



Early
Childhood
Education Lab

Leadership Learning Buddies

Prince Edward Island Team Prototype
Atlantic Canada ECE Lab Round 2



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.



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Introduction

The PEI Lab Team developed an idea of a leadership learning “buddy system” where pairs of ELCC Directors participate in a leadership self-evaluation process together as a way of sharing learning and help each other keep accountable to the process. The buddies self-organized regular one-on-one check-ins and participated in group coaching sessions over the course of six months.

The team wondered if it would be more helpful for pairs to select each other or if it was better to be matched with someone, and decided to structure the prototype to test this question, with half of the pairs matched by through the prototype and the other half of pairs self-organized. We also wanted to bring in a cultural pedagogy lens as a way of addressing learning needs expressed by directors around bridging ECE pedagogy with leaders’ roles in guiding and supporting cultural identity construction and learning, for staff, children and families. The coaching sessions included discussions around leadership learning goals and prompts to reflect on cultural pedagogical leadership at their centres.

The flyer is divided into two main sections: a teal left side and a yellow right side. The teal section contains the main invitation text, a photo of a woman in a yellow shirt, and details about the program's duration and flexibility. The yellow section lists the topics to be discussed and the benefits of participating.

Are you an ECE Director in PEI?

You're invited to participate in the Leadership Learning Buddy Prototype

Join this **FREE** prototype opportunity to test a new leadership and management skill-building approach for PEI's ECE sector.

May - Sep 2023

- Schedule is flexible
- Coaching sessions are either in-person at a convenient location or online
- Time commitment is approx. 18-20 hours total, including interviews, coaching and peer learning sessions

Topics of leadership growth and knowledge that will be discussed in the sessions can include:

- Collaborative leadership tools
- Building trusting relationships with staff
- Delegating responsibility
- Managing operations effectively
- Leadership structures and role clarity
- Time management
- Healthy, up-to-date HR practices
- Dealing with stress
- Supporting staff mental health
- Making decisions about what work to prioritize when you can't do everything

What will you receive from participating?

- a personal learning plan for leadership growth
- a knowledgeable coach and peer group to support your learning goals
- new insights into challenges you are currently dealing with in your centre
- an opportunity to share your skills and knowledge to support other directors

Image: the recruitment flyer for leaders to join the prototype

[Brochure PEI Prototype for Participants_digital ↗](#)



When to use this prototype

Use this prototype pack if you want to:

- Create a confidence-building experience for directors to enable greater shared leadership with their teams through
 - sharing leadership responsibility with staff in new ways,
 - soliciting and hearing feedback on leadership or management of the centre from their staff,
- Create or deepen a supportive and trusting relationship with another leader in the PEI ECE sector
- Inspire leaders to take up learning opportunities or resources based on their personal leadership goals

How To Prototype a Leadership Learning Buddy Program

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

[Read the Short Report ↗](#)

Step 1 Select a Leadership Approach and Coach

- Consider leadership frameworks that are compatible with curricular frameworks and ECE pedagogy
- Reach out to local professional association(s) and provincial or district Early Childhood Education consultants for support to select leadership frameworks and gather recommendations for coaches
- Select a coach who specializes in or has experience facilitating ECE leadership or mentorship training, and brings the following:
 - a wealth of knowledge in ECE
 - facilitation skills for establishing positive buddy relationships
 - guided inquiry for deeper reflection
 - resources tailored to the participants' learning goals
 - availability and responsiveness to participant needs, especially in balancing work obligations with participation



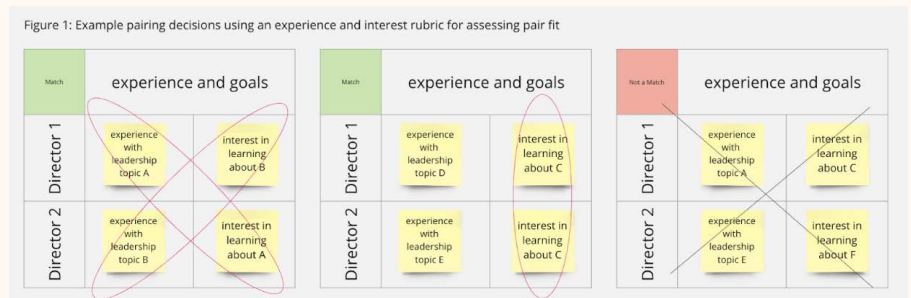
Step 2

Recruit ECE Leaders and match them into pairs

- Advertise the opportunity on social media and through professional associations to reach out to leaders who may be interested in self-directed leadership learning

2023_PEI Leadership Learning Test Recruitment ↗

- Conduct pre-interviews of Leaders to identify their leadership experience and learning interests, and to set baselines for prototype findings
- Use information about leadership experience and learning goals to match buddy pairs



- The most important elements for productive buddy dialogue are to have a mix of **complementary** leadership learning goals and **experiences**.
- Buddies who pair from **different organizations** (rather than the same corporate group or centre) may benefit from fresh perspectives, even between centres with very different profiles and between Directors with different roles.

Step 3

Convene Leadership Coaching sessions (2:1)

- Kick off the coaching sessions with a Leadership Inventory or other in-depth leadership self evaluation to help participants identify leadership learning goals
- Leader pairs share their learning goals and the aspects of their goals they wish for support from their buddy to attain

Step 4

Leadership Buddies meet regularly

- Leader pairs share progress and frictions on their learning goals
- Leaders share experiences and offer self reflection as peer learning support for their buddy (“In a similar situation I have tried...” rather than “You should...”)



Step 5 **Conduct post-interviews**

- Interview buddy participants individually
- Interview leadership coach

Step 6 **Compare results and reflect on next steps**

For an example of learning reflection from the leadership coach's perspective, read this reflection from the PEI prototype's leadership coach, Kim Gillis.

[Leadership coach reflection PEI ECE Lab ↗](#)

Pre and Post Interview Question Samples

Pre-interview questions for Leaders:

1. To start, tell me briefly about your centre, your background and training in ECE. What is your current certification level?
2. Tell me about your learning goals for yourself as a Director. Where would you like to grow your leadership practice?
3. How often do you involve staff in decisions about how to run the centre? What does their involvement typically look like?
4. How often do you involve staff in decisions about curriculum or learning programs in the centre? What does that involvement typically look like?
5. How do you currently manage conflict or difficult decisions at your centre?
6. How often do you have the opportunity to engage in self reflection on your leadership practice?
7. How do you currently gather feedback about your leadership practice? Who is the feedback coming from? Do you ask your staff for feedback?
8. Who do you go to currently for help or advice when you have a leadership or management question or challenge?
9. How do you think the coaching and peer support you're going to receive might help you at this time in your career?
10. What aspects of leadership or management do you feel that you need the most support with?
11. Do you have any questions about how the prototype will work, or what this experience will include or not include?
12. What impact do you hope the connection to your learning buddy will have on your learning? What about on your work as a Director?



Post-interview questions for Leaders:

1. To start, tell me about your experience of the prototype.
 - What has stuck with you since then?
 - What did you think was missing?
2. How did the self evaluation go? Do you see an impact of that on your leadership practice? What could have made that more useful?
3. What have you seen happening as a result of the connection to your learning buddy?
 - a) What about that connection is useful or supportive?
 - b) What might make that connection more useful for your leadership practice development?
4. What did you learn? Did you learn what you hoped you would?
5. Over the prototype experience, have you noticed a change in your own attitude toward your work, or toward your role in your centre?
 - a) How often are you reflecting on your leadership practice?
 - b) How often are you reaching out to your buddy to talk about leadership?
6. As a result of this experience:
 - a) Have you implemented any new feedback practices, for yourself or with staff?
 - b) Have you planned or implemented any changes to the way you share leadership responsibility at your centre?
 - c) Have you planned or implemented any changes to the way you make decisions at your centre?
7. What were you hoping would happen as a result of this experience that did happen?
8. Knowing what you know now about the prototype, would you do it again?
 - a) If there were a cost involved, would you do it again?
9. What would you like to see happen with this prototype?



Reflection Questions for the Leadership Coach:

1. To start, tell me what happened in the coaching sessions.
 - What has stuck with you since then?
 - What did you think was missing?
2. What impact, if any, do you think the coaching has had on participants' leadership practice?
3. How did the self evaluation work, and what was the participation like?
4. Do you see an impact of that on people's self-conceptions as leaders?
5. How did the learning buddy connections work?
6. What have you seen happening as a result of the learning buddy connections?
7. How did you prepare to take on this role?
8. What did your activities as coach look like?
9. Over the last couple of months, have you noticed a change in your own attitude toward your work?
10. What were you hoping would happen as a result of this experience that didn't happen?
11. Knowing what you know now, would you do it again?
12. Do you think the directors would do it again?