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Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Play-Based Full-Day Kindergarten: Educator Perceptions

The focus of this study was to examine educator perceptions of children with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in Ontario's relatively new Play-Based Full-Day Kindergarten program. The study also examined educator perceptions of the parent-educator relationship for children with ADHD. Both teachers and ECEs throughout Southwestern Ontario were included in the study to get well-rounded perceptions of children with ADHD and the FDK program. Using an Ecological Systems Theory lens, semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain participants' perceptions. The data was analyzed using Thematic Analysis (TA) in which five themes emerged: 1) Knowledge and Understanding, 2) Benefits and Challenges of the Play-Based FDK Program for Children with ADHD, 3) Strategies Educators Used to Promote Success, 4) Creating and Maintaining Positive Relationships, and 5) Child and Educator Needs. From these five themes it was evident that the educators had positive attitudes towards children with ADHD, that the play-based component of FDK was perceived as beneficial for children with ADHD, that educators worked to maintain good relationships with the parents, that there were different perceptions held between teachers and ECEs, and that there were differences between the play-based curriculum and its implementation in each school. Overall, this study was the first to my knowledge that examined both teacher and ECE perceptions on children with ADHD in the play-based kindergarten program, which addresses a gap in the literature. The more awareness and knowledge that can be brought to this topic, the more children with ADHD will succeed academically, socially, and emotionally.