

**Recommendations for Enhancing Quality in
British Columbia's Out of School Child Care Sector**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Research indicates that out of school child care programs not only support labour market attachment, but can help promote young children's achievement across a range of developmental domains if they are of high quality (Little, 2007, p.2). Best practices in child care demonstrate a number of elements which contribute to high quality out of school care programming, both at the individual program level and at the broader systems level. One problem that has been identified by BC Government staff who are responsible for supporting the delivery of out of school child care is determining the degree of quality in the Province's out of school care programs. The quality in BC's out of school care sector is unclear since the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) has limited information on the quality of these programs. This report will identify the elements which constitute high quality out of school care and will help to assess the level of quality in BC's out of school care programs. A review of child care quality literature and best practices in out of school care will be used to address the following research question:

What strategies can the British Columbia Ministry of Children and Family Development implement to assess the overall quality of BC's out of school child care sector and to determine which quality measures need to be improved?

For the purpose of this project the out of school child care sector refers to licensed group and family child care programs in BC which provide care to school-aged children in the before and after school hours, and which receive operating funding through MCFD's Child Care Operating Funding (CCOF) program.

METHODS

To answer this research question the following research tasks were completed:

- A literature review of key developmental trajectories of children in the middle years to identify the significant social, emotional, physical and cognitive developmental milestones identified as critical to well-being throughout middle childhood. The literature review also examined what constitutes high quality in out of school child care programs.
- A cross-jurisdictional review of best practices in out of school child care in Australia, Scotland, Manitoba and Kentucky. These jurisdictions were selected because they are leaders in the out of school child care field and have policy frameworks in place that support high quality out of school care programming. Importantly, these jurisdictions also deliver their child care systems in a similar way to BC such that it is possible to translate policy practices from these jurisdictions' context to BC's context.
- An analysis of BC's current out of school child care system to identify gaps in policy-maker's knowledge about this system and service gaps, including areas where the system does not meet identified best practice or recommendations within the current literature.

- A focus group session with representatives of the cross-ministry Out of School Child Care Working Group to identify opportunities for collaboration in supporting enhanced quality in out of school child care. Focus Group discussions helped to identify which recommended policy or program changes are feasible in BC.

FINDINGS

Existing research shows that children experience a range of physical, cognitive and psychosocial changes as they transition from early childhood into adolescence (middle childhood). Out of school child care providers can play a key role in helping school-aged children reach their developmental milestones by offering them a variety of age and developmentally-appropriate activities which meet their physical, cognitive and psychosocial needs.

Australia, Scotland, Manitoba and Kentucky are leaders in the out of school child care field. These jurisdictions also deliver their child care systems in a similar way to BC but differ from BC by providing a policy framework with information and resources to assist out of school child care programs with delivering high quality services. BC does not provide these types of resources. These jurisdictions also focus on partnerships and collaboration to promote quality in out of school care programs, as well as evaluate out of school care programs to ensure they are maintaining a high degree of quality service delivery.

British Columbia's Ministry of Children and Family Development and partner ministries already have the infrastructure and legislative foundation in place to offer quality out of school care programs. The provincial government funds numerous out of school child care programs in BC, yet does not have sufficient information on how well children are being cared for. Aside from licensing requirements and minimal program standards for child care, the provincial government does not offer comprehensive policies or guidelines to support quality practices in out of school child care, nor does it evaluate whether the programs are high quality, evidence-based, or developmentally appropriate. As a result the quality and level of services supported by out of school child care programs varies and there is little information available to government on how well these programs support children's well-being in the middle years.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The investigator developed a series of recommendations for improving quality in out of school care based on the information gathered through the literature on middle childhood development and child care quality, on the review of high quality practices in the four jurisdictions and on the information and gaps in knowledge related to quality in BC's out of school care programs. A series of questions related to these recommendations were put forth to a focus group comprised of representatives of the cross-ministry Out of School Care Working Group. As a result of the focus group discussion, the following strategies are recommended to increase the BC Government's knowledge about the quality of the Province's out of school child care sector and to increase the quality of this sector:

Recommendation 1: Implement an evaluation tool such as the School Age Child Care Environmental Rating Scale to determine baseline quality levels in BC's out of school child care programs.

Recommendation 2: Update the Annual Child Care Provider Profile survey to include information on quality indicators for out of school care, such as the activities available to support development in school-aged children and the degree of staff training on middle childhood development.

Recommendation 3: Increase the number of hours of training required for out of school child care staff and include a requirement to complete courses on middle childhood development. Out of school care staff should also engage in ongoing professional development related to middle childhood.

Recommendation 4: In collaboration with child care providers, the School Age Child Care Association of BC, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development, the Ministry of Education and academic research bodies such as the Human Early Learning Partnership, MCFD should develop a policy framework and practice guidelines which includes agreed upon program goals, training information, tips for integrating with other community services and suggested activities and material checklists for out of school care programs.

Recommendation 5: Facilitate increased partnerships between out of school care programs and other service providers, such as schools and community recreation programs, to help provide more diverse program activities which support optimal development across the physical, cognitive and psychosocial domains of middle childhood development.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project client and problem

Working families with school-aged children may need child care for the hours surrounding the school day since many parents work longer hours than the typical 9am to 3pm school day. Research indicates that out of school child care programs not only support labour market attachment, but can help promote young children's achievement across a range of developmental domains if they are of high quality (Little, 2007, p.2). A number of factors can contribute to high quality programming in out of school care programs, both at the individual program level and at the broader systems level. This can range from overarching legislative requirements for adequate physical space and staff education, to the variety of developmentally appropriate activities that are available for children attending out of school care programs. This report focuses specifically on the level of quality in out of school child care programs in British Columbia (BC).

One problem that has been identified by BC Government staff who are responsible for supporting the delivery of out of school child care is determining the degree of quality in the Province's out of school care programs. The quality in BC's out of school care sector is unclear since the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD), which is the lead Ministry responsible for child care in the Province with licensing support from the Ministry of Health, has limited information on the quality of these programs. However, research and best practice in child care indicate a number of elements which contribute to high quality out of school care programming. This report will identify the elements which constitute high quality out of school care and will help to assess the level of quality in BC's out of school care programs.

The client for this project is Sonja Yli-Kahila, Senior Manager of the Early Years Policy team with the BC Government's MCFD. This team is situated within MCFD's Policy and Provincial Services division, which integrates several child and family policy work units including Children and Youth with Special Needs Policy, Child Welfare Policy, Child and Youth Mental Health Policy and Aboriginal Policy. As Senior Manager for Early Years Policy, Ms. Yli-Kahila is responsible for managing policy and program development and support for child care in BC.

1.2 Project objectives

This report will review indicators of child care quality, in particularly those quality elements which support healthy child development and well-being in school-aged children who attend out of school child care. The research on out of school care quality will then be analysed in the context of quality in BC's out of school child care sector to help to address the following research question:

What strategies can the British Columbia Ministry of Children and Family Development implement to assess the overall quality of BC's out of school child care sector and to determine which quality measures need to be improved?

The following sub-questions are answered to help address this research question:

1. What are the key developmental trajectories of middle childhood and how can out of school child care help to support positive developmental outcomes for school-aged children?
2. According to the current literature what characteristics does out of school child care need to have in order to be high quality?
3. What information does BC have regarding the quality of BC's out of school child care sector and what are the information gaps?
4. To what degree, and in what respects does BC's out of school child care sector have the characteristics of high quality child care?
5. What short term and longer term strategies can BC implement to increase its knowledge about the quality of BC's out of school child care sector and to increase the quality of this sector?

As defined in the *Child Care BC Act*, a child care setting is “any setting in which child care is provided in a facility licensed under the *Community Care and Assisted Living Act* to provide child care” (Province of British Columbia, 2001). Section 5.1 of this report further outlines licensing requirements for child care programs in BC. Licensed child care programs are also eligible to receive Child Care Operating Funding (CCOF) if they are willing to serve families receiving Child Care Subsidy and are in good standing with MCFD. Over 90 per cent of licensed child care programs in BC receive operating funding. For the purpose of this project the out of school child care sector refers to licensed group and family child care programs in BC which provide care to school-aged children in the before and after school hours, and which receive operating funding through MCFD's CCOF program (See *Appendix A* for a glossary of terms for this project). Although the recommendations presented in this report can apply to all child care programs that provide care for school-aged children in BC, the scope is limited to licensed, funded programs because MCFD only collects data on these programs. Information is not available on unlicensed programs and is difficult to obtain for licensed programs which do not receive CCOF.

Quality refers to best practices in out of school child care at the program and organizational level. Recommended quality practices will focus on a variety of out of school child care components, such as training and education of child care providers, evaluation of services, cross-sector collaboration and integration with other services and the development of resources to assist programs to deliver quality care for children. The issue of quality in BC's out of school care sector is important because of the large number of school-aged children who attend these programs before and after school in the province. In 2007/08 approximately 30,000 of the licensed child care spaces in BC were out of school care spaces (Beach et. al, 2009). This indicates that about 30,000 children in BC per month are attending child care programs of which the quality is uncertain.

2.0 METHODOLOGY AND DATA SOURCES

The overall goal of this research project is to recommend strategies for MCFD to assess the overall quality of BC's out of school child care sector and to determine which quality measures need to be improved. To achieve this goal the investigator took a comparative analysis approach to assess how well BC is fairing compared to established quality standards. Comparative analysis looks at the similarities and differences between different processes or systems, which in the context of this report included the comparison of the information on quality in BC's out of school child care sector to the literature on how quality child care supports healthy middle childhood development.

Qualitative data were used to identify the best practices in out of school care programs which help to support healthy middle childhood development for school-aged children. Information on the current state of BC's out of school child care sector was compared to the best practices identified in the literature on middle childhood development and quality child care in order to assess the quality of BC's out of school care programs. The data on best practice included academic and grey literature on child development and child care quality. The investigator reviewed papers located via online academic databases and Google Scholar. Data sources included academic journal articles and books on child development in the middle years and the role of quality child care in facilitating health and well-being in school-aged children. The key search terms used to conduct research for the literature review included: *child development; middle childhood; middle years; child care; out of school child care; after school care; quality child care; and child care framework.*

BC's out of school child care sector was also analysed in comparison to identified leaders in the field of out of school child care through a cross-jurisdictional review, which looked at high quality child care practices in four jurisdictions (Australia, Scotland, Manitoba and Kentucky). The purpose of the cross-jurisdictional review was to assess the similarities and differences between BC's out of school child care sector and these four jurisdictions to help determine whether BC offers high quality out of school care services. The investigator concluded that these jurisdictions' recent development of frameworks and guidelines specific to supporting high quality out of school care programs in their communities demonstrated their commitment to this sector. There are also similarities between these jurisdictions' delivery of child care services and BC's child care system so that the identified best practices can be more easily applied to this province. Government and non-government information for these national and international jurisdictions provided data sources for the cross-jurisdictional review. The investigator used an internet search engine to access public reports, news releases, research papers, legislation, factsheets, frameworks and strategic plans for Australia, Kentucky, Scotland and Manitoba.

Information in publically available BC government documents, such as annual reports, child care legislation, news releases, factsheets and strategic plans helped to assess the current state of BC's out of school child care sector. The information presented in these documents was compared to the literature on middle childhood development and

child care quality to determine whether service gaps exist in BC’s programs. Child care articles released by non-government agencies, including advocacy groups and research bodies, were also a key data source for this section of the report.

Several different research tasks were conducted to address the overarching research question for this project. Table 1 describes the rationale behind the methods used to address each sub-question.

Table 1

Rationale for Methods Used to Address Research Sub-Questions

Sub-Question	Methodology/methods	Rationale
1. What are the key developmental trajectories of middle childhood and how can out of school child care help to support positive developmental outcomes for school-aged children?	A literature review of key developmental trajectories of children in the middle years was conducted. The investigator obtained information on developmental trajectories from academic journal articles and books on middle childhood development. The investigator also reviewed literature on quality child care to determine the best practices in out of school child care which can help to support healthy physical, cognitive and psychosocial development in school-aged children.	A literature review was the best method to answer this sub-question because it provided a quick and cost effective overview of the current knowledge of developmental trajectories in middle childhood and the ways in which out of school child care programs can help to support healthy development across these trajectories.
2. According to the current literature what characteristics does out of school child care need to have in order to be high quality?	The investigator conducted a literature review on quality practices in out of school child care using academic journal articles as data sources. A cross-jurisdictional review of best practices in out of school child care in four jurisdictions was also conducted. Data sources included government reports, frameworks and legislation related to quality enhancement strategies in out of school care.	A literature review provided a quick and cost effective way of establishing what is currently believed to constitute high quality in out of school child care. Information about how other jurisdictions have implemented after school child care provides practical ideas for policy in BC. While interviews with policy-makers in these jurisdictions may have provided more in-depth information about their practices,

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		a scan of publically available was significantly quicker and more cost effective for the purposes of this initial study.
3. What information does BC have regarding the quality of BC's out of school child care sector and what are the information gaps?	<p>The investigator reviewed academic research, the BC government Web site, public reports by advocacy groups and child care legislation to determine what current information is available on out of school care quality in BC.</p> <p>The information gaps were determined by analysing the types of quality information BC does not collect in comparison to what the literature says is important for providing a quality child care system.</p>	A review of public material on out of school care in BC was the best method to use in order to determine what information on quality was available because this information is not confidential and can be shared publically, and also was readily available to the investigator for review. This method was also more cost and time effective than conducting interviews with child care policy staff.
4. To what degree, and in what respects does BC's out of school child care sector have the characteristics of high quality child care?	To determine the level of quality in BC's out of school child care sector, the investigator compared the information available on quality in BC's programs with the literature on child care quality and with the best practices described in the cross-jurisdictional review. The investigator noted instances where not enough information was available to determine the degree of quality in BC's out of school child care programs.	Give the timelines and resources available it was not possible to collect primary data on the quality of BC's after school care system. Given these constraints a comparison of publically available information was the best approach for this initial study.
5. What short term and longer term strategies can BC implement to increase its knowledge about the quality of BC's out of school child care sector and to	The investigator hosted a focus group session with representatives of the cross-ministry Out of School Child Care Working Group. Based on the results of the comparison of BC's current out of school care practices to the best practices identified in the literature review and cross-jurisdictional scan, the investigator presented a series of recommendations to	A focus group session was the best method to use for this question because it brought together a variety of policy experts on BC's out of school care sector. Participants were able to speak to the perspectives of the different ministries which are involved in out of school care.

increase the quality of this sector?	enhance quality in BC's out of school child care sector to the Working Group (further detail on the process involved in the focus group is provided below and in <i>Appendix B</i>).	Discussions with the cross-ministry representatives helped to identify which recommended policy or program changes are feasible in the short and long term in BC given the current fiscal climate and political direction.
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Results of this research informed the development of recommendations for enhancing out of school child care in BC, which were brought forth to a focus group comprised of representatives of the cross-ministry Out of School Child Care Working Group for feedback and discussion on the feasibility of implementing these recommendations. Focus groups use group interaction to generate data for a research study, particularly if the investigator wishes to capitalize on the experience and knowledge of a diverse group of people (Kitzinger, 1995, p.299). The investigator submitted an application for ethics approval for human participant research to the University of Victoria's Human Research Ethics Board. The target recruitment group was the Out of School Care Working Group, which is an MCFD-driven cross-ministry working group which includes representation from the BC Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development. Focus group participants were chosen from this group because representatives on the Out of School Care Working Group are BC Public Service employees who are knowledgeable on policies and initiatives related to programs for school-aged children in the before and after school hours. All eight members of the Out of School Care Working Group signed a consent form agreeing to be part of the focus group. Four participants attended the focus group discussion in person (for a total of six people present at the session, including the investigator and the recorder) and four participants submitted their responses to the questions electronically. The investigator used PowerPoint to first present the results of the literature review, cross-jurisdictional review and analysis of BC's out of school child care sector (the presentation and focus group questions were emailed to participants in advance of the session). An MCFD staff person not associated with this project recorded the focus group session by hand and using audio recording. The focus group schedule is provided in *Appendix B*. To code the data the investigator reviewed the notes for each question and used a (1) or a (2) to delineate where participants agreed (1) or disagreed (2) with the recommendation. The investigator then used letter coding (i.e. a, b, c, d, etc...) to identify themes within the discussion, which entailed reviewing all of the written and transcribed notes for each focus group question and determining where the content was similar and different. Similar content (i.e. comments made about consulting with stakeholders) was grouped and marked with a letter code to determine where participants made the same type of response to the focus group question. The coding results which show the common themes for each focus group question are also shown in *Appendix B*. Results of the focus group are described in Section 5.4.

3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

This literature review outlines the research and evidence associated with middle childhood development and child care quality, specifically the role that children's experiences in out of school child care programs have in supporting their healthy physical, cognitive and psychosocial development. The focus on this line of research will provide information on developmental norms in middle childhood and help policy-makers to better understand the quality features of out of school child care that can best support healthy child development and well-being. By having a clear understanding of the ways child care can foster positive developmental outcomes in children, the BC Government will be able to assess how to best proceed with improving quality in the province's out of school child care sector. Information obtained through this literature review will help to address the overarching research question: *What strategies can the British Columbia Ministry of Children and Family Development implement to assess the overall quality of BC's out of school child care sector and to determine which quality measures need to be improved?*

This review focuses on middle childhood (ages six to 14 years) since out of school child care is typically available for children in middle childhood. This review uses the academic and grey literature to help answer two sub-questions:

1. *What are the key developmental trajectories of middle childhood and how can out of school child care help to support positive developmental outcomes for school-aged children?*
2. *According to the current literature what characteristics does out of school child care need to have in order to be high quality?*

Major trends in the research on middle childhood and quality out of school child care including gaps or areas of disagreement between different works are discussed. Key findings in the research show that positive childhood experiences within multiple environmental systems have an important role in shaping healthy development and well-being. Bronfenbrenner's highly influential Ecological Systems Theory is used to elaborate the relationship between experiences and positive child development. Current research also shows that children experience significant physical, cognitive and psychosocial developmental changes throughout middle childhood and that quality out of school child care programs can help to foster each of these developmental trajectories. This review identifies the various structural and process indicators associated with high quality out of school care, such as an adequate physical environment, developmentally appropriate activities, well trained staff and ongoing program evaluation. Information garnered through the literature review and subsequent cross-jurisdictional scan informs the development of recommendations to enhance quality in out of school child care in BC (Section 5.5).

3.2 Middle Childhood Development

Researchers disagree about the most common developmental milestones in middle childhood (between the ages of six to 14). This variation in theories of childhood

development extends back over a century when psychological theorists attributed different developmental changes to children throughout middle childhood. Freud, for example, associates middle childhood with a latency period in which little developmental activity occurs (Papalia, Olds, Feldman, & Kruk, 2004, p.26), while Piaget emphasizes important cognitive developments and children's capacity to reason and apply logic to solve problems throughout this period (The National Academies Press, 1984, p.4). Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, on the other hand, identifies middle childhood as a period when children develop a sense of industry (Papalia et al., 2004, p.26). Despite these variations in historical perspectives on middle childhood development current research shows that several key milestones are achieved throughout this time period at rates varying with each child's genetic disposition and experiences (Papalia et. al, 2004, p.332). It is now recognized that significant biological, cognitive and social changes occur throughout a child's middle years (Eccles, 1999, p.30).

A common way of understanding children's development in middle childhood is through a model of three separate but interdependent developmental trajectories: 1. physical development; 2. cognitive development; and 3. psychosocial development (Papalia et. al, 2004, p.11). These categories are used by other research groups to describe developmental milestones in children. The Human Early Learning Partnership's (HELP) Early Development Instrument (EDI), for example, assesses children's development in BC kindergarten classrooms across five domains, including physical development, cognitive development, and psychosocial development. The specific physical, cognitive and psychosocial developmental milestones in middle childhood are discussed in further detail in this report with an emphasis on how school child care programs can foster optimal well-being and growth across these developmental trajectories.

A consistent finding in the current research on children is that genes and the environment play a dynamic role in children's development. While children are biologically predisposed to acquire certain traits and characteristics that will dictate how they will develop, there is a strong argument that the environment and experience are also critical to a child's future success and well-being (Papalia et. al, 2004, p.21). Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory can be used to explain the key role that experience has in shaping child developmental outcomes. This theory states that children undergo a range of different experiences as they develop and that these experiences, which include the various environments and people children interact with, help to shape their development. An overview of how the broader environment impacts children's development throughout the middle years is now provided in the context of Ecological Systems Theory.

Middle Childhood and Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory has strongly influenced current approaches to understanding child development. For example the development of the Middle Years Development Instrument, which is described below, was informed by Bronfenbrenner's theory that "social, biological and cultural factors in different ecological contexts jointly influence children's development" (Schonert-Reichl et. al, 2010, p.12). It

is now accepted that middle childhood is a critical period of physical, social and cognitive development in which children begin to explore and be influenced by environments beyond their immediate family, such as school and their broader community (Schonert-Reichl et. al, 2009). Throughout middle childhood, children spend more time in environments outside of their homes and are more heavily influenced by their peers and adults other than their parents (Hanvey, 2006, p.2). Environments which foster optimal health and development for children in the middle years help them to thrive and transition into healthy, competent adolescents. These environments can include a range of settings which Bronfenbrenner describes as interconnected systems.

Bronfenbrenner describes a series of interconnected systems in his explanation of how experience impacts child development. These four ecological systems interrelate in such a way as to provide unique experiences for children as they develop into adults. Ecological Systems Theory applies to a range of childhood experiences from birth to young adulthood, but can be attributed specifically to middle childhood development as follows:

- **Microsystem** – the face to face connections children in middle childhood have with other individuals, such as family members, school teachers or peers;
- **Mesosystem** – the connection between two or more microsystems, such as a child's school and out of school child care setting;
- **Exosystem** – the settings which may indirectly impact a child's development, such as parents' work place or a child care provider's training institution; and
- **Macrosystem** – the broader societal and cultural context in which a child is raised (Marshall, 2004, p.165).

This system is often graphically depicted to show the individual child at the centre of a series of concentric circles which extend from the microsystem as the inner-most circle closest to the child to the macrosystem, which is further displaced from the child but still influences the child's development. The various interactions between these systems help foster the holistic growth of children, particularly throughout middle childhood when children are interacting more with their broader society.

Some researchers have put Ecological Systems Theory into practice for the middle childhood age group. Dr. Kimberley Schonert-Reichl is an applied developmental psychologist who has spent the past 20 years exploring the mechanisms that foster positive social development in middle childhood and has focused particularly on BC's population of children. Schonert-Reichl et al. (2007) identify positive school experiences and connectedness with parents, peers, school and community as critical dimensions of middle childhood development (p.5). The 2007 Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI) study lead by Schonert-Reichl researched the psychological and social experiences of a sample of grade four to grade seven children in the Lower Mainland and describes how children spend their time outside of school hours. Participant children self-reported on a variety of their social experiences, including time spent in the after school hours; parents also completed surveys about their children's use of after school time. Children responded to a series of questions related to their emotional connectedness to family, peers, school and the community; their social and emotional

health; body image; and competence and achievement in school. Results showed that 50 per cent of participants were in structured after school activities while the remaining half were typically at home “spending time on sedentary activities that tend to dislocate them socially” (Schonert-Reichl et. al, 2007, p.12). Parents noted barriers such as availability and cost to their children accessing structured after school time activities. Other findings linked excessive screen time (i.e. television; computer) with poor social and emotional health, and stressed the importance of children’s relationships with peers and other adults in supporting healthy social and emotional development throughout the middle years. Overall, the study results show that “children benefit significantly from participating in structured activities during the after school hours” (Schonert-Reichl et. al, 2007, p.17). Constructive use of after-school time helps children to build relationship skills, develop pro-social behaviour and achieve other positive developmental outcomes (Schonert-Reichl et. al, 2010, p.24). This research is a practical demonstration of the role of childhood experiences in helping to shape children’s overall health and development, which is a key feature of Ecological Systems Theory.

One example of a child’s microsystem is the activities they partake in and the people they interact with during the after school hours, such as participating in out of school child care programs. As described above, structured activities and programs are most beneficial if they help support growth and development by nurturing the physical, cognitive and psychosocial changes children experience throughout middle childhood. These developmental milestones are described in more detail along with the role of out of school care in fostering development along these three domains. Practical examples of out of school care programs which offer high quality services in support of middle childhood development are provided in the cross-jurisdictional review (Section 4.0 of this report).

Developmental Domains of Middle Childhood

Children experience a range of physical, cognitive and psychosocial changes as they transition from early childhood into adolescence over the middle childhood period of development. Table 2 summarizes Papalia et. al’s (2004) theory of the typical developments during this time period for each of these three domains.

Table 2

Typical Major Developments in Periods of Middle Child Development

Physical Developments	Cognitive Developments	Psychosocial Developments
- Growth slows	- Egocentrism diminishes and	- Self-concept becomes more
- Strength and athletic skills develop	children begin to think logically but concretely	complex, affecting self-esteem
- Respiratory illnesses are common, but health is	- Memory and language skills increase	- Co-regulation reflects gradual shift in control from

<p>generally better than at any other time in lifespan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cognitive gains permit children to benefit from formal schooling - Some children show special educational needs and strengths 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> parents to child - Peers assume central importance
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(Papalia, Olds, Feldman & Kruk, 2004, p.11)

Each domain is discussed in further detail with a lens on how out of school care providers can help impact children’s development.

i. **Physical Development**

Children’s growth rate throughout middle childhood is slower compared to adolescence and early childhood, though during these years muscle and bone strength increase (Harold & Hay, 2005, p.3). Experiential factors such as the family environment can influence physical development in middle childhood, particularly with respect to healthy body weight (Dowda et. al, 2001). Parents and caregivers have a key role in ensuring children have access to nutritious foods and opportunities to engage in activities that support healthy physical development. There is also a role for out of school care providers to promote physical development and health in children who attend these programs before and after school, as discussed below.

Proper nutrition contributes significantly to healthy physical development (Papalia et. al, 2004, p. 331). Childhood obesity is a key concern during these formative years, particularly in Western civilizations where fast food diets are relatively popular. Research indicates that parents and caregivers have a strong influence on childhood obesity, and indeed parents are considered “the gatekeepers of the kinds of foods available to the child and provide the structured environment whereby children are introduced and socialised towards food” (Skouteris et. al, 2012, p.170). Changing a child’s activity levels and diet to promote a healthy body mass is therefore more effective when the child’s entire family engages in similar eating and exercise habits. Children also need to consume nutritious foods in order to maintain healthy bones and muscles and to support the enhanced motor development that occurs in middle childhood. Malnutrition due to lack of nutritious food and obesity due to an unhealthy diet can negatively impact physical growth. Out of school care programs which offer healthy after school snacks contribute to children’s optimal physical development, particularly if children who participate in the program do not have access to healthy and nutritious foods in the home or in school. A healthy eating component to programming should be included as part of the operational budget of out of school care programs. Staff can also act as role models for children by demonstrating healthy eating habits or by teaching children the value of a proper diet that helps to promote optimal physical growth.

In addition to healthy food options children need opportunities to engage in physical activity to help prevent future incidences of chronic disease and to improve overall physical health (Sothorn et.al, 1999). The Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines suggest that children aged five to 11 engage in at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per day, including three days per week of vigorous intensity activities and muscle strengthening activities (Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology, 2012, p.1). These guidelines offer examples of activities that parents and caregivers can plan for their children, such as walking or biking to school, swimming or playing active games on the playground. Out of school child care settings that offer physical activity as a component of their programming provide health benefits for children who may not otherwise engage in enough physical activity throughout the day. These programs could offer a variety of sports activities different days of the week to keep children interested and engaged. Other activities could be offered for children who are not interested in participating in team sports, such as dance or swimming. This draws attention to the importance of out of school care programs affiliating with other community resources, such as recreation centres and sports leagues, to ensure children have access to a wide variety of activities. Studies also recognize the importance of play in supporting healthy physical development in children (Bergen & Fromberg, 2009, p.426). Out of school care providers should ensure children have enough space to engage in self-organized activities and free play time, such as running, jumping and skipping, to help promote physical activity and health.

ii. Cognitive Development

Children require mental stimulation and opportunities to learn in addition to the activities that support physical development. The following describes children's typical cognitive developments throughout middle childhood and highlights the ways in which out of school care programs can impact positive cognitive development.

Cognitive functioning is considerably enhanced during middle childhood through children's higher understanding of concrete operations, which is a phase of cognitive development in which children's capacity to think logically enhances (Papalia et. al, 2004, p.315). Children start recognizing patterns and spatiality, as well as numbers, categorizations and causality throughout the middle years. After age six children's self awareness and selective attention enhance and they can retrieve information more readily, helping to advance their learning and thinking skills and increase their knowledge base through school and other experiences (Eccles, 1999, p.33). It is fitting that children enter the school system in middle childhood given their expanded cognitive abilities throughout these years, particularly since they can now apply reasoning and logical thought to their activities (Harold & Hay, 2005, p.4).

During middle childhood children become more proficient in language and literacy, particularly in the linguistic area of pragmatics (Papalia et. al, 2004, p.345). With their enhanced cognitive abilities, children are able to use grammar and vocabulary in more advanced ways and can demonstrate a better understanding of reading comprehension

and use (Schul, Townsend & Stiles, 2003, p.262). Children's grasp of language is best encouraged through practice and experience, which highlights the importance of school in supporting literacy and language acquisition. This ability can only be improved through further experience with reading in settings outside of school, such as in the home and during children's discretionary time or in out of school care programs.

Child development can occur at different rates depending on each child's individual experiences and whether their environment promotes or inhibits development (Coll & Szalacha, 2004, p.84). Children raised in supportive environments that foster their cognitive development and who have opportunities to master their skills in school and in the home may fair better than children raised under difficult circumstances. For example, if children are not given adequate opportunities to practice reading then they may find it challenging to master this skill over time. Out of school care programs can offer a variety of activities to help children develop higher cognitive functioning and hone their literacy skills, which is especially beneficial to those children who do not have adequate opportunities to practice these skills at home. Child care providers should offer a variety of books and interactive learning programs such as memory games that are age appropriate and are replaced on a continual basis to keep children engaged. Some out of school care programs have an academic component to programming in which staff are available to offer homework support for older children. Children's ability to play also helps to support executive functioning when they have to follow rules, use symbols in games or develop scripts for dramatic play (Bergen & Fromberg, 2009, p.428). Further practical examples of specific activities in out of school care which support cognitive development are explored in the cross-jurisdictional review section of this report.

iii. Psychosocial Development

Middle childhood is also accompanied by heightened social and emotional awareness in tangent to the physical and cognitive changes children experience during this period. The following discussion on psychosocial development in children throughout middle childhood highlights the impact that children's experiences in out of school child care have on their social and emotional developmental outcomes.

Children in the middle years become more aware of their place in society as they begin to develop relationships with peers and to exhibit self-regulation and emotional competence (Colle & Del Giudice, 2011). Self-regulation helps children to control their own behaviours, a particularly useful skill as children in this age range begin to interact more with peers and adults outside of their immediate families. Middle childhood is also marked by the ability to understand one's own emotions and those of other people (Harold & Hay, 2005, p.4). An understanding of how people react to different situations helps to foster empathy and pro-social behaviour within children, and they become more sensitive to the inherent differences between themselves and others. This is valuable as children in middle childhood begin to explore their social environments and interact with more people outside of their home.

Children's self-esteem and a positive self-concept can be strengthened by a strong social support network involving parents, peers and teachers (Papalia et al., 2004, p.349). Some children may experience learned helplessness if they are not encouraged and supported to believe they are capable of achievement in a variety of tasks. Although children naturally develop and mature on their own throughout middle childhood, parents and teachers play a crucial role in motivating children to perform well and to become competent learners. This can extend into the out of school care system when qualified program staff engage children in activities that foster social and emotional well-being and help children to gain self-confidence and feel a sense of worth in what they do.

Out of school care staff can take several measures to help ensure school-aged children develop a positive sense of self and to exhibit pro-social behaviour. Programs should offer a wide variety of activities in which children can choose to participate to help them develop a sense of competence (Rosenthal & Vandell, 1996, p.2444). Children develop a stronger sense of autonomy and independence when they can make their own decisions about which activities to engage in. Out of school care programs could also take advantage of the resources available for helping to develop empathy in children, such as BC's Roots of Empathy program, which aims to reduce violence and aggression in school aged children while raising social and emotional competence (Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2008, p. 15). Empathy and pro-social behaviour can also be learned through books and activities which explore diverse populations and by learning about individual differences. Out of school care programs could celebrate diverse cultures to help children develop a better understanding of social dynamics.

Although the physical, cognitive and psychosocial developmental domains of children during middle childhood differ in certain ways, it is recognized that children grow holistically and that each of these developmental components are interrelated (Ministry of Education, 2008, p.11). Out of school care programs that are of high quality should have the capacity to support and nurture children's holistic growth throughout the middle years. The following review of child care quality in out of school care describes the various facets of quality that help children in middle childhood meet their developmental outcomes.

3.3 Out of School Child Care Quality

Researchers and practitioners define quality in child care settings in various ways and the concept of quality continues to evolve as new studies emerge on child development. While there is no common definition of child care quality (Flanagan, 2005, p.36), it is recognized that child care cannot be considered high quality if it only meets the basic levels of health and safety (Goelman et. al, 2000, p.20). Other factors must be present in order to create high quality child care programs.

The literature on child care quality is extensive for child care programs focused on the early years (children birth to six years of age) but is less focused on child care quality

for children in the middle years. Few studies have been conducted on the quality features of out of school care (Rosenthal & Vandell, 1996) and limited research is available on the effects of quality out of school care programs on developmental outcomes in children (Little, 2007). This review focuses specifically on the literature that is available on quality in out of school care programs.

Many studies tend to categorize child care quality indicators as either structural or process (Marshall, 2004, p.166). This review focuses specifically on the indicators of process and structural quality for school-aged programs. Some of the quality components discussed focus on the individual program level while others reflect a broader, more systems level approach to providing high quality out of school care.

Structural Quality

Structural quality generally refers to operational features of a child care facility and the characteristics of the environment that maintain high quality practice. These indicators are typically regulated through legislation or standards and can usually be measured quantitatively or are easily observed (Goelman et. al, 2000, p.20). Examples of structural quality indicators may include staff to child ratios, the number of children enrolled in a child care program, education levels of staff and training and professional development opportunities (Marshall, 2004, p.166). This quality type can be assessed in terms of the following attributes of out of school child care programs: i) staff to child ratios and physical environment; ii) staff education and training; and iii) overall program governance.

Staff to child ratios are one indicator of structural quality in out of school care. Child care programs which have small group sizes and high staff to child ratios in which children receive more one-on-one individualized care and attention are typically considered of higher quality (Little, 2007, p. 4; Greenspan, 2003, p.1066; Rosenthal & Vandell, 1996, p.2435). Research shows that low staff to child ratios in out of school care may result in both children and parents reporting a poor emotional climate in out of school care settings (Rosenthal & Vandell, 1996, p.2442). Children who are unhappy or who do not feel emotionally supported when attending these programs may have lower self-esteem or other psychosocial developmental challenges (Rosenthal & Vandell, 1996, p.2442). Staff to child ratios in child care programs generally tend to decrease as children get older; given that out of school child care programs offer care for school-aged children, these programs typically have the lowest staff to child ratios of all child care categories. Under BC's Child Care Licensing Regulation, for example, one staff person is required for groups of 12 to 15 children, depending on whether children in preschool or grade one are present; two staff are required for groups of 24 to 30 children. These ratios are explored further in the BC context analysis section of this report.

Children in out of school care also require adequate physical space in which to explore and develop. Beach and Friendly (2005) review the regulations governing physical space requirements across the Canadian provinces and territories, noting the contribution of the physical environment to high quality child care (p.1). Their research

indicates key elements of a quality physical environment to include a physical layout of furnishing and equipment that is age appropriate and conducive to the centre's pedagogical philosophy; adequate square footage of both indoor and outdoor space; and sanitary food preparation facilities in which culturally respectful and nutritious foods may be prepared (p.3). This study shows that BC's licensing regulation requires the lowest square footage of indoor space for out of school child care relative to the province's other care types and indicates that BC's child care legislation does not specify outdoor space requirements for school-aged children. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) 2004 Country Note on early childhood education and care in Canada also reports a lack of adequate outdoor space in the nation's child care centres relative to certain Nordic countries, such as Finland and Sweden, which emphasize the importance of physical activity and outdoor play as well as exploration of the child's natural environment. The critical role of physical activity in promoting healthy middle childhood development that was previously discussed shows that out of school child care centres should have large enough indoor and outdoor spaces to include activities that support gross motor movement as a component of high quality programming.

Staff experiences and qualifications are also noted as quality indicators in out of school care programs. The Harvard Family Research Project surveyed researchers and out of school child care professionals' perceptions of the most important contributor to quality out of school care and received an overwhelming consensus that well trained and well compensated staff were critical to achieving high quality (Harvard Family Research Project, 2004, p.1). The *You bet I CARE* study also revealed predictors of child care quality to include such factors as staff wages, working conditions and staff characteristics and attitudes (Goelman et. al, 2000, p.xi). This research shows that higher quality care is found in settings in which staff feel valued, which can be facilitated by higher wages and supportive leadership from facility directors. These operational practices help program staff to feel more engaged and supported which in turn creates a more positive work environment. Staff thus display more positive interactions with children and help them to feel more welcome and nurtured, which indicates a high quality out of school care program (Child Development Resource Connection Peel, 2010).

Another key predictor of child care quality in out of school care is staff education levels and professional development opportunities. Kim Flores is a leader in participatory evaluation with a background in developmental psychology and has consulted with the Robert Browne Foundation on exploring the practical features which make out of school care programs high quality. Flores (2010) linked quality to the overall organizational effectiveness of out of school care programs and developed a comprehensive list of quality indicators related to the overall governance of out of school care programs, including ongoing staff learning and improvement (p.4). Studies have shown that staff sensitivity tends to increase for staff with more formal early childhood education and for those who have engaged in training opportunities and workshops (Burchinal, Cryer, Clifford & Howes, 2002; Goelman et. al, 2000). These findings were supported even after controlling for staff to child ratios and staff experience. Robert Rosenthal and

Deborah Vandell (1996) conducted empirical research on the association between various program features and children's experiences in 30 out of school care settings in Wisconsin. Their study on quality program features hypothesized that staff with more formal levels of education would be better trained to exhibit positive interactions with children participating in out of school care programs (p.2435). Results showed an increased frequency of negative interactions between children and staff and in turn less emotionally supportive staff in programs where they had less formal education (p.2443). Staff sensitivity is further explored in the subsequent discussion on process quality, which looks at the impact of interactions and relationships between staff and children. Priscilla Little (2007) of the Harvard Family Research Project describes the impact of quality out of school care programs on child outcomes and makes recommendations for child care policy-makers wanting to enhance quality in out of school child care programs. Indicators of quality out of school care programming include staff management practices that focus on retaining well educated staff and providing ongoing training opportunities (Little, 2007, p.4). Out of school child care programs typically employ staff with the least amount of formal education and training. BC licensing regulations require that out of school child care programs be staffed by one or two responsible adults, depending on group size, who must have completed only 20 hours of course work related to children.

In its recommendations for improving quality in Canada's early education and care system, the OECD proposes that jurisdictions work to strengthen the initial and continued training of child care staff in order to positively impact child well-being (2004, p.81). They suggest that high quality staff are those who develop individualized plans for each child and offer feedback to parents on their children's progress. Involving families in children's out of school care experience is a strong indicator of quality in out of school care (Little, 2007, p.4; Seligson & Coltin, 1991, p. 2). The issues with training and education for BC's out of school care staff are detailed in the BC context section of this report.

It is well recognized that qualified staff contribute significantly to high quality child care programming; however, low wage levels and varied work hours create significant recruitment and retention challenges for this sector. High staff turnover due to low wages and the part-time nature of after school care create significant challenges for many out of school care programs (Raley, Grossman & Walker, 2005, p.30). Given the economic climate and low public funding currently available for child care programs in BC, wage enhancements for out of school child care staff are unlikely to happen in the near future. However, strong leadership and guidance for facility staff is helpful in reducing staff turnover, which in turn helps to create more positive child care experiences for children. Governments at all levels need to partner with child care administrators to create an effective recruitment and retention strategy to help reduce staff turnover and burnout, which in turn ensures children receive high quality care.

Quality is also associated with overall governance of out of school care programs. For the purpose of this report, governance refers to the quality components that contribute

to the overall delivery of out of school child care, including program funding; legislative oversight; quality frameworks; and evaluation and monitoring.

Research into child care in Canada recognizes the need for enhanced public funding to increase the provision of high quality programs (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2004, p.72). An effective budget strategy supported by sound resource management practices contributes to the overall organizational effectiveness of out of school care programs and helps provide higher quality services (Flores, 2010, p.4). Increased expenditure towards out of school child care programs supports a number of quality improvements, such as better equipped facilities with larger indoor and outdoor play spaces, higher wages and more professional development opportunities for staff to help reduce turnover and improved capacity for evaluation and oversight. As previously mentioned, each of these structural program features leads to higher quality out of school care services. The ability of programs to address these quality indicators is contingent on both capacity and resources available. Since many out of school care programs rely partially on public funding, the ability of programs to reach high quality status is partially dependent on government support. It is difficult for government to increase public expenditure on child care quality improvements in times of economic constraint and when competition exists for scarce resources. Government could consider more creative ways to provide enhanced funding to child care programs by exploring partnerships with municipalities and/or private organizations.

Legislative oversight is also crucial to helping to ensure child care programs meet certain structural quality standards. Child care licensing legislation and regulations, such as BC's *Child Care Licensing Act* and Child Care Licensing Regulation, outline the specific health and safety requirements child care centres must meet to ensure children are safely cared for. Any child care program in BC which cares for more than two children must be licensed to operate. The BC Government only provides operating funds to child care programs that have been licensed under the *Act* and regulations, indicating a higher preference for licensed programs compared to those programs that do not have monitoring or oversight. Of course licensing legislation is most beneficial if it is consistently and continuously enforced, so licensing officers play a critical role in helping to ensure programs meet their licensing standards on an ongoing basis. This speaks to the importance of capacity for licensing officers to do their jobs effectively.

Research shows that programs demonstrate higher quality when they meet more stringent licensing standards or have been accredited through processes over and above the typical health and safety standards dictated through licensing (Ceglowski & Davis, 2004, p.345). How can out of school child care programs improve quality over and above the health and safety standards typically regulated through licensing legislation? Some jurisdictions offer child care providers quality improvement resources in addition to licensing standards to help create a higher overall quality system that addresses all quality elements. Australia's National Quality Framework, for example, includes four components to support continuous improvement and increased quality in the country's early education and care sector, including: 1. a national legislative framework; 2. a National Quality Standard; 3. a national quality rating and assessment

process; and 4. a new national body called the Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2011). Together these elements replace previous separate licensing and quality assessment processes to create a more coordinated and consistent approach to quality assurance nation-wide. Quality frameworks also have the benefit of being developed to cater to a specific care type if needed. The cross-jurisdictional review (Section 4.0 of this report) examines frameworks developed specifically for out of school care programs in four jurisdictions. These frameworks provide more comprehensive and detailed information and resources for out of school care programs than legislation does alone, which is often generalized to multiple care types. Quality frameworks can also include processes to evaluate and monitor quality in out of school child care centres, which is discussed in further detail below.

Evaluation of out of school child care programs is key to determining if programs are delivering high quality services to children and their families. Flores (2010), who is a noted leader in participatory evaluation, lists ongoing monitoring and evaluation as one of the primary indicators of quality in out of school care (p.4). Evaluating out of school child care helps to assess how well these programs are fairing against established quality indicators or can be used to determine whether programs are helping to create improved developmental outcomes for children. Evaluation activities for programs for older children are often adapted from the quality assessments used for early years programs (Harvard, Family Research Project, 2004, p.13). These activities may include: gaining consensus on developmentally appropriate practice; developing a conceptual framework to guide program staff, researchers and policy-makers; and developing evaluation instruments that are valid and useful, and which include measures that are meaningful to practitioners.

Regular program evaluation “is the best way to get feedback on what is working and what isn’t so you can make continuous improvements” (Gieger and Britsch, 2004, p.1). Evaluation can take various forms and is used for both accountability and learning purposes (Harvard Family Research Project, 2004, p.14). Table 3 shows examples of various types of program evaluation and methods of assessment. A more comprehensive approach to evaluation which looks not only at program goals and administrative requirements, but also at parent, child and staff satisfaction with the program, helps to identify key areas of improvement. Some of the evaluation tools that are used specifically to assess out of school child care are discussed in the following section on process quality.

Table 3

Examples of Types of Program Evaluation and Methods of Assessment

Outcomes/Outputs	Data Source(s)
- Perceptions of benefits, enjoyment and quality of programs	Student, parent, staff, and teacher surveys and focus groups; adult participant surveys

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENHANCING QUALITY IN OUT OF SCHOOL CHILD CARE

- Perceptions of program quality in core academic areas and satisfaction with enrichment and support activities, including the link with the regular school day	Student, parent, staff, and teacher surveys and focus groups
- Satisfaction with services directed specifically at them	Parent surveys and focus groups; adult participants surveys
- Success of partnerships, building of relationships	Staff surveys and focus groups; partnership surveys
- Effective communication among stakeholders	Student, parent, staff, and teacher surveys and focus groups
- Operational support for program effectiveness	Staff surveys and focus groups; partnership surveys

(Geiger & Britsch, 2004, p.5)

As Table 3 indicates, several types of evaluation methods can be used to assess quality in child care programs. A follow up to this report should include further investigation into the different evaluation tools available for out of school care programs and an analysis of the tools which could be most applicable to BC's child care programs.

Process Quality

Process quality speaks to the direct experiences of children within child care settings as a result of their interactions with program staff and the activities and materials available to support their developmental growth (Marshall, 2004, p.166; Goelman et. al, 2000, p.4). These features of child care programs are more difficult to measure compared to the structural attributes previously discussed, which means that process quality indicators are not often monitored through legislative frameworks. The challenge also results from the inability to observe all child care centres to gain an understanding of children's individual experiences within these programs.

Research suggests a key process quality indicator for out of school child care to be associated with the types of activities available for children in these settings (Little, 2007, p.4; Rosenthal & Vandell, 1996, p.2441; Child Development Resource Connection Peel, 2010). Children attending child care centres with high process quality ratings in which activities are developmentally appropriate show better performance on cognitive tests and higher social and emotional outcomes relative to children in low quality centres (Vandell & Wolfe, 2000). It is important that children are given opportunities to practice the various physical, cognitive and social development skills they develop throughout middle childhood, so programs should offer a variety of age-appropriate activities from which children can choose. Indeed, Rosenthal and Vandell's (1996) study on the factors associated with children's perceptions of the psychosocial climate in out of school care programs shows that a larger variety of program activities available to children is significantly correlated with children's perceptions of positive

emotional support and autonomy in these programs. This study indicates that out of school care programs which provide “a rich array of activities may result in children viewing themselves as more competent because the children have had opportunities to make decisions and function independently” (Rosenthal & Vandell, 1996, p.2444). The literature also suggests that high quality out of school care programs include a range of both structured and unstructured activities which can be child-initiated and adequately capture the interests of children (Seligson & Coltin, n.d., p. 2). Quality out of school care programs thus contain elements of flexibility to their programming in which children can choose from multiple activities that promote independence and choice while supporting development and learning.

A relatively recent review of the various associations between process quality and child developmental outcomes and their behaviour within child care and in other settings found that children appear happier and exhibit more positive relationships with both staff and their peers when staff appear engaged and positively react to children (Vandell and Wolfe, 2000). The finding was echoed by an in-depth study of some of the out-of school programs funded by the Robert Browne Foundation which concluded that a key indicator of quality in out of school care programming to be a focus on positive growth and development in children rather than deficits (Flores, 2010, p.4). This implies that out of school care staff should recognize children’s capabilities and help support the development of their innate skills through a strengths-based approach rather than highlighting their limitations. Autonomy and choice in program activities combined with an environment which fosters nurturing and warm relationships between staff and children help support positive developmental outcomes for children attending out of school care programs (Little, 2007, p.8).

Several quality assurance tools are available to evaluate process quality in out of school care programs. Little (2007) analysed the state of quality assurance in out of school child care based on the Harvard Family Research Project’s 2005 scan of quality assessment tools for this sector (p.7). This scan revealed forty-four tools which measure over 3,000 indicators of quality in out of school care, including process quality indicators related to program activities and relationships between children and staff. The School Age Child Care Environmental Rating Scale (SACERS) is a research-based evaluation tool specific for centre based out of school child care programs. It was adapted from various quality assessment tools for early childhood programs, including the Early Care Environment Scale (ECERS), the Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS) and the Family Day Care Rating Scale (FDCRS) (FPG Child Development Institute, 2011). The SACERS assesses the range of activities children are exposed to in out of school child care and evaluates staff interactions with children to determine the extent that out of school care programs meet process quality standards. Arnett’s Caregiver Interaction Scale is another tool for measuring program quality in child care. It assesses four subscales of staff responsiveness to children, including positive interactions in which staff are warm and exhibit developmentally appropriate behaviour towards children and detached responses where staff appear disinterested in the children they are caring for (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010). Although this scale is not specific to out of school care, it shows there are various facets of staff interactions with

children that should be taken into account when assessing process quality in child care settings, including out of school care. As previously noted, further research should be conducted to compare and contrast the variety of quality evaluation tools available for out of school care programs in order to determine which tools are most applicable to BC's programs.

It is difficult to assess process quality in terms of children's experiences with staff and program activities without the resources and expertise to implement quality assessment tools which measure these program features. However, this type of indicator is a strong measure of quality in the child care sector and should be evaluated on a continuous basis. Some child care programs may meet the structural quality standards laid out in licensing legislation, but may fall short in offering positive and nurturing interactions between children and staff. This is an area that requires considerably more attention in BC's child care sector as a whole, which is analysed further in the BC context section of this report (Section 5.0).

3.4 Conclusion

This literature review aimed to answer two sub-questions:

1. *What are the key developmental trajectories of middle childhood and how can out of school child care help to support positive developmental outcomes for school-aged children?*
2. *According to the current literature what characteristics does out of school child care need to have in order to be high quality?*

To address question 1, this review outlined the major developmental milestones in children throughout middle childhood and the role that out of school child care can play in supporting positive developmental outcomes in children. Current research shows that children undergo a number of physical, cognitive and psychosocial developmental changes throughout middle childhood and that environmental factors and experience can heavily influence how well children develop across these domains. Healthy physical development is achieved when children have opportunities to engage in physical activity and have access to nutritious foods. Children also need opportunities to practice reading in order to develop their literacy skills and other cognitive functions. Adults have a fundamental role in ensuring young children develop a positive sense of self and reach their full potential across all developmental domains – opportunities that can be made available through children's participation in high quality out of school care programs.

This review responds to question 2 by outlining the characteristics that child care needs to have in order to be high quality. Research indicates there is no single definition of quality in child care programs. Rather, quality can be defined in terms of the various elements which contribute to creating high quality services. A number of structural and process elements are critical to creating quality out of school child care centres in which children can achieve healthy developmental outcomes. The literature review on child care quality indicates that high quality out of school care system should integrate a

number of quality components at a minimum. Table 4 summarizes the various structural and process quality elements that contribute to high quality out of school care:

Table 4

Summary of Structural and Process Indicators of Out of School Care Quality

Structural Quality	Process Quality
- high staff to child ratios	- age-appropriate activities
- adequate indoor and outdoor physical space with age-appropriate furnishings	- choice in the types of activities children can partake in
- well-trained staff with formal levels of education	- warm and nurturing relationships between staff and children
- sustainable program funding	- recognition of children’s strengths rather than their limitations
- legislative oversight through licensing	
- quality frameworks with information to help programs enhance the quality of their services	
- regular program evaluations	

The following jurisdictional scan illustrates how these quality indicators are put into practice through a detailed examination of four jurisdictions that are leaders in supporting high quality out of school child care. The information presented in this literature review will then be used assess the level of quality in BC’s out of school child care sector (Section 5.0) by identifying whether BC’s out of school care programs incorporate these different quality components.

4.0 CROSS-JURISDICTIONAL REVIEW

This cross-jurisdictional review offers examples of how governments, communities and service providers in four jurisdictions have developed high quality out of school care programs. The review examined four jurisdictions, Australia, Scotland, Manitoba and Kentucky, who are leaders in out of school child care practices because they have committed resources to enhancing quality in this sector using strategies and initiatives which reflect the information presented in the literature review (Section 3.0). Scotland is noted for emphasizing the value of out of school care services to its stakeholder groups which support children (Cartmel, n.d., p.6). Manitoba is mentioned in several reviews of child care quality initiatives (Flanagan Rochon, 2005, p.15; Doherty, Friendly & Beach, 2003, p.36). Australia was recognized by members of the cross-ministry Out of School Care working group as having strong quality enhancement initiatives specific to out of school care, and Kentucky was reviewed because of its recent 2011 release of a quality framework for out of school care. These jurisdictions also offer child care in a similar manner to BC by providing licensed and unregulated programs and having various types of child care funding programs to support both parents and providers (BC's funding programs are discussed in further detail in Section 5.0). A similar child care structure allows the initiatives presented in this cross-jurisdictional review to be more generalizable to BC.

Several common themes emerged in this review. All jurisdictions have developed a comprehensive framework with materials and resources, such as guiding principles and training information, to help increase quality in out of school child care at the individual program level and the broad systems level. The literature review identified the development of a quality framework to enhance program quality as a structural quality indicator, and this cross-jurisdictional review shows how these frameworks are put into practice in four jurisdictions. Practical guidance for out of school child care programs in the form of standards, equipment lists and/or guidelines are available to out of school care staff to help guide quality practice. Most jurisdictions support ongoing evaluation and quality assurance to ensure out of school care programs are adhering to pre-established quality standards and are supporting children's developmental outcomes. This aligns with the research which indicates that ongoing program evaluation is a structural quality indicator for out of school care programs. Finally, partnerships and collaboration between government and non-government organizations, out of school care programs, schools and other community organizations help improve quality in out of school child care. This cross-jurisdictional review aims to offer practical examples of quality out of school child care practices which may be used to inform quality improvements for BC's out of school child care system.

4.1 Australia

Several components of Australia's out of school child care sector help to create high quality programming for this nation's children and families. The following attributes of Australia's out of school care system are discussed in further detail: 1) the principles and pedagogical practices described in Australia's out of school care framework; 2) practical guidelines for how out of school care providers can support developmental

outcomes for school-aged children; and 3) the legislation-based National Quality Framework to support out of school child care to meet a range of quality standards.

The Australian Government bases its out of school care framework on the principles set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states that children have a right to play and to be active participants in matters affecting their lives. Australia's 2011 Framework for School Age Care entitled *My Time, Our Place* outlines principles, practices and outcomes to assist child care providers with quality program development for out of school child care. These guidelines focus on holistic approaches to care, learning through play, cultural competence and evaluation of well-being and learning as cornerstone to practice in Australian out of school child care centres. The Council of Australia Governments engaged a variety of stakeholders through the process of developing this framework, including child care staff, various levels of government, children and families. The goal of this framework is to "extend and enrich children's well-being and development in school age care settings" (Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2011, p.3).

Australia's framework bases its principles for quality out of school care upon current theories on children's learning:

- *Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships* – children are nurtured and treated respectfully to help them develop self-esteem and a sense of worth;
- *Partnerships* – communication and trust are the foundation of effective partnerships between out of school care programs and families, schools and the broader community;
- *High expectations and equity* – programs are inclusive and all children are given equal opportunities to succeed;
- *Respect for diversity* – staff respect and acknowledge children's different cultures and traditions; and
- *Ongoing learning and reflective practice* – staff continuously review their own practices to assess whether they reflect current theories and knowledge related to child development and well-being (Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2011, pp.11-13).

Australia's framework also sets out a number of pedagogical practices to guide out of school child care staff in program development and delivery. While these practices are broad and can be generalized to children of all age groups, they offer out of school care staff a sound theoretical framework for supporting child development and well-being. These identified practices include collaborating with children in program planning and ensuring the cultural and social context of children are supported and respected. See *Appendix C* for a full list of Australia's pedagogical practices for out of school care providers.

In addition to the principles and pedagogical practices discussed in this framework, the Australian government also offers practical guidance for out of school care providers to deliver high quality services to school-aged children in order to achieve the following

five outcomes: 1. Children have a strong sense of identity; 2. Children are connected with and contribute to their world; 3. Children have a strong sense of well-being; 4. Children are confident and involved learners; and 5. Children are effective communicators. As discussed in Section 3.2 of the literature review, these outcomes appear to be based on current understandings of children's emotional and psychosocial development in middle childhood development, namely a strong sense of self-worth. Australia's framework associates each outcome with several sub-outcomes and provides examples of how children may demonstrate that they are reaching each sub-outcome. For example, a sub-outcome flowing from Outcome #3 is "children become strong in their social and emotional well-being" (Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2011, p.31). Examples of how children may exhibit this include showing self-regulation and working collaboratively with others. The framework also provides examples of how child care staff can help facilitate children's achievement of these sub-outcomes. For Outcome #3 this may include discussing emotions and self-control with children at the centre or communicating children's achievements with their families (p.31). *Appendix D* provides examples from the framework on how program staff can help to achieve identified outcomes.

Australia is a good demonstration of a nation striving to enhance quality in its child care programs. In addition to the out of school care framework discussed here, Australia has developed a national quality framework for preschool, family day care and out of school care services. This framework is overseen by the newly created national body called the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority and includes a national legislative framework, a national quality standard and a quality assessment system (Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2011). Ongoing program evaluation was noted in the literature review (Section 3.3) as an important component of structural quality. The goals of the National Quality Standard are i) to ensure families understand the true meaning of quality services and ii) to promote the health and well-being of children through the delivery of high quality programs which will be evaluated on a number of quality areas, including: educational program and practice; children's health and safety; physical environment; staffing arrangements; relationships with children; collaborative partnerships with families and communities; leadership and service management. Beginning April 2012, Regulatory Authorities in each Australian state began rating child care programs against each of these quality areas. This is an approximately 20 week process whereby programs receive notice about their assessment date and must provide the Regulatory Authority with a quality improvement plan (New South Wales Government, n.d.). Out of school care programs, for example, are assessed on their physical environment in terms of fencing and security, shade in outdoor spaces, sufficient indoor space and the design of the premises. Following the onsite inspection programs are given an opportunity to comment on the assessment report before the final rating score is made publically available to help guide families in choosing an appropriate child care program to meet their needs.

The literature review identified legislative oversight as a key element of out of school care quality (See Section 3.3). Australia's national quality framework includes legislative

requirements under the new *Education and Care Services National Law* and the *Education and Care Services National Regulations*. This legislative framework replaces previous licensing and quality assurance processes under the *Child Care Act 2002* (Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2011). The *Education and Care Services National Regulations* sets out minimum requirements for child care programs against the seven quality areas and establishes the rating system for providers to be assessed against the National Quality Standard (Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, 2011). Under these Regulations child care programs must meet a range of regulatory requirements in order to receive service approval, which is similar to BC's child care licensing system in which providers must meet several requirements in order to be licensed to operate.

Australia appears to offer a variety of quality improvement strategies for both individual out of school care programs and for the system as a whole. The BC Government can learn from this dual approach to enhancing quality in this sector.

4.2 Scotland

Out of school care programming in Scotland is similar to BC's system in that programs are offered in a variety of settings, including schools, community centres and churches (Scottish Out of School Care Network, 2011). They may be operated by voluntary organizations with the help of parent participation or by local authorities. This section highlights a number of quality enhancement strategies Scotland has implemented for out of school child care services, including: 1) a comprehensive framework for the development of quality out of school care services; 2) legislation to assess how well programs meet certain quality standards of care; 3) systems to support collaboration between schools and out of school care programs; and 4) the Out of School Care Network to rate quality in Scotland's out of school care programs.

In 2003, the Government of Scotland, in association with the Scottish Out of School Care Network, drafted a framework for the development of quality out of school care services. Scotland's framework defines out of school care as the care of school-aged children in the hours before and after the school day and during school holidays (Scottish Government, 2003, p.17). Three overall goals for Scotland's framework are to: 1. Emphasize the benefits of out of school care; 2. Support the development of quality out of school care services that meet community demand; and 3. Establish priorities for out of school care in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2003, p.8).

Scotland's framework, entitled *Schools out: Framework for the development of out of school care*, provides information and resources related to best practice in the field to help assist a range of stakeholders with developing and delivering quality out of school care services. Stakeholders such as child care associations, local governments, service providers and schools can benefit from information on out of school care that has been informed by research and through consultations with out of school care professionals and children who utilize these services. Scotland's framework focuses strongly on the economic benefits of out of school care, particularly labour market impacts. It also recognizes the social benefits of out of school care for children, including: opportunities

for social development; increased self-confidence; healthy eating and physical activity; and reducing negative behaviours while improving citizenship in children (Scottish Government, 2003, p. 31). Each of these items was noted in the literature review (Section 3.2) as important to healthy middle childhood development.

The literature review indicated that licensing and evaluation are noted structural quality indicators in out of school care (Section 3.3). Scotland has several means of monitoring and enforcing quality in its out of school care programs and evaluates these programs along a variety of themes, such as staffing, facilities, environmental aspects and parent interaction. Under the 2001 *Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act*, the Care Commission (now called the Care Inspectorate) issues certificates of registration to out of school care programs that meet a high quality standard of care. This is much like the role of licensing offices in BC, which inspect licensed child care programs to ensure they continue to meet a range of legislative requirements related to staffing, physical space and other quality assurance indicators. This also echoes Australia's approval system for child care programs that meet regulatory requirements under the Education and Care Services National Regulations. Programs that are regulated under the *Regulation of Care Act* in Scotland must adhere to a comprehensive set of national care standards that have been developed based on the principles of "dignity, choice, safety, realising potential and equality and diversity" (Scottish Government, 2003, p. 36). Regional offices of the Care Inspectorate provide regular onsite inspections of child care services to determine whether programs are meeting the standards of care that apply to them. Each of these fourteen standards includes various activities that program staff and managers must engage in to be certified. For example, Standard 4 states that "each child or young person will be supported by staff who interact effectively and enthusiastically with him or her" (Scottish Government, 2011). This should be demonstrated by i) staff's understanding of key developmental milestones; ii) positive interactions with children which improve self-confidence and support learning; and iii) continuous assessments of each child's development and growth. *Appendix E* provides a list of the national care standards for child care in Scotland which apply to all regulated child care programs for children up to age 16, including out of school care.

Scotland's framework emphasizes the importance of physical location in providing quality out of school care services for children, and notes that "in many cases, schools can provide the ideal premises for (out of school care) clubs" (Scottish Government, 2003, p.44). The benefits of locating out of school care on school premises are also recognized; programs can utilize existing resources and children do not have to be transported. Such physical proximity helps to bridge the link between the education and care sectors, which helps to create a more integrated approach toward caring for children. The Scottish government has also dedicated resources to the development of community schools (Scottish Government, 2003, p.45). This model promotes collaboration within the community in providing overall family support and may be facilitated through public private partnerships between local authorities, schools and out of school care providers. Partnerships between out of school care programs and the broader community, particularly the school system, are similarly noted in Australia's framework for out of school care. Scotland focuses on the benefits of physically locating

out of school care programs on school grounds, in contrast to Australia's emphasis on the importance of information sharing between child care programs and the schools to help streamline transitions for children and create a seamless day.

The Scottish Out of School Care Network (SOSCN) provides another quality assurance mechanism. SOSCN is a resource for service providers aiming to deliver high quality out of school care programs. Since 1991, SOSCN has aimed to "work with children, government and develop links with child care organizations worldwide to share good practice" (Scottish Out of School Care Network, 2011). The SOSCN offers support and information to a variety of service providers associated with out of school care programs and aims to align its principles with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, particularly the child's right to play. This emphasis on play is similar to Australia's approach to caring for young children. The SOSCN has published a number of comprehensive resource packages, including materials related to starting up an out of school care program or improving a current out of school care business, and information on play-based activities and essential policies and standards for both employers and staff.

The SOSN has also developed a quality assurance tool for assessing how well out of school care programs in Scotland are meeting different quality standards. The Aim High Scotland quality assurance scheme uses an independent assessor to rate out of school care programs against 16 different quality areas, such as partnerships with parents, staffing, local networking and program access (Scottish Out of School Care Network, 2011). The quality assurance tool is only available to members of the Network. There is also a fee associated with participating in Aim High Scotland and for mentoring services for those programs wanting additional guidance through the process. While this may deter some programs from participating in Aiming High Scotland, the SOSCN does provide information on funding assistance that may be available through local authorities or grants. A quality assurance program such as Aiming High Scotland could be better utilized if it were publically funded and rolled up as a part of the Scottish government's support for out of school care; however the availability of this service does have its merits and helps to create a higher quality system.

The literature emphasizes the importance of physical activity in children throughout middle childhood and the importance of cultural diversity. Scotland's out of school care framework recognizes the critical role out of school care providers have in helping children to meet optimal physical activity levels and healthy outcomes. It also encourages out of school care providers to offer a range of cultural activities to help support creativity and develop children's self-confidence (Scottish Government, 2003, p.70). This has particular relevance since BC has a vast multicultural population and a strong Aboriginal presence. Out of school care programs should recognize children's diverse backgrounds and offer a range of activities to promote and support different heritages as part of a quality enhancement strategy for BC's sector.

4.3 Province of Manitoba (Canada)

Manitoba's strategies for improving quality in the Province's out of school care system show how this work is being implemented in Canada at a provincial level. A number of initiatives have been established to support quality in Manitoba's out of school care programs, including: 1) increased collaboration with the school system; 2) promotion of physical activity and healthy eating in out of school care programs; 3) an equipment list to support high quality practice; and 4) licensing processes to ensure out of school care programs meet minimum quality standards.

Over the past decade the Province of Manitoba has made a concerted effort to engage in long term strategic planning for child care. In 2002 the government created its Five Year Plan for Child Care and committed additional funds for new child care spaces, higher subsidy rates and increased staff salaries. The Province followed this up with a new plan in 2008 entitled *Family Choices: Manitoba's Five-Year Agenda for Early Learning and Child Care in Manitoba*. This latest plan focuses on improving Manitoba's child care system by enhancing accessibility of services, maintaining low parent fees and advancing child care quality (Province of Manitoba, 2008, p.3). The Family Choices strategy commits the government to investing in new child care spaces, including out of school care, and commits government to work with the Public Schools Finance Board and school divisions to allocate funds for child care in surplus school space (Province of Manitoba, 2008, p.5). It also focuses efforts on government's increased collaboration with the school system to ensure school-aged child care better meets the needs of families. Some school divisions, for example, are working with government agencies to integrate child care into their K-12 school system and have developed information resources for school administrative staff and out of school care providers to assist with this process. This linkage to the school system is similar to Scotland's efforts to ensure schools support the provision of out of school child care. Manitoba's Government also revised its parent's guide to choosing high quality child care programs to highlight the importance of "play-based, developmentally appropriate learning in contributing to literacy, numeracy, language, emotional and social development" (Province of Manitoba, 2008, p. 6).

Manitoba has established several initiatives to increase the quality of out of school care. After the School Bell Rings: A Manitoba After School Recreation Project is a provincial initiative with a dual purpose of helping to increase physical activity and healthy eating for children in out of school care while supporting communication and networking among out of school care providers to ensure effective service delivery (Recreation Connections Manitoba, 2011). The project is funded from February 2011 to March 2013 to offer a variety of resources which support healthy opportunities for children aged six to 12 being cared for in settings such as child care, recreation centres, schools and friendship centres. While the literature review indicated that physical activity and healthy eating as only one component of a high quality out of school care program, it is important to supporting children's physical development during such a formative time of maturation and growth. There is also an active and safe travel component to the project which provides an avenue for community stakeholders to discuss barriers to active travel (i.e. walking) for children in their communities.

Information and materials on increasing healthy outcomes in children are available through several resources offered by the After the School Bell Rings initiative, including an after school program resource manual for child care providers and a Web site with program ideas and a list of training opportunities (Recreation Connections Manitoba, 2011). An example of a resource provided on the project's Web site is a 2010 brief developed by Moore, Bronte-Tinkew and Collins on practices to foster quality in out of school care programs. These practices are based on current out of school care literature and a series of roundtable discussions with out of school care practitioners. Many of these practices closely align with the research-based practices discussed in the literature review section of this report. This brief includes several quality components noted in the literature review section of this report and recognizes the following practices as beneficial to an effective out of school care program in Manitoba:

- Positive and sustained relationships with caring adults;
- An organizational culture that focuses on the whole child;
- Engaging and varied activities;
- Opportunities for children and youth to have input into programs;
- Age-appropriate volunteer opportunities in which children and youth can participate;
- Engaged and involved parents and families;
- A program environment that has staff “buy in” for data and evaluation;
- Culturally appropriate programs;
- Varied and engaging approaches to staff training; and
- Treatment of children and youth as individuals (Moore, Bronte-Tinkew & Collins, 2010, p.3).

Another quality enhancement tool for Manitoba's out of school care system is a comprehensive equipment list to help providers to offer high quality care to school-aged children. The Manitoba Government adapted a list of materials and equipment for out of school care from research and literature on child care quality and the School-Age Environment Rating Scale developed in 1996 by Thelma Harms. This resource recognizes that “high quality early learning and child care programs provide safe, stimulating environments that are warm, comfortable, inclusive and aesthetically pleasing” (Province of Manitoba, n.d., p.1), and offers a comprehensive list of materials and equipment that should be available to children in out of school care. A key component of this resource is an explanation of how these materials should be offered to ensure children get the most effective use out of them. Children should be able to engage in a variety of developmentally appropriate activities of their choosing, both indoor and outdoor, that support their independence and learning while helping them to be creative and mature both physically and socially (Province of Manitoba, n.d., p.1). The literature review section on process quality in out of school care (Section 3.3) aligns with Manitoba's views on the range of activities and equipment that should be available to support optimal middle childhood development. See *Appendix F* for overarching activity themes provided in Manitoba's materials and an equipment list for out of school care services.

As with BC, Australia and Scotland, and as discussed in the literature review section on structural quality (Section 3.3), Manitoba also supports quality out of school care programming by issuing licenses to child care programs that meet certain standards. Under *The Community Child Care Standards Act* and Regulations, the Manitoba Child Care Program of Manitoba Family Services and Housing issues licenses to out of school child programs that meet minimum standards of care. Ongoing monitoring of programs is provided by child care coordinators who inspect licensed programs multiple times a year to ensure they are complying with the Regulations (Manitoba Family Services and Housing, n.d., p.7). Child care providers who apply for a license must include a comprehensive statement of program goals, as well as reports from fire and public health inspectors that the facility complies with basic health and safety rules. Programs must also meet staffing requirements, have appropriate furnishings and equipment and offer a range of activities to meet children's developmental needs. The *Best Practices Licensing Manual for Early Learning and Child Care Centres* is a guide for child care programs to understand the requirements of the Regulations. This resource aims to "provide well-researched ways to help improve program quality and ensure high quality early learning and child care" (Province of Manitoba, 2012).

4.4 Kentucky (United States)

In 2011, the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services introduced *The Kentucky School-Age Quality Framework* to help increase quality in both school and community-based out of school care programs for children and youth. Kentucky's Out-of-School Alliance developed the framework with funding support from the Division of Child Care and the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (Cabinet for Health and Family Services, 2011, p.9), and designed the framework to offer a "more coordinated quality system" for a range of out of school care programs, including licensed child care, community-based programs such as Boys and Girls Clubs and 4-H, faith-based programs for children and Federally Funded 21st Century Community Learning Centres (Cabinet for Health and Family Services, 2011, p.8). Each component of the framework is discussed in further detail and includes the following attributes of out of school care programming: 1) program standards; 2) accreditation and quality rating systems review; 3) training information; and 4) competency profiles for child development staff and program directors. The role of licensing in promoting quality services is also discussed.

Kentucky's out of school care programs standards have seven themes that parallel the structural and process quality measures discussed in the literature review (see above), including the indoor and outdoor environments; evaluations of the program, staff and participants; health and safety; professional development; and the quality of staff relationships with children, families and the community at large. Kentucky's framework also sets standards centred on program management, including the development of a clear vision, mission and measurable goals, as well as sound fiscal management and human resources processes as measures of quality (Cabinet for Health and Family Services, 2011, p.24). Under these standards, programs must clearly define their policies and procedures to staff and develop advocacy and awareness strategies to effectively communicate participant needs to decision makers (p.25).

Kentucky's framework promotes the importance of a flexible child care program schedule to accommodate the unique needs of families, which is applicable to BC's diverse population. Overall, Kentucky's quality standards appear broad and can be generalized to a range of child-serving programs and services outside of out of school care. The framework authors note that the standards were developed in this fashion to allow for "encouraging and celebrating the uniqueness of each program" (Cabinet for Health and Family Services, 2011, p.18). *Appendix G* lists examples of the standards associated with Kentucky's overarching quality themes for out of school child care.

Section 3.3 of the literature review discusses the role of evaluation in supporting quality out of school care and notes the range of tools available for assessing quality in out of school care programs. Kentucky's framework includes a review of several quality rating systems for out of school child care programs (Cabinet for Health and Family Services, 2011, p.40). A working group for this framework created a rubric based on the aforementioned program standards to help service providers assess which quality rating tool meets their individual needs. Six evaluation tools were assessed on whether they address a number of out of school care attributes, such as professional development, program structure, the environment, evaluation practices and relationships between staff and children. The rating guide also states whether there is a cost associated with each tool, if the tool is national or specific to a particular state and if the tool can be implemented internally or requires external assessment. Kentucky's framework does not promote a specific tool, but rather emphasizes that programs should use a tool which best meets their needs.

Kentucky's system aims to maintain a highly qualified workforce by providing up to date information for staff on continuous training and professional development opportunities. Staff training and education was identified in the literature review (Section 3.3) as one of the most important elements of a quality out of school care program. The Kentucky Out-of-School Alliance is currently developing an online training resource for qualified out of school care trainers to post information and resources for out of school care staff and providers. Information on upcoming training events, contact information for out of school care trainers, a message board for discussions on pertinent topics and other relevant information and materials are key features of this online resource (Cabinet for Health and Family Services, 2011, p.99). A focus group made up of high performing out of school care professionals in Kentucky developed a set of competency profiles to guide out of school care directors and staff to provide effective, high quality services to children. These competency profiles are outlined in *The Kentucky School-Age Quality Framework* and although they are somewhat confusing to interpret they do offer out of school care providers a detailed list of tasks that directors and staff should partake in to ensure programs have the greatest impact on children. For directors this includes such tasks as establishing safety guidelines, utilizing available community resources, recruiting employees, developing a program budget, managing records and facilitating a nutrition program. Staff duties may include monitoring attendance, preparing lesson plans, supervising hygiene procedures and maintaining the activity schedule.

Licensing is another quality support mechanism in Kentucky's out of school child care sector, as with the other jurisdictions discussed and as noted in the literature review. The Division of Regulated Child Care issues licenses to out of school care programs which meet all requirements set out in the Licensed Child Care Centre Regulations (Cabinet for Health and Family Service, 2012). Regional offices in Kentucky conduct regular inspections of child care programs to ensure they continue to comply with the health and safety standards related to various structural quality indicators, such as staff to child ratios, furnishings and other attributes of the physical premises and staff requirements.

Overall, Kentucky's framework provides out of school care providers with a comprehensive resource for ensuring program staff have the skills and knowledge to offer high quality services to children and their families. The next section analyses the similarities and differences between each jurisdiction's approach to enhancing quality in its out of school care programs.

4.5. Synthesis of Cross-jurisdictional Review

While each jurisdiction has a slightly different focus in supporting the quality of their out of school care programs several common themes emerged in this review. All jurisdictions have developed a comprehensive policy framework, or other resource materials specific to out of school child care, that focus on quality at the individual program level and the broad systems level of service delivery. Several key differences exist between these frameworks. Australia's framework has a strong focus on the role of out of school care staff in facilitating learning through play for school-aged children, while Kentucky emphasises the importance of training, credentials and competencies for out of school care staff and offers resources related to these topics for its out of school care programs. Scotland's framework highlights the benefits of out of school care for a range of stakeholders, including child care associations, local governments, service providers and schools, and recommends a cross-sectoral approach. This differs from Manitoba's out of school care resources which are primarily addressed to program staff and have a strong physical activity and healthy eating focus. Each of these jurisdictions' resources provides a comprehensive guide for out of school care staff to deliver high quality services that are based on research and aim to support the optimal growth and development of school-aged children. The BC government currently does not offer out of school care programs materials or resources specific to enhancing quality, so it should consider developing a framework which addresses the topics presented by these other jurisdictions, such as staff training, activities to support different developmental domains and opportunities for cross-sectoral collaboration. Since out of school care staff in BC are not required to have training in middle childhood development and funding for additional training may not be available at this time, then a resource which describes the most age appropriate activities to support healthy development in school-aged children would be the most beneficial for out of school care programs in BC.

In addition to the minimal standards established through licensing requirements, all jurisdictions provide practical guidance for out of school care staff but they do this in

different ways. Australia's out of school care framework offers specific activities for staff to help children reach a range of developmental outcomes, while Manitoba provides out of school care providers with a comprehensive materials checklist of materials. Scotland and Manitoba have developed program standards related to a range of areas but with a particular emphasis on physical health and well-being. Adherence to these quality standards is voluntary in both jurisdictions. Although BC's legislative requirements include program standards to help children reach certain developmental outcomes, these standards are not specific to out of school child care. The materials and activities these jurisdictions offer their programs could be adapted to suit BC's out of school care sector and help program staff to provide quality services in their communities.

All jurisdictions except Manitoba have comprehensive evaluation and quality assurance elements in their out of school care system. Australia provides quality assessment for out of school care programs as part of a national quality framework for child care services. Scotland's evaluation system, on the other hand, is operated through a non-government agency which assesses how well out of school care programs meet different quality standards. Kentucky's out of school care framework includes several examples of evaluation tools with a rating guide for providers to use to see which tool best meets their needs. This rating guide may be useful for BC given the diverse geographic and cultural elements of its out of school care programs. The Province should also establish a systematic process for evaluating quality in its out of school care programs similar to these jurisdictions' approaches. This could include implementing the School Age Child Care Environmental Rating Scale in all out of school care programs on a regular basis or collaborating with non-government agencies such as the School Age Child Care Association of BC to assist with quality assessments of BC's programs.

Partnerships and collaboration between government, non-government agencies, school care programs, schools and other community organizations were also important in all jurisdictions that were reviewed. Both Australia and Scotland promote the benefits of out of school care programs affiliating with schools, including continuity in transitions for children and improved knowledge transfer and coordination for families. Manitoba facilitates partnerships between out of school care programs and recreation services through its After the School Bell Rings initiative. Most of these jurisdictions have also created partnerships between government and non-government agencies to help better support quality improvements in child care and in some cases have developed their guiding frameworks with a variety of partners. As discussed in the BC Context section of this report, BC's out of school care programs are supported by a range of government and non-government agencies which could consider collaborating on ways to enhance quality in this sector.

This review shows that Australia, Scotland, Manitoba and Kentucky each dedicate considerable resources and effort in supporting out of school care providers to offer high quality services for children in their communities. The various strategies these jurisdictions implement to enhance quality in their out of school care programs are reflective of the quality components identified in the literature review of this report, including quality framework development, evaluation and assessment, support for child

care staff, appropriate activities for children and licensing requirements. Some additional strategies these jurisdictions have implemented include partnering with non-government organizations to develop resources to help enhance quality in out of school child care, as well as emphasising the benefits of co-locating out of school care services on school grounds. Table 5 summarizes each jurisdiction’s approach to improving quality in its out of school care system:

Table 5

Summary of Cross-jurisdictional Review Findings

Jurisdiction	Quality Improvement Strategies
Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bases its framework on the principles set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, in particularly the child’s right to play. - Pedagogical practices stem from five principles for quality out of school care, including nurturing relationships with children, partnerships with the community, inclusive programming, respect for diversity and continuous staff learning. - The framework is part of the Australian government’s national quality framework for early learning and child care which aims to improve the quality of child care programs and to promote the well-being of children in communities nation-wide.
Scotland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aims to assist a range of stakeholders to deliver high quality out of school care programs, including local government and schools, rather than focusing solely on child care providers and staff. - Delivers multiple quality assurance mechanisms and regulatory bodies that assess how well programs meet a range of quality standards. - Recognizes the important role of schools in helping to create an integrated out of school care system for families and promotes physical health and cultural awareness in Scotland’s programs.
Manitoba, Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Commits funds to improve accessibility and quality in the province’s child care system, including increased collaboration between schools and out of school care programs. - Offers a provincial initiative to increase physical activity and healthy eating in out of school care and to ensure providers have access to resources and information to help improve the quality of their services. - Distributes a material list for providers to help ensure children have opportunities to engage in developmentally appropriate activities that support their independence and learning.
Kentucky, United States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provides a comprehensive list of standards for a range of quality areas which includes specific activities to guide out of school care providers in delivering high

quality services for children and their families.

- Helps out of school care providers to determine the most appropriate quality assurance system for programs aiming for continuous improvement.
 - Strives to maintain a highly qualified workforce by supporting out of school care staff to partake in ongoing training and professional development opportunities.
-

This overview of quality enhancement strategies in four national and international jurisdictions can be used as a practical guide for BC Government policy-makers in determining strategies to improve quality in BC's out of school child care sector. While BC has the appropriate infrastructure to implement initiatives in order to help increase quality in out of school care, a challenge is whether there are sufficient resources to dedicate to this sector. The information provided in this review in conjunction with the research and evidence previously discussed on middle childhood development and quality features of child care will now be used to assess the quality of BC's out of school child care sector.

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF QUALITY IN BC'S OUT OF SCHOOL CHILD CARE SYSTEM

This section assesses the quality of BC's after school child care system and outlines draft recommendations. The following sub-questions are addressed:

3. *What information does BC have regarding the quality of BC's out of school child care sector and what are the information gaps?*
4. *To what degree, and in what respects does BC's out of school child care sector have the characteristics of high quality child care?*
5. *What short term and longer term strategies can BC implement to increase its knowledge about the quality of BC's out of school child care sector and to increase the quality of this sector?*

Publicly available BC government documents including annual reports, child care legislation, news releases, factsheets and strategic plans were used to show BC's current out of school child care policies and practices. Section 5.1 provides a general overview of child care service delivery in BC, and a summary of MCFD's child care funding programs and BC's legislative framework for child care with a focus on out of school care. To determine the extent to which BC's out of school child care sector has the characteristics of high quality child care I compared BC's policies and practices to the best practices identified in the literature and cross-jurisdictional review. On the basis of this assessment I drafted initial recommendations. The focus group session with representatives of the cross-ministry Out of School Care Working group was used to identify the feasibility of these recommendations. Their suggestions and insights were used to develop the final recommendations.

5.1 BC's Child Care System

The Government of BC offers several programs to support the provision of child care. Policy and program development for child care rests primarily with MCFD, while the Ministry of Health is responsible for child care licensing. The provincial government supports "a sustainable early learning and child care system in which families can choose from a range of affordable, safe, quality child care and early learning options that meet the diverse needs of children and families across BC" (Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2010a, p.28).

In 2005/2006, MCFD in collaboration with the Ministry of Education engaged in a series of community consultations with early childhood education and care stakeholders to identify priorities and goals for BC's early learning and child care programs. As a result of this consultation process, the provincial government has based its child care policy and planning decisions on five principles: 1. *Accessibility*; 2. *Quality*; 3. *Human Resource Development*; 4. *Integration, Co-location, Partnerships and Communities*; and 5. *Sustainability* (Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2009, p.1). MCFD recognizes the geographical and cultural diversity of BC's family population and aims to ensure child care programs are accessible to both rural and urban communities and are culturally inclusive. A key goal is to help ensure "families have access to child care

services that meet the needs of children of all abilities from all cultural, linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds” (Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2009, p.4).

A primary characteristic of BC’s child care sector is the element of choice parents and caregivers have in the type of child care available for children due to policies which allow subsidy for children in unregulated child care. Two categories of child care are available to BC families: i) Licence-not-required (LNR) child care which is not regulated under the BC Child Care Licensing Regulation, and ii) Licensed child care which is offered in facilities which have been issued a licence under the Regulation. LNR care is typically offered in family homes in which caregivers can care for a maximum of two children or a sibling group unrelated to the caregiver (Beach et. al, 2009). BC is the only province in Canada which subsidizes unregulated child care for low and middle income families, which means families who have challenges affording child care have more choice in the type of care available to them (Friendly, Beach, Ferns & Turiano, 2007). Several types of licensed child care are available in either group settings or family care homes, including: Group child care (under 36 months); Group child care (30 months to school-age); Preschool; Group child care (school age); Family child care; Multi-age child care; and In-home multi-age child care (See *Appendix H* for a description of these care types as described in the Child Care Licensing Regulation).

The provincial government does not directly provide child care in BC communities but funds or delivers a variety of programs and services that support the provision of child care. MCFD funds Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR) programs, which have the dual purpose of providing training and resources to child care providers and assisting parents with choosing child care arrangements (Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2010a). Licence-not-required programs have the option of registering with their local CCRR which requires that they meet some basic health and safety requirements (e.g. a criminal record check). An evaluation of this program showed that CCRRs overall do a good job at helping families to find quality child care in their communities, although scarce resources sometimes make it difficult for CCRRs to fully meet their communities’ needs (Agency Research Consultants, 2008, p.21). The Ministry’s Early Childhood Educator (ECE) Registry issues licences to practice to Early Childhood Educators (ECE), ECE Assistants, Infant/Toddler Educators and Special Needs Educators (Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2011). Staff must complete a set number of hours of professional development in order to be able to renew a licence to practice. BC’s child care sector has identified a number of challenges with respect to recruiting and retaining skilled staff and emphasizes low wages and lack of benefits for the primary reason for staff turnover (BC Council for Families, 2009). While child care staff must be licensed in order to provide care for children in licensed centres, this does not extend to out of school care staff for whom there is not a designated licence to practice category.

Child Care Funding Programs

Several child care funding programs are available for licensed child care providers and for families accessing child care services in BC. MCFD manages several funding

programs to assist child care providers and families with the cost of child care. The **Child Care Subsidy Program** provides subsidies to assist eligible low and middle-income families with the cost of child care, with funding levels dependent on family income, family size, the child's age and the type of care the family is accessing (Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2010a). Subsidy is available to eligible families whose children are attending both licensed programs and LNR child care settings, including out of school care programs.

The **Child Care Operating Funding (CCOF) Program** assists licensed group and family child care providers with the daily costs of providing child care. Funding is available to support a range of activities and rates are dependent upon whether a program offers group or family child care, the ages of the children attending and the number of children enrolled each month. It is the responsibility of child care programs in BC to set fees for parents, though it is expected that the government's CCOF contribution will offset some of the costs to operate a licensed child care program and help to maintain affordable parent fees (Ministry of Children and Family Development Child Care Programs and Services Branch, 2011, p.13). Group out of school care programs receive \$2.80 per full-time (more than four hours) enrolled child per day in funding through CCOF while family child care providers receive \$1.46 per day for each school-aged child enrolled in the program (Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2012, p.1).

The **Minor Capital Funding Program** also helps eligible child care programs to provide quality programming for children and families in BC communities (Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2011). Programs may use these funds to assist with emergency upgrades and repairs or emergency replacement of equipment to help meet licensing requirements. In the past, BC has also offered major capital funding for the development of new child care spaces, though this program has been on hold for the past several years due to budget restraints.

Child care advocacy groups in BC have vocalized their concerns about adequate funding for child care programs. A 2011 report by the Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC (the Coalition) and the Early Childhood Educators of BC (ECEBC) notes the challenges BC families face in accessing affordable child care and indicates that child care fees are too high for parents while staff wages are too low (Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC & Early Childhood Educators of BC, 2011, p.5). Their report entitled *Community Plan for a Public System of Integrated Early Care and Learning* proposes significant public investment (over \$1.5 billion annually) for child care and early learning, including enhanced services for school-aged children.

Legislation/Regulations

There are specific regulatory requirements for licensed out of school child care programs in BC. Out of school child care programs are typically delivered in group or family child care settings before and/or after regular school hours and sometimes during periods of school closure (Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2010b). The

Child Care Licensing Regulation describes the requirements for licensed out of school child care, which is listed as Group Child Care (School Age) in the Regulation.

The Regulation outlines in detail the requirements for licensed child care centres to maintain a licence, including health and safety standards and the training requirements of care providers (Province of British Columbia, 2007). Licensed child care programs are required to adhere to facility requirements for an adequate physical environment, including at least 3.7 m² of usable floor space per child; proper furniture; age and developmentally appropriate play equipment and materials; and a sanitary environment. These requirements are generalized for all child care types and are not specifically outlined for out of school child care.

The Regulation also specifies the maximum group size and staff to child ratios allowed for all categories of licensed child care programs as well as the qualifications required of staff. In June 2010 MCFD and the Ministry of Health issued a joint news release announcing expanded out of school child care in the wake of full-day kindergarten implementation in BC. New regulation changes allowed for an increase in the number of children programs could enrol to help expand the number of out of school care spaces across the Province (Ministry of Children and Family Development & Ministry of Health, 2010, p.1). Programs with kindergarten and Grade 1 children enrolled can now care for four additional children, to a maximum of 24 children, and programs with school-aged children in Grade Two or above can enrol a maximum of 30 children, which represents an increase of five child care spaces. One staff person designated as a responsible adult must be present to care for 12 children or less and two responsible adults are required for 13 or more children. Staff must meet the following requirements to be recognized as a responsible adult under the Regulation:

- (a) *be at least 19 years of age,*
- (b) *be able to provide care and mature guidance to children,*
- (c) *have completed a course, or a combination of courses, of at least 20 hours duration in child development, guidance, health and safety, or nutrition, and*
- (d) *have relevant work experience* (Province of British Columbia, 2007).

Advocacy groups have expressed concern that these legislation changes will “likely erode the quality of before and after school care for Kindergarten and Grade 1 children” given the decrease in required staff to child ratios (Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC, 2010, p.1).

BC’s child care legislation also states that licensed programs support psychosocial, physical and cognitive growth in children and that indoor and outdoor activities must be age and developmentally appropriate (See *Appendix I - Schedule G of Child Care Licensing Regulation*). The Regulation does not offer any information or standards for program activities specific to out of school child care. Further, there are several programs available for children in the hours after school which are exempt from the Regulation, including programs that operate strictly for the purpose of tutoring, academics, music, arts and/or recreation.

MCFD considers the licensing regulation as the minimum standard for quality child care in BC and has partnered with other ministries to offer more comprehensive quality guidelines for child care programs, such as the Early Learning Framework which is discussed in more detail below (Ministry of Children and Family Development Child Care Programs and Services Branch, 2011, p.3).

5.2 Information on Quality in BC's Out of School Child Care Sector

This section highlights the information available to the BC Government on the quality of its out of school care child sector and the information gaps. Sources of this information on quality include academic research and third party views from advocacy groups on child care quality. This section responds to the research question: *What information does BC have regarding the quality of BC's out of school child care sector and what are the information gaps?* Understanding the information gaps is important because it highlights areas where it is not possible to assess the current quality of BC's out of school child care sector.

There is no academic research on the quality of BC's out of school child care programs, though some studies have addressed quality in the province's overall child care sector. A review of child care facility closures in BC from 1997 to 2001 revealed "dramatic instability" in the child care sector, meaning a high number of licensed child care programs closed down over this four year period (Kershaw, Forer & Goelman, 2005, p.431). These researchers emphasize that stable and consistent child care helps to improve quality by fostering more secure attachments between children and staff and that the high rate of child care facility closures in BC's programs negatively impact the children's sense of safety and trust in their care provider. Other researchers note BC's "struggle with the question of how to 'reach' or 'accomplish' 'quality' early education" (Pacini-Ketchabaw, Kocher, Berger, Isaac & Mort, 2007, p.7). They regard enhanced education and professional development opportunities as well as better wages and working conditions for child care staff as key to improving quality in BC's child care sector. These findings are consistent with the recommendations within the broader literature (as outlined above) (Flores, 2010; Rosenthal & Vandell, 1996; Little, 2007). Some research shows that BC fares better than other Canadian jurisdictions in terms of quality in child care settings for young children. In a study of 239 Canadian infant/toddler and preschool-aged child care centres, BC scored significantly higher than Ontario, Saskatchewan, Quebec and New Brunswick on the Infant/Toddler Environmental Rating Scale, which looks at various dimensions of structural quality in infant/toddler child care settings (Goelman, Forer, Kershaw, Doherty, Lero & LaGrange, 2006, p.286). BC also demonstrated higher mean scores on the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised Edition quality evaluation tool compared to Quebec, Saskatchewan and New Brunswick. The researchers credit BC's post secondary education and practicum requirements for infant/toddler child care staff for these higher quality ratings compared to the other jurisdictions which require less training. These results do not pertain to quality in BC's out of school child care sector though.

Child care advocacy groups in the province stress the importance of high quality child care and argue that current BC policies do not adequately meet families' child care needs (Early Childhood Educators of BC & Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC, 2010, p.2). In their plan for an integrated system of early learning and care, ECEBC and the Coalition propose that out of school child care move under the responsibility of Boards of Education and that staff requirements for out of school child care change to include an ECE with training in children's development from birth to age 12 (Early Childhood Educators of BC & Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC, 2010, pp.5-7). Some organizations have reviewed out of school care services specific to individual communities. In 2008 the United Way of the Lower Mainland and the YMCA of Greater Vancouver commissioned an environmental scan of licensed out of school care programs in the Lower Mainland to assess how well these programs are meeting the child care capacity needs in these communities and to outline any service gaps (Buote, 2008, p.10). Results of this study showed that "school-aged programs in BC lack adequate processes to ensure that the care offered is of high quality" (p.47). Recommendations from this environmental scan included developing a quality assurance system for out of school care programs in the Lower Mainland and increasing training requirements for out of school care staff beyond the requisite 20 hours of course work.

There is significant information gaps related to out of school care quality in BC given that little empirical research has been conducted specifically on the quality of this sector. As described above some general information on quality in BC's entire child care sector is available; however, there is no academic research or fulsome evaluation findings specific to quality in BC's out of school child care programs.

5.3 Assessment of Quality in BC's Out of School Child Care Sector

While a single definition of out of school care quality is difficult to solidify, the literature review (Section 3.3) suggests that a high quality out of school care system should consist of several structural and process quality indicators to support healthy middle childhood development, including: high staff to child ratios; properly trained staff who exhibit warm and nurturing relationships with children; an age appropriate physical environment and program activities that help children develop their innate skills; strong monitoring and oversight; and a sound evaluation system. This section assesses the degree to which BC's out of school child care sector meets these requirements for a high quality system. The information on quality in BC's out of school care sector provided below is based on child care licensing requirements and the information collected through MCFD's Annual Child Care Provider Profile survey. The role of the Ministries of Health and Community, Sport and Cultural Development and the School Age Child Care Association of BC in supporting quality out of school child care are also discussed. The review of the available material on quality in BC's out of school care sector shows that BC has the infrastructure in place to support quality programs but is in need of more comprehensive policies and evaluation systems to ensure programs are offering high quality services to children and their families. This section responds to the

sub-question: *To what degree, and in what respects does BC's out of school child care sector have the characteristics of high quality child care?*

In addition to the range of funding programs to support the provision of child care, BC has a strong legislative foundation for providing quality licensed child care services through its *Child Care Licensing Act* and Regulation. The Regulation sets out numerous structural quality indicators of child care such as adequate physical space and age appropriate equipment in the Province's licensed programs. A primary concern is the general nature of the legislation; BC does not offer a comprehensive policy or framework to help guide out of school child care practitioners to provide quality care specifically for school-aged children. Although BC's Child Care Licensing Regulation offers some program standards, the Regulation focuses primarily on the health and safety components of child care and the standards are generalized to all child care types rather than specific to out of school child care. School-aged children have different developmental needs than children under six years of age, so the standards that are described in the Regulation may not entirely apply to the older age group. Schedule G of the Regulation describes some suggested activities to encourage positive physical, cognitive and psychosocial development but they are not intended specifically for middle childhood development (See *Appendix I*).

In its 2008 report on child care in BC, MCFD outlines several priority actions for enhancing quality in BC's child care programs, such as providing information and resources to support the delivery of high quality care and promoting the use of evaluation (Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2009, p.5). It is unclear whether these priority actions extend to out of school child care. In 2008, BC's provincial government provided operating funds to approximately 90,000 licensed spaces and 4,800 facilities each month across the province (Beach et. al, 2009). In 2010 approximately 1,100 of the Province's child care centres were licensed group out of school care programs, of which nearly half were located on school premises (Ministry of Children and Family Development & Ministry of Health, 2010, p.1). Since service delivery occurs at the local level, BC government provincial office staff are unable to track and monitor each individual centre to determine program quality levels in detail other than obtaining basic information on certain aspects of programs through the Annual Child Care Provider Profile surveys. All licensed CCOF funded programs must complete this survey on an annual basis in order to receive Ministry funds (Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2011c). The survey reports on several operational aspects of programs to help MCFD determine the numbers and types of licensed child care programs available in BC and some of the services they offer. Information collected through the survey includes: location of centre; hours of operation; ages of children enrolled; parent fees and other revenue; operating expenses; and waitlist information.

The provider profile survey collects limited data on quality indicators for child care programs, therefore information on the degree of quality in these programs is difficult to obtain. One question asks for the average number of hours of training and professional development staff completed in the previous year. This question does not request

specific details on the types of training, so information is not available on the degree of focus this training places on middle childhood development. There is also information requested on the types of physical activities child care programs offer, including sports and dance. This question speaks to the quality indicators of physical development in middle childhood but does not offer any detail beyond the number of programs which provide these services. The survey also asks if programs implement the Ministry of Education's Early Learning Framework (ELF), which aims to guide child care staff to provide rich early learning experiences based on current research and best practice (Ministry of Education, 2008, p.3). Child care programs may use this framework to support quality improvements in programs which care for children under six, but it is not intended for older children in out of school care. While the provider profile survey offers an overview of some of the operational aspects of BC's out of school care programs, there is little in-depth information on the quality of services in these centres and the extent to which programs are meeting school-aged children's developmental needs.

Staff in BC's out of school child care system appear to have low levels of education and training in child care. The literature on out of school care suggests high quality programs are those with well-qualified staff who have sufficient training in middle childhood development. The staffing requirements in the Regulation help contribute to quality services by ensuring child care staff are qualified to work in licensed programs. However BC's child care regulations require out of school care staff to have only 20 hours of coursework related to child development, guidance, health and safety or nutrition. Training on middle childhood developmental domains is not a requirement to work in these programs. Lack of knowledge on middle childhood development may have negative impacts on the manner in which staff interact with children.

Another quality indicator related to staffing is high staff to child ratios in which children are able to obtain more individualized care if enough staff are present (Little, 2007, p. 4; Greenspan, 2003, p.1066; Rosenthal & Vandell, 1996, p.2435). Current requirements for staff to child ratios in BC's licensed out of school care programs are the lowest of any child care program type in the Province. Low ratios combined with limited staff training specific to middle child development indicate lower quality programming.

Other government ministries support quality in out of school care programs in BC to a degree. As previously discussed, the Ministry of Health is responsible for licensing out of school care programs and ensuring that programs adhere to the legislative and regulatory requirements for a safe and healthy environment for children, which are important components of a quality program. The Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development is currently funding the After School Sport Initiative to provide opportunities for children to participate in sports and movement programs in the after school hours (Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development, 2011, p.1). Physical development was noted in the literature review as a key developmental domain in school-aged children (Section 3.2). Local sports organizations partner with out of school care programs located on school premises to teach children fundamental movement skills and a variety of sports activities. The RunJumpThrow program is a fundamental movement program offered as part of this initiative. It promotes physical

literacy and teaches children about the importance of physical health and well-being, which is a key developmental domain in middle childhood development. The Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development has piloted the After School Sport Initiative in a handful of rural and urban communities across BC, with a particular focus on children identified as at risk. Information on the impact of this program on middle childhood development is not currently available and the program is only offered in a small number of BC communities rather than being built into regular program activities for out of school care.

BC also has non-government support for the delivery of quality out of school care programs through the School Age Child Care Association of BC (SACCA), which aims to “improve the availability of quality, affordable school age child care by providing programs and services to professionals in this field” (School Age Child Care Association of BC, 2010). This non-profit organization works to achieve this goal by providing professional networking opportunities for out of school care providers, offering workshops and training to staff and developing province-wide standards specific to out of school care. The role of the SACCA is similar to that of the previously discussed Scottish Out of School Care Network (SOSCN), which offers support and resources to help out of school care programs to deliver high quality care in communities throughout Scotland. There are also similarities with the Kentucky Out-of-School Alliance, which provides infrastructure to support quality out of school care programs through state-wide, regional and local partnerships. The key difference between these associations and the SACCA is the latter does not appear to have a strong connection to BC’s Government nor does it provide quality assurance for out of school care. The SOSCN, for example, worked with the Scottish Government to develop its out of school care framework and also has a well established quality assurance system to evaluate quality in out of school care programs. The Kentucky Out-of-School Alliance also has a strong connection to Government systems and notes its key partners as the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services and the Kentucky Education Cabinet. Although the SACCA in BC offers voluntary standards for out of school care, information on these standards has not been provided to MCFD for review.

The SACCA in BC does, however, affiliate with other non-government organizations which deliver quality assurance tools across the Province, such as the Human Early Learning Partnership’s Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI). The MDI measures development in school-aged children across five domains, including social and emotional development, physical health and well-being, connectedness, school experiences and constructive use of after school time (Human Early Learning Partnership, n.d). School teachers administer the survey in Grade Four classrooms to help researchers to better understand how children self report on the five developmental domains at a population level. Although the tool is not currently administered in out of school care programs it provides detailed information on children’s physical, cognitive and psychosocial development throughout middle childhood and helps to show how children’s experiences in their communities are contributing to their overall health and well-being. The MDI is an example of one of the evaluation tools available to assess the various domains of children’s development throughout the middle years.

As noted in Section 5.2, the BC Government does not have sufficient information on quality in the out of school child care sector; however it is clear that BC's out of school child care sector is missing some of the elements identified in the literature review as critical to ensuring services for school-aged children are high quality. Although BC has a licensing system for out of school care, the standards of care that are required through licensing are not specific to this care type. Staff to child ratios are the lowest in out of school care compared to all other licensed child care types, and staff training requirements are limited to just 20 hours of coursework that is not specific to middle childhood development. Some out of school child care centres may, indeed, provide high quality services for school-aged children, while others may fall short of the desired quality standard as identified by research and best practice. Given the variability and breadth of out of school programs in BC, it is impossible to know how all of these centres are fairing without a comprehensive evaluation of these programs beyond the operational information collected through the Annual Child Care Provider Profile survey. The literature review and cross-jurisdictional review sections of this report have identified a number of evaluation tools available for assessing both structural and process quality in out of school care programs. Unlike the jurisdictions reviewed in Section 4, BC does not partner with other non-government organizations to support quality out of school care, nor has it developed a comprehensive framework to assist out of school care programs to provide quality service to school-aged children.

5.4 Draft Recommendations, and an Assessment of their Feasibility

Using the information gathered through the literature on middle childhood development and child care quality, on the review of high quality practices in the four jurisdictions and on the information and gaps in knowledge related to quality in BC's out of school care programs the investigator developed a series of draft recommendations for improving quality in out of school child care. A focus group comprised of representatives of the cross-ministry Out of School Care Working Group (see *Appendix J* for focus group questions) was asked to comment on the feasibility of these recommendations. The Out of School Care Working Group includes representation from the BC MCFD, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development.

The draft recommendations address out of school care quality in a number of ways. The BC Government needs to establish processes for obtaining more information on quality in out of school care programs, which could be achieved by enhancing the Annual Child Care Provider Profile survey with more quality-related questions, or by conducting evaluations of programs or surveying parents on the quality of their out of school care arrangements. Quality issues can also be addressed with more stringent training requirements and a regulatory requirement for ongoing professional development for staff working in out of school care programs. Out of school care staff could also benefit from a resource document with suggested activities for promoting healthy development in school-aged children. This should be part of a broader policy framework for out of school care which speaks to numerous facets of this sector, including professional development and training for staff and various methods of promoting process quality in

out of school care. The final recommendation suggests that the BC Government help support partnerships between out of school care programs and schools and other community based organizations.

There was general agreement on most of the proposed recommendations for enhancing quality in BC's out of school child care sector. However certain challenges and other opportunities associated with each recommendation were noted throughout the discussion. This section summarizes the findings for each focus group question and also offers a brief analysis of the responses to help inform the final recommendations proposed in Section 5.5:

Question 1: What is the feasibility of adapting the Annual Child Care Provider Profile survey so that it can focus on the structural and process quality indicators which contribute to healthy middle childhood development?

All focus group participants, except two who did not comment, agreed that this could be accomplished at little cost to government. Several themes emerged throughout the discussion including different options for adapting the survey. New questions on quality indicators for out of school care could be added to the current survey or an entirely new survey could be created which includes more quality-related questions specific to out of school child care. The format would depend on executive support for this policy change. One participant noted the importance of involving providers in determining which quality indicators to include in the survey and the group recognized that careful consideration of which questions to include is important so as to not overwhelm providers with a lengthy survey.

This strategy would be useful for obtaining more information on quality in out of school care programs. The Provider Profile Survey must be completed annually for child care providers to receive CCOF, and licensed providers are already familiar with the format of this survey so would most likely have little difficulty completing it. This is also a no cost option for Government since the survey is developed, administered and analysed within MCFD.

Question 2: Do you think it is feasible, in the short or long term, to implement an evaluation tool such as the School Age Child Care Environmental Rating Scale for determining baseline quality levels in BC's out of school child care programs?

The focus group participants did not oppose the use of evaluation to determine baseline quality levels in BC's out of school care programs, but they identified the need for some foundational work prior to implementing an evaluation system. Some participants suggested that the BC Government needed to first work with the sector to develop agreed upon goals for improving quality out of school child care and to create resources to help programs meet these goals. Participants also agreed that a pre-existing tool should be used for evaluation to help save time and costs. Many evaluation tools exist that have been shown to be valid and reliable. An evaluation would have to be

conducted by a contracted agency and would thus be a longer term strategy for improving quality due to current fiscal challenges.

The literature review identified ongoing evaluation as important for determining how well out of school care programs are meeting the needs of children and their families. A number of valid and reliable evaluation tools that are specific to out of school care are available to assess both structural and process quality in these programs. Further research into these different tools should be conducted in collaboration with the out of school care sector to determine which tool can best assess quality in BC's programs. This strategy does have significant cost implications for Government given that the evaluation would have to be conducted by an independent contractor. Actual cost would depend upon the tool used and the number of providers who participate in an evaluation.

Question 3: Given your understanding of the BC policy environment do you think developing and implementing a survey which addresses parents' perspectives on quality in their out of school child care arrangement is feasible in the short or long term?

All but two focus group participants argued there were too many challenges associated with implementing a parent survey on out of school care quality. The most commonly cited challenge was variations in parents' understanding of child care quality and whether parents would have an accurate assessment of quality in their child's out of school care program. Sufficient parent participation in a survey was also noted as an issue, particularly since parents generally do not attend their children's out of school care programs and may not be aware of whether the program structure and activities are of high quality. One participant who stated a survey was feasible cautioned that Government would have to be prepared to take action to address any issues raised by parents. The overall feedback suggested that a parent survey would not be the best approach to help improve out of school care quality in BC.

A survey could be another avenue to obtain information on quality in out of school care settings, however the variability in parents' perspectives on quality would, indeed, make it difficult to attain a true assessment of quality in these programs.

Question 4: Is a policy proposal to increase the number of hours of training required for out of school care staff and to require ongoing professional development related to middle childhood development feasible?

This recommendation was strongly supported by all focus group participants and several options were considered for improving qualification levels for out of school care staff. There was particular support for out of school care staff to have training in middle childhood development and requiring ongoing professional development for responsible adults who work in out of school care. One participant suggested that training for early childhood educators include development courses on children birth to twelve years of age (rather than birth to five) and for out of school care programs to have to include at

least an ECE Assistant on staff who has been trained to work with children in the older age group. Another participant recognized that BC must have the capacity and resources to accommodate additional professional development before implementing new training requirements. This implies that additional training could not be implemented without proper training materials and enough qualified staff to conduct the training. Consideration should also be given to amending family child care training requirements to include training on middle childhood development as these programs also care for school-aged children.

Well qualified staff and ongoing professional development specific to middle childhood were noted in the literature as an important structural quality indicator. Since out of school care staff in BC currently have the lowest education requirements compared to other care types and do not have to engage in ongoing professional development in order to practice, then a strategy to enhance training for this sector is definitely needed to improve quality. Training could be offered through Child Care Resource and Referral centres, which currently offer training for family child care providers. Government may have to provide more financial resources to CCRRs to increase their capacity to provide training specific to out of school care.

Question 5: Should the BC government develop a policy framework and practice guidelines which include training information, tips for integrating with other community services and suggested activities and material checklists for out of school care programs?

All focus group participants agreed that a resource document should be developed to assist out of school care providers with providing high quality services. This was recognized as a low cost option that would be easy to implement given that it does not require changes to current child care licensing. Participants had different suggestions about which type of information to include in the policy framework. A vision for a quality out of school care system as well as learning goals and key priorities for out of school care were deemed important for this resource by some participants, in addition to activities and material checklists. Two participants suggested including standards which programs must adhere to in order to receive operating funding, which would impact MCFD's current Child Care Operating Funding policies. Other participants recommended that this resource be developed with full and meaningful consultation with all partners and to include input from the out of school care sector. The framework could be housed electronically on various government Web sites to reduce printing costs.

All jurisdictions discussed in the cross-jurisdictional review section of this report have developed comprehensive frameworks specific to improving quality in out of school child care. Such a resource could help ensure program activities are age-appropriate and diverse enough to meet the physical, cognitive and psychosocial developmental needs of school-aged children in BC.

Question 6: How can we facilitate increased partnerships between out of school care programs and schools and community recreation programs to help ensure school-aged children have opportunities for optimal development across these domains in out of school care?

Partnerships and collaboration at the community level were recognized by all focus group participants as important for supporting children's holistic development in the middle years. Some challenges that were noted include liability issues with using school space before and after school hours and whether Government can motivate schools and community recreation programs to collaborate with out of school care programs in service delivery. One participant noted that these types of partnerships already exist in some communities, and that some child care programs order supplies from their local school boards. Another participant suggested that we include ideas for partnerships between out of school care programs and schools and community centres in the policy framework discussed in Question 5. While the focus group expressed overall support for this recommendation, further exploration into methods of facilitating increased partnerships at the community level is needed.

A first step to facilitating partnerships between out of school care programs and schools and community centres would be to invite representatives of the School Age Child Care Association of BC, school boards and the BC Recreation and Parks Association to an Out of School Care Working Group meeting to discuss potential linkages between these various bodies. Discussions could centre around the possibility of co-locating out of school care programs on school grounds to reduce transitions for children between school and out of school care. This would also provide an opportunity to approach Recreation and Parks about the use of community centres to support physical development in children attending out of school care.

5.5 Final Recommendations

British Columbia's Ministry of Children and Family Development and partner ministries have the infrastructure and legislative foundation in place to offer quality out of school care programs for children and families but need to focus more specifically on providing support and resources to the out of school care sector. The Provincial Government funds numerous out of school child care programs in BC, yet does not have sufficient information to understand how well children are being cared for in these environments. Aside from licensing requirements and minimal program standards for child care in general, the provincial government does not offer comprehensive policies or guidelines to specifically support quality practices in out of school child care, nor does it evaluate these programs to assess whether children are benefitting from quality, evidence-based, developmentally appropriate programming. As a result, the quality and level of services supported by out of school child care programs varies, and there is little information available to Government on how well these programs support child well-being for children in the middle years.

As a result of this research and the focus group discussion, the following strategies are recommended to increase the BC Government's knowledge about the quality of the Province's out of school child care sector and to increase the quality of this sector:

Recommendation 1: Implement an evaluation system with tools that speak to both structural and process quality specific to out of school child care to determine baseline quality levels in BC's programs.

A variety of evaluation and quality assurance tools are available to assess how well out of school care programs are meeting structural and process quality indicators. The BC Government should implement an evaluation tool such as the School Age Child Care Environmental Rating Scale in all licensed out of school child care programs to obtain a baseline measure of quality in these programs (Note: The School Age Child Care Environmental Rating Scale is an example - further research should be conducted in collaboration with the sector to determine which evaluation tool best applies to the BC context). Evaluation information could then be used to determine whether programs are adequately meeting quality standards or need some additional support and resources to make quality improvements. Program evaluations should be conducted by an independent research agency and consultation with out of school care staff on the purpose and use of the program evaluation is important prior to implementation. This is a longer term strategy due to costs associated with using a contracted agency to conduct this work.

Recommendation 2: Update the Annual Child Care Provider Profile survey to include more questions on quality assurance measures specific to out of school care, such as the activities available to support development in school-aged children and the degree of staff training on middle childhood development.

Children throughout middle childhood have vastly different physical, cognitive and psychosocial developmental needs compared to children less than six years of age. The Annual Child Care Provider Profile survey should thus be adapted to create a version specific to out of school care which focuses more on the structural and process quality indicators which contribute to all facets of healthy middle childhood development. Policy staff would have to consider a number of factors for updating the Provider Profile survey so as to not overwhelm child care providers with cumbersome reporting requirements. Careful consideration should be given to the type and number of questions added to this survey, and policy-makers should consider consulting with out of school care providers on the type of data that would be collected.

Recommendation 3: Increase the number of hours of training required for out of school child care staff and include a specific requirement to undertake courses on middle childhood development. Out of school care staff should also be required to engage in ongoing professional development related to middle childhood.

Research shows that highly qualified staff who have opportunities for ongoing professional development and training can significantly contribute to a high quality out of school care program. The BC Government should consider increasing the number of hours of training required for out of school care staff from twenty hours to the same level of education required for early childhood educators (at least a one year diploma), and require this training to include courses specific to middle childhood development. Staff should also be given adequate opportunities to engage in ongoing professional development related to middle childhood development to ensure their knowledge and skills are based on current best practices in the out of school care field. Before proposing this policy change it is important that the BC Government ensures that this type of training is available in BC and that there is capacity in the system to accommodate ongoing professional development.

Recommendation 4: In collaboration with child care providers, the School Age Child Care Association of BC, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development, the Ministry of Education and academic research bodies such as the Human Early Learning Partnership, MCFD should develop a policy framework and practice guidelines which includes program goals, training information, tips for integrating with other community services and suggested activities and material checklists for out of school care programs.

Out of school care programs may rely on up-to-date information on quality care and best practice from external sources, such as government organizations, academic institutions and advocacy groups. The BC Government should consider developing a comprehensive policy and practice framework specific to improving quality in out of school care programs. This framework should include information on a range of program components that support high quality, such as staff training and professional development opportunities, age-appropriate activities that promote healthy middle childhood development and tips for integrating with other community agencies such as schools and sports and arts programs. Providing an overall vision, principles, pedagogical expectations and learning goals for a high quality program would also be useful for providers. Information for this resource could be drawn from existing out of school care frameworks, such as those discussed in the cross-jurisdictional review. Full and meaningful consultation with partners and the out of school care sector is imperative while developing this resource.

Recommendation 5: Facilitate increased partnerships between out of school care programs and other service providers, such as schools and community recreation programs, to help provide more diverse program activities which support optimal development across the physical, cognitive and psychosocial domains of middle childhood development.

Schools and other community organizations can help out of school care programs to offer a wider variety of developmentally appropriate activities for school-aged children, such as sports equipment or a larger physical space to engage in various gross-movement activities. The various government ministries which help support out of

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENHANCING QUALITY IN OUT OF SCHOOL CHILD CARE

school care programs (i.e. MCFD, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development) should collaborate on ways to help out of school care programs integrate with other service providers to help provide more diverse activities and enhance their quality of care. This could begin by inviting representatives of the School Age Child Care Association of BC, school boards and the BC Recreation and Parks Association to an Out of School Care Working Group meeting to discuss opportunities for collaboration amongst these sectors.

6.0 CONCLUSION

Research emphasises the importance of a positive, nurturing environment to support optimal growth and development across the physical, cognitive and psychosocial domains of middle childhood. High quality out of school child care programs with well trained staff and developmentally stimulating activities can have a strong impact on developmental outcomes for school-aged children. This report has proposed a series of recommendations in response to the overarching research question:

What strategies can the British Columbia Ministry of Children and Family Development implement to assess the overall quality of BC's out of school child care sector and to determine which quality measures need to be improved?

A key finding from this research is that the BC Government does not have sufficient information on the level of quality in the Province's out of school care programs. Although licensing officers monitor many aspects of structural quality to ensure child care programs adhere to health and safety standards, an evaluation system is needed to better understand the degree of process quality in these programs. Further training and professional development for out of school care staff is also necessary to enhance quality in BC's programs. The cross-jurisdictional review provided examples of ways in which government and non-government organizations have partnered to support out of school care programs, such as in the development of policy frameworks and activity guidelines or helping programs to link with other community groups or schools. Such collaboration could facilitate the pooling of resources and linkages between out of school care and schools and other community organizations to help out of school care programs in BC to reach higher quality levels.

The BC Government should implement strategies that are evidence-based and reflect best practice in the sector to help determine the level of quality in BC's out of school care programs and to improve upon the services currently being delivered in BC communities. Child care policy-makers in BC should consider connecting directly with the jurisdictions noted in this report to learn more about the processes involved in developing comprehensive frameworks for improving quality in out of school care programs. Further insights could be achieved by conducting site visits to a sample of out of school care programs across BC to interview staff and families about their experiences with these programs and to discuss how quality improvements could be achieved at the local level. Discussions should also be held between Government and child care providers on the best evaluation tool to assess quality in BC's out of school care programs. The information and recommendations presented in this report can facilitate initial dialogue between policy-makers and child care providers in determining how to enhance quality in BC's out of school care sector in order to best meet the developmental needs of school-aged children in this Province.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

*Glossary of Terms**

**Based on Child Care Licensing Regulation definitions*

Child Care - the care and supervision of a child in a child care setting or other facility, other than

(a) by the child's parent, or

(b) while the child is attending an educational program provided under the School Act, the Independent School Act or a law of a treaty first nation in relation to kindergarten to grade 12 education.

Child Care Program/Child Care Centre – a setting in which a child care provider offers care and supervision to children. Types of child care programs include the following: Registered Child Care; License-Not-Required family child care; Licensed Group Care; Licensed Out-of-School Care; Licensed Preschool; Child Care in the Child's Own Home; and Multi-Age Child Care.

Out of School Child Care - a child care program that provides, before or after school hours or during periods of school closure, care to children who attend school, including kindergarten (listed as Group Child Care [School Age] in the Child Care Licensing Regulation).

Child Care Sector – the set of licensed, funded group and family child care programs and staff in communities across BC¹.

Licensed Child Care – a child care program that holds a license to practice under the *Community Care and Assisted Living Act*.

Funded Child Care – a child care program which receives Child Care Operating Funding through the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development.

Group Child Care – a child care program offered in a group setting.

Family Child Care - a child care program in which the licensee

(i) is a responsible adult (although some family child care providers are ECEs), and

(ii) personally provides care, within the licensee's personal residence, to no more than 7 children.

Responsible Adult - a person who is qualified to act as a responsible adult under section 29 of the Child Care Licensing Regulation. To qualify for employment in a community care facility as a responsible adult, a person must:

¹ This definition applies specifically to this report. The Province of BC recognizes the child care sector to also include unlicensed and non-funded group and family child care programs as well as registered licence-not-required child care programs.

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- (a) be at least 19 years of age,
- (b) be able to provide care and mature guidance to children,
- (c) have completed a course, or a combination of courses, of at least 20 hours duration in child development, guidance, health and safety, or nutrition, and
- (d) have relevant work experience.

Appendix B

Focus Group Schedule

The investigator conducted the following activities for the focus group session:

- The investigator first submitted an application for ethics approval for human participant research to the University of Victoria's Human Research Ethics Board.
- The target recruitment group was the Out of School Care Working Group, which is an MCFD-led cross-ministry working group which includes representation from the BC Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development.
- The investigator determined an appropriate time to conduct the focus group with Out of School Care Working Group members who agreed to participate (April 25, 2012).
- A third party (the co-lead of the Out of School Care Working Group) emailed members of the Out of School Care Working Group via email to inform them of the research and to ask of their participation in the focus group. The third party requested that individuals who are interested in participating in the focus group contact the investigator (Lara Blazey) directly. The focus group session was held outside of a regular Working Group meeting and members were informed that they could participate on a voluntary basis.
- The investigator sent a meeting request to Working Group members who agreed to participate in the focus group and included a copy of the consent form; the investigator requested the signed consent form be returned either before or at the focus group session.
- The investigator developed a PowerPoint presentation summarizing the findings from the literature review, cross-jurisdictional review and analysis of out of school child care in BC and emailed a copy of the PowerPoint presentation and the focus group questions to participants two days prior to the scheduled focus group meeting.
- The investigator presented the PowerPoint presentation during the first part of the focus group session. The focus group questions were then presented and discussed.
- An MCFD staff person not associated with this project recorded the focus group session by hand and electronically.
- To code the data the investigator reviewed the notes for each question and used a (1) or a (2) to delineate where participants agreed (1) or disagreed (2) with the recommendation. The investigator then used letter coding (i.e. a, b, c, d, etc...) to identify themes within the discussion (see below). Reactions to the questions were summarized.

Focus Group Question Coding Results – Common Themes

Focus Group Question Number	Focus Group Question Topic	Common Themes Identified through Focus Group Discussions
1	Adapt Annual Child Care Provider Profile Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Review existing surveys b. Add questions to current survey c. Create targeted surveys d. Determine indicators with child care providers e. Carefully consider questions to include f. Assess cost
2	Implement evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Use an evaluation tool that already exists b. Do not implement both evaluation and survey (question 1) c. Conduct independent evaluation d. Work with child care sector to develop quality goals e. Long term strategy due to cost
3	Implement parent survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Challenges with administration b. Not enough parent participation c. Parents do not understand out of school care quality – information may not be useful
4	Increase staff training and professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Is there capacity to accommodate more training b. Early childhood educators should have training in child development for 0-12 years c. Use assistants in out of school care d. Implement ongoing professional development for responsible adults e. Train the trainer model
5	Develop out of school care policy framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Include vision, principles, key priorities and learning goals b. Engage in full consultation with partners c. Develop framework with the out of school care sector d. Doesn't impact regulations e. No cost f. Must be able to update g. House electronically on government web pages h. Include standards as leverage to receive operating funding
6	Enhance partnerships and collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. What are liability issues with using schools outside of school hours b. How can government motivate schools and community centres to link with out of school care c. Some centres order supplies through school boards already d. Include school boards and community centre representatives in development of framework

Appendix C

Australia's Pedagogical Practices for Out of School Care Providers

1. Adopting holistic approaches
2. Collaborating with children
3. Planning and implementing play and leisure activities
4. Acting with intentionality
5. Creating physical and social school age care environments that have a positive impact on children's development, wellbeing and community-building
6. Valuing the cultural and social context of children and their families
7. Providing for continuity in experiences and enabling children to have successful transition
8. Using reflection and documentation about children's wellbeing and learning to inform and evaluate programs and to support children in achieving outcomes

(Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace, 2011, pp.14)

Appendix D

Australia's Out of School Care Staff Practices to Help Children Reach Sub-outcomes

Outcome 1: Children have a strong sense of identity

Sub-outcome: *Children feel safe, secure, and supported*

Educators facilitate this, for example, when they:

- spend time interacting and conversing with children, listening and responding sensitively as they express their ideas and needs
- support children's attachment through consistent and warm nurturing relationships
- support children in times of change and bridge the gap between the familiar and the unfamiliar
- recognise that feelings of distress, fear or discomfort may take some time to resolve
- acknowledge each child's uniqueness in positive ways
- support the development of children's friendships
- acknowledge the importance of opportunities for children to relax through play and leisure

Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world

Sub-outcome: *Children respond to diversity with respect*

Educators facilitate this, for example, when they:

- plan experiences and provide resources that broaden children's perspectives and encourage appreciation of diversity
- engage in interactions with children that promote respect for diversity and value distinctiveness
- expose children to different languages and dialects and encourage appreciation of linguistic diversity
- encourage children to listen to others and to respect diverse perspectives
- demonstrate positive responses to diversity in their own behaviour
- explore the culture, heritage, backgrounds and traditions of children within the context of their community

Outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing

Sub-outcome: *Children take increasing responsibility for their own health and physical wellbeing*

Educators facilitate this, for example, when they:

- collaborate to plan energetic physical activities, including dance, drama, movement, sports and games
- draw on family and community experiences and expertise to include familiar games and physical activities
- provide a wide range of resources to develop and consolidate children's fine and gross motor skills
- engage children in experiences, conversations and routines that promote safety, healthy lifestyles and nutrition
- provide a range of active and relaxing experiences throughout the day
- adjust transition and routines to take into account children's needs and interests

Outcome 4: Children are confident and involved learners

Sub-outcome: *Children use a range of skills and processes such as problem solving, enquiry, experimentation, hypothesising, researching and investigating*

Educators facilitate this, for example, when they:

- plan environments with appropriate levels of challenge where children are encouraged to explore, experiment and take appropriate risks
- provide experiences that encourage children to investigate ideas, solve problems and use complex concepts and thinking, reasoning and hypothesizing
- encourage children to communicate and make visible their own ideas and theories
- collaborate with children and model reasoning, predicting and reflecting processes and language
- provide opportunities for children to initiate and lead activities and experiences

Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators

Sub-outcome: *Children engage with a range of texts and gain meaning from these texts*

Educators facilitate this, for example, when they:

- provide opportunities for children to follow directions from everyday texts such as recipe books, instructions for craft, rules for sports or games.
- read and share a range of books, magazines and newspapers with children
- provide a literacy-enriched environment including display print in home languages and Standard Australian English
- incorporate familiar family and community texts and tell stories
- encourage children to share their interests in music and discuss lyrics
- engage children in discussions about books and other texts that promote consideration of diverse perspectives

Appendix E

Scotland's National Care Standards

Standard 1: Being welcomed and valued

- *Each child or young person will be welcomed, and will be valued as an individual.*

Standard 2: A safe environment

- *The needs of each child or young person are met by the service in a safe environment, in line with all relevant legislation.*

Standard 3: Health and wellbeing

- *Each child or young person will be nurtured by staff who will promote his or her general wellbeing, health, nutrition and safety.*

Standard 4: Engaging with children

- *Each child or young person will be supported by staff who interact effectively and enthusiastically with him or her.*

Standard 5: Quality of experience

- *Each child or young person can experience and choose from a balanced range of activities.*

Standard 6: Support and development

- *Each child or young person receives support from staff who respond to his or her individual needs.*

Standard 7: A caring environment

- *In using the service, children, young people, parents and carers experience an environment of mutual respect, trust and open communication.*

Standard 8: Equality and fairness

- *You will be treated equally and fairly.*

Standard 9: Involving the community

- *You can be confident that the service contributes to the community and looks for opportunities to be involved in the community.*

Standard 10: Involving other services

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- *You can be confident that the service keeps up links and works effectively with partner organisations.*

Standard 11: Access to resources

- *Each child or young person has access to a sufficient and suitable range of resources.*

Standard 12: Confidence in staff

- *Each child or young person receives support and care from staff who are competent and confident and who have gone through a careful selection procedure.*

Standard 13: Improving the service

- *You can be confident that the service will evaluate what it does and make improvements.*

Standard 14: Well-managed service

- *You can be confident that you are using a service that is well managed.*

Appendix F

Themes from Manitoba's Materials/Equipment List for Out of School Care

1. Activity Area: Dramatic (daily living centre, drama and theatre)
 - Materials/equipment:
 - o home area (i.e. stuffed animals; toy kitchen supplies)
 - o dress up clothes (i.e. costumes)
 - o props and theatre boxes (i.e. pretend restaurant and party supplies)

2. Activity Area: Fine Motor/ Quiet Games (quiet thinking centre, manipulative centre)
 - Materials/Equipment:
 - o small building toys (i.e. blocks)
 - o games and puzzles (i.e. board games; playing cards)
 - o manipulative (i.e. beads and string)
 - o Furnishings for art materials (i.e. open shelves)

3. Activity Area: Creative (art centre, wood construction area)
 - Materials/Equipment:
 - o drawings (i.e. crayons; chalk)
 - o paintings (i.e. non-toxic paint; paint brushes)
 - o collage (i.e. glue; yarn; buttons)
 - o three-dimensional art (i.e. play dough; pipe cleaners)
 - o tools (i.e. scissors; staplers)
 - o construction and carpentry (i.e. hammers; goggles)

4. Activity Area: Blocks
 - Materials/Equipment:
 - o blocks (i.e. natural wood blocks)
 - o accessories (i.e. toy vehicles)

5. Activity Area: Reading (language reasoning, literacy, books and pictures, library area)
 - Materials/Equipment:
 - o factual (i.e. animals; newspapers)
 - o nature, science and social studies (i.e. human body; magazines)
 - o culture (i.e. different languages)
 - o diverse abilities (i.e. stories with people who need additional support)

- o fantasy (i.e. picture books)
- o additional language materials (i.e. puppets; listening centre)

6. Activity Area: Large Muscle (active role play centre, space, equipment for gross motor play)

- Materials/Equipment:
 - o stationary equipment (i.e. climbing equipment; swings)
 - o portable equipment (i.e. balls; tumbling mats)

7. Activity Area: Sand and Water

- Materials/Equipment:
 - o sand/water (i.e. sand boxes; hose)
 - o sand/water toys (i.e. measuring cups; funnels)
 - o dramatic play toys (i.e. small trucks; large spoons)

8. Activity Area: Science

- Materials/Equipment:
 - o natural objects (i.e. flowers; branches)
 - o living things (i.e. aquarium; garden plants)
 - o nature and science books, posters, games, puzzles (i.e. maps; globe)
 - o nature and science materials (i.e. scales; magnets)

9. Activity Area: Math and Numbers

- Materials/Equipment:
 - o measuring (i.e. scales; height chart)
 - o shapes (i.e. geometric puzzles)
 - o counting (i.e. play money)
 - o written numbers (i.e. calendar)
 - o quantities (i.e. dominos)

10. Activity Area: Music and Movement

- Materials/Equipment:
 - o musical instruments (i.e. cymbals; piano)
 - o dance props (i.e. ribbons; hoops)
 - o audio equipment (i.e. CD player; music tapes)

11. Activity Area: Technology Centre (TV, video, computers)

- Materials Equipment:
 - o Technical equipment (i.e. computers; TV shows)

http://www.gov.mb.ca/fs/childcare/pubs/school_age_equipment.en.pdf

Appendix G

Examples of Kentucky's School-Age Program Quality Standards

Component 1: Environments

Standard 1.1.1: The environment meets the physical, social, emotional, cognitive and creative needs of all out-of-school-time participants.

Standard 1.1.2: The environment is physically accessible to child(ren)/youth, staff and families with disabilities.

Standard 1.1.3: The environment allows child(ren)/youth to take initiative and explore their interests.

Component 2: Evaluation and Assessment

Standard 2.1.1: Measurable goals and objectives are aligned with the organization's vision and mission statements.

Standard 2.1.2: Formal and/or informal measures of program effectiveness are used with child(ren)/youth, staff and parent/guardians.

Standard 2.1.3: Data is used to measure progress toward quality.

Component 3: Health, Safety and Nutrition

Standard 3.1.1: Program staff supervise child(ren)/youth at all times.

Standard 3.1.2: Policies are established to address behavior management.

Standard 3.1.3: Staff are trained in CPR, First Aid and emergency procedures.

Standard 3.1.4: Healthy, nutritious meals and/or snacks are provided; drinking water is readily available at all times.

Standard 3.1.5: A policy is in place to provide an opportunity for physical activity within the daily schedule.

Component 4: Professional Development

Standard 4.1.1: Staff meetings are used to communicate topics that are relative to professional growth.

Standard 4.2.1: Volunteers are trained and recognized.

Standard 4.3.1: Staff are made aware of opportunities for professional growth.

Component 5: Program Management

Standard 5.1.1: The program develops a clear vision statement, mission statement, and measurable goals and objectives that directly relate to child(ren)/youth development outcomes.

Standard 5.1.2: Partnerships are established that are mutually beneficial and supportive of program goals and objectives.

Standard 5.2.1: The program maintains a budget with accurate record of funds received and dispersed.

Standard 5.2.2: The program's administration provides sound fiscal management and oversight of the program.

Component 6: Program Structure

Standard 6.1.1: Programming includes developmentally appropriate academic support and/or enrichment activities that complement existing state and/or national standards.*

Standard 6.1.2: Staff members work with individual teachers and/or parents/guardians to support child(ren)/youth's homework and/or educational needs.

Standard 6.2.1: The program schedule is consistent enough to establish a routine, yet offers flexibility to meet the individual or situational needs of all child(ren)/youth.

Standard 6.4.1: Developmentally and/or age-appropriate activities are offered that reflect the mission and goals of the program.

Standard 6.4.2: A variety of indoor and/or outdoor activities are offered that provide social, emotional, physical, recreational and educational opportunities.

Standard 6.5.1: Child(ren)/youth input and participation is used in the activity planning and implementation.

Component 7: Relationships

Standard 7.1.1: Child(ren)/youth demonstrate positive peer-to-peer interaction.

Standard 7.2.1: Staff engage with all participants in a positive way through listening, acceptance and mutual respect.

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Standard 7.2.2: Staff strive to meet the individual needs of child(ren)/youth.

Standard 7.3.1: Effective community collaborations are established to bring resources to enrich the program activities.

Standard 7.4.1: Families receive positive communication in a variety of formats.

Standard 7.4.2: Staff and management provide opportunities for and promote and encourage family involvement and engagement.

Appendix H:

Child Care Licensing Regulation Care Types

2 For the purpose of paragraph (a) of the definition of "care" in section 1 of the Act, the following programs are prescribed:

- (a) Group Child Care (Under 36 Months), being a program that provides care to children who are younger than 36 months old;
- (b) Group Child Care (30 Months to School Age), being a program that provides care to preschool children;
- (c) Preschool (30 Months to School Age), being a program that provides care to preschool children who are at least
 - (i) 30 months old on entrance to the program, and
 - (ii) 36 months old by December 31 of the year of entrance;
- (d) Group Child Care (School Age), being a program that provides, before or after school hours or during periods of school closure, care to children who attend school, including kindergarten;
- (e) Family Child Care, being a program in which the licensee
 - (i) is a responsible adult, and
 - (ii) personally provides care, within the licensee's personal residence, to no more than 7 children;
- (f) Occasional Child Care, being a program that provides, on an occasional or short-term basis, care
 - (i) to preschool children who are at least 18 months old, and
 - (ii) to each child for no more than 40 hours in a calendar month;
- (g) Multi-Age Child Care, being a program that provides, within each group, care to children of various ages;

(h) In-Home Multi-Age Child Care, being a program in which the licensee personally provides care, within the licensee's personal residence, to no more than 8 children of various ages.

http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws_new/document/LOC/freeside/--%20c%20--/community%20care%20and%20assisted%20living%20act%20sbc%202002%20c.%2075/05_regulations/12_332_2007.xml

Appendix I:

Child Care Licensing Regulation Schedule G

Schedule G

(Section 44 [program of activities])

- 1** A licensee must ensure that a program of activities is provided that encourages the physical development of children, including providing
 - (a) indoor and outdoor activities that encourage the development of large and small muscle skills appropriate to each child's level of development,
 - (b) activities that promote the development of self-help skills, and
 - (c) activities that encourage good health and safety habits.

- 2** A licensee must ensure that a program of activities is provided that encourages the intellectual development of children, including providing
 - (a) a flexible daily program that responds to the needs and interests of the children,
 - (b) an environment that facilitates the development of curiosity, reasoning and problem-solving skills,
 - (c) age-appropriate activities that encourage development of concept-building skills such as classifying, ordering, determining direction and perceiving spatial relationships,
 - (d) activities and materials that encourage creative endeavours such as art, music, movement, imaginative play, story-telling and construction, and
 - (e) activities and materials that foster a greater understanding of the environment.

- 3** A licensee must ensure that a program of activities is provided that encourages the language development of children, including
 - (a) modelling of good language and listening skills,

(b) providing opportunities for children to develop receptive and expressive language skills, and

(c) providing activities that encourage communication.

4 A licensee must ensure that a program of activities is provided that encourages the emotional development of children, including

(a) helping children develop a positive self-concept and an accurate perception of self,

(b) helping children express positive and negative feelings in appropriate ways, and

(c) providing a comfortable atmosphere in which children feel proud of their cultural heritage and cultural sharing is encouraged.

5 A licensee must ensure that a program of activities is provided that encourages the social development of children, including

(a) providing an environment for children to work independently and to share and work cooperatively in small groups,

(b) providing an environment that fosters positive behaviour in children,

(c) helping children appreciate differences and respect the personal feelings and property of others,

(d) providing opportunities for social interactions that help children develop appropriate skills for social relationships, and

(e) providing experiences that facilitate a child's feeling of belonging to family, community and the world at large.

Appendix J:

Focus Group Questions

The following focus group questions about improving quality in out of school child care are based on the information gathered through literature on middle childhood development and child care quality, on a review of high quality practices in four jurisdictions and on the information and gaps in knowledge related to quality in BC's out of school child care programs. Discussions with representatives of the Out of School Care Working Group will help to identify which recommended policy or program changes are feasible in the short and long term for increasing out of school child care quality in BC.

- 1) The analysis of BC's out of school child care sector revealed that limited information on quality is collected/available to help guide policy and planning for out of school child care. One of the suggestions that I make in my report is to adapt the Annual Child Care Provider Profile survey so that it can also focus on the structural and process quality indicators which contribute to healthy middle childhood development. What do you think about this proposal? Is this proposal feasible? Are there better alternatives that I have not considered?**

- 2) A variety of evaluation and quality assurance tools are available to assess how well out of school care programs are meeting structural and process quality indicators. The jurisdiction review identified that it is best practice to use these evaluation and quality assurance tools. In my report I suggest that one option is for the BC Government to implement an evaluation tool such as the School Age Child Care Environmental Rating Scale in all licensed out of school care programs to obtain a baseline measure of quality in these programs. This information could then be used to determine whether programs are adequately meeting quality standards or need some additional support and resources to make quality improvements. Do you think it is feasible, in the short or long term*, to implement an evaluation tool such as the School Age Child Care Environmental Rating Scale for determining baseline quality levels in BC's out of school child care programs?**

- 3) The BC Government conducted a parent needs survey on child care in 2003, however this survey did not address parents' perspectives on quality in their care arrangement nor was it specific to out of school care. In the report I suggest that in addition to a provincial evaluation system for out of school care programs, the Ministry of Children and Family Development could conduct a survey to assess parents' satisfaction with the quality of their out of school care programs, including how well these programs meet their children's developmental needs. Given your understanding of the BC policy environment do you think developing and implementing a survey which addresses parents' perspectives on quality in their out of school child care arrangement is feasible in the short or long term?**

- 4) As outlined in my report the research shows that highly qualified staff who have opportunities for ongoing professional development and training can significantly contribute to the quality of out of school child care. Given your knowledge of the BC policy environment is a policy proposal to increase the number of hours of training required for out of school care staff feasible? Given your knowledge of the BC policy environment is a policy proposal to ensure that out of school care staff are required to participate in ongoing professional development related to middle childhood development feasible? Given your knowledge of the BC policy environment what other policy changes to increase the qualifications of out of school care staff may be feasible?**
- 5) The cross-jurisdictional scan showed that each of the reviewed jurisdictions developed a policy framework with information and resources to assist out of school child care programs with delivering high quality services to children and families. In the report I suggested that in collaboration with child care providers, the School Age Child Care Association of BC, the Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and academic research bodies such as the Human Early Learning Partnership, the Ministry of Children and Family Development could develop a policy framework and practice guidelines which include training information, tips for integrating with other community services and suggested activities and material checklists for out of school care programs. Given your knowledge of the BC policy environment is this policy initiative feasible in the short term for BC? What about the long term?**
- 6) Research on middle childhood development emphasizes the importance of fostering healthy development across three domains in school-age children: physical; cognitive; and psychosocial development. In my report I suggest that schools and other community organizations can help out of school care programs to offer a wider variety of developmentally appropriate activities for school-age children, such as arts and crafts materials, sports equipment or a larger physical space to engage in various gross-movement activities. The various government ministries which help support out of school care programs (i.e. MCFD, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development) could collaborate on ways to help out of school care programs integrate with other service providers to help provide more diverse activities and enhance their quality of care. How can we facilitate increased partnerships between out of school care programs and schools and community recreation programs to help ensure school-age children have opportunities for optimal development across these domains in out of school care?**