

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



The Centre for Family Literacy

# Centre Page

September 2009

## New Program Making Dollars and \$ense

There is a lot of buzz about financial literacy these days, heightened by the current global economy and financial meltdowns of the past year. The term financial literacy covers many different things, including understanding how to navigate financial services and plan for retirement. Like regular literacy, financial literacy is required on an everyday basis to help people make better decisions throughout their lives, and it is key to self-sufficiency and participation in the economic mainstream.

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“Consumer credit-card debt in Canada totals \$80 billion, a 40% increase from 2004.”

*Deloitte, February 2009*

“No matter how busy you may think you are, you must find time for reading, or surrender yourself to self-chosen ignorance.”

*Confucius*

## Program Shows Marked Improvement for Parents and Children

The Learning Together program wrapped up on June 24 with a celebration for the ten families who attended the 36-week program.

Learning Together is unique in that parents attend school with their children. The children participate in a play and literacy-based preschool program while the parents are involved in an adult class that combines adult literacy with family literacy skills, parenting topics, child development information, and learning about the school system. The program also includes

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## New Program Making Dollars and \$ense

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“A financially literate person is someone who understands the basics of money management, knows when they need financial advice and where to get it, and is able to make informed financial decisions with confidence.”

There has been a dramatic realization that many people lack money knowledge and do not have the capacity to manage savings and debt. A 2008 Bank of Montreal survey found that 7 in 10 Canadians did not have a budget and that 80% of the survey respondents did not feel that the current economic downturn was enough incentive to create one.

The need for action becomes more apparent when the above survey is coupled with a 2007 report published by the Toronto-Dominion Bank. It contends that Canada is losing billions of dollars to poor literacy and numeracy among youth and adults. The 2003 International Adult Survey echoes these findings, reporting a 50% rate of poor numeracy skills amongst Canadian adults.

In response to this need, the Centre for Family Literacy, with funding from the Alberta Government, has developed four levels of financial literacy courses for adults over 18. These courses, called “Dollars and Sense,” will cover basic math and money, spending and saving, budgeting, using bank services including computer banking, and credit and debt. These classes are being offered this fall and are open to the public as well as to the Centre’s participants. The Centre is also embedding more numeracy in its family literacy programming and is seeking opportunities to further develop and deliver a new program called “ABC-123.”

At the Centre, our goal is to improve literacy levels in Alberta. One strategy is to offer adults instruction in the full range of literacy skills that they desire and need to function in today’s society, and reach their personal, educational, and career goals.

## Program Shows Marked Improvement

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*Young graduate receives congratulations from CFL Learning Together staff.*

times when parents and children share their learning by participating in activities together.

An outside evaluator assessed the children in the 2009/2010 preschool program and found progress in learning for all children, especially in literacy and numeracy. She also concluded that most of the children who were entering kindergarten in the fall displayed a “high level of school readiness.”

All of the adult learners displayed at least a grade level improvement in their reading comprehension scores. Two parents who sought out additional help from the Centre’s adult tutoring program showed the most remarkable gains.

In April, one of the parents wrote, “this program enriched my family’s life by not only giving me the tools to encourage my son’s literacy, but also my own.” This same parent is enrolled at a post-secondary institution for September and plans to continue her education and change her field of work. The parents have said, “Everyone deserves the opportunity to gain the literacy and social skills offered in this program.”

As Learning Together ended, the families were eagerly tackling new challenges in their lives. They were seeking out information on schools and other programs for themselves and for their children. Many of the parents were looking for another program that they could do together with their child. They had recognized the value of spending time as a family and felt that they could learn more in a program together than in one they attend separately.

## Addressing Youth Violence with Early Education

Understanding youth violence requires focusing on children before they become young adults. The Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development has released a report, "Early Learning Prevents Youth Violence," that explores the stages of aggressive acts and how early learning can decrease or prevent violent tendencies later in life.

Aggressive behaviour does not develop at the onset of puberty but is apparent at all ages, if one knows what



to look for. Aggression has been reported in infants; their demonstrations of anger emerge as screaming and angry facial expressions. True physical aggression appears for the first time between six and twelve months when babies have developed the motor control they need to make gestures.

Hitting is the most common form of aggression in two- to three-year-old children, and by the time they reach age four most children have the motor skills they need to commit the violent

acts seen in adolescents and adults. However, by this age those tendencies are generally starting to decrease because children are better able to control themselves and are beginning to develop verbal skills and the ability to vocalize their frustrations.

It is important to recognize that aggression is natural, and it is not always a sign of behaviour problems. It is often, instead, an opportunity to teach the child alternatives to aggression and to encourage pro-social behaviour. Language development is an important part of this process, especially during the first three years of life when physical affection, responsive care and play, and teaching socially appropriate behaviours are pivotal for the brain to develop properly. This development provides the foundations for children to be able to express themselves throughout all stages of life without resorting to violence.

## New Executive Director for the Centre



On June 1, the Centre for Family Literacy welcomed Jonna Grad as our new Executive Director. Having worked extensively in not-for-profit organizations in Ontario, she brings with her in-depth knowledge and leadership experience. Jonna spent nine years counseling

individuals and facilitating programs at the Women's Centre of Hamilton before moving on to the Marty Karl Centre for five years, where she helped provide employment and training services for people with barriers to employment.

Jonna's background serving families and communities compliments the Centre's and has assisted in the transition process. While busy settling in to her new position, Jonna is continuing to get to know the staff and board at the Centre, and the many community organizations who all work in and support family literacy.

The essential role of literacy in life is not lost on Jonna. She is a passionate reader and had a large library of books before she moved to Alberta, which, due to freight charges, she was forced to leave behind. But not to worry, "I am in the process of building back my collection and have already outgrown the two bookshelves I have."

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:





## Workplace Family Literacy Project Announces Three Pilot Programs

Brooks • Taber • Edmonton

The two-year Workplace Family Literacy project is exploring how family literacy programs can provide additional dimension to workplace literacy and essential skills programs. Building on the research done in the field of workplace literacy, this project is reviewing a range of options for programming and suggestions for adapting current family literacy programs for workplace delivery.

An environmental scan of the business sector was conducted by Leger Marketing to measure the current levels of awareness of the impact of literacy on the economy, the variety of workplace literacy programs being used, and the types of partnerships that exist between this sector and literacy organizations.

The information from this environmental scan and the input from literacy organizations across the province are being used to develop and implement three pilot programs for the project.

The Taber and District Adult Learning Association in partnership with Lucerne Foods is developing a series of workshops tailored to meet the interests of

the employees and the ages of their children. Topics include sharing books, reading with school-age children, developing math skills, literacy in the environment, and child development.

The Centre for Family Literacy in partnership with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers will offer a Books Offer Our Kids Success (B.O.O.K.S.) program at the Electrical Industry Training Centre in Edmonton. Union members who participate in the program will learn how books, games, and activities support literacy and numeracy skills in their children.

Lakeside Packers in Brooks will present the third pilot using their own Human Resource staff who attended the Centre's Family Literacy Training Institute in August to supplement their knowledge. They will also use the B.O.O.K.S. program as a starting point for engaging their workers in family literacy.

Having three pilots adds value to the research carried out during this project, and having three such diverse pilots will provide rich information on the feasibility of adding family literacy to the workplace.

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### 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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