

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



The Centre for Family Literacy Centre Page

December 2007

Fathers, Fun and Family Literacy!



KARA Family Resource Centre and Claireview Headstart have started a group for kids and their "male role models" (fathers, stepfathers, grandfathers and uncles) to have some quality time together on Saturday mornings.

They approached the Centre for Family Literacy to provide a literacy component in the way of our Lending Box program. Enthusiastically, we entered the partnership and started providing a male facilitator to come in once a month to do literacy activities and bring a box of books for participants to borrow from.

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Measuring Success

Family Literacy is a beautiful strategy, illustrated by pictures of parents and grandparents and other caring adults reading, talking, singing, writing, playing, rhyming and laughing together with children. And research confirms the importance of these regular, positive shared activities to overall child development and family relationships.

But what, exactly, are we accomplishing? Fair question, and one the Centre continually asks when planning and implementing its programs.

Ask our staff and they will tell you that our family literacy programs have positive results because of the relationships we enjoy with the Edmonton adults and children who attend our programs, and with our generous volunteers and partners.

If you delve a little deeper, they will tell you about a grown woman beaming with pride and excitement when she wrote her name in cursive for the first time. Or about a parent confiding she never knew how important talking and singing with her baby was until she attended the Rhymes That Bind program with her son.

That parent also tells us that her son now has far stronger language skills than her older daughter did at the same age, and that she's now reading with both of them lots and lots, and that they are all increasing their reading skills together!

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Happy Holidays!

“I believe with all my heart that every person in the world is entitled to the gift of literacy. We must provide that gift to the best of our ability, for doing so ensures our humanity and makes possible the realization of a more nearly perfect world.”

*Scott Momaday,
UNESCO Artist for Peace,
writer, painter, and
Pulitzer Prize Winner for
Fiction*

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Fathers, Fun and Family Literacy!

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Parents have a profound influence on the literacy development of their children. A solid foundation in language and early literacy is essential to children's success in daily activities, in new environments and in formal school settings. For many, the idea of developing children's literacy skills sounds like work. The men of the family who may not have a lot of time to spend with their children are sometimes afraid that this takes away from "fun time."

This Lending Box program is unique in that it is all male participants with their children. Through the program, they are learning that literacy can be fun and that the time they spend together reading, singing, rhyming and playing is helping them build stronger relationships with their children.

Participants talk about the changing role of males in the family, from breadwinner to active caregiver, and some are just happy for the chance to spend time with their kids. They discuss all the topics we hear in other groups of only moms with their children. They have the same concerns, need support and social interaction and want the best for their children.

Family literacy fits in well here. The participants are learning how literacy begins in the family and the role they can play in it. They learn about activities they can do with their kids to promote literacy. They are eager to use the activities in the time they get to spend together. It is a great example of how the focus isn't just on moms and babies, but also on the significant men in children's lives.

Measuring Success *Continued from page 1*

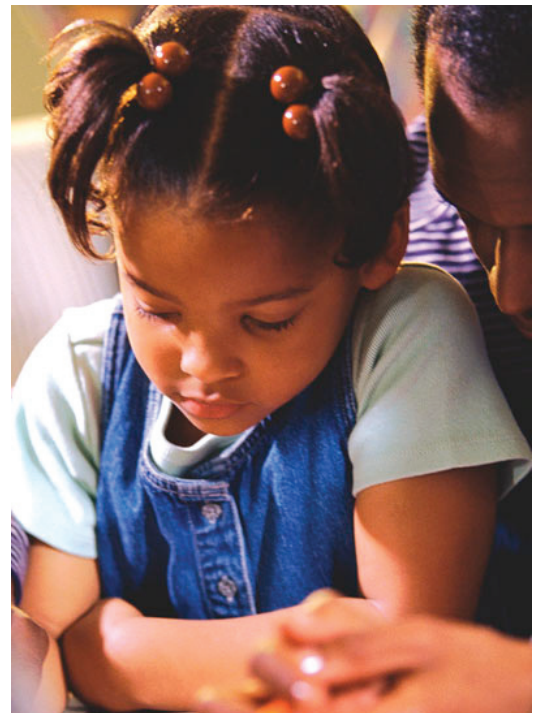
Anecdotes are an important part of measuring success but we also want to couple that with evidence based measurements. So on an annual basis we collect statistics and participant evaluations for all of our programs and they are compiled and reviewed by a third party evaluator. This evaluation provides us with yearly statistics, as well as measures of the desired outcomes of each program.

Simple evaluation forms with tick boxes or rating scales are used to get feedback from all participants. Our community partners also evaluate the effectiveness of the programs.

So let's look at some of the results.

- 72% were reading more frequently to their children
- 82% were now encouraging other family members to read to children
- 81% said their children were now more interested in books
- 75% were interacting more positively with their children
- 81% were more aware of how to choose books for their children
- 98% of partner agencies rated the program excellent or very good

We consider such anecdotes and evidence as incredibly powerful proof that our literacy programs work, and that literacy makes huge differences in the lives of families and individuals.



Building Essential Skills

Joe came to the Centre in September of last year. He wanted to get his class four ticket in Power Engineering. Joe told the staff at the Centre that math was his problem – not reading. Brett, a young engineering student, became Joe’s tutor and they worked together for several months. Brett soon realized it wasn’t so much the math as the reading comprehension that was the problem for Joe.

Joe and his tutor Brett changed their focus and began working on reading skills. “Brett is a wonderful tutor, he helped Joe so much – gave him confidence” commented Joe’s wife. The other day Joe took a course through work and got 25/28 on the exam. According to his wife, “he never would have taken a course at work before because he was so afraid of the test at the end.”

Joe is representative of about one-quarter of workers in the Canadian labour force. On the International Literacy Survey, they would score at a high Level 2 or low Level 3. At this level, they can read but their proficiency makes it difficult for them to face new demands, such as learning new job skills. A Conference Board of Canada report states, “Improving the literacy skills of this group could have a significant impact on productivity, innovation, quality, labour market outcomes, income and lifelong learning.”

A recent Toronto Dominion Bank Report states “Canada is losing billions of dollars to poor literacy and numeracy.” Craig Alexander, TD Bank’s deputy chief economist went on to say

“An increase in literacy of 1% would mean a \$32 billion increase in national income . . . three times the return on investment in machinery.”

We know that only 10% of the adults needing help are participating in literacy programs. As a leader in the literacy field, the Centre’s programs are striving to increase that percentage by encouraging individuals and families to participate at many points in their lives.

Flexibility and adaptability are the watchwords of our programs and Joe’s experience demonstrates how this can lead to success. Joe wanted help with his math and in the end he received a whole lot more.



Staff Picks for the Holidays

Babies to preschoolers

HUG – Jez Alborough, board book

Baby Says Peekaboo – DK Publishing, board book

Touch the Bunny – Jacqueline McQuade, board book

Ages 3-8

I Ain’t Gonna Paint No More! – Karen Beaumont

Clancy the Courageous Cow – Lachie Hume

My Little Sister Ate One Hare – Bill Grossman

The Three Snow Bears – Jan Brett

Pre-Teens

Owen & Mzee: Language of Friendship – Isabella Hatkoff,

Craig Hatkoff and Dr. Paula Kahumbu

Walking With the Dead – Lucy M. Falcone

Teens

Slam – Nick Hornby

The Dangerous Book for Boys – Conn & Hal Iqulden

Just Listen – Sarah Dessen

Adult titles

The Big Over Easy – Jasper Efforde

Edmonton Book of Everything – Mark Wells

The Golden Spruce: A True Story of Myth, Madness and

Greed – John Vaillant

Peace Like A River – Leif Enger

Online donations to the Centre can be made through CanadaHelps.org



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



Edmonton & Area
Child & Family Services Region 6



January 27 is Family Literacy Day

Family literacy activities are important every day! To promote the importance of reading and learning together, January 27 is recognized as Family Literacy Day across Canada.

Parents, as their children's first teachers, provide the foundations for literacy and learning. For a child, first comes experience, then comes understanding and finally comes language. We encourage you to celebrate Family Literacy Day and here are a few literacy activities you might share as a family.

- Act out a story with your child
- Make a pretend store and count out the change together
- Go for a walk and read the signs along the way
- Write a letter or a shopping list together
- Visit your local library and let your child choose a book
- Make cookies – reading the recipe together
- Visit a local museum and share stories of our history
- Create a scavenger hunt using books and magazines in your home as the clues
- Play games that use words and numbers
- Use songs and rhymes as part of your daily routine

Enjoy! And remember, it is never too early or too late to talk, sing, and read with your child.

Tips for Year-End Giving

Here are some tips to help you make the most of your donations for 2007.

1. Calculate your income and try to get a handle on your tax liability for the year. Did you sell any appreciated assets? Will you owe more taxes? Take the time to do some planning while you still have the opportunity to make a year-end gift.
2. Review your stocks. In particular look at the stocks you have held for more than a year. Which ones have appreciated the most? It may be prudent for you to make your year-end gift using one or more of these stocks. If you give the stock as a donation, you will not incur any capital gains tax and you get a charitable donation receipt for the full amount of the stock.
3. Talk to your advisor before making any significant gift. Your professional advisor can help you understand the impact of your gift on your income tax return and estate.

Remember in Alberta, your tax reward is even greater this year. Thanks to a new initiative introduced in the province's April 2007 budget, you now receive a 50% tax credit for every dollar donated over a \$200 threshold!

If you would prefer to receive the Centre Page newsletter via email rather than by mail, please send us an email at info@famlit.ca. Please reference Centre Page in the subject line.

Literacy Develops in Families First

The Centre for Family literacy is dedicated to helping Alberta grow and prosper. Our innovative programs, training and research help Alberta families achieve what they imagine - improved education, jobs and health.

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