



Early Childhood Educator Journey Map

Ideas to: Recruit, nurture, recognize, reward,
retain and reinvest in your team



Storypark



Intro

Recruiting and retaining staff is a challenge facing early childhood operators around the world.

Storypark has worked with over 20 multi-site early childhood organizations from six countries to apply customer journey mapping techniques to map the career journey of early childhood educators, with the goal of enabling cross-pollination of ideas, resources and approaches.

This resource is designed with the intention of continuing to help the early childhood education profession to deliver the best possible experience and support for educators through an educator's career journey.

Read page by page as a booklet, or print the document and place the pages side-by-side to see how the stages flow into each other. You can refer to the additional resources to read some of the survey answers and learn about research and initiatives other multi-sites are utilising to support the journey of their educators.

This document doesn't have "all the answers" and we welcome your feedback to add resources or further develop it.







Peter Dixon, Co-founder, Storypark

For more insights about the research we've undertaken or initiatives in this space please contact me at peter@storypark.com

1. Awareness

- Educators learn about early childhood education as a profession through high school, family and search
- Explore training requirements, cost, availability and possible career pathways

<p>Experience</p> 	<p>I want to be an educator because it plays an important role in society</p> <p>I gain professional recognition</p>	<p>There's easy ways/funding for me to become an educator</p> <p>Passion for children, relational in nature - every child matters approach</p>	<p>I'm able to work in an empathetic, comfortable environment with mental health support</p> <p>Role is less challenging than getting into business</p>
<p>Activities</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeking employment opportunities • Responding to surveys • Researching roles • Understanding the importance of the role in society <p>Mentorship, Peer-Peer and Elder support</p>		
<p>Touchpoints</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathy mapping • Outreach initiatives/campaigns • School career advisor • School boards • Websites 		
<p>Opportunities</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How might we design / fund expedited training? • How might we create awareness of the role and the importance of early childhood education in society? • How might we create more availability of ECE programs for children and families? • How might we create awareness and understanding of each country's ECE policy? Draws on emotional and social awareness for "greater good" of teaching profession • How might we provide other 'perks' or benefits to retain our team? • How might we paint a career path for new educators to show them the opportunities ahead? 		

Leadership: Building knowledge of career pathways and leadership opportunities



2. Training

- Undertake training with tertiary training provider
- Practicum period
- Become employed as an untrained ECE worker and begin training as a part time ECE teacher (4 years) or study full time (3 years)

<p>Experience</p> 	<p>I'm inspired as a parent to work in ECE</p>	<p>I can't afford training</p>	<p>"I've gotten through the day" feeling and am leaving the industry as I don't feel like I'm educating</p>
<p>Activities</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm exploring areas to train while working in another field • Doing online research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring funding options, scholarships available etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the constraints that I live in e.g. child/aged parents support
<p>Mentorship, Peer-Peer and Elder support</p>			
<p>Touchpoints</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Webinars and online training • Conferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning Management System (LMS) • In-person training 	
<p>Opportunities</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How might we provide ongoing holistic support at every step of the learner's journey, accomodating their diverse needs with valuable activities and emotional support? • How might we create the opportunity for an educator to be set-up for success with training (remote/in-person)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How might we ensure that people that do the ECE training enter in the field, and stay past the three year mark? • How might we create ongoing professional growth to keep educators engaged in pedagogical currency but for ongoing inspirational and engaging learning for children? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we ensure training is accessible (including inside work hours) and affordable for everyone? • How might we train for ECE while working in other fields and enable leveraging of existing credentials? (different to apprenticeship)

Leadership: Self-leadership

3. Evaluation/Engagement







- Working as an educator
- Working in a support role
- Educator receives mentoring and professional development
- Working as a director / leader / manager / trainer

<p>Experience</p> 	<p>We are all in this together at my centre and work well as a team</p>	<p>I'm not giving up my personal time to further my education in this field</p>	<p>Staff and providers are engaged in their roles</p>
<p>I feel heard, cared for and nurtured by my employer</p>			<p>I'm influenced by the feedback from my students' parents, my peers and growth in children</p>
<p>Activities</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I've set goals to work towards • I've made a commitment to this job and I'm flexible (within reason) with where I work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I've identified areas for improvement in the work I do • I've asked for feedback from my manager, colleagues and parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I've structured my time for planning and delivering education
<p>Mentorship, Peer-Peer and Elder support</p>			
<p>Touchpoints</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal development plan/appraisals • Parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colleagues, Managers, Professional Learning lead • Time management recording 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation tools e.g. Resonate • Questionnaires/surveys
<p>Opportunities</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How might we tap into initiatives such as community of inquiry, research, time to spend as team and make their daily work more engaging? • How might we maintain connections with staff who need to relocate? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How might we determine the value of online professional development and explore ways for individuals to bring back their learnings to colleagues and improve curriculum delivery? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How might we design personal development plans, and provide ongoing counselling/emotional support for each person's unique context? • How can we offer leadership opportunities - eg Storypark Lead, Nature Play co-leads?

Leadership: Leading others

4. Leadership

- Regional Manager / Executive leadership role
- Centre Manager
- Working as a certified educator (maintaining certification every 3 years). Changing rooms to extend knowledge of all age based settings. Mentoring others. Some educators travel overseas to experience ECE in other countries.
- Student leaders

<p>Experience</p> 	<p>There's no-one else to lead and I'll do it if I have to</p>	<p>I've seen what works and want to step up to change things for the better</p>	<p>I'm burning out - I wonder what other opportunities there may be with less direct work with children</p>
<p>Activities</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm connecting with peers to understand shared pain points • I'm co-creating/creating programmes for aspiring leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm understanding what tools upcoming leaders need within my organization • I'm engaging with alumni to understand attrition factors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm working on a leadership strategy & succession plan and continued professional development (CPD) modelling
<p>Mentorship, Peer-Peer and Elder support</p>			
<p>Touchpoints</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alumni and current educators • Other leaders within the sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement with local government / politicians • Case studies (written/video) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECE organizations with leadership strategy/succession planning in place • Third party suppliers
<p>Opportunities</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How might we create the environment to engage with politicians and civil servants to educate them on the importance of early childhood educators? • How might we promote indigenous culture through our programmes? • How might we engage retired ECE's as mentors or advisors? 		

Leadership: Leading others

5. Advocacy

- Speaking at universities, regional boards/membership organizations
- Opportunities for leaders, educators and students to leverage experience and advocate with funders/ governments/granting bodies for ongoing improvements to the sector (whatever that might look like in an individual area)
- Individual advocacy

Experience



I want to give back to the profession and be recognize for my contribution

I understand what ECE means to children and society at large

I've been recognized by peers, awards or employer

Activities



- I'm giving back to the community by mentoring/training/ speaking

- Creating space for educators to have non-contact time for planning, training/ education

Mentorship, Peer-Peer and Elder support

Touchpoints



- Other leaders or educators within the sector

- Engagement with local government/politicians
- Engagement with family, friends, and others outside the ECE sector

Opportunities



- How can we build greater public awareness of the value of early childhood education and educators jobs? -Roles and responsibilities
- How might we provide non-contact time for educators to get involved in advocacy? (other ways to way to keep them engaged in their profession and add to retention).

- How might we create inspirational case studies of people's role development and backgrounds (why they started, journey to date, what they've overcome, celebration of successes (eg. apprentice to director)and create career pathways?

- How can we share alumni case studies of what's been happening for children since they were at the centre? Easy if staff still work for you

Leadership: Leading in your community/sector

Educator Journey Map additional resources:

The following are results and comments from a survey completed by over 20 multi-site organizations from UK, US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Malaysia about their Educator Experience design.

International multi-site research study conducted by Storypark in 2023

- 27% had more than 50 sites, 50% had less than 10 sites
- 72% of survey respondents and all in-person workshop participants said educator experience was a key strategic priority for their organization, with recruitment and retention tied at most important and professional development as the next most important specific priorities

At what point are we seeing people leave being an ECE?

- 66% of respondents said most people leave in first 3 years
- “Low pay” and “Stress and burnout” equally rated as the reason people are leaving globally
- Personal reasons driving choices: Pregnancy / young children, Older parents that require support
- “Heat map shows us that on average employees are leaving around 3-5 year mark. If we get them past 6 years - we keep them long term.”
- “Since our first internal survey in 2021 on stress inside and outside of the workplace, the latest 2022 results show reduced stress within the workplace, but the stress outside the workplace are still impacting our team”
- Do the ECE training, don't enter the field, but do the additional qualifications to become a teacher

What initiatives are you working on?

- We are working with a supply agency we can call on but very expensive, and some of the permanent staff get resentful as the temps. don't have key children relationships to work on/document
- Changing staffing models regarding 1:3 ratio 10 infants, 4 staff. Have stuck with 5 and looking to up staffing if there's budget to do it, generally meeting ratios and taking pressure off the staff, asking for feedback from staff re engagement with children, comms, parents. So they feel like they are educating vs caretaking

- In Ottawa we just received pilot funding to hire a Professional Learning Lead, it's a pilot but the intention is that there is an individual per agency who can facilitate conversations, mentor, share resources etc
- Leadership strategy, we have an ageing workforce 50+ how do we engage with aspiring leaders and support them to step into these roles. Enormous risk with people stepping out
- Survey monkey questionnaires - series of questions about their recruitment, training. Getting feedback from manager on how they can support them
- Piloting a new software called Resonate which is for parent/customers, but you can buy the additional model for using it with staff - gives you live feedback that you action
- We are investing at the mid-level management level (program supervisors) to create succession planning that is intentional and focused at a strategic level. Today's Family and LEF has engaged with the Social Enterprise Academy (Scotland) to begin this work pre-pandemic. quite successful
- We offered an internal leadership mentorship which was very successful - started with an application from those interested, we confirmed 5 participants for 6-months - interestingly now all are in leadership roles at our organisation
- Onboarding is an important process, create a fun and inviting atmosphere, recognize accomplishments, and provide feedback consistently, offer resources, mentoring, we're not punitive regarding vacation/sick time. Offer wellness days and staff grant incentives. Exciting professional development opportunities. We connect people with their passions
- “Internal APP communication platform, Educational Leader Program, Conference, Learning Management platform, Employee Assistance program, Employee Wellness training for Managers
- Ongoing Critical incident support and training, Corporate partnership with financial provider to provide discounts & advice, Childcare discount benefit
- Career Progression and Career mapping
- Corporate Partnership with Private health fund roll out, Online learning portal with hundreds of short courses available

Educator Journey Map additional resources:



- Partnership with registered training organisation (RTO) for upskilling and ongoing learning
 - Regular performance reviews including coaching from leaders”
 - Each individual head teacher of the kindergarten works closely with their team. The Association provides professional development options as well as an annual conference. We have focused on wellbeing in those recently. Our Board have granted money at Christmas and recently to acknowledge the stress of recent events (covid, floods etc). Educators are rarely denied attendance at external professional development opportunities
 - “Regular Acknowledgement indicating that they are valued
 - Investing in their personal professional growth which enriches the quality of your Organization
 - Listen & truly see who your staff is - that they are individual in their own right with particular qualities & strengths so showcase these. Have frequent conversations with them and be an attentive listener so they see they are heard.”
 - Professional development consists of online courses in ECD which takes years (as they work on an EC course or 2 once or twice a week) also 1 regional workshop once a year- and 4 program visits per year to deliver an intensive training (Hanan Program- Learning Language and Loving It)by Project Coordinator, providing skills and knowledge in working with children under the age of 4 yrs old. Not much in the area of Wellness/Self-care
 - Building stronger team spirit as well as stronger sense of “worth” and “contribution to the children future” through our professional knowledge & roles
 - Leadership Development. Professional development. Networking. Benefits. Fair pay. Performance management. Team building.
 - Ongoing professional development to support them in their roles beginning with the onboarding. Recognize staff for their contributions regularly
 - Very comprehensive PD opportunities, wellbeing ambassadors at every site, wellbeing initiatives, end of year closing period, strong focus on relationship building, internal promotions, internal leadership programs
 - Make sure I stay connected to them, work alongside them. Ensure I’m empathetic and kind but fair. Look for the stretch goals to keep them growing and engaged
 - We grow our own by providing full scholarships for our teachers to get their CDA or AA degree in ECE. WE also added more PTO and a 401k match in the last two years.
 - “With grant funding, we have an workplace wellness initiative aimed at cultivating a resilient workplace culture
 - Staff wellness credits, particularly during COVID, we didn’t track sick time, staff were paid regardless, also we provide shared/work positions so staff could alternate being at home to help with children and working on site. Those who couldn’t work on site created content at home and provided curriculum through our social media platforms
 - We survey our team every 6 months to WorkWell Insights and then follow up with targeted actions to support improvement. Leadership development, coaching, and staff workshops on appreciation vs. recognition, leading above the line, Prosilient Problem-Solving, self-care, True Colors, and work smarter-not harder - along with a Wellness Retreat in the fall, were key to improvements in our WorkWell (up 7 points) and Net Promoter Scores (up 22 points)
 - In the fall, a working group was formed to support workload analysis, identifying key targets for workload management, gathering data from the centres, and making recommendations for action that will mitigate the risk of burnout. This group will report back in the Spring of 2023”
 - Focus on equity, diversity and inclusion, and emphasis on mental health and well-being
 - Reintroducing our referral scheme
- What mentoring and professional development / support do you offer?**
- Enhanced orientation for new employees, creation of a training video library, and development of a strategic HR growth plan
 - What does professional growth mean and look like for you is an area we are exploring.
 - What we can afford to do (based on ability for parents to pay) but thinking what we want the programme to be and what we need it - looking at the opportunity - thinking about things differently

Educator Journey Map

additional resources:

Working on programmes to get aspiring leaders into leadership roles, upskill the leader and they lead others within the organisation, giving them the ability to provide the tools to others and mentor others

- LSE involved with the leadership development, leading others and community - different perspective online to our business, think differently about what leadership means
- PD learning plans, which include focus on equity, diversity and inclusion, and mental health and well-being.
- Specific leadership courses for those working towards that next step
- The resilience project for helping with everyone's mindfulness
- Developing our own on line 'ToolBox' that centres can use at anytime to enrich & enhance their teachers understanding in regards to our educational approach but doing this pd in their own setting

Any initiatives that haven't worked that you've learned from?

- Mostly all initiatives have had a positive impact!
- "Once staff are trained in the Programs they are "snagged" by Government for the Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten for better pay and benefits"
- "My organization collaborated with a university to offer a staff-sponsorship scheme to our in-service teachers for the DECE programme in 2020 whereby we provide the professional expertise and venue. However, due to economic challenges and work commitment, only 35 out of the 115 teachers took up the offer."
- "Split-shift wage premium - didn't really make a difference and created another issue when someone moved out of a position with it to a part-time non-split shift and then lost the premium."

If you could do anything, what one massive change would you make (other than government funding)

- Recognition of the profession - Improve societal understanding of the importance of the early years. Respect for early years educators should be on equal terms with teachers of older children and adults

- Improved salaries and working conditions (ratios, non-contact time) - Give educators a reasonable amount of programming time outside of direct contact with children. The work they do is so valuable to the child and their families
- Early learning programs available to all families
- "Career advancement pathway and professional development programme for both the in-service & newly joined teachers"
- "Innovative ways to provide mentorship and expand thinking on leadership in ECE; opportunities for educators, families, employers, and communities to connect and collaborate within, across and outside of learning spaces."

Research/resources

[Key determinants of burnout and the most effective approaches to reduction](#)

[Social Enterprise Scotland leadership training for impact](#)

[New Zealand Leadership strategy for ECE teachers](#)

[Early Care and Learning Recruitment and Retention Strategies - B.C. Canada.](#)