

Theory-to-Practice Impact Report Summary of Feedback

This report summarizes the year two data collected from early childhood educators (ECEs) throughout Alberta from April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024.

Theory-to-Practice Feedback from Early Childhood Educators

Final evaluation results from 843 Theory-to-Practice participants are summarized below. Testimonials show the impact on participation in the Theory-to-Practice sessions when early childhood educators were asked what they learned.

97% of early childhood educators reported a better understanding of their role in brain development in the early years.

“It helps a lot to have a better understanding of brain development and its consequences for lifelong health.”

“I was reminded of the important role ECEs can play in ensuring children have access to basic needs such as healthy food, adequate rest/sleep, and clean drinking water that they may not be able to access at home.”

“Child care providers play a critical role in a child’s brain development. Stress affects the child’s development that is why support network is very important.”

“I learned that early childhood educators have an important role in brain development of a child because the 3-5 years age is the time to make more positive connections in brain and negative experience can break those connections. At this age we can help them to make strong foundation for their entire life by being a caring ECE.”

99% of early childhood educators reported having increased confidence in applying the brain science theory to their daily practice with children and families.

“Overall, I found all the sessions very informative to support children's brain, development, and behaviours. The most important one was the stress and ways to cope which was totally new concept and learning for me as an educator. Also, the executive function session helped me a lot in proceeding towards my field of being an educator.”

“Learnt a lot of new ideas and thought about the kids and different ways to tackle problems of a child either physically or mentally. All the Educators and the facilitator were so kind and knowledgeable as they have share theirs views and listen to ours as well.”

“The Brain Story, Theory-to-Practice gives an increased knowledge and skill on how brain develops by Serve and Return interactions a solid brain foundation by various back and forth communication. Encouraging self directive play strategy to fuel development. Building Executive Functioning and Self Regulation Capacities, Using the Science of Early Brain Development to build Resilient children, families, and communities.”

97% of early childhood educators reported making some connections between the Brain Story Certification course and other early learning and child care ideas such as *Flight: Alberta’s Early Learning and Care Framework* and inclusive child care.

“Personally, I enjoyed learning how the brain architecture is connected and linked to Flight: Alberta’s Early Learning and Care Framework. It was fascinating.”

“It was wonderful the number of connections the facilitator was able to make back to Flight. I enjoy and use Flight but have a heightened awareness of how important it is and have more drive to expand on my practice.”

“One important takeaway from the series is the profound impact that early experiences and relationships have on children’s development and well-being. Through the exploration of concepts such as brain science, resilience, relationships, and inclusive practices, I learned how early childhood educators play a critical role in shaping children’s cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development during the formative years.”

99% of early childhood educators would recommend the Theory-to-Practice sessions to other early childhood educators.

“I think everyone that deals with children should take this course! including parents.”

“This training was very impactful for me, and it was an eye opener. I will recommend it to everyone in my field.”

“This series is the best! This is highly recommended! I wish all educators will see this!”

“I recommend this course because it helps us to know in more detail how family environments, backgrounds and behaviors can help or affect our mental development in childhood and adolescence.”

General Feedback

When asked about the Theory-to-Practice Sessions, early childhood educators offered comments such as:

“As a new member of the Early Childhood Community this workshop helped me a lot in understanding brain development, what should and should not do to help young minds grow in a way that both adult and kids can benefit from it.”

“I enjoyed and so much learning to apply to my day home and daily living. I hope we will more study grant like this to give ECEs some more knowledge and it helps us in our growth and development.”

“I enjoyed taking the Theory-to-Practice Series it made me understand how important my role as a childcare worker in the life of little children in my care, now I know that I can make a big difference in a life of a child through play. I feel more confidence applying brain science theory to my daily practice. Thank you AECEA for giving me this enjoyable experience learning about Brain Story, it’s a life changing course.”

“I enjoyed every bit of the series; it was very educative and impactful. I learnt so many ways to interact with children as an educator, understanding the level of growth their brains can take, how to communicate with them. I wish they could be many more series to look upon.”

“I am so fortunate to have attended both the Brain Story and Theory to Practice Series. It gave me a deeper understanding of how important our role is. That we can make and unmake a child. It helped me realize that we have to be more sensitive and be cautious of our everyday actions towards the children. Further it gave us more knowledge to cope with stress that we may encounter in our workplace.”

“I am incredibly grateful for the brain story theory-to-practice session, as it was a truly enriching experience that significantly deepened my understanding of the brain's development. Collaborating with dedicated early childhood educators, sharing ideas, and learning together was an absolute delight. The session served as a powerful reminder of the pivotal role we play in shaping the minds of young children the future citizens of our country. Recognizing the profound impact we have on these individuals' lives, both in the present and the future, has truly made me feel valued in this profession. It has further emphasized the tremendous responsibility we bear in nurturing and supporting their cognitive growth and overall well-being. I want to extend my heartfelt appreciation to our amazing facilitators, for their outstanding guidance and expertise throughout the session. Their passion and dedication were evident, and their facilitation skills made.”

Brain Story Certificate Feedback

98% of participants would have taken the Brain Story course without being compensated for their time.

99% of early childhood educators would recommend the Brain Story Certification Course to other early childhood educators.

When asked for anything else to share, the responses were varied and powerful. Some respondents indicated this professional learning opportunity had an impact not only on their professional lives but their personal lives.

*“It was great timing for me as my ** is a drug addict. This course helped me understand more.” (personal information redacted).*

“I learned a lot about myself and my family. I personally have many ACE markers myself and it explains a lot about what’s happened and happening in my life right and in the past. I’m so grateful to know it’s not just me but I struggle because of trauma I’ve had in my life. No one ever tells you that.”

“I learned a lot about the process of building the brain so that I can help children as a mother and as an educator.

Moving into Year Three

Based on the information gathered over years one and two, efforts will be focused on conducting a limited run of the Theory-to-Practice series. For this, the AECEA team has rewritten their forms, templates, and workflow to create a bundled process. The focus for the remaining funds in year three will be to increase the number of ECEs who have Theory-to-Practice training.

The AECEA team is developing a robust evaluation plan that will target T2P attendees and their programs. The evaluation process will move beyond survey data with the team conducting interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders to conduct a summative evaluation in hopes of understanding the impact of the Brain Story/Theory-to-Practice grant on ECE practice.

“This is one of the best workshops I have taken. Very rich in ideas, very useful in my daily work. It not only helps me get a deeper understanding of my work, but also gives me the answers to my questions. Now I can explain to the parents why we design this or that activity, what we can do together to help the children develop their brains with great confidence. I really want to learn more in this field. Many many thanks for providing us with such a learning opportunity.”
