



The Centre Mentor Program

Prince Edward Island Team Prototype
Atlantic Canada ECE Lab Round 1



The Atlantic Canada Early Childhood Education Lab was funded by the Government of Canada's Future Skills Program through the Future Skills Centre.

Delivered by The Pond Deshpande Centre at the University of New Brunswick in partnership with All In Research & Innovation, Inc.





Introduction

The PEI team developed a mentorship program concept that creates a new embedded mentor-educator role within centres. The concept wove together whole-centre mentorship training, a new job description and pay grade increase for mentor-educators, and a new area of professional development around mentorship available to the entire sector, including a peer support network for mentor-educators.

To test this concept, the prototype includes:

- A half-day leadership training for an entire centre team
- Peer nomination and selection of 2-3 mentors
- A centre-mentor job description
- Two community of practice meet-ups for centre-mentors led by leadership coaches

A recruitment poster for the Centre Mentor peer nominations program. The poster features the ECE LAB logo at the top left, which includes the text 'Early Childhood Education Lab'. The main text asks if a fellow educator has supported or encouraged them in their work and what potential impact of mentorship and peer support they see at their centre. It encourages them to help imagine a mentorship program for their centre. The poster includes a list of questions to reflect on, a call to action to send ideas and nominations by November 4th, and a link to a Google Form: <https://forms.gle/fiwpMEzgGwqqVntz7>. It also provides an email address for questions: amanda@noulab.org.

Image: Recruitment poster for Centre Mentor peer nominations



When to use this prototype

Use this prototype pack if you want to:

- Support ECEs at a centre to more confidently engage with pedagogical leadership, especially in:
 - Actively seeking feedback on ECE practice from trusted peer mentors
 - Confidently providing feedback and modeling to peers
- Share the responsibility of pedagogical leadership more broadly across an ECE team
- Open new career path options within centres for highly-skilled ECEs

How To Prototype a Centre Mentor Program

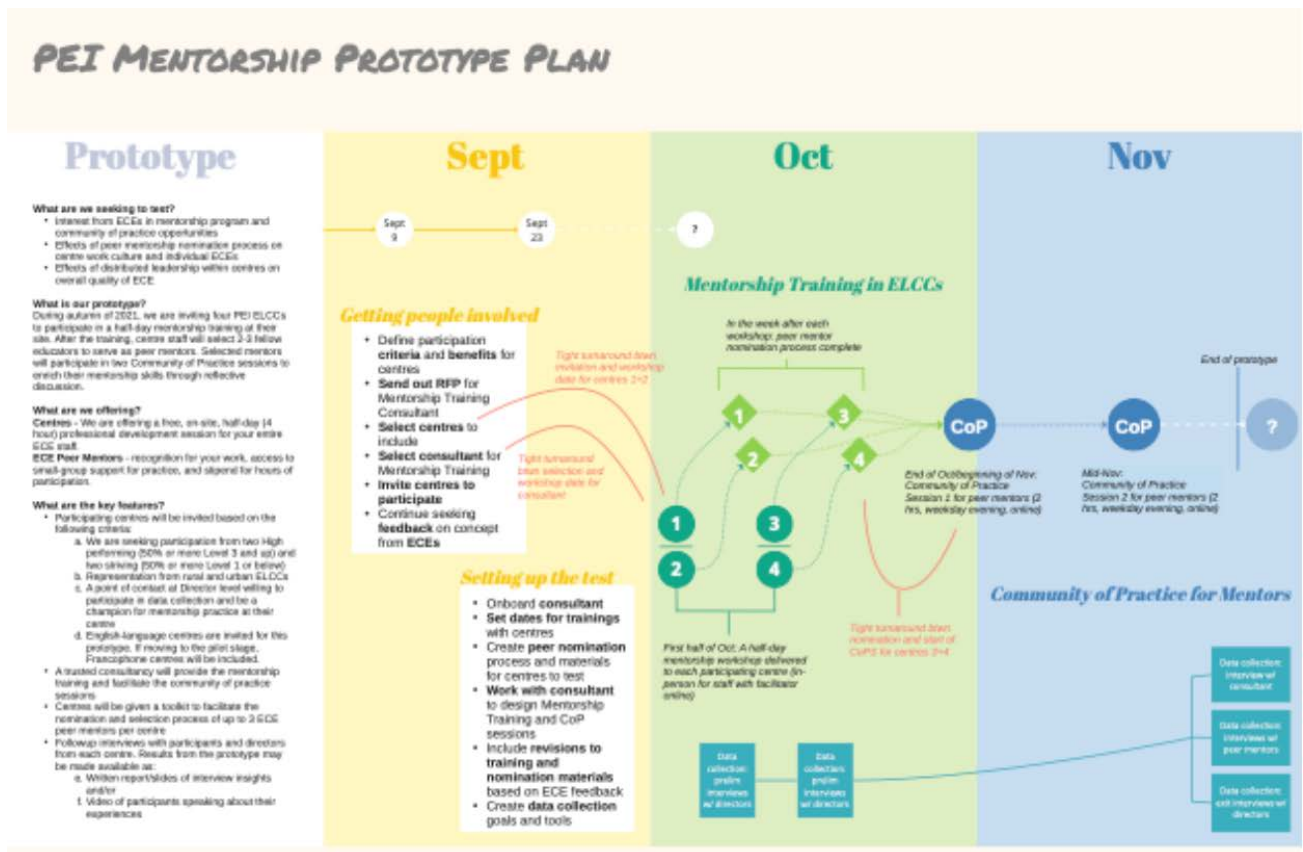


Image: the steps to create the Centre Mentor prototype and guidance for how they fit together



Step 0 **Read the Short Report about this prototype in the ECE Lab**

[Read the Short Report ↗](#)

Step 1 **Recruit and onboard centres to participate in the prototype**

- Example of Welcome letter to centres participating in the prototype

[Example of Welcome letter to centres participating in the prototype ↗](#)

- Conduct pre-prototype interviews with early learning center team

Step 2 **Organize an All-Staff Leadership Training Session**

- Consider the leadership frameworks that are most compatible with your centre's pedagogical philosophy and curricular frameworks
 - Reach out to local professional association(s) and provincial or district Early Childhood Education consultants for support to select frameworks and training
- Hire a Leadership Training consultant
 - Select a consultant who specializes in or has experience facilitating ECE leadership or mentorship training
 - Contract the consultant for a full staff training and two Community of Practice follow-up sessions with the peer mentors

[Example of a RFP for ECE Mentorship consulting ↗](#)

- Convene the training so that all ECE staff can participate

Step 3 **ECEs select their peers to be Centre Mentors**

- After the Leadership training, invite ECE staff to nominate and elect 2-3 peer mentors from within the team
- Use a confidential nomination process, for example:

[Centre Mentor Nomination Form PDF ↗](#)

- Enable nominated educators to accept or bow out of the nomination
- Use a confidential election process to determine the peer mentors for the centre



Step 4 Empower the Centre Mentors to take up peer mentorship activities during their regular work day

- Announce the results of the selection process at an all-staff meeting
- Encourage the team to ask for feedback from the peer mentors
- Discuss with the mentors how much time each day they are available to engage in peer mentorship activities
 - Scope of these activities might include modeling, giving feedback on practice, and supporting pedagogical reflection
 - Communicate the peer mentor availability and scope of activities to the team so everyone's expectations of what the mentor can and can't offer is clear

Step 5 Support Peer Mentors to participate in two Community of Practice sessions

- Provide paid hours and schedule flexibility for centre mentors to participate in the sessions
- Encourage peer mentors to continue meeting regularly to offer each other support and continue mentorship learning together

Step 6 Conduct post-prototype interviews with early learning center teams, leaders and centre mentors

- Provide paid hours and schedule flexibility for centre mentors to participate in the sessions
- Encourage peer mentors to continue meeting regularly to offer each other support and continue mentorship learning together

Step 7 Compare results and reflect on next steps

- An example of a job description that could be implemented at your centre for centre mentors who excel in this role:

[Centre Mentor full time job description ↗](#)



Pre and Post Interview Question Samples

Pre-interview questions for ECEs:

1. To start, tell me about your previous experience with mentorship.
 - Have you been mentored before?
 - Have you ever mentored anyone?
2. What impact do you hope the upcoming mentorship training and ongoing peer mentorship might have on your centre?
3. How do you think mentorship might help you at this time in your career? What sorts of things could mentorship support help you with?
4. What is your current certification level? (If less than University) Have you considered going back to school to gain further certification? What kinds of support would you need to do that?
5. Do you see value in getting a higher certification level, and if so what might that be?
6. Tell me about your career aspirations. Where do you see yourself headed, or what kinds of career development would you like to achieve? Do you see yourself staying in Early Childhood Education as your career?
7. Do you have any questions about the Community of Practice sessions that will follow the training? Are you interested in being a peer mentor at your centre? Why/Why not?

Pre-interview questions for Leaders:

1. To start, tell me about your previous experience with mentorship.
 - Do you have any mentorship training or program currently active at your centre?
 - In a few words, how would you describe your own mentorship style?
2. From a staffing perspective, what are the top challenges your centre is facing at this time?
3. What do you think is preventing your Level 1s and 2s from getting their higher credentials?
4. What do you see as the value for them to get those higher certification levels?
5. What impact do you hope the upcoming mentorship training and ongoing peer mentorship might have for your staff? For the quality of care and learning you provide to children?
6. Lastly, have you been mentored? What impact did it have on your professional development?



Post-interview questions for ECEs:

1. To start, tell me about your impression of the half day Mentorship training with your team.
 - What has stuck with you since then?
 - What did you think was missing?
2. What impact, if any, do you think the mentorship training has had on your centre?
3. How did the training impact you personally?
4. What have you seen happening as a result of the mentorship community of practice sessions?
 - a) (if participated) How has that impacted your practice?
 - b) (if participated) How has that impacted the work environment at your centre?
5. Over the last couple of months, have you noticed a change in your own attitude toward your work, or toward your career aspirations in ECE?
 - a) (If change is noticed) How does that affect your interest in pursuing further training in ECE?
6. What were you hoping would happen as a result of this mentorship training that didn't?
7. Would you recommend the training session to other centres?
 - a) Would you recommend the program of nominating educators and having them participate in a mentorship community of practice?
8. Knowing what you know now about the training and the community of practice, If there were a cost involved, would you do it again?

Post-interview questions for Leaders:

1. To start, tell me about your impression of the half day Mentorship training for your team.
 - What has stuck with you since then?
 - What did you think was missing?
2. What impact, if any, do you think that half day mentorship training has had on your centre?
 - a) What do you think might be the impact of this training on the staffing challenges we discussed last time?
3. What have you seen happening as a result of the 2 mentorship community of practice sessions?
 - a) Are there challenges coming up from the training, or this ongoing practice?
 - b) How are you supporting mentorship activity in your centre now?
4. Over the last couple of months, have you noticed a change in your staff's attitude toward work, or toward their career aspirations in ECE?
5. What were you hoping would happen as a result of this mentorship training that didn't?
6. Would you recommend the training session to other centres?
 - a) Would you recommend the program of nominating educators and having them participate in a mentorship community of practice?
7. Knowing what you know now about the training and the community of practice, If there were a cost involved, would you do it again?