do?" and she's more than willing to try to help us figure things out.*

Year by year, as the relationship between the coach and the educator developed into a trusting collaboration where both partners were committed to achieving the same aims, one educator reflected on how she was able to implement and perfect her use of the TPM practices.

*The first year was very unsettling, I was quite nervous getting my first TPOT [fidelity of implementation measure]. I was, well very jittery because you're being, you feel like you're being tested. So, the first year was more about figuring out the tools that they were offering and maybe having a try. The second year was about starting the year with some of the tools and getting better at using them. The third year was more about just pushing the tools a little farther, the fourth year has been us using our tools effectively. Becoming really good communicators with our parents, and embedding in our planning how we can use these tools all throughout the preschool year instead of just in pockets of time we've come up with a system that has us use them and build on them throughout the year.*

One of the indicators of effective early educational practices is to connect what educators are doing in the child care setting with what families are doing in the home. One educator reported that because of her work with her ASaP Coach, over time she felt more comfortable communicating with families and connecting with them.

*I personally have problems kind of forming those relationships with parents, just I don't know why, it's just the kind of person that I am. So, I still find it personally a little bit tricky, because I'm not one to just go out there and be like, "Hi I'm [name] how are you?" that's not really me. But it's getting better. So. Which is really good. ... I think the confidence with the building of relationships with the parents and that has greatly grown.*

## **Theme 2 - I feel recognized as a childcare professional**

Educators within the ASaP project felt coaching provided them with the tools, resources, and knowledge to assist fellow coworkers and parents, to solve child behavioral concerns and to promote social and emotional skills in ways that are developmentally and culturally appropriate. Furthermore, educators felt a shift in not only how they perceived their own professional identity, but how others perceived it, as well.

By participating in the ASaP project, one educator commented that she felt she had gained such knowledge and skill that she felt like a more empowered educator.

*One, the biggest one for me, is that it has taken my level of not just professionalism but my level of experience to a whole new level. ...other people notice it (e.g. parents, co-workers and my board members) ...It's like I somehow, without sounding arrogant but it's almost like I have this empowerment and I have something so unique. That's a great feeling as an educator.*

By participating in the ASaP project, one educator described gaining confidence in her knowledge and abilities as an experienced child care professional and elevating the perceived value of her profession.

*One of the big things, and I think that maybe it's a little bit of- I want to say a little bit of a chip on my shoulder is that the way that early childhood educators are perceived. A lot of our parents still kind of have that babysitter kind of vibe. I think that that's improved and knowing that, feeling more confident about myself that I do know what I'm talking about. I don't have a degree, I don't have letters after my name but this is what I do and this is what I've been doing for the last however many years and so, I do actually have some value to what I can speak to about so.*

Another educator described the continuous and up-to-date training and coaching provided her a sense of pride in her work as she constantly strived to better herself and her practices.

*It does keep you proud of your work but it actually adds an extra element of professionalism because you, I feel like I am constantly working on this and it just keeps me more current. With everything, and it's exciting.*

One educator described an increase in communication between her and families as a result of participating in the ASaP project and having access to resources and supports that she can share with families.

*The parents I think are more likely to come and talk to somebody that can say, "Here is what I would do, but if that doesn't work let me figure out something else." And so, I can give the suggestions that I would do personally and then say, "Okay, now I'm going to ask the coach and if it's okay with you I will mention this situation and we will figure something out." So, it's made those conversations much easier.*

The ASaP project aims to develop sustainability through the leadership and engaging in peer-mentoring practices. One educator described the extent to which participating in the ASaP project has increased her confidence in her abilities and elevated her position among her coworkers to an individual they can turn to for support when they are confronted with a challenge.

*... it's(ASaP) done huge for me because the staff come to me with what they need, which they were doing on occasion before but now it's steady. It's really increased my confidence when it comes to that because if I don't have the answers I will find them for them. So, it's given me that.*

### **Theme 3 - Children Benefit**

An overwhelming number of educators agree that children benefit from the coaching educators receive within the ASaP project. Educators attribute strengthened relationships with children, a deeper understanding of children, and more patience with children to the coaching they received through the ASaP continuum project. One educator referred to learning new strategies that have reduced problematic behavior within her room, to the extent where other staff in the centre are taking note.

*You know when you've got the more challenging behaviors, a person automatically – "okay you were told no so why is this continuing?" but it's building the different strategies to build towards success that has been very beneficial and its just calmed things. The new staff coming in to my former room, they've just been amazed with the effects.*

One educator described how participating in the ASaP project changed the way in which she understood children's behavior and how this new understanding assisted her in supporting the development of children in her care.

*At the beginning of the school year when it was time for snack he would lay down on the ground and he would scream because he actually didn't know what to do. I think that this process*

*[coaching] has made me realize that when a child does that they are not, they are looking for help. They are not being defiant. Yeah, and so breaking down the snack process into steps in a visual because he's a reader, this little guy was a reader, made him feel like he was more in control. He could look, he could go wash his hands, he could come back to the visual, he knew to go to his cubby and we could just point and then it stopped us from always talking. We could point to the visual and then we could congratulate him when he had done each of those steps.*

The ASaP continuum project seeks to support educators for the development and inclusion of *all* children. One particular educator described how coaching prepared her for the inclusion of a well-known challenging child and assisted her in establishing a safe and trusting relationship with the child, subsequently decreasing the child's aggressive behavior.

*He was very aggressive and I can tell you last year maybe it wasn't any day that we didn't have any by incident report- maybe two or three, every day. We were very lucky if we had just one and he wasn't in my room but when he moved to my room we already work on this program so we just have him and hopefully no biting accident report and it's almost one year he is in our room, no accident report. For biting. Yeah. It's really helpful because the very first one I started to create some communication and relationship with him. Very gradually step by step but it worked very well and he knows me because I listen to his words, I'm patient for his behavior, and he trusts me because when I promise him something for sure I do not forget it. And I would do that. I think creating relationship with children is a very, very very important step and it's really helpful and I think that's a base for creating trust to each other.*

One educator credited participation in the ASaP project for strengthening the relationships she had with the children in her care. The educator described slowing down and taking external information into account when trying to understand a child as a whole.

*I think the building of relationships has improved greatly with the kids. Yeah, I think that it's making me realize that I need to know more about them. So, like we have a little guy who comes in and he is here only in the afternoons and he kind of just wanders about kind of from place to place and thing to thing. I was trying to figure out what we can do to kind of get him to be involved in something and then one of the other staff members actually asked him, and realizing that he actually doesn't know how to just have those kind of free playing experiences because that's not something that he's done before. So really kind of slowing down and trying to get to know the kids and get to know kind of what else is happening in their lives so that we can help them out better in here because he was just waiting for us to tell him what he needed to do*

The ASaP continuum project strives to support educators understanding that healthy social and emotional development starts with providing a nurturing environment. One educator described how participation in the project assisted her in creating a safe and understanding space for children to feel their emotions.

*I think you're a lot more understanding of how they are feeling, you're not really making excuses like, "Oh they are just mad because whatever they didn't get their way" or "Why are they feeling mad?" and you ask a lot more questions rather than just being like, "Ugh," or if they are feeling sad like you know to- from their feelings that that's really helped them just know that you are actually there for them, they can feel that way and it's going to be okay and yeah.*

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