

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



The Centre for Family Literacy

# Centre Page

December 2009



*Happy Holidays everyone,*  
from the Centre Board and Staff!

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## What Rhymes with Success?

The itsy bitsy spider climbed up the waterspout,  
Down came the rain and washed the spider out,  
Out came the sun and dried up all the rain,  
And the itsy bitsy spider climbed up the spout again!



On any given day during the week, in community organizations across Edmonton, you will find parents sitting in circles on the floor reciting *Itsy Bitsy Spider*, laughing, and playing with their children. These parents are attending a Centre for Family Literacy Rhymes that Bind program.

What does this simple rhyme have to do with preparing children for success in school?

Infants communicate from the moment they are born. Crying, babbling, and cooing are their earliest forms of

communication, and, by responding to baby's vocalization, parents give meaning to their sounds.

When parents sing songs and rhyme with their child from an early age, they are helping their child develop language and communication skills, which are essential for learning. At the same time, they are building warm and secure relationships that support their baby's healthy brain development.

Research shows that a child who has positive early interactions with her or his parents will have an easier time learning, will have better social skills, and will develop greater resiliency.

So reciting *Itsy Bitsy Spider*, singing a lullaby, or telling a simple story at a Rhymes that Bind program is providing parents with an opportunity to encourage their child's language and literacy development.

Demand for Rhymes that Bind has grown substantially over the past three years with over 998 adults and 1,198 children participating last year. The program has responded to the diverse ethnic and cultural make-up of our city by including songs and rhymes in a variety of languages from Cree to Mandarin.

Unfortunately, due to funding cut backs, this highly successful program is at risk of being downsized. The Centre is encouraging individuals and business to make a donation in support of Rhymes that Bind so that we can continue to provide families with tools to help them lay a strong language foundation for their children's literacy.

## Literacy and the Law

The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police recently completed an 18-month project, Literacy and Policing in Canada. Working with literacy organizations, community groups, governments, and police agencies across Canada, the study produced the Literacy Awareness Resource Manual for Police that provides valuable information to those within law enforcement as well as anyone interested in literacy development and its role in social growth and improvement. As well, the website Literacy and Police: Target Crime with Literacy has been developed to provide further information on the issue.

The statistics utilised by the project were from the 2003 International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS) participated in by seven countries. The Canadian portion, in which more than 23,000 Canadian adults took part, was coordinated by Statistics Canada. For the purposes of the study, literacy was defined as “the ability to use and understand information that is fundamental to daily life at work, at home, and in the community”.

The statistics presented in the IALSS survey are very troubling. In Canada, about 58% of adults aged 16 to 65 have the basic reading skills they need for most everyday reading. The other 42%—9 million adult Canadians—have low literacy skills and scored below Level 3, which, according to the Government of Canada, is the minimum level required by an individual to be able to cope in society.

This project found that the role of literacy in the criminal justice system must not be underestimated. Low literacy can lead to feelings of isolation and situations of vulnerability that can result in either criminal acts or victimisation. Statistically, offenders are three times as likely as the rest of the population to have literacy problems. In fact, 65% of people entering correctional facilities have less than a Grade 8 level of literacy skills.

The reasons for offences and re-offences vary but can be significantly impacted by low literacy. Those who do not fully understand the terms of their probation, court summons, or other literacy-dependent factors of the legal system may face repeat arrests, reminding us that events do not always happen due to criminal intent but sometimes because of misunderstandings.

Everyone interacting with the criminal justice system, whether as a suspect, witness, or victim, must deal with police and legal jargon, which can be more difficult and stressful for individuals with low literacy skills. At any stage of this process, a person involved with the system will have to read documents, answer questions, and fill out forms.

This manual includes a judge’s comments on police jargon used by police that demonstrates how challenging it can be. For example: “A person does not tell them his name; he identifies himself”, “they [police] do not watch or look; they surveille”, and “they [police] do not go somewhere; they proceed”.

Research has shown that literacy programs have the capacity to decrease criminal activity and repeat offenses. According to the U.S.-based Rand Corporation, investing \$1 million into literacy programs that assist inmates to graduate from high



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school would prevent 258 crimes a year, versus the same amount of money invested in prison space for career criminals, which would prevent only 60 crimes a year. Ways must be found to keep inmates in the programs through to completion. The Adult Based Education program saw inmates' grades raise nearly three levels upon completion; however, the completion rates were only 22% over a five-year period.

The legal system is now recognising that low literacy is a special circumstance, and this understanding requires that all personnel involved in the system be trained to look for signs of low literacy. The emphasis is on individual officers to make sure that people with low literacy levels understand their situation, their rights, and the effects of their decisions. As the manual states: "Canada is a multicultural society with Charter protections for everyone"; and a failure to assist those with low literacy skills "may be a form of systemic discrimination".

The responsibility does not rest on the legal system alone, though, and individuals should also alert officials of their needs. However, until there is no longer any social stigmatisation surrounding low literacy, people will continue to feel ashamed of letting others know that they are struggling to understand what is happening, and they will continue to be unable to participate as fully and positively in their communities.

For further information, please refer to [www.policeabc.ca](http://www.policeabc.ca).

## Leading with Literacy Breakfast

The Centre invites you to join us for our annual Leading with Literacy Breakfast.

When: Wednesday, January 27, 2010  
Where: Westin Hotel, Edmonton  
Tickets: \$40 per person or \$320 for a table of 8  
Guest speaker: Jim Hole

**Order tickets on our website at [www.famlit.ca](http://www.famlit.ca)**

This is an opportunity to celebrate the accomplishments of the Lois Hole Memorial Award nominees and to network with business, government, and community leaders committed to improving literacy in our province.

## Book Donation

CFL Executive Director  
Jonna Grad and Telus  
Ambassadors Lanny Graham  
and Fran Papworth inspect  
new books purchased with a  
donation from the  
Ambassadors  
to Read In Week Partners.



## Privacy Policy

If you do not wish to receive Centre Page or information about the Centre for Family Literacy, you may call, write, or e-mail us. A copy of our privacy policy can be found on our website at [www.famlit.ca](http://www.famlit.ca)

Online donations to the Centre can be made through [CanadaHelps.org](http://CanadaHelps.org)



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







The CanadaHelps Great Giving Challenge is a 4-week long competition that encourages Canadians to use the power of social networking to help their favourite charity.

December is the most popular month for Canadians to make donations, so the Challenge is running from November 23 to December 20.

Every Canadian is challenged to set up what is called a GivingPage on the CanadaHelps website and raise funds for any registered Canadian charity of their choice. To encourage you to raise money, cash prizes will be awarded to the charity whose GivingPages raise the most money and to the charity that attracts the highest number of donors.

We hope you will join the Challenge and set up a GivingPage for the Centre for Family Literacy. To join, simply go to the CanadaHelps website at

[www.canadahelps.org](http://www.canadahelps.org) and click on the Giving Challenge. Once you have joined then start promoting it to everyone: friends, family, colleagues. Maybe you would like to challenge a friend to see who can raise the most money.

CanadaHelps is a registered charitable foundation that provides an online donation portal for Canadian charities. The Centre for Family Literacy has been a member of CanadaHelps since 2005. The “donate now” icon on our website sends you directly to our page where you can make a donation in a variety of ways, including monthly gifts, and receive a tax receipt immediately.

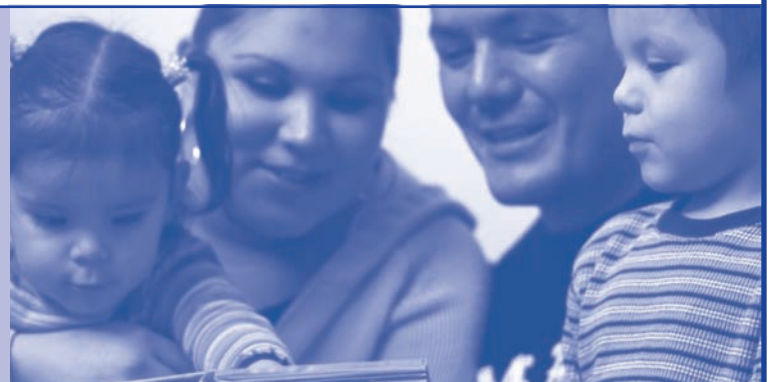
Now there are three easy ways to donate to the Centre:

1. On-line through CanadaHelps
2. GivingPage through CanadaHelps
3. By mail using the response card below and sending it to: 201, 11456 Jasper Ave, Edmonton AB T5K 0M1

Your donation will help support the innovative programs that are making a difference in families’ lives.

## 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.



### YES, I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

Your support will help us make a difference in the lives of Alberta families! Together we can make Alberta a healthy, literate society where all are able to contribute and succeed.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Mr. Mrs. Ms. Miss Dr.

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