

The Centre for Family Literacy is dedicated to helping Alberta grow and prosper.



The Centre for Family Literacy Centre Page

December 2006



Season's Greetings

“Wishing you a happy holiday season and a new year filled with peace and prosperity.”

The Staff of the
Centre for Family
Literacy

Two New Programs at Centre for Family Literacy

This year the Centre for Family Literacy took over two programs – Book Buddies® and Multicultural Book Buddies – that were originally developed and delivered by the Success by Six® Community Team.

Multicultural Book Buddies is a program that gives parents the opportunity to borrow children's books to take home each week to share with their children. The program is offered in partnership with agencies such as Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers that offer services to immigrant and refugee families.

Parents are encouraged to use the pictures to tell stories in their own language, and about their families, cultures and traditions. As with all books used in our family literacy programs, care is taken to ensure materials are culturally sensitive and reflective of diversity, and that they offer a range of print difficulty. Parents meet with a facilitator who discusses the importance of reading with children from a young age, and answers parents' questions.

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Canadian Attitudes Towards Learning

In October 2006, the Canadian Council on Learning released the results of the “Survey of Canadian Attitudes toward Learning”. This survey was done in consultation with Statistics Canada.

The survey results indicated that Canadians believe “that learning begins at home and is critical at every stage in order to succeed in life.” In fact one of the key findings of the survey was that “early childhood learning should focus more on attitudes – such as fostering a positive attitude toward learning – than on school readiness.”

Parents of young children were asked to rate the importance of certain activities on improving early childhood learning. Although fathers and mothers showed slight differences in their ratings, “Overall, parents are most likely to agree that reading to children is important and least likely to agree that attending organized classes is important.”

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This program helps get books into homes that might not otherwise have them, and supports families reading together. By helping parents and children develop good book handling and borrowing habits, we facilitate their successful use of libraries and support them to connect with the larger community and its resources.

Book Buddies® is a literacy program aimed at enhancing the literacy skills of school aged children and preschoolers. It is run in partnership with over 20 Edmonton elementary schools. During the 8-week program, children in grades 3 – 6 borrow books to take home and read with a preschool “book buddy” (a sibling, other relative or neighbour). Like many of our family literacy programs, one of the primary goals is getting books into homes. In this program, the older child gets practice in reading and gains self-esteem through being able to read to their younger “buddy,” and sibling bonding, as well as bonding across the grades, is facilitated.

Comments from participants and program partners:

We hope you continue this program because it both benefited my little son and my grade six daughter. She didn't just improve her reading skills but also developed a sense of responsibility. *Parent*

The way my daughter read to her small cousin, it was evident that she felt important to him and she was enjoying what she was doing. *Parent*

I really liked reading to my little sister because we got to spend more time together My little sister really enjoyed this experience. I would recommend to keep this program for other children. *Student*

I really liked reading to my reading buddy. I liked that I got to teach him that words go left to right. I felt like a leader when I read to [him]. *Student*

This program is a wonderful ‘club’ to offer to elementary students with younger siblings, neighbors and relatives. Students enjoy coming to exchange books and telling me about their experiences reading at home. Quality time between siblings is being integrated into these homes. Awesome! *School Principal*

Canadian Attitudes Towards Learning

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When asked how government could facilitate early childhood learning, respondents favoured two areas: “increasing public awareness of the importance of early childhood learning and improving access to quality child care services.”

Another interesting finding relates to adult training. It was found that “Canadians are more likely to participate in work-related adult training if they enjoyed their initial experiences with schooling.”

The report also found that 69% of Canadians take work-related training so they can perform more effectively in their job, 33% in order to earn more money, and 31% to get a better job.

Commenting on the report, Paul Cappon, President and CEO of the Canadian Council on Learning, stated, “Canadians clearly recognize that we have some work to do, as a society, to meet our own expectations for creating lifelong learners.”

For more information, please visit www.ccl-cca.ca/scal

Longitudinal Research on Centre's Learning Together program

In partnership with the Canadian Centre for Research on Literacy housed at the University of Alberta, we undertook a long-term evaluation of one of our most intensive family literacy programs – Learning Together. Over three years, program participants and a control group were assessed for gains in literacy skills in parents, and amongst their children aged 3 – 5 years.

The Learning Together program offered sessions for parents, an early childhood development program for the children, and then joint sessions in which parents and children interacted around literacy events.

The results confirmed the “incredibly powerful combined effect of parents’ education and parents’ reading ability on their children’s reading ability before starting school.” Specifically the research found:

- The program had a positive influence on all children except those who were already in the top 20 – 30% at the pretest stage.
- Participant parents acquired and implemented more frequent and varied literacy activities at home than the control group parents.
- Participant parents also reported being more confident and secure in their own ability to help their children.

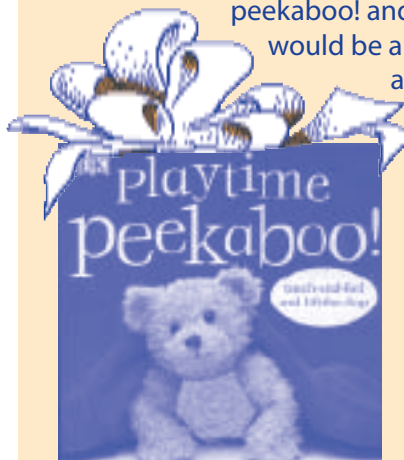
It was found that the program was most effective for children with the greatest need. Although there was no specific increase in the parents’ literacy levels because of the short length of the program, there were qualitative improvements in the parent’s ability to advance the literacy levels of their children.

The “Conclusions and Policy Implications” chapter of the report is available on our website. The book, *Family Literacy Matters: A Longitudinal Parent-Child Literacy Intervention Study* by Linda M. Phillips, Ruth Hayden and Stephen P. Norris has been published by Temeron Books, Inc. (ISBN: 1-55059-339-6).

Staff Holiday Picks

Wendy Peverett, Books for Babies Coordinator, feels the **DK peekaboo!** Series, (Baby says peekaboo! bathtime peekaboo! and playtime peekaboo!)

would be a wonderful addition to any baby’s library. These sturdy books are full of colourful photos hidden by large flaps and a variety of textures for baby to explore.



Mary Soliman, Help Your Child to Read and Write Coordinator, recommends **The Magic Hockey Stick** by Peter Maloney. It’s every child’s dream to play

hockey just like Wayne Gretzky! This book brings that dream to life – it’s great for parents too.

Heidi Ryll, B.O.O.K.S. Coordinator, says **Sometimes My Mommy Gets Angry** by Bebe Moore Campbell is a very popular book in her program. This book is a positive and gentle way to talk to young children (ages 4 and up) about how to stay safe in a home where a family member suffers from mental illness and/or substance abuse.

For the adults on your list, our new librarian, Rob Kowaluk would like to recommend **Housekeeping vs The Dirt** by Nick Hornby. This is a refreshingly clever collection of literary reviews that compels you to rethink your own reasons for reading.

Moccasin Goalie by William Roy Brownridge is a book that Janice Schneider, Literacy C.O.W. Coordinator, recommends to families visiting her program. The story is about Danny who wears moccasins instead of skates, Petou who is too small to make the “real team” and Anita who is told “girls don’t play hockey”. Together they show that determination, teamwork and not underestimating anyone can make dreams come true.

The Centre for Family Literacy gratefully acknowledges the ongoing support of the following:



It's That Time of Year

Whatever the reason, many donors make their gifts near the end of every year. Taking a little bit of time now – to review your giving options and plans – can ensure that your gift has the maximum impact.

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The recent market conditions could make the tax savings significant for some people. When you sell appreciated publicly listed securities, 50% of the capital gain is taxable. However, if you transfer ownership directly to a charity, like the Centre for Family Literacy, none of the capital gain is taxable.

Check with your financial advisor for more information on this type of charitable gift.

If you direct your gift to the Centre's Endowment Fund at the Edmonton Community Foundation, you will become a member of the Legacy for Literacy Club, joining others who want to provide a measure of funding stability for our work.

Celebration of Family Literacy

In conjunction with other events planned around Family Literacy Day, the Centre will be hosting our **Leading with Literacy Breakfast on Wednesday, January 24.**

This year's keynote speaker will be Dr. Eric Newell, Chancellor of the University of Alberta and Honorary Chair of the Centre for Family Literacy. At the breakfast, we will be announcing this year's winners of the **Lois Hole Memorial Achievement Awards.**

The recipients are being recognized for their outstanding commitment to family literacy and learning – a cause that was very important to the Centre's Past Honorary Patron, Lois Hole. We are very pleased that Jim Hole will be in attendance to present the awards.

Tickets are \$35 and can be ordered by calling the Centre at 421-7323 or visit our website at www.famlit.ca for an order form.

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Literacy Develops in Families First

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