

CHANGING RESULTS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

Research Findings 2021-2022

Prepared by:

Dr. Sharon Jeroski
Research Director
Horizon Research & Evaluation Inc.

Jennifer Delvecchio
Project Associate: Media and Research

for

BC Ministry of Education & Child Care

August 21, 2022



CONTENTS

1. Background
2. Participants
3. Impact on children’s social-emotional well-being (SEWB): THE WONDER CHILDREN
4. Impact on educators: A Community of Practice

1. Background

Changing Results for Young Children (CR4YC) is a collaborative inquiry project that brings together Community-based Early Childhood Educators, Strong Start Facilitators, and Kindergarten Teachers to improve the social and emotional well-being of young children.

CORE PRINCIPLES

- ♦ To build a community of practice for early childhood educators and primary teachers to share what they are learning
- ♦ To extend opportunities for collaboration and implementation of quality practices associated with increasing social and emotional well-being in young children
- ♦ To establish a culture of inquiry through documentation, critical reflection and pedagogical narration
- ♦ To use current research of what fosters social and emotional well-being in young children

CR4YC is a partnership between The Ministry of Education (MOE) and the United Way of British Columbia (UWBC) and was initiated in the fall of 2017. Community-based educators, Strong Start Facilitators and Kindergarten teachers work collaboratively in six joint professional learning sessions with release time provided by the CR4YC Project. CR4YC is based on the successful Changing Results for Young Readers framework that was implemented in 57 BC School Districts from 2012 – 2015.

INTENT

- ♦ To increase the social and emotional wellbeing\of young children
- ♦ To enhance awareness and use of the Early Learning Framework
- ♦ To improve the quality of practices associated with teaching social and emotional well-being To increase collaboration and strengthen relationships between early childhood educators and primary teachers

- ♦ To use the science and research of social and emotional well-being to improve both educators' practice and social and emotional outcomes for young children
- ♦ To provide young children with opportunities and specific skills that foster their social and emotional competence through positive human qualities: happiness, self-regulation, kindness, empathy, sense of belonging, altruism, sense of agency, compassion, sense of identity, and building relationships

CR4YC focuses on social and emotional well-being to improve outcomes for young children. One of the CR4YC goals is to identify and apply a strengthened understanding of quality practices associated with improving the social and emotional well-being (SEWB) of young children. Another goal is to increase the coherence in pedagogy between Early Childhood Educators and Primary Educators, using the Early Learning Framework.) Dr. Kim Schonert-Reichl is the lead scholar advising the CR4YC Initiative, including professional learning sessions throughout the year.

2. Participants

Working in 49 inquiry groups that each included 1, 2, or 3 communities, educators examined their own practices and explored ways of strengthening children’s social and emotional well-being (SEWB). They observed, supported, and recorded growth in seven facets of personal and social well-being connected to the Early Learning Framework and related to the BC core competencies of social and personal competence. Each participant developed an ongoing case record for one “wonder child” and focused their observations on one facet:

Identity

Sense of identity – “who I am”

Social Responsibility

Building relationships; friends

Kindness and empathy - caring for others
Contributing to classroom community

Personal Awareness and Responsibility

Well-being – sense of joy and happiness

Self-regulation - connecting actions/results; taking responsibility

Sense of personal agency - self-efficacy; advocates for self; addresses own needs

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS AND GROUPS

327 educators in 49 communities participated in CR4YC in 2021-2022.

It is extremely difficult to estimate how many children these educators collectively work with across BC, in-person and virtually. Many districts have created active FaceBook and webpages that engage with many more young children than are involved in face-to-face programs.

256 educators in 33 communities responded to a survey about *Changes in Practice* in June 2022.

257 educators (78%) submitted case studies including final summaries for individual children by July 2022. As in previous years, some were unable to complete the case studies because centres had closed, ECE's had been re-assigned, , or children were no longer attending. The completion rate is similar to 2020-2021 (76%.)

- ♦ Because of the impact of COVID-19 on the attendance of young children and the ability of their educators to maintain contact with them and their families, each site determined the best way for them to recruit and document children. While they attempted to include 1/3 K teachers, 1/3 Strong Start facilitators and 1/3 community early childhood educators, that was often not possible.

5. Impact on children’s social-emotional well-being: THE WONDER CHILDREN

To provide a focus for supporting and observing SEWB, each participant chose one child to follow, observe and document during the project –a child they would wonder and inquire about. For that child, they would focus specifically on one of the seven facets:

- Sense of identity
- Building relationships
- Kindness and empathy
- Contributing to the classroom community
- Well-being – sense of joy and happiness
- Self-regulation
- Sense of personal agency

It is important to note that the facets are not distinct – they are part of an integrated whole. However, they provided a way to focus on a relatively specific area over the relatively short duration of this project. Participants often changed their facets as they got to know the children in more depth.

At each meeting, educators shared observations, “wonderings”, and documentation about their chosen child. The documentation often included the child’s words, interviews, representations, structures, photographs, and videos. At three points in the project, they submitted written documentation to the Early Learning Lead; this was eventually passed on to the researcher and assembled into individual case records.

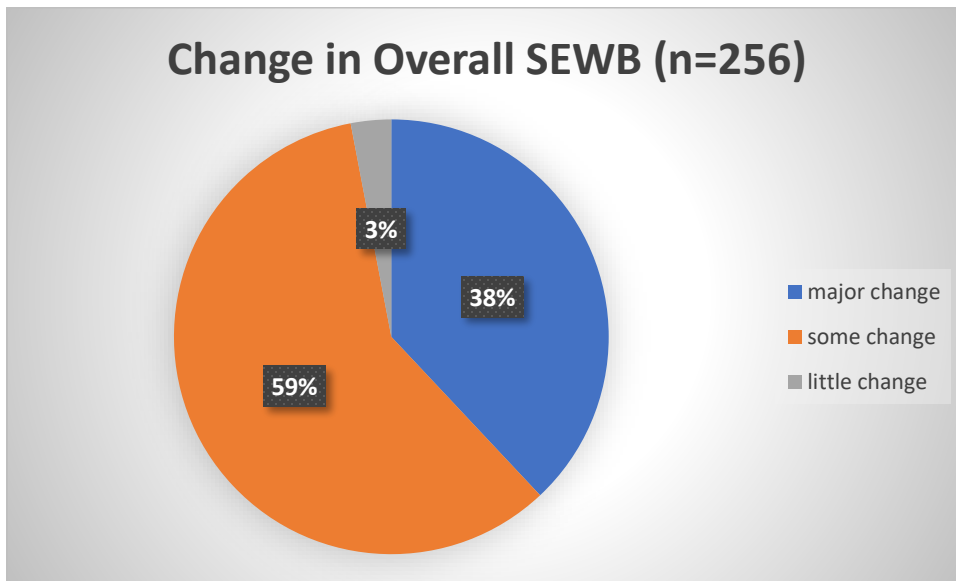
Results in this report are based on over 250 individual case records that include:

- A collection of information, including interviews with family members, that focused on the child’s strengths and interests, interests, and relationships
- Observations of the child, including interpretation and questions
- A final recording and analysis of the child’s SEWB, focusing on strengths and changes, and offering advice about ways to continue support the child, and often a message to the child.

Under extraordinarily challenging circumstances (e.g., no available TOCS, COVID protocols that often limited direct contact with the children and their families) over 250 participants were able to complete all aspects of the documentation; a further 90 educators were able to begin following a “wonder” child, but challenges in staffing, release time, COVID protocols, changes in programs and family situations prevented them from gathering all the required information. Note that under the circumstances everyone faced in 2021-22, every piece of documentation was valued and celebrated—the response far exceeded the expectations of the project team.

Change in Social Emotional Well-Being

Each participant indicated the extent to which they had documented change in their “wonder” child’s SEWB. As shown in the graph below 97% children showed positive change; in 38%, the change was described as “major.”



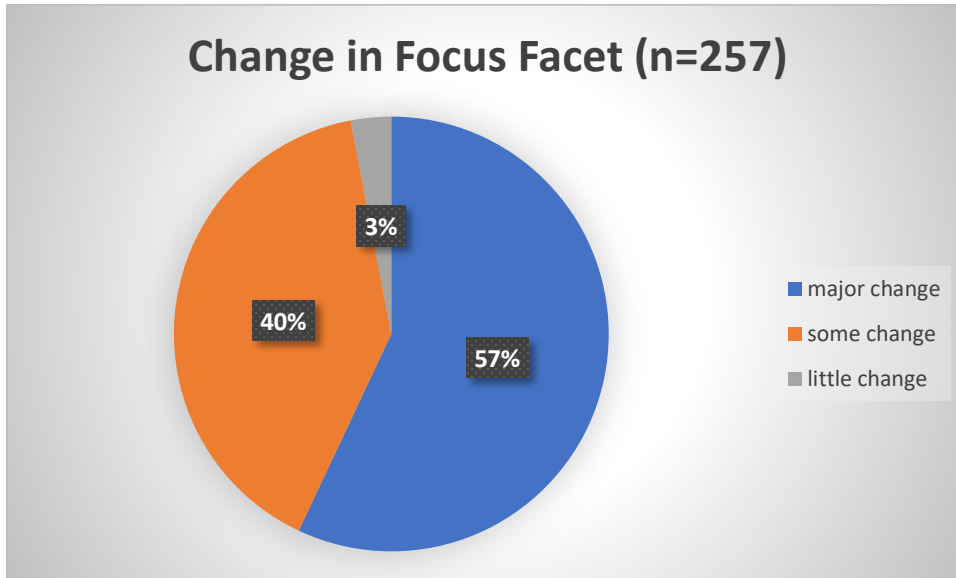
Participants provided evidence and analysis of the change they saw in the children. For example,

S’s social-emotional well-being has changed dramatically. Although she still has moments where she becomes very upset and will have tears at school, the way in which she is able to self-regulate and work through these emotions has shown great growth since the beginning of the school year. Now when S becomes upset she is able to have some time to process and then speak to an educator about what is making her upset. Through her English language skills developing, as well as her connections with me and her peers has strengthened, I believe that S feels much safer in our space and therefore is able to share her feelings more easily. This has allowed for S to begin to develop friendships with her peers as well as develop in her sense of personal agency and her ability to advocate for her needs. This has translated into even moments of joy in which S feels comfortable to ask for things that bring her joy (ie. Asking for crafts or art during centre time).

Each participant chose one of the seven facets as a focus:

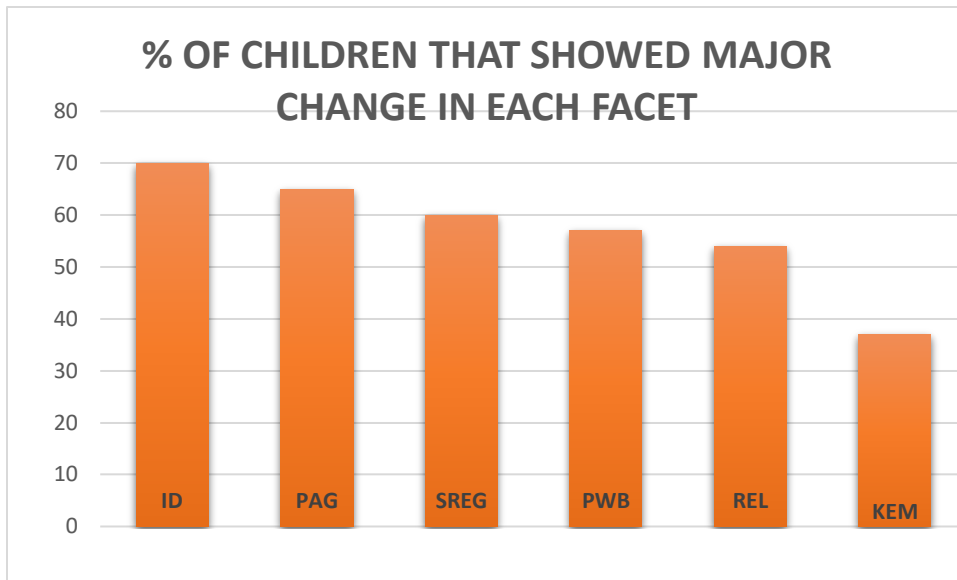
- 103 (40%) chose “Building relationships.
- 26-33 (10-12%) chose one of Identity, self-regulation, personal well-being, kindness/empathy, and personal agency
- 10 (4%) chose contributing to the classroom.

Most participants (57%) documented major change in the facet in they had chosen; a further 40% described “some change.”



Participants that focused on different facets reported differing levels of success. For example, 70% of those who focused on *sense of identity* reported major change compared with 37% that reported major change when they focused on Kindness and Empathy. In other words, participants who focused on *Sense of identity* tended to feel more successful than those who focused on *kindness and empathy*. The table and graph below show the proportion of those who identified *major change in each facet*.

Because of the overlapping nature of the facets and the relatively small numbers who chose each facet, these results are tentative. It is interesting to note that two facets that may not previously have been the focus on SEWB – identity and personal agency – showed the greater increase – this may be attributed to a greater awareness.



Because of the overlapping nature of the facets and the relatively small numbers who chose each facet, these results are tentative. It is interesting to note that two facets that may not previously have been the focus on SEWB – identity and personal agency – showed the greater increase – this may be attributed to a greater awareness on the part of the educators

Facet	n	Major change	Some change	Little/no change
Identity	30	70% (21)	27% (8)	3% (1)
Pers Agency	26	65% (17)	35% (9)	(0)
Self-regulation	33	61% (20)	33% (11)	6% (2)
Pers Well-being	28	57% (16)	43% (12)	(0)
Relationships	101	54%(54)	43% (44)	3%(3)
Kindness/empathy	27	37% (10)	59% (16)	4% (1)
Contrib to clrm	10	40% (4)	60% (6)	(0)
	255			

What have we learned about our wonder, children?

- BC children whose educators participate in CR4YC continue to strengthen and deepen their Social-Emotional Well-being.
- Children showed strong growth in all facets of Social-Emotional Well-being.
- Growth was strongest in areas that educators chose as a focus.
- Over half of educators who focused on *sense of identity; sense of personal agency; self-regulation; personal well-being; and relationships/friendship* saw major improvement in the children they worked with.

6. Impact on educators: A Community of Practice

Educators participating in CR4YC have established a network and community of practice that goes beyond individual districts, groups, and roles. Over 4 years, as participants have discussed, documented, and shared stories of their work with their “wonder children”, key themes associated with effective practice and Indigenous principles of learning continue to stand out.

- Recognizing children’s strengths
- Facilitating child-led play
- Listening to children’s voices
- Giving children time
- Connecting with the outdoor environment

Participants have responded to an annual survey about their practices over the last 5 years. The items for the survey were originally chosen because they reflected practices that were evident in contexts where children were becoming confident and capable learners with a strong sense of well-being.

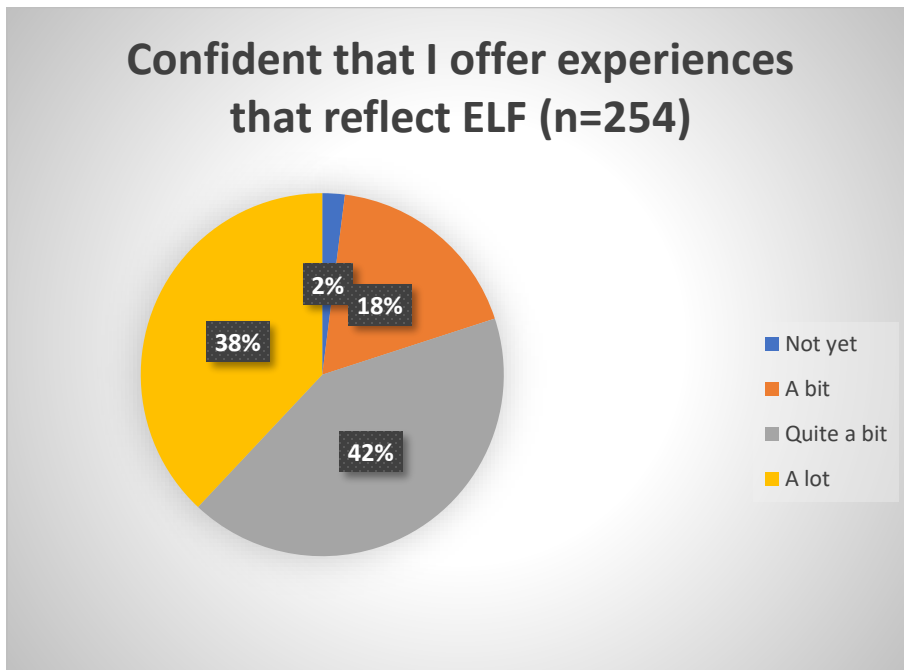
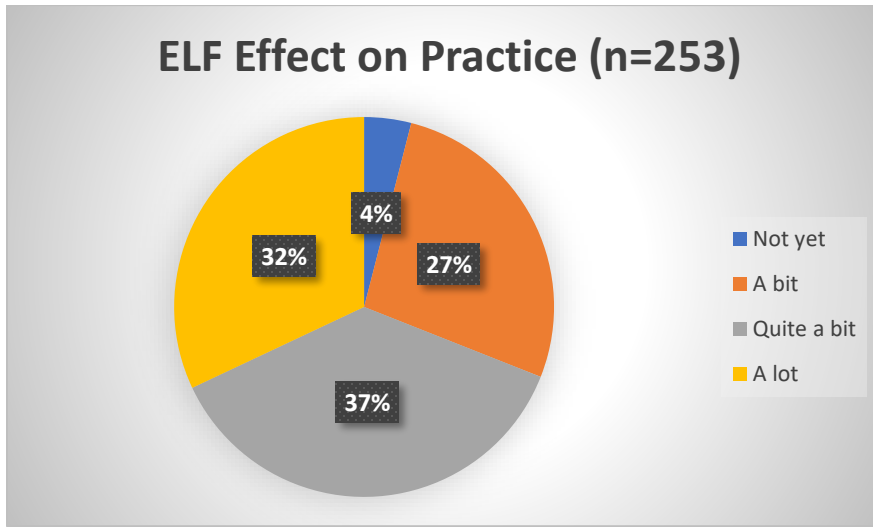
Initially, educators’ responses and reported practices varied from one setting to another. However, with the publication of *The Early Learning Framework* in 2019, and ongoing experiences and collaboration with their colleagues in *Changing Results for Young Learners*, results become more and more consistent from one setting to another. Whether the participants initially came from Strong Start Centres, Kindergartens, or Community Early Learning programs, educators shared similar beliefs and aspirations about their learners. We continue to ask a few of the same questions, but there is now little variability in the results.

Impact on practice

The 256 participants that responded to the surveys indicate strong endorsement of both the *Early Learning Framework* and the experience of being part of a Changing Results for Young Children group: nearly 85% reported that CR4YC had affected their practice “quite a bit” or “a lot.” The result is slightly more positive than in the previous year, and is particularly striking in a year when groups were often unable to meet face-to-face, or had to accommodate odd hours or sites. Community-based educators faced strong challenges, often unable to find a way to meet because there was no coverage. School-based educators were often in situation where districts had stopped providing TOCs for professional development because there simply weren’t any. The high level of positive responses speaks to the commitment of these educators, the support they found in coming together, and the bonds they formed with each other.

Approximately 70% of the educators reported that the ELF had impacted their practice *a lot*, or *quite a bit*. Again, this was a more positive result than we had anticipated in a year when educators had minimal face-to-face interaction.

Two looks at the same concept (difference is level of confidence)



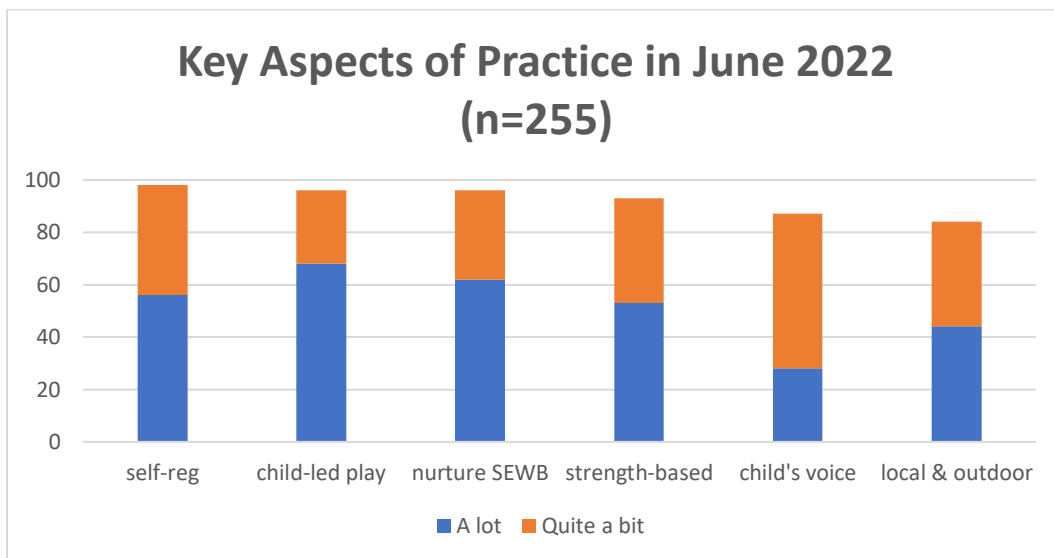
Specific practices

Similar to 2021, after participating in CR4YC, over 90% of participants reported that they focused on:

- Helping children develop self-regulation (98%)
- Creating opportunities for child-led play (96%)
- Nurturing children’s SEWB (96%)
- Stating and building on children’s strengths (93%)

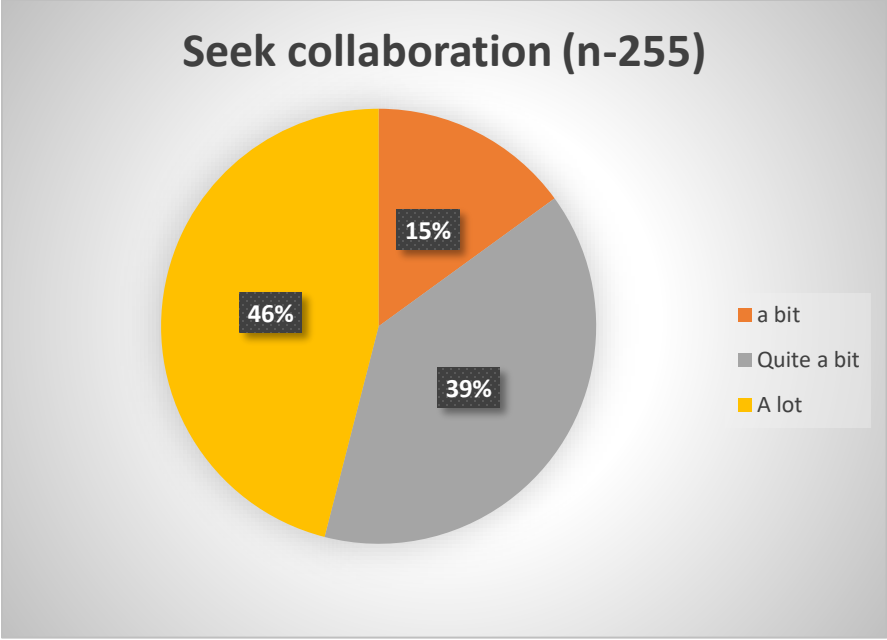
Over 80% reported focusing on:

- Listening to the child’s voice (87%)
 - Opportunities to connect with local communities and outdoor environment (84%)
- Note: COVID-19 protocols affected opportunities to make these connections. These results strongly suggest that there is a community of practice – that these educators generally value and demonstrate a similar body of practice that is consistent with the Early Learning Framework. In fact, 80% are confident that they offer experiences that reflect the ELF.

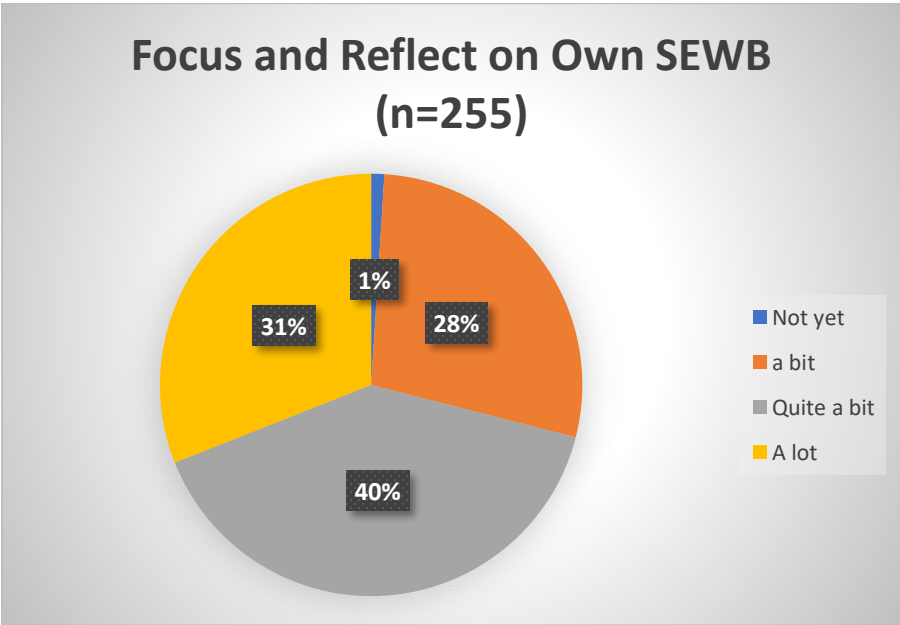


Collaboration is one of the key features of CR4YC – collaboration among Strong Start educators, community-based preschool educators and Kindergarten teachers in the same community. Under COVID protocols and related barriers, traditional forms of collaboration were often impossible. Educators rarely met face-to-face; they were generally not able to visit each others’ classrooms and centres. However, they did continue to seek out opportunities to collaborate, to use social media to make connections, and to support each other:

- Approximately half reported that seeking opportunities to collaborate was “A lot like me”, and a further 39% said it was “quite a bit like me.”



Participants were also asked about their own SEWB:



- Forty-percent of participants reported that CR4YC had affected the extent to which they focused on reflected on their own SEWB.

CR4YC has changed my career as a teacher. It has brought out the passion I have for working with children and helped me validate and advocate for our young learners. It has even made a huge impact on my own social emotional well-being. Life changing!!!!

What have we learned about educators' practices?

- The educators in CR4YC are part of a community of practice that values and reflects principles of the ELF including:
 - Children are strong, capable in their uniqueness, and full of potential
 - Play is integral to well-being and learning
- They value their experiences with CR4YC and recognize its impact on their practice and their intentional focus on SEWB
- They seek out opportunities to collaborate even under challenging circumstances
- They recognize the importance of their own and their colleagues SEWB