

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



The Centre for Family Literacy Centre Page

December 2008

Learning Together Shows Positive Outcomes for Parents and Children

The Learning Together program was re-launched in September 2008 in a new format as a 36-week program. Funding received from Alberta Advanced Education and Technology and a partnership with Edmonton Catholic Schools have enabled twelve families to meet twice a week at St. Gerard School in north-central Edmonton.

The children attend a preschool program with a literacy focus and their parents (and one grandmother) attend their own adult literacy class where they discuss parenting issues, child development, family literacy activities and how to improve and support their own literacy. The parents and children join together once a week to engage in literacy and

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Happy Holidays!

“Knowledge is the currency of our economy. If you want to see your workforce in 15 years, look at your children today.”

*Frank McKenna,
Pan Canadian Interactive
Literacy Forum
April 2008*

Improving Literacy Levels Among Aboriginal Canadians

In 2003 Canada participated in the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey. Literacy levels were rated using a five-level scale with Level 3 considered to be the level required “for coping with the increasing skill demands of the emerging knowledge and information economy”.

Among Canadians aged 16 to 65, 42% failed to meet this standard; among Aboriginal peoples, this number was even higher. In urban Manitoba and Saskatchewan, as well as in the Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut, the proportion of Aboriginal adults whose literacy skills fall below Level 3 is at least 16 percentage points higher than their non-Aboriginal counterparts.

Education contributes to stronger literacy skills for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples: among both groups, those with higher levels of education generally have strong literacy skills.

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Learning Together

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learning activities, such as: sharing a story, playing a game or making a discovery at the many activity centres around the room.

The first twelve weeks of the program have focused on supporting children's social, emotional and literacy development. The Learning Together preschool program encourages children to participate in creative play both independently and with their parents. During the joint sessions, parents are encouraged to get on the floor or get their hands dirty and participate in activities with their children. In an article entitled, "Why Children Need Play," Dr. Elena Bodrova and Dr. Deborah J. Leong (2005) commented that "teachers of entering school-agers do hope that the children who come into their classrooms can concentrate, pay attention, and be considerate of others. These are areas developed not

by using flashcards or computer programs, but through interacting with peers during play" (p.6). One of the parents noticed that her "child brings home new words, table manners, says thank-you for meals and shares songs with his younger sister." The Learning Together staff are hoping to build on these early successes and to cultivate the skills that the families need to engage in life-long learning.

There has also been evidence of adult literacy learning in the program. One of the parents said that the things she learned in class helped her to communicate with her older child. "My English is better," she said, "my son is impressed with me." This same mother has asked to participate in the adult tutor program at the Centre for Family Literacy.

The next twelve weeks of Learning Together will focus on improving adult literacy skills and the facilitators are confident that they will continue to see positive outcomes for both the parents and the children.

Improving Literacy Levels

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There are a number of reasons for poor educational outcomes among Aboriginal populations in Canada. Among the barriers to success articulated by Aboriginal students and educators are discrimination, institutional insensitivity toward Aboriginal cultures and lack of awareness of Aboriginal approaches to learning.

Addressing the educational challenges faced by Aboriginal students is a critical component of improving literacy skills. Some approaches that show promise include: early engagement of Aboriginal parents with their children's schools, development of an understanding of Aboriginal approaches to learning, and decreasing the impact of student absenteeism and mobility.

At the Centre for Family Literacy, our Aboriginal Family Literacy Coordinator works with Aboriginal organizations and communities across the province providing training and support for family literacy programs. We have developed an Aboriginal Storysacks program that respects the importance of the culture, traditions, practices and beliefs of Aboriginal people. We have also researched and produced an extensive list of culturally appropriate Aboriginal books to support all of our family literacy programs.

Low literacy is one of many challenges facing Aboriginal communities across Canada. Addressing the underlying causes can contribute to overcoming many of these challenges.

Source: excerpts from Canadian Council on Learning, article Improving Literacy Levels Among Aboriginal Canadians

“Low literacy is one of many challenges facing Aboriginal communities across Canada. Addressing the underlying causes . . . can contribute to overcoming many of these challenges.”

Family Literacy an Every Day Success

A child's early positive interaction with adults helps form the basis for success in school, work and life. Engaging young children in literacy activities at home enables parents and other family members to become active participants in their children's education at an early age.



Many parents ask when and how to share books with their child. Here are a few suggestions:

- Begin when your child is born and spend time reading every day.
- Sing to your child or repeat nursery rhymes.
- Choose books with colourful pictures and simple words – or no words at all.
- Read with interest and expression – or just tell the story in your own words.
- Let your baby play with the book. Most board books and cloth books are safe for babies to handle and chew on.
- Encourage your toddler to point out objects, repeat words, and talk about the story.
- Ask your child open-ended questions about the story: "Why do you think Goldilocks ate Baby Bear's porridge?" "What do you think will happen next?"
- Tell stories about your family and culture.
- Be an example to your children; let them see you read books too.

Reading aloud – with children participating actively – helps children learn new words, learn more about the world they live in, learn more about written language, and see the connections between spoken and written words.

So, grab a good book and cuddle up with your child. It will provide fun and enjoyment for both of you.

Family Literacy Day World Record Attempt

ABC CANADA Literacy Foundation is inviting Canadians of all ages to help set a new Guinness World Record for "Most Children Reading With an Adult, Multiple Locations". Join the Centre for Family Literacy's event and help set a new record.

Where: Edmonton City Hall

When: Saturday, January 24, 10 a.m. to 12 noon

More details will be available on our website in January.

Leading with Literacy Breakfast

The annual Leading with Literacy Breakfast celebrating the winners of the Lois Hole Memorial Literacy Awards will take place:

When: Tuesday, January 27

Where: Crowne Plaza Edmonton Chateau Lacombe

Tickets: \$40

Raise a Reader Book Drive and Sale

The Edmonton Journal's fourth annual book drive and sale in support of Raise a Reader will take place:

Book Drive: Sunday, March 22 – Victoria School of Performing and Visual Arts

Sunday, March 29 – J. H. Picard Catholic School

Book Sale: April 17-20 – Beside Alberta Aviation Museum at 11410 Kingsway Avenue

Watch for further details on our website or in the Edmonton Journal.

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



AN EDMONTON COMMUNITY
OF LIFELONG LEARNERS



Human Resources and
Social Development Canada



United Way
Member Agency

Enhanced Charitable Tax Credit

Did you know that if you donate more to registered charities like the Centre for Family Literacy, you now have an opportunity to receive a higher tax credit on your income tax return? As part of the Alberta government's new Community Spirit Program, the combined provincial and federal charitable tax credits gives Albertans a 50-cent tax credit for every dollar donated over \$200.

For example, if you donate a total of \$500 to several charities throughout the year, you would receive a non-refundable tax credit of \$200. This means your donations would cost you about \$300.

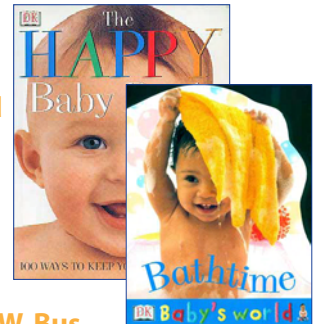
In addition to the higher tax credit, your donation also creates an opportunity for the Centre to obtain a provincial grant to support our work. The donation grant component of the Community Spirit Program allows our organization to apply for a grant based on the amount of money donated by individuals over a 12-month period.

The more funds we raise, the better chance we have of receiving this grant to support our family literacy programs and services.

Your donation will help ensure that parents can provide their children with positive early learning experiences.

A gift to the Centre will make a lasting difference!

- \$25 – **3 quality board books for a baby**
- \$75 – **a book bag and 4 hard cover books for a family**
- \$100 – **healthy snacks for families attending a 6 week literacy program**
- \$300 – **fuel for the local C.O.W. Bus for one month**



(Samples only)

3 easy ways to donate to the Centre for Family Literacy

- On-line through CanadaHelps.org
- By phone: 780-421-7323 or 1-866-421-7323
- By mail: Centre for Family Literacy, 201 11456 Jasper Ave, Edmonton, AB T5K 0M1

We accept donations by Visa, MasterCard or Cheque.

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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