Grand River Healthy Communities Education Forum Summary Report

March 21, 2018

The Goal

The group came together to discuss how to better develop and support a community culture of learning.

Creating a community culture of learning.

The Current Landscape

In order to better understand the current landscape of education and learning in Brantford, Brant, and Six Nations, the group received presentations about the following topics:

- EarlyON Child and Family Centres - Jennifer Kirkham
- Best Start Indigenous Advisory Committee - Sherry Lickers
- Best Start Network - Flora Ennis
- Graduate Brantford - Alexandra Graham
- Bundled Arrows - Taina Lickers Smith
- Education Works - Tamara Kaattari
- Wilfrid Laurier University (Age Friendly Learning) - Michael Ackerman

Based on the presentations and a subsequent tour by individuals, the following current initiatives and projects were identified.
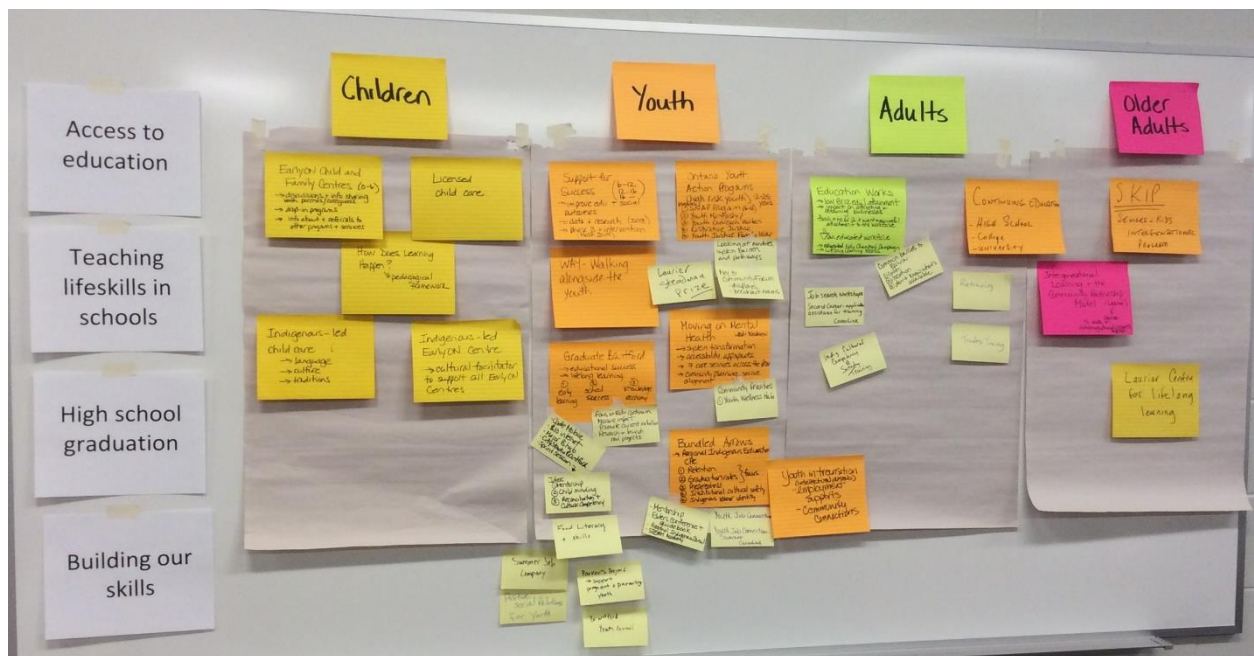
See the table below for details in each of the age categories.

Children	• EarlyON Child and Family Centres (0 to 6 years)
	  ○ Discussions and information sharing with parents/caregivers
	  ○ Drop-in programs
	  ○ Information about and referrals to other programs and services
	• Licensed child care
	• Indigenous-led child care centre
	  ○ Language
	  ○ Culture
	  ○ Traditions
	• Indigenous-led EarlyON Child and Family Centre
	  ○ Cultural Facilitator to support all EarlyON Centres
	• *How Does Learning Happen?* as the pedagogical framework

Youth	• Support for Success
	  ○ Improve education and social outcomes
	  ○ Data and research (2018)
	  ○ Phase 3: intervention (2019)
	• Ontario Youth Action Programs (high risk youth, 12 to 25 years)
	  ○ SNAP Program (6-12)
	  ○ Youth Mentorship
	  ○ Youth Outreach Workers
	  ○ Restorative Justice
	  ○ Youth Justice Family Worker
	  ○ Looking at mandates, system barriers, and pathways
	  ○ May 31 Community Forum (displays and breakout rooms)
	• Moving on Mental Health
	  ○ System transformation
	  ○ 7 core services across the province
	  ○ Community planning, service alignment
	  ○ Community priorities: Youth wellness hub
	• Youth Job Connections
	• Youth in transition (intellectual disabilities)
	• Food Literacy and Skills
	• Summer Job Company
	• Brantford Youth Council
	• WAY (Walking alongside the youth)
		• Laurier Steadman prize
		• Graduate Brantford
		  ○ Educational success and lifelong learning
		  ○ Three areas of focus: early learning, school success, knowledge economy
		  ○ Focus on education continuum, measure impact, promote current initiatives, research and launch new initiatives
		  ○ Projects: Code Mobile, $10 internet, Major B hub, CityStudio Brantford, Sprint Session (ideas: mentorship, child minding, Reconciliation and Cultural Competency)
		• Bundled Arrows
		  ○ Regional Indigenous Education Committee
		  ○ Focus on preparedness, retention, institutional cultural safety, Indigenous learner identity
		  ○ STEAM Academy, mentorship, Elder conference/guide book, Regional Indigenous Council
		• Parker's Project
		  ○ Support pregnant and parenting youth

Adults	• Education Works
	    ○ Low grade 12 educational attainment
	    ○ Impact on attracting and retaining businesses
	    ○ Focus: no grade 12 and want meaningful attachment to the workforce
	    ○ Result: an educated workforce
	    ○ Education Champions Campaign
	    ○ Lifelong Learning Weeks
	    ○ Common barriers to learning as EarlyON: cost, location, people don't know what's available
	• Job search workshops
	• Indigenous cultural competency and safety training
	• Retraining
	• Trades training
	• Continuing education (high school, college, university)

Older Adults	• Intergenerational Learning and Community Partnership Model (Laurier) ○ Course to work on autobiographical projects together • SKIP (services and kids intergenerational program) • Laurier Centre for Lifelong Learning

Reflections

After the presentations, individuals toured the visual depictions and then returned to their small groups to reflect on the following questions:

1. What are you seeing in the map of priorities and projects?
2. How are the current initiatives helping us to develop and support a community culture of learning?
3. How are initiatives supporting each other? How are the initiatives linking across the lifespan continuum? Where are the intersections/connectedness?
4. Where are the gaps? What do we need to do to create a full spectrum of education and learning?

Reflections from the small groups included:
• Do we need an overarching broad vision for the whole education branch? (next step?)
• More bridges between services and between groups
• More conversations
• How to engage and build trust in the community
• Programs needed for people with disabilities

- Traditional education models not always suitable, many instructors not capable of working with students with special needs (e.g. dyslexic)
- Recognition that people have different learning styles
- Technology may not work for everyone; trouble keeping up with how fast it changes
- Technology can also be used to support disabilities (e.g. computers for dyslexic). But not everyone is aware or has access
- Education shouldn't be seen only as a road to employment
- The biggest piece missing for me this morning is not acknowledging our relationship with the natural world and how human choices and activities are respecting and working in collaboration with the "EARTH". Because this underlying awareness and value is not discussed/thought of (people aren't there yet) it's challenging for me to have this conversation without this perspective (land acknowledgements are not enough)
- Big focus on youth – less traditional definition of youth – older than we traditionally have considered youth to be
- Mentorship – strengthening
- Many groups are planning strategically – should work together
- Should be sharing data and info
- More joint planning
- Need a more systemic approach (immigrants/seniors/poverty/child care)
- Short term and long term outcomes – outcomes defined with realistic outcomes but with enough time to change the culture
- Common challenges (e.g. need for education opportunities in local neighbourhoods)
- Many different initiatives – pots of funding – projects
- School boards are suspiciously absent from the conversations, outside of adult and continuing education
- Mental health for adults
- Mental health – barrier to education, stability is really important, "disruptive", "are we a hospital or school", "mental health resulting in graduation rates", what programs mitigate that?
- People tend to rely on individual schools to tackle those challenges
- Family barriers to provide support to their children (mental health)
- What supports exist in the early, middle and transitional years?
- We don't do assessments of children until grade 3 (ensuring supports are provided sooner)
- If your child is struggling at a young age then it may impact later
- Too much emphasis on certain tools but there are other tools for addressing needs sooner
- Is it parent education/empowerment? (equal responsibility of all – SHARED)
- How do we equip one another – how to support, equip, find that balance
- Parents are the experts – they're living it (facilitating supports, youth and staff, value of working together, mentorship)
- Parkers project – junior staff having been previous clients
- Developmental needs
- Education can sometimes create mental health issues

- Trauma of education system, "shame", no grades (Russia example)
- Education is you and I having a conversation
- Too much emphasis on "institutional education"
- How to change way learning happens
- Create opportunities for those who don't fit into the "school" learning box
- Not fitting people into a box
- No limits
- Support needs to happen now (too many degrees of separation, too many barriers – funding, systems, levels)
- The more we know the more we can collaborate and support each other
- Working together
- Parents worry about their children, affects their mental health, education, work, which affects their children as well (cycle)
- Service collaboration – involving client and learner
- People can't focus on school/learning/jobs when people are in difficult situations (housing, food)
- Developmental assets? (doesn't have to be just for youth, can be for everyone)
- Trust – relationship – families can identify their needs (challenge is funding)

Actions
Proposed actions from the small groups include:

- Keep moving to where people are
- Communication plan
- Deep – full engagement – how to listen and give voice
- Those who need programs the most are often not aware of what's available
- Systemic approach to education
- Situation table for education
- Collective impact approach

Next Steps
Participants at the session agreed that "creating a community culture of learning" is a good, overall direction for the group. There will be a second session held in late May/early June to explore what a collaborative approach can look like.