



## Early Literacy Alliance of Waterloo Region

Partnering for early literacy. Ensuring a stronger future.

### Early Literacy Alliance of Waterloo Region (ELAWR) Conference 2012 “Building a Community through Early Literacy” Summary Report

On Saturday October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2012 ELAWR hosted 112 community agency service providers from 39 different agencies for its second full day conference on Early Literacy development at Conestoga College.

- The **participants** included broad cross-sector representation as follows:
  - 22% classroom teachers in school boards (all 4 boards represented)
  - 3% Speech/Language Pathologists (SLPs)
  - 47% Early Childhood Educators (ECEs and ECE resource consultants)
  - 9% Community facilitators and coordinators
  - 14% representing Supervisors and Directors of programs
  - 5% represent “other” groups such as librarians, students, and Early Literacy Specialists

Within these groupings, 8% were from outside regions (Fergus, Erin, Guelph, St. Thomas, Hamilton, and Brantford), 11% represented special needs populations, and 3% indicated that they work with the ESL/second language population.

The Eventbrite online registration process was used by 78% of participants.

Twelve student volunteers from Conestoga College ECE program participated in the day.

The **conference committee** consisted of 8 individuals:

- Kim Krueger-Kischak, ELS in the Region of Waterloo (Co-Chair)
- Gabriele Croft, SLP from KidsAbility, (Co-Chair)
- Lorri Sauve from Project Read Family Literacy Network,
- Samantha Burns of the Conestoga College ECE Professional Resource Centre (PRC).
- Colette Moffat, Waterloo Catholic District School Board
- Michelle Vanderwindt, SLP, Waterloo Region District School Board
- Stephanie Helwig, SLP, Waterloo Catholic District School Board
- Wanda Kampijan, Our Place Family Resource and Early Years Centre



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The **program** included:

- Keynote presenter – Mark Zelinski, photographer, publisher, and winner of the Canadian Governor General's medal.
- 18 professional presentations at 3 separate break-out sessions, offering 6 choices per time slot
- 14 vendors of literacy materials

The **format** of the day was as follows:

- **8:00-9:00 am** Registration, coffee, morning snacks
- **9:00-10:00 am** Keynote Presentation
- **10:00-10:30am** Coffee Break – Networking , shop among the vendors
- **10:30-11:45 am** Morning Presentations (6 pre-selected options)
- **11:50-1:05** Mid-Day Presentation (6 pre-selected options)/Lunch #1
- **1:05-2:20pm** Mid-Day Presentation (6 pre-selected options)/Lunch #2
- **2:25-3:40 pm** Afternoon Presentations (6 pre-selected options)
- **3:40--3:45pm** Evaluation/Gift

**Workshop evaluations** were provided following the individual workshops and these results were shared with presenters.

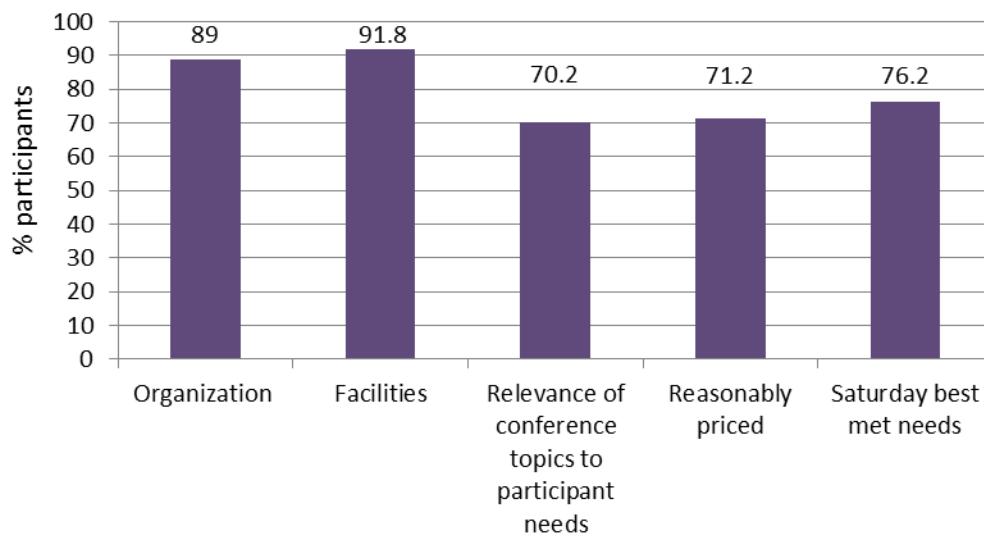
In addition a **Full conference evaluation** was conducted. 112 evaluations were completed and results were tabulated and summarized with the assistance of the Data Analysis Coordinator with the YMCA Early Years Centre, Amy Romagnoli.



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### % rated favourably (4 out of 4)



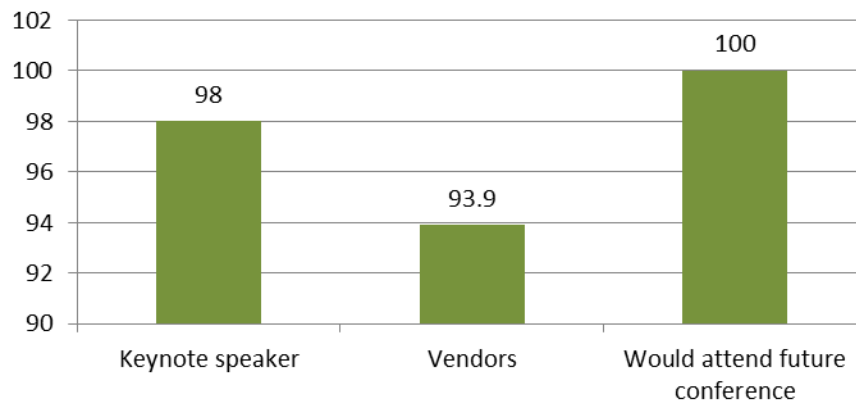
Most participants felt that the conference was well organized, with 89% ranking organization 4 out of 4, and 11% ranking it 3 out of 4. 91.8% were happy with the facilities, with an additional 8.2% ranking the facilities 3 out of 4. Over two thirds said the conference was relevant to their needs and 29.8% ranked this a 3 out of 4. 71% said the conference was reasonably priced, while 27.9% ranked the price 3 out of 4. The Saturday date met the needs of most participants, with 93.8% ranking the date as 4 out of 4 and 11% ranking it as 3 out of 4. Only 3.8% said that Saturday was not a suitable day for them.



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### Enjoyment of other conference features



Most participants enjoyed the keynote speaker, and commented that he was very inspiring and informative. The two participants who did not enjoy the keynote speaker questioned the relevancy of his topic to literacy. Those who commented on the vendors said there was a good variety of interesting items being displayed and sold. Six participants did not enjoy the vendors. All participants said they would attend another conference.

Some suggestions for future conference workshops include:

- Brain Gym
- Program/centre management/coordination
- Info on community resources: who are ELS, when to refer to speech pathologist, how can librarians support teachers, etc.
- Autism
- How to read to a group of children/special needs children
- Purposeful play/play-based learning/imagination thinking
- Clear writing
- Gross motor workshops
- Computer literacy in the classroom and beyond
- Literacy and music, art, science
- Specific things to develop literacy topics
- Activities for children age 1-3/baby/toddler program development



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- Development of literacy milestones and helping parents teach children
- Math, literacy, digital citizenship

Overall, participants wrote many positive comments about the conference, and look forward to attending another in the future.

It is anticipated that ELAWR will host another conference in two years' time – likely in the fall of 2014.

Summarized by: Gabriele S. Croft, SLP, KidsAbility  
Co-Chair, Early Literacy Alliance of Waterloo Region  
Dec. 10, 2012