



The Centre for Family Literacy Centre Page

The Importance of Play

Our Mission Statement:

The Centre for Family Literacy builds, develops, and improves literacy with families and communities.

Child's play is serious stuff. So serious in fact, it is protected by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Why is it so important? Play is critical to every aspect of a child's development: social, emotional, intellectual, physical and creative. We define play as being self-motivated, child-driven, and free of imposed rules. With play, the process is more important than the end-result.

For parents, who are their child's first teacher, playtime is an important way to relate and engage with them. But does this mean that you have to treat your home like a classroom? Not really. In fact, because playing and learning are not separate activities for young children, they learn just as much or more from the unstructured free play many of us grew up with, as they do from structured teaching. Free play has become seriously undervalued, and there is increasing evidence that a lack of play is damaging to development.



“Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood.”

– Fred Rogers

Time for free play has been cut down because of rushed lifestyles, and increased attention on achievement-based learning. But free play is more important than trying to build specific skill sets. Nobody can be sure what skills will be needed in the future, but certain qualities will always be useful for navigating a complicated world. Play allows your child to conquer fears, which leads to confidence, competence and resiliency.

Spending one-on-one time playing with your child strengthens bonds, and since we all learn best when we feel safe, secure and connected, it's these bonds that will help carry your child confidently through what life throws at them.

Play allows kids to build on their skills through hands-on experience. For example, playing with blocks lays the foundation for scientific reasoning and problem solving, while pretend play or make-believe fosters communication skills and empathy. When in groups, they learn life skills such as sharing and conflict-resolution. It's these skills they will need for the rest of their lives.

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The Importance of Play

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How do I support my child in play? You can help by providing a significant chunk of uninterrupted time for play, and creating an environment with hands-on materials that encourage exploration and discovery.

“Play is the highest form of research.”

– Albert Einstein

It is important for play to be self-motivated, as this lays the groundwork for a love of lifelong learning; so let them play on their own terms.

You can also help by observing, role-modelling, making suggestions and asking questions—without taking over. When adults try to take control of the process, some of the benefits of play are lost. If your child becomes frustrated though, help them to figure things out; sometimes they will need your guidance.



It's never too early to start to play with your child. The moment they are born, they are looking for ways to connect with you. When a baby smiles at you and you smile back, this is the very first playful interaction. Remember that you don't need the latest and greatest educational toys. All you need is time, imagination and some hands-on materials.

Tailored Workshops Meet Community Needs

“Our customized Literacy Links workshops have grown in popularity over the past year,” said Wendy Peverett, Program Manager at the Centre for Family Literacy. She went on to say, “Many of the requests have been from day care centres, service clubs, and family resource centres in the Edmonton area, but as word has spread we are receiving inquiries from across the Province.”

The workshops are designed to increase participants' ability to develop and support children's early learning and literacy skills, whether they are parents, caregivers, community partners or professional associations. Each workshop includes some theory, a lot of sharing amongst participants, and time to practice new-found skills.

The Centre has developed 12 packaged workshops; each is customized according to the specific needs of the participants. Workshop participants are always pleased with the new knowledge they gain. As one participant put it, “There were fun hands-on science experiments that explored the children's sense of touch. I can't wait to try making slime and bubbles with 3-5 year olds!”

Some of the more popular workshops include:

- More than Words on a Page
- Becoming Readers and Writers
- Come Play with Me
- The Scientist in All of Us
- Digital Technology

A listing of upcoming workshops can be found on the Centre's website under the training tab. If you are interested in learning more about this program and how you can bring it to your community, please contact the Centre. They would be delighted to discuss your needs.

The Importance of Oral Language Development

When you sing *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* with a child, you might think you're just enjoying a treasured rhyme together. However, research shows rhymes, songs, and finger-play are important tools in the development and acquisition of early literacy skills, and help build the foundation for a lifetime of learning.

Recognizing the importance of oral language, the Centre's **Rhymes that Bind** program has been offered for over 15 years. The program has been expanded and adapted over the years to address changing community needs, with **Multicultural Rhymes that Bind** and **Intergenerational Rhymes that Bind** programs offered, as well as the original program.



Multicultural Rhymes that Bind encourages families to use their first language to set a foundation for their children's future language development through songs, stories and rhymes in a mix of English and the group's first language.

The flexibility of the program is particularly important when working with multicultural populations, where we fit the program to meet the participant's needs and build on their strengths.

Intergenerational Rhymes that Bind takes place in seniors' living communities and the residents are welcomed and encouraged to attend and participate. Many parents attend the intergenerational sites because they do not have grandparents or extended family living nearby. Bringing together three generations creates a wonderfully unique environment with seniors often leading in song and sharing stories.

Rhymes that Bind programs are successful in opening learning doors on many levels—oral language development, socialization of children and parents, and bonding between parents and children.

“We feel less isolated as a family. Rhymes that Bind helps us integrate into English-speaking community.”
– Participant

Important Dates

Training Institute 2016

May 2-6
Deerfoot Inn,
Calgary AB

Links fore Literacy Golf Tournament

Wednesday, August 17
Links Golf Course,
Spruce Grove AB

Literacy & Learning Symposium 2016

September 26-30
Fantasyland Hotel,
Edmonton AB

Early Years Conference

October 2-4
Edmonton Marriott at
River Cree Resort,
Edmonton AB

Check the Centre's website for more information.



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



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



Awards Presented at Leading with Literacy Breakfast



Sharon Bellion



Tamara Clark



Seta Menas

The annual Leading with Literacy Breakfast emceed by David Hancock included the keynote address by Randy Boissonnault, MP Edmonton Centre, and the presentation of the 2016 Lois Hole Memorial Literacy Awards.

The moving acceptance speech by Adult Learner recipient Sharon Bellion had those in attendance on their feet. Information about this year's winners can be found on our website under Special Events.

Family Literacy App Launch a Success

The number of users of **Flit**, the Centre's family literacy app, has remained constant since its launch on January 22, with the peak in downloads on Family Literacy Day. People from across Canada have been downloading **Flit** and reviews on the app store are universally positive.

If you are disappointed that it is not available in an Android version, please go to our website and complete the short survey on the homepage so that we can show potential funders there is a demand for this great resource.

Elephant Toothpaste Anyone?

The Family Literacy Day Carnival at MacEwan University was a fun way for the whole family to celebrate. Guest readers included Dr. David Atkinson, Councillor Michael Walters, and Edmonton Eskimos players Blair Smith and Andrew Jackson who got into the swing of things—reading to the children and helping make elephant toothpaste at the science booth.

Golden Key International Society students were the creative minds that came up with activities to link literacy with science, music, math, aboriginal culture, health, and play.



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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