



The Centre for Family Literacy Centre Page

The Importance of Play

Parents do not always understand the importance of play, and, in today's competitive world, the temptation is to have children stop "wasting time" and to put that time to what they believe is more constructive use.



But for a child, there is no more constructive activity than play. Play is so important to optimal child development that it has been recognized by the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights as a right of every child.

What do children learn from play? It allows children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity, and physical, cognitive, and emotional strength. Play is

Our Vision: *A healthy, literate society where all are able to contribute and succeed.* important to healthy brain development and paves the way for learning. Children who play regularly tend to perform better in mathematics and reading in comparison to those who have fewer opportunities to play.

Play helps children learn about the world in which they live. They can investigate and discover, test their theories, develop spatial relationships, and explore cause and effect, societal roles, and family values in a caring and safe environment.

Play builds self-esteem and social skills. Children will often play at something they know they can do well, at which they can be successful. They will begin with solitary play using inanimate objects like dolls, stuffed animals, trucks, and blocks. Later

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Breakfast Celebrates Literacy

The Westin Hotel was packed for the Centre's Leading with Literacy Breakfast. They came to hear the keynote address by Councillor Don Iveson and to congratulate the finalists and winners of the Lois Hole Memorial Literacy Awards.

"It's easy to take for granted that we have some of the best public education in the world right here in Edmonton, from kindergarten to post-secondary. It's one of the primary reasons my wife and I chose to raise our family in Edmonton," said Councillor Iveson.

He went on to say that in the spring of 2010, City Council declared Edmonton a City of Learners. "As a City of Learners, we recognize the importance



Councillor Don Iveson

of learning. This city's educational strength is a competitive advantage we need to build on by encouraging a culture of learning at all ages," stated Iveson.

In this context, it seems fitting the 2011 Lois Hole Memorial Literacy Award

nominees and winners were acknowledged. The awards recognize the efforts of individuals in their own personal learning journeys and those who support that learning through their leadership.

Two outstanding volunteer tutors, Alexandra Hildebrandt and Tammy Irwin, were finalists in the Leadership category along with the St. Benedict

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March
2011

The Importance of Play

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they will play with other children as they learn to share, negotiate, and cooperate.

Play with parents should not be underestimated as research has shown children whose parents play with them ultimately develop superior social skills. When parents play or join with their children in child-driven play, they are given a unique opportunity to see the world from their children's vantage point. They learn to communicate more effectively with their children and are given another setting to offer gentle, nurturing guidance.

Play helps with language development. Think of the vast

number of words a child uses during play, many of them repeatedly, enhancing their language skills.

Consider the importance of pretend play in stimulating a child's creativity and imagination. Making a castle in the sand, or a barn out of a shoe box, preparing dinner in their imaginary kitchen or playing dressing up allows children to stretch the limits of their world and experience the fun of make-believe. They are using imagination, storytelling, and problem solving skills that are the foundation of reading, writing, and communication.

Physical play provides various health benefits and promotes early brain development and learning in infants and young children. It helps a child to develop connections between the nerve cells and the brain. As these connections develop, a child's motor skills, socialization, personal awareness, language, creativity, and problem solving are improved.

Quite simply, play is a cherished part of childhood that inspires fun and laughter and creates a happy family environment in which both children and adults thrive.

Breakfast Celebrates Literacy

Continued

Elementary Catholic School for their support of the Learning Together program.

Rob Campbell and Neil Bosch were the recipients of the Leadership Award. In his acceptance speech Rob said, "Literacy is a cause that is very close to my heart. My father and mother went a long way to instilling a love of books and a real understanding of how important and what a key literacy is to whatever you want to do in life."



Neil Bosch, Jim Hole, Jonna Grad, and Rob Campbell

Luisa Magnan and Judy Tran were finalists in the Learner category. Both were recognized for their efforts and commitment to their children's learning. The recipient of the Learner Award was Tanya Sherk.



Tanya Sherk

Tanya has a dream. She wants to be a receptionist and came to the Centre to get help achieving that goal. Typically a student takes a full year to improve by one reading level. Tanya improved by four levels in one year and was admitted to NorQuest

College in an upgrading course in order to enter the Administrative Professional Program.

Standing in front of an audience of over 200 people, Tanya confidently gave her acceptance speech impressing everyone with her commitment to achieving that dream—a fitting finale to the Leading with Literacy breakfast.

Grocery Shopping with Children Can Be Fun!

If you had to make a list of your least favorite activities, grocery shopping would probably be in the top ten. Add children into the mix and it might rank number one.

The Centre decided to change this experience with the Great Grocery Scavenger Hunt. The Saturday before Family Literacy Day® (January 27) seemed like a great time to introduce the scavenger hunt.

Sobeys partnered with us, and four of their Edmonton stores were selected to host the event. Our two Classroom on Wheels (C.O.W.) Buses parked outside the Sobeys stores, giving families a wonderful opportunity to visit and explore a variety of fun literacy activities.

Inside Sobeys, families were welcomed by our staff and volunteers and provided with the Great Grocery Scavenger Hunt activity sheet. Families with preschool children were encouraged to find shapes (squares, triangles, rectangles, and circles) in the store or to sing or rhyme the Muffin Song using the tune of "Three Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed".

For families with school age-children, the scavenger hunt included answering a series of questions: What aisle is the cereal in? How much does 2 liters of milk cost? How many employees are in the bakery right now?

Each family received a free book, and there were draws for Sobeys gift cards and tickets to the Edmonton Symphony's "Symphony for Kids" concert.

Parents agreed that the scavenger hunt certainly improved the shopping experience. So next time you are shopping with your children consider playing I Spy or creating your own scavenger hunt. You might just discover that shopping can be fun, and the bonus is your children are learning at the same time.



Raise-a-Reader Book Drive and Sale

Book Drive

Date: Sat. April 9 2011

Place: J.H. Picard School
7055 99 St., Edmonton

Date: Sat. April 16 2011

Place: Concordia University College
Ralph King Athletic Centre
112 Ave & 73 St,
Edmonton

Book Sale

Date: April 29 - May 1 2011

Place: Aviation Museum Hangar
11410 Kingsway Ave
Edmonton

Check our website for times



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



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



Government of Alberta

 Human Resources and Social Development Canada

SUCCESS BY 6



Books for Babies

Books for Babies is one of the first family literacy programs the Centre delivered. We asked Wendy Peverett, Program Coordinator for the past nine years, to reflect on the program's evolution.



When did Books for Babies start as a program at the CFL?

Back in 1997, Prospects Literacy and the Junior League of Edmonton made a joint commitment to a program that gave a book bag with some books to parents of newborns in Edmonton on

Family Literacy Day. They would go to the maternity wards and deliver these bags to moms there.

The program was expanded to include our community partners and the new moms involved with their programs. After a couple of years, more information about community resources for families with babies under a year was included in the bags.

How has the program changed?

Before, the focus was on getting the books out into homes rather than information on how to support their child's early literacy development.

Today, we share information on what to look for in books for this age group; take a critical look at the content, safety, durability, and construction of books; learn songs and rhymes that help with language development; and look at ways to help parents connect with others in their community.

Often parents want to wait until their children are "old enough to know how to handle books" before they give books to them. We help them understand that "book handling" is a learned skill. We encourage parents to let their children explore the books and to watch as they master different stages of opening and closing the book, going from front to back, upside down to right-side up, and finally "pretend" reading.

You certainly have some memorable moments that have made you realize what an affect B4B has had on families. Can you share one of those with us?

Oh, there are so many that it is hard to select one. One dad in particular stands out. He was a reluctant participant but came because his wife wanted him to.

Within the first week I had a feeling that he was struggling with his own literacy issues. During our session on language play, he said he didn't understand why talking to his baby was so important - they got enough of that through the TV. You could see that he was really trying to learn some of the rhymes and songs but wasn't following in the book. I gave him a CD that "he could listen to while on the road".

At the end of the program he had started sharing the pictures in the books, making up his own stories and songs for his baby, and was so grateful that we had acknowledged that not everybody "likes or enjoys" reading. He felt there were things even he could do to help his child learn to like reading.

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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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