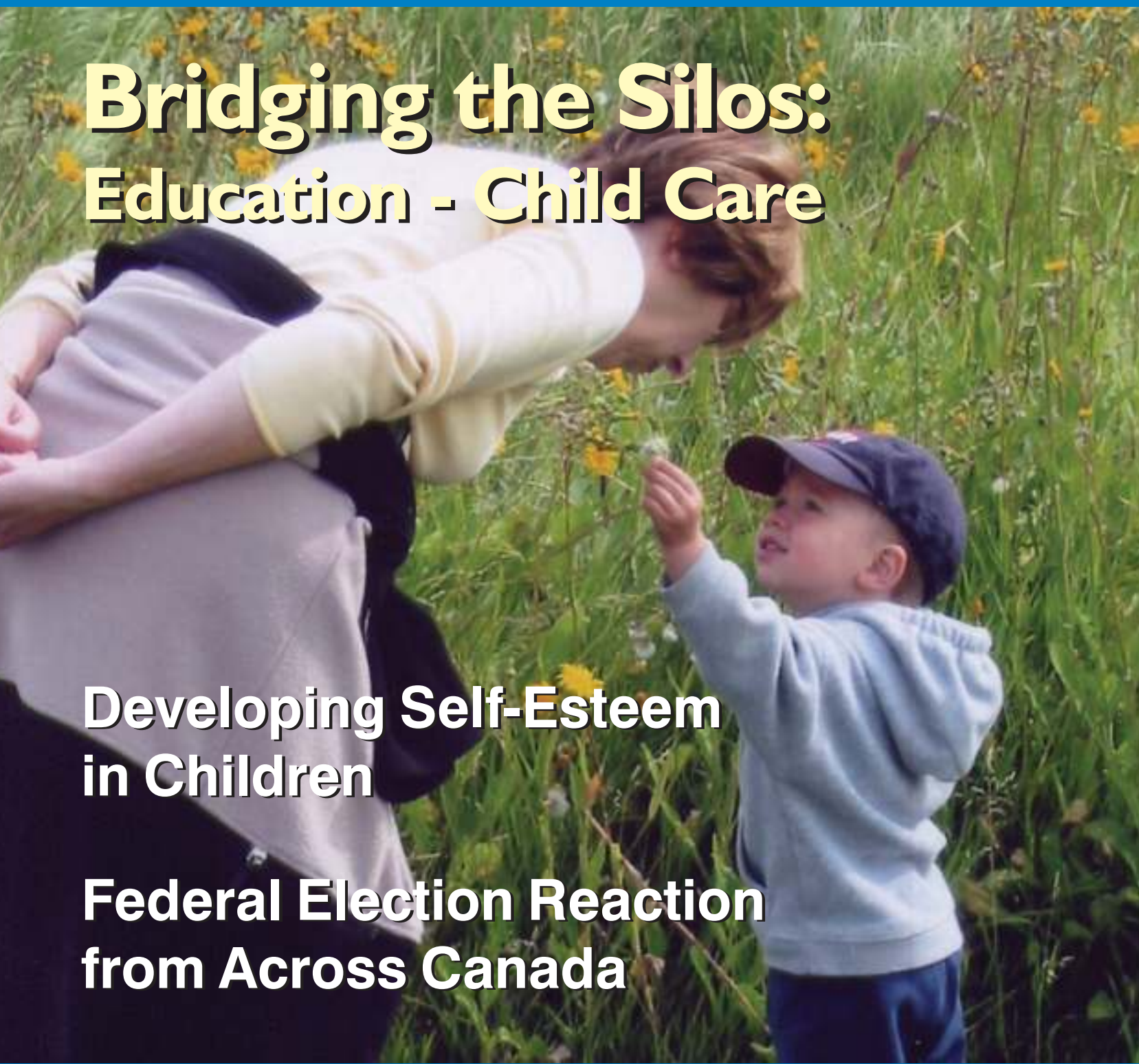
Interaction

VOLUME 20, NUMBER 1, SPRING 2006



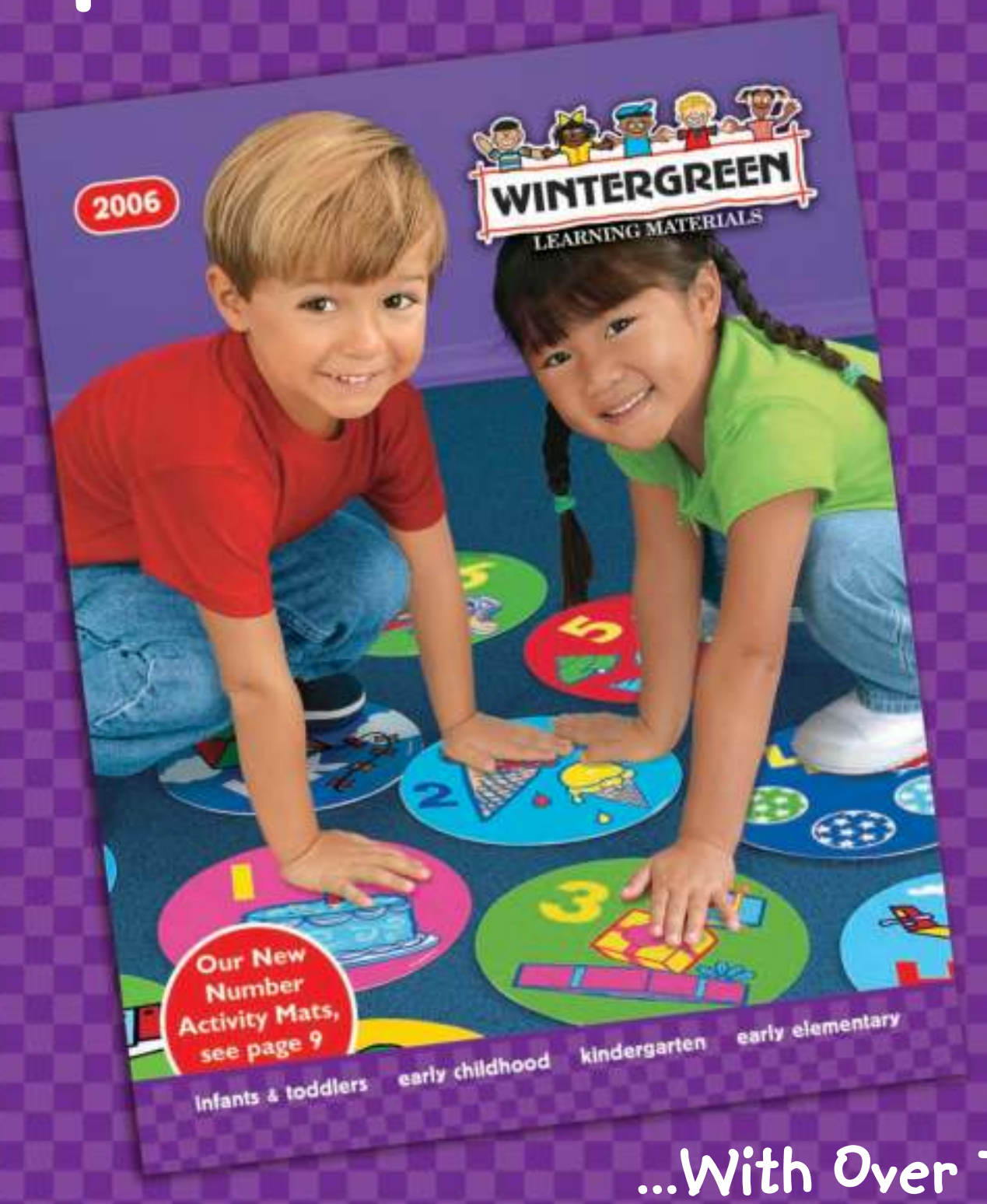
Bridging the Silos:
Education - Child Care

Developing Self-Esteem in Children

Federal Election Reaction from Across Canada

PUBLICATION OF THE CANADIAN CHILD CARE FEDERATION

Inspire and Motivate...



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Interaction

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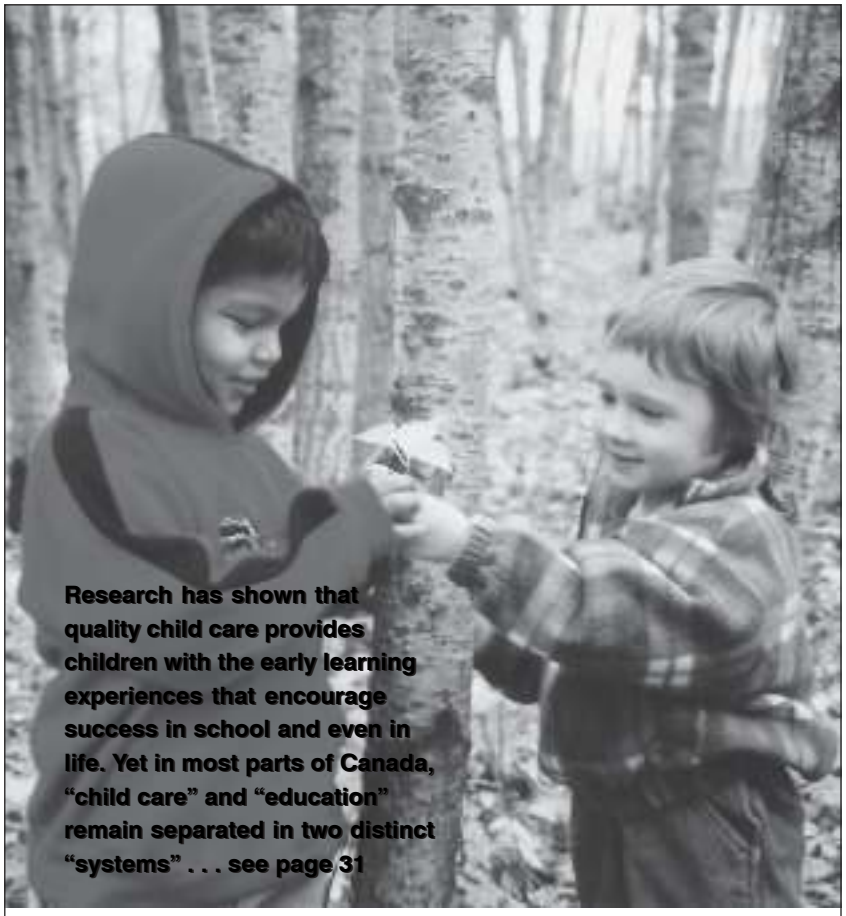

Research has shown that quality child care provides children with the early learning experiences that encourage success in school and even in life. Yet in most parts of Canada, "child care" and "education" remain separated in two distinct "systems" . . . see page 31

Bridging the Silos: Education - Child Care

Departments

A new resource sheet (#79) accompanies this issue – *Bringing Back Physical Activity Play in Childhood*

The photo on the front cover was taken by *Shoot for Cover* winner, Sherisse Ziprick, Russell, Manitoba.

Behind the Scenes

Spring is a season of hope. If you feel you need some signs of hope on the child care agenda, you're probably not alone. Last year at this time, the federal government had just announced a $5-billion plan to create a national early learning and child care system. Fast forward a year to a new government and a new child care plan to divert this funding to payments to parents of $1200 (taxable) per child under six.

One glimmer of hope is that there will be a transition period of one year before the current bilateral agreements are terminated. And a lot can happen in a year, as we've seen. In From Where I Sit, CCCF's newly elected president, Don Giesbrecht, reminds us that at this crossroads in the sector, "we must be determined and not compromise in our pursuit of quality early learning and child care for Canada."

This issue of *Interaction* focuses on a trend that is being seen in early learning and child care across the country – integration of the school and child care systems. Most everyone agrees that these two systems need to be working together more closely for the benefit of children and their families. However, there's less consensus on what integration should look like and what impact it will have on children, families and the child care sector. Inside you'll get an overview of national discussions on the issue of integration and profiles of a number of models across the country.

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Interaction

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Inside the Federation

Centre of Excellence Update

The Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development (CEECD) recently became the lead organization for the Canadian Council on Learning's Early Childhood Learning Knowledge Centre (ECLKC). The ECLKC will identify priorities for research, identify best practices and create networks to ensure that the most current knowledge about early childhood learning is shared across Canada. The Canadian Child Care Federation is coordinating the knowledge exchange component of the Centre's work.

An inventory of products related to early learning and child care is now available on the CEECD Website. This new resource for educators, policy makers, service providers and families was created by the Early Learning and Child Care Working Group of the Centres of Excellence for Children's Well-Being.

The CEECD online encyclopedia now includes a series of papers on the topics of parenting skills, obesity, learning disabilities, resilience and head start policy. Check the CEECD website regularly for new postings and syntheses!

The spring issue of the CEECD *Bulletin* focuses on attachment. You can find this and previous issues on topics such as aggression, language and nutrition by visiting the CEECD website at www.excellence-earlychildhood.ca.

- Valérie Bell

Trusted Health Info – Online and On the Road

The Canadian Health Network team at CCCF has been busy developing resources on children's health. We've completed a lengthy collection analysis, removed out-of-date resources, revised many of our frequently asked questions (FAQs) to reflect plain language, and took over responsibility of more than 260 resources and 16 FAQs from the Relationships section of the website. We've collaborated with CHN to write a "Healthy Bytes" article on serving special needs children, which will appear on the site soon. We also developed an FAQ booklet for parents or others caring for children who may not have access to the Internet.

Our new brochure is now available, too! This full colour promotional item discusses more in-depth the content in our collection, as well as how we undertake our work.

It has been an active quarter promoting CHN on the road. The Early Years conference in Vancouver in February was a great success, and we had the opportunity to distribute CHN materials to more than 600 delegates. We also attended events for the Francophone community; school-age care and teachers. Recently, we've been invited to workplace health events for a few major corporations, and have provided employees, many with young families, with valuable information about CHN.

Your CHN team is very proud of the work we do, for you, and hope that you take full advantage of everything the collection has to offer. For more information or to order promotional items, contact me at ktytler@cccf-fcsge.ca.

- Kim Tytler

INSIDE THE FEDERATION

Meeting the Challenge Online – Coming Fall 2006

Are you feeling challenged by the behaviour of some of the children in your care? Do you need some practical strategies to help you in your daily interactions with children?

Meeting the Challenge Online is an e-learning course to help you deal with challenging behaviours in young children. Pilot-tested by child care practitioners from a range of settings, this course will help you develop effective intervention strategies and enhance children's prosocial behaviour. It will also give you the opportunity to share your experiences with practitioners across Canada in an online learning environment – at your own pace and in the comfort of your home or child care facility.

Co-developed by two ECE instructors and e-learning experts from Grant MacEwan College in Alberta, the course expands on the best-selling publication *Meeting the Challenge: Effective Strategies for Challenging Behaviours in Early Childhood Environments*, written by Barbara Kaiser and Judy Sklar Rasminsky.

The nine-week course covers eight topics and includes required reading, implementation of skills learned, individual and group assignments, individual reflection and "e-communicating" with fellow learners and coaches.

Meeting the Challenge Online will be available in English and French starting in Fall 2006. If you are interested in completing the course, visit the website, download the interest form and return it to CCCF by mail or fax. For more information contact us at mtcinfo@cccf-fcsge.ca.

- Jeanine Plamondon

Tools to Encourage Physical Activity in Your Practice

Active play in early childhood not only supports children's motor development (building muscle and movement coordination, stamina and physical strength) but also their cognitive, social and creative development.

CCCF and Loyalist College have developed practical hands-on resources (10 resource sheets and an interactive multi-media CD) specifically for those who work with young children. These evidence-based resources present best practices for quality learning environments and quality programming that support healthy child development with a specific emphasis on physical activity. The total cost for the resources is $6. For more information, contact CCCF at (613) 729-5289 ext. 234; orders@cccf-fcsge.ca, or order from the E-store at www.cccf-fcsge.ca.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in August 2005, the world was moved by the stories and images of families uprooted by the disaster in New Orleans. The Canadian Child Care Federation was inspired by the relief efforts of many organizations, in particular Embrace Mississippi's Children: Hurricane Relief Project which set up child care services to serve the families taking refuge in the Louisiana Superdome. CCCF donated a package of its latest, most popular resources to the effort. The following is an excerpt from a thank-you letter sent to CCCF from Embrace's coordinator, Lynn Darling:

> *"The return to a safe and nurturing environment is the first step in the healing process for young children following the trauma of this devastating disaster. Donations like yours will make it possible for teachers to provide children with a familiar routine, supported by materials and books that stimulate their development and engage their imaginations."*

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FROM WHERE I SIT

Child Care at a Crossroads

by Don Giesbrecht

The Canadian Child Care Federation is pleased to welcome Don Giesbrecht as the new president of its Board of Directors. Former executive director of the Manitoba Child Care Association, Don has represented the MCCA on CCCF's Member Council for the past two years. He is currently executive director of the Assiniboine Children's Centre in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The following is an excerpt from his election speech to Member Council on February 4, 2006:

Early learning and child care (ELCC) is at a crossroads in Canada – a crossroads that is potentially so daunting in nature and scope that I'm concerned that so many who have worked so hard for so long will not have the energy to carry on.

However, we all know that this is not an option. We also know that now, perhaps more than at any other time in the history of ELCC, that leadership is needed – leadership that the Canadian Child Care Federation can bring for its members and for children and families across the country. The leadership that we bring needs to be unapologetic in what it stands for and unapologetic in what it believes. This does not mean that we are to be brash, arrogant or opposed to differences, quite the opposite in fact. If we are to continue to move forward we have to listen with open minds and be respectful, but we will not stray from what we know to be true and we must be determined and not compromise in our pursuit of quality ELCC for Canada.

One of our greatest strengths lies in our "child first" philosophy – a philosophy that puts aside partisanship, special interests, cultural differences and regional issues in the pursuit of a common purpose and goal.

We are so diverse across Canada and it is no more apparent than in our ELCC systems – or as some might say, our *lack* of systems. What meets the needs of a family in Charlottetown, PEI, may not work for a family in downtown Toronto or in Whitehorse, Yukon. Yet, it is through these differences that the role of CCCF is vitally important. The CCCF brings together all of the regions, all of the varied and diverse interests and needs for ELCC from across Canada and provides the support, resources and information that each group needs to ensure that they are striving for excellence and who in turn, provide vision and strategy to build a national ELCC system. In fact, one of our greatest strengths lies in our "child first" philosophy – a philosophy that puts aside partisanship, special interests, cultural differences and regional issues in the pursuit of a common purpose and goal.

Former Social Development Minister Ken Dryden often remarked, "the argument has been won, the case has been made, and the evidence is there" that ELCC is needed. We wish now that was the fact. The truth is that we still have to make the same compelling case for ELCC that we have made, well, I am sure for many it seems like forever. But we know that excellence takes time and we also know that the compelling case for a pan-Canadian system for ELCC needs champions, not just the CCCF and other national organizations, but the grassroots, the families, communities and local groups who all have a vested interest in the well-being of their children, their future.

The CCCF is a strong organization with a great history and a great future. Projects such as the occupational standards for ECEs, ethics and accreditation, to name just a few, show leadership and vision for ELCC in that these are the

tools and projects that promote excellence and the pursuit of quality. Therefore, the role of president of the CCCF has to continue on this path. This role is no more important than the projects, the people, the staff, the representatives from across the country. It is one other cog in a large wheel that must work in partnership and cooperation. Certainly, there must be vision, passion and understanding of what excellence in ELCC is, but the role of President is not to boldly go into the unknown charting a new course; it is to work with the staff, the board and the member council in their capacity as representatives of their organizations to set a collective vision and path.

I had the great honour of serving the over 3000 members of the Manitoba Child Care Association as their president from 2002-2004. It was my duty and responsibility to represent them with government, business, the public and the media. It is with this experience, knowledge and confidence that I move into the role of president of the CCCF, unapologetic in the pursuit of a quality pan-Canadian ELCC system and deeply honoured to represent the over 11,000 members from sea to sea to sea. We will not waiver in our message and we will be resolute in our purpose.

Federal Election Reaction: Voices from across the Country

On January 23, 2006, Canada elected a minority Conservative government. A main plank on the party's platform during the election campaign was to end the early learning and child care agreements negotiated between the federal and provincial governments in the past year. These agreements would be replaced by a "Choices in Child Care" strategy — a combination of payments of $1200 (taxable) to parents for each child under six and funding to businesses and community organizations to increase spaces.

Just days after being sworn in as Prime Minister on February 6, Stephen Harper announced that the bilateral agreements would be ended by March 2007, and that parents could expect their child care allowance payments by July 1. As this issue of *Interaction* went to press, no further details have been released about how these payments will be made or how the funding for spaces will be administered.

The volume and intensity of discussion about child care during and in the weeks following the election campaign proves how important the issue is to Canadians. Below are just a few responses gathered from leaders in government, policy and the child care community:

"We're at a defining moment. So much work has already been done in communities across the country. Governments, early learning and child care organizations and leaders, parents and practitioners have been working together — making concrete action plans based on these agreements. Dismantling the agreements will have serious consequences for Canada's children."

— Barbara Coyle, CCCF's executive director. *CCCF Urges New Government to Work Together to Solve Child Care Crisis in Canada*, CCCF press release, January 24, 2006

"Mr. Harper must respect the signed child care agreements . . . Cancelling these agreements will destroy the hopes for a universal child care program that families and child care workers have been fighting for over the last 30 years."

— Paul Moist, national president of the Canadian Union of Public Employees. *Leave national child care agreements alone - CUPE to Harper*, CUPE press release, February 6, 2006

"There should be no unilateral action by Mr. Harper on child care. . . Whether Canada has a child care program is too important a decision to make without recourse to Parliament."

— Monica Lysack, executive director of the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada. *Let Parliament decide fate of child care program*, CCAAC press release, February 3, 2006

"This Allowance will let parents choose the child care operation that best suits their family's needs . . . Our aim is to ensure that Canadian families get the greatest possible benefit from this new Allowance."

— Prime Minister Stephen Harper. *Government Moves Forward on Child Care Choices for Parents*, Press release from Prime Minister's Office, February 6, 2006

"I urge your government to respect the current federal-provincial agreements earmarking almost $5 billion for early learning and child care programs through to the year 2010. These agreements were hard-won and the result of extensive negotiations and commitments by all levels of government. A deal is a deal."

— Basil "Buzz" Hargrove, president, Canadian Auto Workers. *A Deal is a Deal – CAW Urges Prime Minister and Premiers to Respect Current Childcare Agreements*, Open letter by CAW, February 24, 2006

"Our children need and deserve the best services possible . . . People working in child care centres, and the time and effort they commit to working, teaching, and playing with our children, have a profoundly important role."

— Joanne Crofford, community resources and employment minister, Government of Saskatchewan. Government of Saskatchewan news release, January 5, 2006

continued on page 43

CCCF Urges New Government to Work Together to Solve the Child Care Crisis

The Canadian Child Care Federation has responded to the new federal government's plans to dismantle the agreements in principle, and replace them with the Choices in Child Care strategy. During and immediately after the federal election campaign, CCCF issued press releases stating that the plan to give money directly to parents and some money to encourage businesses and community organizations to create spaces acknowledges that families with young children are struggling to find and pay for child care. However "these proposed solutions fall short of the vision for a truly pan-Canadian system of early learning and child care in which parents and child care providers work together for optimal outcomes for each and every child."

Immediately following the election, CCCF sent letters to Prime Minister Harper and Minister Diane Finley, responsible for Human Resources and Social Development – the federal department responsible for early learning and child care. These letters position CCCF as a national authority on early learning and child care that is eager to work with the new government towards long term solutions to the child care crisis. Finally, the letters urge them to reconsider ending the bilateral agreements.

> *"We're at a defining moment. So much work has already been done in communities across the country. Governments, early learning and child care organizations and leaders, parents and practitioners have been working together — making concrete action plans based on these agreements. Dismantling the agreements will have serious consequences for Canada's children."*

CCCF has also sent letters to each of the premiers urging them hold firm on the agreements and to continue to support child care in their jurisdictions:

> *"We're counting on you to invest federal dollars in early learning and child care services that reflect the QUAD principles (quality, universally inclusive, accessibility, developmental) and to lengthen, deepen and make permanent this investment."*

Interaction readers are also encouraged to let their local MPs know that they share CCCF's commitment to achieving excellence in early learning and child care. The following link leads to a listing of MPs: www.parl.gc.ca.

Child Care Advocates Launch Code Blue Campaign

Led by the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada (CCAAC), Code Blue for Child Care is a Canada-wide campaign to protect the progress made on child care. According to the CCAAC, the campaign brings together national, provincial/territorial child care organizations; labour, women's and social justice groups; and Canadians from all walks of life to speak for the 64 per cent of Canadians who voted *for* a child care system to meet the needs of Canada's children, families and communities.

Code Blue for Child Care aims to work with provincial/territorial governments; with Parliamentarians in all regions; with local governments; with coalition partners, with families and with the child care community to save the fledgling child care system.

Code Blue encourages its partners to:

- ✔ Sign the campaign's Open Letter to the Prime Minister and Premiers (www.buildchildcare.ca).
- ✔ Share this information widely.
- ✔ Call on your newly elected federal representative to maintain the child care agreements.
- ✔ Call on your provincial/territorial government to defend the child care agreements and live up to their own child care commitments.
- ✔ Get supportive organizations to feature the campaign and open letter in their newsletters and websites.
- ✔ Contact your provincial/territorial child care groups for information on local activities and events
- ✔ Stay tuned to the CCAAC website www.childcareadvocacy.ca for actions, news and information over the next few months.

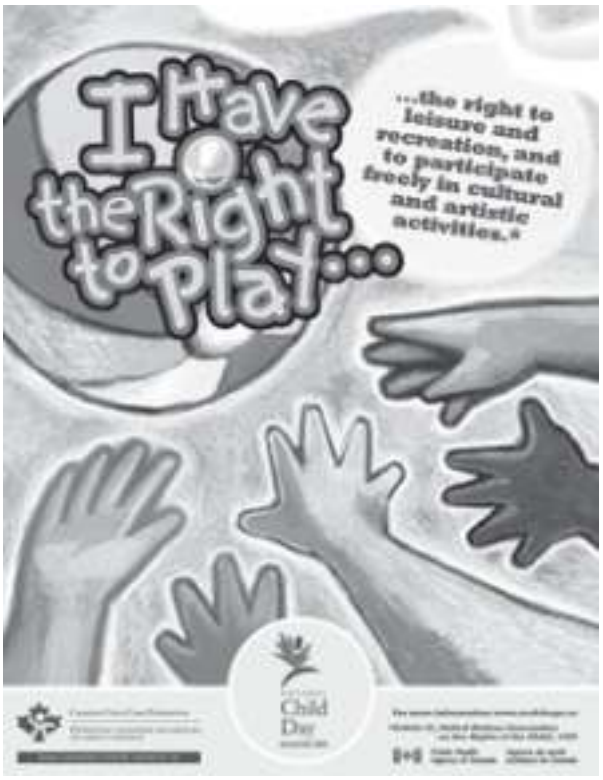
National Child Day 2005

"I Have the Right to Play!"

by Kim Tytler

National Child Day is a day when people across the country celebrate Canada's most precious resource — our children. This year, thousands of early learning and child care practitioners, and others who care for children, joined the Canadian Child Care Federation to celebrate by building awareness of Canada's commitment to a child's right to play.

The CCCF developed a promotional items and educational tools, including a series of resource sheets, a website toolkit including a community ideas section, note pads, beachballs and more. The most popular item was a full-colour poster designed by Ottawa artist Andrew Young. The poster



features children's hands reaching out to a beachball, with the "I Have the Right to Play" slogan, and a plain language description of Article 31 of the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*. More than 7,000 copies of the poster have been distributed to date; copies are still available.

Launch of Children's Rights Learning Kit

CCCF also celebrated by launching its *Children's Rights in Practice Learning Kit* – an innovative resource to help early learning and child care practitioners understand the UN Convention and learn to apply it to their everyday work with children.

Designed for use in workshops, presentations, parent discussion groups or staff meetings, the kit includes a research paper on children's rights in child care, a facilitator's guide, resource sheets and a CD Rom with presentation tools.

Production of the learning kit and other National Child Day resources was made possible through a financial contribution from the Public Health Agency of Canada. For more information or to order a copy of the kit, visit CCCF's E-store at www.cccf-fcsge.ca.

2006 Theme: I have the right to be heard!

Kim Tytler is health promotion manager for the Canadian Child Care Federation. For information on National Child Day 2006, contact Kim at ktytler@cccf-fcsge.ca.

National Child Day 2005

Postcards from Across Canada

On November 20, 2005, child care practitioners and families celebrated National Child Day in communities across Canada. Here are a few stories of how they recognized this special day and the theme, "I have the right to play."

"At our centre, we planned a fun day for children to celebrate their right to play. It was a pajama day, with a backwards lunch (banana splits for lunch followed by hotdogs for dessert), and fun centres for children to participate in (popcorn station, slushy station, face painting and games). We also sent home the "I have the right to play" poster with information on children's rights for parents and families."

— Deanna Leon-Cook, British Columbia

"Members from several early childhood organizations walked in our local Santa Claus Parade on November 19. During the procession, we distributed blue ribbons and National Child Day stickers. We jingled bells, beat drums and sang until our throats were sore. We all had such a good time that we will do it again next year. What a way to get the word out to our community!"

— Sandy Dickson, Alberta

"All of the children took part in a play. The children, dressed in regional folklore costumes, danced Oginski's *Polonez*, a dance that was formerly performed in the richest salons and still used today in opening ceremonies in Europe. The children had fun dancing to musical chairs and doing actions to the story, especially when some of them performed *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* in sign language while others sang it. We used CCCF's resource sheets to make memorable statements of the children's participation in this enjoyable event."

— Liliana Sulikowska-Klebek, Saskatchewan

"The Children's Rights Interest Group of Niagara initiated the first annual National Child Day Poetry Celebration with the theme, "Playing Our Part: Our Right to Participate." This inaugural celebration, open to students in grades 4 through 8 across Niagara, was intended to encourage children's awareness of their rights. Over 120 poems were submitted along with 16 pictures from grade 2 students."

— Michelle Thacker, Ontario

"For the past several years we have held a community carnival to celebrate our children. This year we called children and parents to action to support government initiatives in terms of increasing health and well-being for our kids."

— Deborah, Ontario

Let Language Lead the Way to Quality

The Role of ECEs in Promoting Language and Literacy Development

by Janice Greenberg

As we become increasingly aware of the importance of the first six years of a child's life, the critical role of early childhood educators becomes even more apparent, especially in the area of language development. As McCain and Mustard (1999) emphasize in their groundbreaking *Early Years Study*, the first few years are the only time in life to develop crucial connections in the brain – with verbal interaction and reading being among the most essential factors.

Language learning in the early years depends upon sensitive, developmentally attuned interactions with primary caregivers. Responsive caregivers use play and daily activities to create enriched, interactive language-learning environments that include all children – those who have special needs and language delays, those who are second language learners, and those who are typically developing.

By allowing children to initiate and by following the children's lead, early childhood educators can build extended conversations that promote the development of children's communication, literacy, social and cognitive abilities. Tuned-in caregivers adjust the complexity of their language input to meet the needs of children at different stages of language development. This includes simplifying language input when appropriate to provide effective language models as well as extending the topic beyond the here-and-now to encourage children to reason, problem-solve, predict, talk about feelings, imagine, and reflect on the thoughts and emotions of others – abilities that set children in good stead for a lifetime of future learning.

Positive interactions between caregivers and children – proven to be an important element of quality child care – have also been linked to the development of emerging literacy skills. Dickinson and Tabors (2001) found that children who had been exposed to responsive, interpersonal relationships that encouraged conversation between educators and children achieved greater literacy success as they moved through elementary and middle school.

Clearly, the quality of early childhood educational experiences can have a huge impact on children's later success, especially in the areas of language and literacy development. However, it has also been well-documented that interactions between educators and children do not consistently reflect the warm, responsive and developmentally-stimulating relationships that are essential to quality child care. Despite our knowledge of how to create optimal language-learning environments, some preschool and child care environments are characterized by poor language and literacy activities and teacher-dominated conversations that do not expand the children's knowledge about the world or effectively prepare children for learning to read (Girolametto & Weitzman, 2003; Dickinson & Tabors, 2001). Gillian Doherty's 2001 publication *You Bet I Care!,* which examined the quality in child care centres across Canada, reported that only 44 per cent of preschool rooms and 29 per cent of infant/toddler rooms provided activities or materials that support

children's development. Moreover, 30 per cent of staff lacked professional credentials and 25 per cent had not had in-service training in the previous 12 months. Yet, despite the lack of training, 75 per cent of centres had at least one child with special needs, with staff asking for more support services, and 40 per cent of centres included at least one child learning English as a second language.

In order to provide increased support to child care professionals working with young children, The Hanen Centre has developed *Learning Language and Loving It* – The Hanen Program® for Early Childhood Educators. The Hanen Centre is a non-profit organization that has been producing programs and resources to foster social, language and literacy development in young children for more than 25 years. It has traditionally trained speech-language pathologists in the *Learning Language and Loving It* program, who in turn train early childhood educators. In fact, since 1991, the centre has trained 1560 speech-language pathologists worldwide to offer this program to early childhood educators in their respective communities. Recently, the centre has begun to train early childhood educators to train their colleagues, so that the child care community will not have to rely solely on speech-language pathologists to deliver the training.

Learning Language and Loving It provides a step-by-step approach to promoting children's social, language and literacy development during everyday classroom routines and activities. Through a combination of group sessions and individualized videotaping and discussion opportunities, educators learn strategies based on sound research that addresses the types of classroom interaction that foster language and literacy. In the program, educators learn to:

- observe, wait and listen to encourage children to initiate
- follow the child's lead
- encourage extended interactions through balanced turn-taking and by using questions and comments
- maximize involvement and interaction of all the children in a small group
- adjust the way they talk to maximize language learning
- extend the topic beyond the here-and-now and encourage the language of learning
- promote interactions among peers as a vital context for learning social and language skills
- foster early language development through interactive book reading that promotes the use of abstract language
- introduce print in the classroom in meaningful contexts

Evaluation of the program shows that it positively changes the way teachers interact with children and the language used

by children in their care. Early childhood educators who participated in training increased their talkativeness, became more child-centred, promoted children's active participation and turn-taking and altered their view of book reading as a listening activity to that of a conversational activity. The changes in the teachers' behavior were also associated with very positive outcomes for the children's use of language (Girolametto, Weitzman & Greenberg, 2003).

With initiatives like *Learning Language and Loving It*, we can make important strides toward improving the quality of child care and, ultimately, have an impact upon children's development and future success. And, perhaps most importantly, such improved training and support to early childhood professionals will raise the recognition of their critical importance to children's later success and the health of the community as a whole.

Janice Greenberg B.Sc., D.S.P., Reg. CASLPO, is program manager of Learning Language and Loving It – The Hanen Program® for Early Childhood Educators. For more information on the program or if you are interested in becoming a future program leader, please contact Janice at (416) 921-1073 ext. 246 or janice@hanen.org. For more information about The Hanen Centre's programs, resources and research activities, visit www.hanen.org. ©CCCF 2006

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HEALTH WATCH

Giardia

Giardia is a parasite that causes a bowel infection. It is quite common in children in child care centres, especially where children are in diapers.

What are its symptoms?

Giardia can affect children differently. Some children have no symptoms while others may have:

- diarrhea or mushy bowel movements (which may have a very bad smell)
- recurrent stomach cramps
- gas
- loss of appetite
- loss of weight

How is it transmitted?

Giardia may be spread on the hands of someone who has changed a diaper or used a toilet. The spread of the parasite can be prevented by carefully washing hands after changing a diaper and going to the toilet, and before preparing and eating food.

How can it be prevented and treated

The Giardia parasite may be present in a child's bowel movement without causing illness. Routine handwashing is very important for preventing the spread of Giardia even when no one has diarrhea.

If a child in the child care setting is suspected of having the Giardia infection, notify the parents. Parents should contact a physician, who may have to take stool samples on different days to confirm the diagnosis. Medications are available for treatment of children and adults who are ill with a Giardia infection.

If the child has been diagnosed with a Giardia infection and is ill, he should not return to the child care facility until the diarrhea has stopped.

Ensure everyone in the child care setting washes their hands after changing a diaper and using the toilet, and before preparing and eating food.

Canadian Paediatric Society / Société canadienne de pédiatrie

www.caringforkids.cps.ca / www.soinsdenosenfants.cps.ca

ETHICS CORNER

Assessing a Friend and Colleague . . . and Doing it Ethically

by Bev Christian

Current Dilemma

The last issue of the Ethics Corner featured the following dilemma:

You are a frontline early childhood educator. Your director comes to you and asks you to tell her if you feel that another ECE (a co-worker and friend) is too harsh when she speaks to the children. The director tells you that a parent has complained based on her two-year-old telling her that he is afraid that the ECE might get mad at him or yell at him. You do think the ECE has used a harsh tone from time to time but she also has many redeeming qualities. How do you answer the director?

—Gerri Thompson, instructor, Early Childhood Education, Assiniboine Community College

In this field, we work very closely with our colleagues and often create strong personal relationships with them. While each of us will have a different set of beliefs about the appropriateness of personal relationships with those at work, the fact of the matter is personal relationships can complicate any work-related issues that do arise.
In this scenario, we are challenged to consider the best information to provide our supervisor regarding the work practice of both a friend and colleague.

In the past few issues of the Ethics Corner, the Nine-Step Decision-Making Model has been demonstrated through the examination of the ethical dilemma. Application of the model is always good practice and would be useful in this scenario as well. To review, the steps are:

Step 1: What are your initial reactions
Step 2: Who will be affected?
Step 3: What values or principles are in conflict?
Step 4: What are the potential choices?
Step 5: What are the consequences to each stakeholder for each potential choice?
Step 6: Which way are you leaning?
Step 7: Which is the best choice?
Step 8: What action will you take?
Step 9: Evaluate.

There are many issues to consider while examining an ethical dilemma. Remember that personal beliefs and values will influence any decision you make. In this dilemma, you will have to consider your beliefs about personal relationships with colleagues. How do you separate the sometimes-conflicting relationship between "friend" and "colleague"? How are your beliefs about friendships reflected in your thoughts, feelings and actions towards your friends? What about the principle in the CCCF *Code of Ethics* that states "Child Care practitioners demonstrate integrity (complete honesty) in all their professional relationships?" How do you live that principle with your colleagues each day and in this scenario? How will this principle influence what you say to the director? How do you manage confidential information that you may have about your friend that could be influencing her work, while being accountable for the care your team is providing? How will your response reflect on you as a professional, as a friend?

What other aspects of this scenario may be influencing you? How do you feel about the information coming from the director rather than the parent speaking directly to the staff? What is your relationship with this family or with this child? Consider the principle in the *Code of Ethics* that states "Child care practitioners work in partnership with parents recognizing that parents have primary responsibility for the care of their children." How does that impact your thoughts about the parents' actions and their concerns for their child?

When you examine this dilemma you may also consider the following principle: "Child care practitioners demonstrate caring for all children in all aspects of their practice." How does that principle "look" or "show up" in your child care program? Is your colleague's harsh voice tone compromising this principle? If so, what is your role as professional caregiver and a friend in addressing that? If these two roles are in conflict for you which way are you leaning? What does that reflect about you? What about the other redeeming qualities your colleague and friend has? What do you believe about standards of care and the way child care providers should interact with children?

Are there other principles for you to consider in this scenario? It is important to review all the principles carefully when

examining an ethical dilemma and to ask yourself, "What's important to me about this situation?" Sometimes we are surprised to see how many principles or values apply and may be in conflict in an ethical dilemma. Hearing yourself say "I hadn't thought of that" means you are on the right track in your committment to a closer examination of the situation to assist you in making the best choice.

In examining an ethical dilemma we peel away the layers of the onion to help gain clarity on the issue at hand. The Nine-Step Decision-Making Model allows you to consider each layer separately and thoroughly. This careful examination will lead to better decisions about what action to take. And, through the confidence we gain in making a thoughful decision as a result of a clearer view of the situation at hand, we relieve some of the anxiety we feel about ethical dilemmas.

Your director will need an answer to this question. How will your response reflect on you as a professional caregiver? What will your "best choice" action demonstrate about your values and beliefs regarding professional relationships?

Bev Christian is assistant director of child care services at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. Bev is a trainer in the Canadian Child Care Federation's Ethics Training Program.

Next Dilemma

You have recommended another neighborhood child care program to a friend who was also a past client in your own program. Several months after the recommendation and the child's subsequent enrollment in the program your friend has come to you to express her disappointment in the program and tells you she wishes you hadn't recommended it. You are concerned about how this reflects on you as a professional and also concerned about the program. You know the supervisor there and thought it was a strong program. Do you speak to her? What do you say to the parent who is disappointed?

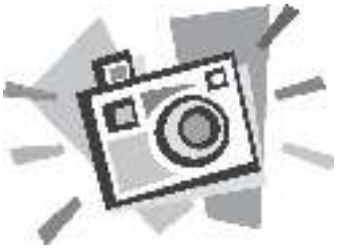
— Bev Christian

Take part in the ethics exchange and win a prize!

Child care providers in every setting are regularly faced with situations that require them to make a moral decision. We want to hear to hear about your ethical dilemmas . . . and your solutions!

Send us an example of a child care-related ethical dilemma. We will publish the dilemma and ask your fellow readers to write a short paragraph (250 words) on how they would deal with it. The Manitoba Child Care Association's Ethics Committee will review the submissions and we will publish them in the following issue of *Interaction*. Prizes will be awarded to those whose dilemmas and solutions are published.

Submissions: *Ethics Corner* c/o Anne Maxwell, senior director, projects, programs & services, 201-383 Parkdale Ave., Ottawa, ON K1Y 4R4. Fax (613) 729-3159; email amaxwell@cccf-fcsge.ca.



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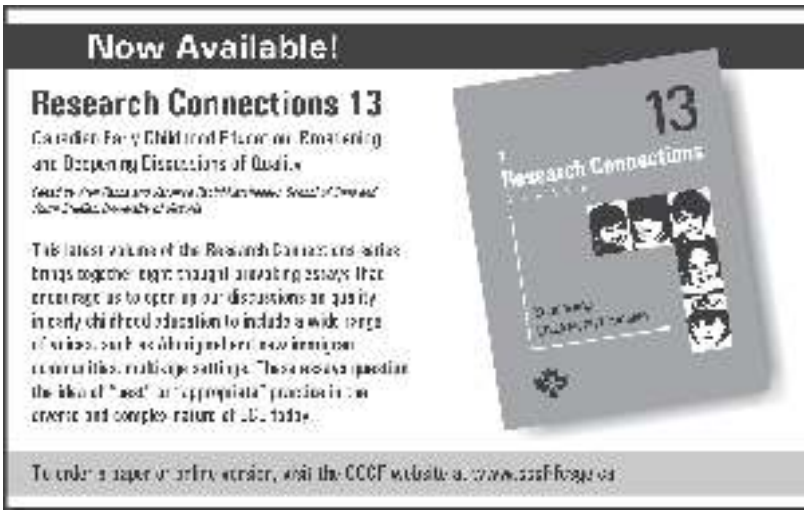

LOOK! BOOKS TO SHARE!

Presenting Pigs…

Dotlich, Rebecca Kai. *Grandpa Loves.* New York: HarperCollins, 2005.

Doughty, Rebecca. *You Are to Me.* New York: G.P. Putnam, 2004.

Eriksson, Eva. *A Crash Course for Molly.* Stockholm: R.& S., 2005.

Falconer, Ian. *Olivia Saves the Circus.* New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2001.

Lobel, Arnold. *Small Pig.* New York: Harper & Row, 1969.

McPhail, David. *Pigs Aplenty, Pigs Galore!* New York: Dutton Children's Books, 1993.

Munsch, Robert N. *Pigs.* Willowdale, Ont.: Annick Press, 1989

Numeroff, Laura Joffe. *If You Give a Pig a Pancake.* New York: HarperCollins, 1998.

Plourde, Lynn. *Pigs in the Mud in the Middle of the Rud.* New York: Blue Sky Press, 1997.

Van Leeuwen, Jean. *Oliver the Mighty Pig.* New York: Phyllis Fogelman Books, 2004.

Waddell, Martin. *The Pig in the Pond.* Cambridge, Mass.: Candlewick Press, 1992.

Wild, Margaret. *Piglet and Mama.* New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2004.

These books were suggested by Elizabeth Thornley, a librarian in youth collection development at the Ottawa Public Library.

On Being Interested

by Alex Russell

"Please Sir, may I have some more?" Oliver Twist's humble plea and the outraged response of the forbidding figure to whom it is addressed – "What!" – say much about how times have changed. To the reader of Dickens' tale, the dangerousness of such a presumptuous request is clear: In Oliver's world, adults do not suffer the presence of children gladly, and children, if they know what's good for them, stay out of the way.

It is only relatively recently that we have begun to be interested in children the way we take for granted today. For most of recorded human history, the challenges and needs of the young have received very little attention from the adults living with them. Until recently, the great majority of children were routinely left on their own for much of the day, largely raised by older children when they were "raised" at all (Heywood, 2001, p.97). In the Middle Ages, for example, children were by our standards today routinely "neglected," often in ways that proved fatal to them (Gies & Gies, 1987, p. 204). Medieval children were viewed small, wayward adults (Aries, 1961), and continually subjected to negative interference in the form of swaddling, "leading strings," corporal punishment and general disapproval (Heywood, 2001).

Historically, in the Western world, adults have held a kind of tyranny over children. "Better whipped than damned," ran the Puritan saying and, when they weren't safely out of sight and mind, this was largely the adult attitude children have been subjected to. The idea that children should be "seen and not heard," or that they should "speak only when spoken to," so commonly held even 100 years ago, is only the tip of the iceberg. As Lloyd DeMause put it in his groundbreaking book, *The History of Childhood*, humankind is just recently waking up from a "nightmare" in which children have been routinely abused, neglected and oppressed (DeMause, 1988).

It is easy to lose sight of how much more attentive we are today to the needs of children, and how much more deeply we feel obliged to meet those needs. Jean-Jacques Rousseau's observation in 1762 that "childhood has its own way of seeing, thinking and feeling," and his admonition to caregivers to "treat your pupil according to his age," may seem self-evident to us now, but at the time, his perspective represented a dramatic shift in the way children and child care were viewed (Rousseau, 1762/2003, pp. 54-55). Over the 250 years since, we have

gradually come to assume that children have a powerful claim on us to be understood according to their unique needs, and should be consistently provided with adult responses appropriate to those needs.

The obligated caregiver

It would be difficult to overstate how much this historical change has affected the health not only of children, but also of the adults whom they become. Many children in our society can generally expect to be in the presence of an attentive and emotionally attuned caregiver most, if not all, of the time. As a result, they generally develop the confident expectation that they will be protected and cared for and that someone will be there for them when they need it. These ingredients are the basic requirements for the "secure attachments" achieved by many children in our society and held as such a virtue among its adults.

However, despite the obvious benefits this historic change has had for children's emotional growth, from the very start it has had troubling side effects. One of these is the inevitable burden it has placed on caregivers. The growing awareness of children's emotional needs has naturally led to an obligation among caregivers to meet those needs.

Nowhere is this more obvious than in the assumption of responsibility that implicitly rests with caregivers in our society, as evidenced, for example, by the deep humiliation felt by parents when their children behave badly in public. In our current age, children's displays of temper or defiance are seen less as a reflection of the child than as a reflection of the child's parents. It is all too easy for the caregiver of a tantruming child to feel like she is being critically judged by onlookers.

There is a moral quality to this caregiving burden that began with the shift in understanding of children's emotional needs during the Enlightenment period of the 18th century. By Rousseau's time, caregivers were beginning to feel "the weight of expectation concerning child welfare," and their experience was already marked by feelings of "anxiety, guilt and fear" (Heywood, 2001, p.72). Nineteenth century Europe and North America increasingly adopted a scientific approach to child rearing, in which "the mother was presented with rules on regular feeding times, bathing procedures, sleep patterns and early toilet training. Her role was increasingly to be a professional mother as the cult of domesticity discouraged her from working outside the home . . . In this climate it was all too easy to feel inadequate as a mother" (Heywood, 2001, p.73). Today, if a parent does not succeed in producing a "securely attached" child, or one with "good self-esteem," the parent has in some sense failed.

Today's caregiver is not just obligated in this deep moral sense, but also instrumentally: He or she must get it right. Today, parents must have "parenting skills" – a concept entirely unique to our age. Professional caregivers must be emotionally attuned and provide responses that are based on the "best practices" appropriate for a child's "developmental stage." Their benefits notwithstanding, these developments have left tremendous pressure on caregivers to do their job correctly – technically correctly and emotionally correctly – sometimes with negative consequences.

Praise and self-esteem

In this climate, it is particularly easy to make the mistake of taking a particular recommended practice too far. An example of this is the temptation to habitually praise children for their efforts, regardless of the context. Born out of the best intentions, caregivers' sense that they must praise children in order to build their self-esteem can lead them to routinely offer praise, almost as a reflex, ultimately devaluing their own praise. If a child repeatedly hears that he has done a "good job" from a caregiver, regardless of the context, the caregiver's praise is eventually going to be taken for granted, thus loosing something of its meaning and value.

Overused, praise is also easily caught up in the dynamics of control that get played out between adults and the children in their care. Praise is given. It is a *gift* in the sense that in praising the child, the adult intends to say, "I like you. I think you're great." And in so saying this, she initiates a reciprocal exchange in which the next move is for the child to give something back: to accept the praise, implicitly praising the caregiver in return. The child grins and looks pleased – he is saying: "You're important to me and your praise feels good."

When children respond to our praise, on some level it feels good. We feel rewarded by it. And, as any child provider quickly learns, children in this positive type of relationship are much more manageable, much more eager to please. Thus, it is very much in the caregiver's interest to praise and be able to use praise, not just to see self-esteem develop in a child, but to secure a position with the child which gives her some sense of her legitimacy and control. In the old days, before adults were required to

think about their children in this way, when they held a kind of tyranny over their children, they did not have to worry about such things. But, in today's world, where caregivers must be much more creative in finding ways to establish an authoritative position with the children in their care, this way of gaining influence is all the more tempting.

These powerful social and personal forces motivating caregivers to attend to children's self-esteem and praise their efforts, can sometimes lead them to miss-attend to what a child actually needs from them. The example of Alice, a young mother who suffered from postpartum depression during her child's first year, helps illustrate this. With her son Ryan now aged four, Alice consulted me wishing to repair the rocky relationship that had developed between them following that difficult first year. She frequently responded to his play in my office with positive and enthusiastic comments – "good work," "that's so excellent," "I'm so proud of you." However, Ryan often used the toys expressively in play sequences involving threatening figures who attacked frightened, vulnerable ones. Her comments were not always attuned to the feelings and concerns expressed in his play, and Ryan's frustration grew visibly, first expressed symbolically in the play and eventually directly when he simply hit his mother with one of the toys, a blow she absorbed without comment.

This is a rather extreme example of what can go wrong when the pressure to be a good mother leads a parent to overuse an otherwise sensible strategy such as praise. Alice wanted Ryan to develop good self-esteem, certainly, but she also, unconsciously perhaps, wanted quite desperately to be able to be a participant in his development and, in so doing, to feel legitimized as his mother. In a sense, her own needs were interfering with her ability to meet her son's, and her praise frustrated him as opposed to leaving him feeling proud or happy. Gradually, as Alice focused more on the meanings expressed in his play – as she became more focused on *him* and less driven by her concern to be a good mother – Ryan became less defiant and angry, and eventually the two were able to play together in a way that both of them enjoyed.

The deep sense of obligation not to fail a child and create "emotional problems" – possibly the ultimate shame for the modern parent – leads many parents to work too hard to please their children, giving them an unhealthy sense of entitlement, and, in some cases, even contempt for their caregiver.

The entitled child

In my clinical practice I am continually presented with examples of parents mistakenly extending what they take to be their caregiving obligations to lengths that are actually a disservice to their children – the parent who continually provides alternate food choices and whose child is now a stubbornly picky eater; the parent who has bent over backwards to help her child stay on top of his homework and whose child now "doesn't seem to care about school" (but accurately expects her parent to continue to oversee the whole business); the parent who, in his wish to be understanding, has overlooked his child's continual transgressions and rudeness and now finds her to be rude and oblivious of consequences. In all these cases, parents appear to have mistaken the importance of being attuned to their children's needs with the belief that they must provide unfailing support, and spare their children any kind of emotional hardship. And they have ended up in situations where they feel powerless and frustrated.

The deep sense of obligation not to fail a child and create "emotional problems" – possibly the ultimate shame for the modern parent – leads many parents to work too hard to please their children, giving them an unhealthy sense of entitlement, and, in some cases, even contempt for their caregiver.

For example, in their wish to avoid being a tyrant, some parents will offer careful explanations and enter into potentially endless discussions with their child about their parenting decisions, no matter how unreasonably their child might be behaving. While intending only to be respectful, these parents sometimes end up conveying the idea that they need their child to buy into the decision. The respect for a child's right to understand the world around her is undeniably helpful to their growing sense of security, but the adult's need for the

child's approval in some of these situations can give a child a frightening sense of control.

Or, to take another common example, in their wish not to leave a child alone with their upset feelings, some parents will respond to their child's temper tantrums either by giving in, or by spending "time-in" with a child (Weininger, 2002), trying to explain and help them accept the reality of the situation. Again, the adult's emotional availability to the child is based on good intentions, but the adult's need for the child to be okay – not to be emotionally scarred, for example – can place them at a terrible disadvantage.

Helping these parents is complicated by the fact that they generally don't lack for techniques or strategies. Parenting advice is offered up ubiquitously in our Canadian culture, through health science and public health initiatives meant to promote healthy parenting (the Toronto Transit Commission, for example, recently ran a poster campaign promoting the importance of playing with your children), or through the media in the form of self-help oriented television shows, books, magazines and newspaper articles.[1] Much of what the parents surrounded by this sea of information are doing, such as explaining decisions to a child, or spending time with a child who has behaved inappropriately, are not bad things to do at all. Taken on their own, these are thoughtful and attuned things to do with children, since they model a respectful, collaborative parent-child relationship in the first case, and prevent a child from feeling rejected in the second. The problem lies not in the techniques or strategies employed, but in the dynamics that can sometimes underlie the relationship. The sense of obligation felt by many contemporary parents to respond correctly to their child, to use the right strategies at the right time, to not *mess up their kid,* can be so great, that it becomes difficult for them to maintain a position of authority with their child.

By the time they come to consult me, many of these parents are finding their children difficult to contain – they report trouble setting limits at home and establishing expectations with their children in the outside world. In my office, these children will often appear defiant, sometimes quite blatantly ignoring or disobeying their parents in front of me, and there is often a rudeness or even an evident hostility in some of their interactions. These moments are extremely painful to witness, given how deeply the parents are trying to give their child exactly what he or she needs. There is something seemingly unfair in witnessing a person trying so hard to get it right and having, in the end, to feel so frustrated and guilty about how things have turned out. Parents in this predicament often describe feeling defeated in their efforts to contain and parent their child; they feel *one down* in the relationship, in a position of frustrated servitude. At these times, the tyranny that adults once held over children appears to have swung to the other side – the child is now the master.

Master and Slave

Relationships between two people that have become polarized into opposing power positions – positions so well captured by the metaphors "master" and "slave" – have their roots in a child's earliest strivings to define themselves in the presence of *an other*. To develop an integrated coherent sense of self, a child requires a parent's attention and emotional attunement. The parent's ability to have a child in her mind, to be attuned to his emotional and cognitive states and to reflect them back,[2] is a critical component in the child's developing ability to understand his own experience and, ultimately, to develop a sense of himself (Stern, 1995). Literally, a child comes to know himself in, and through, the mind of his (m)other. In this sense, *self* experience is deeply interpersonal. We need "the other" to sustain our sense of self throughout life, although we gradually develop the capacity to carry significant others in our minds for when they're not around (Stern, for example, calls these mental representations "evoked companions."

But before these internal representations are developed, before a child has established ways to exist as a self, independent of his mother, the threat of losing her is a significant one indeed. As mother begins to disappoint and frustrate her child – as inevitably she must – he is painfully reminded of his vulnerability, his separateness from her and his potential emotional dependence on her. This realization stirs up in the infant an opposing

1 Although, more recently, some of this advice has been geared toward helping parents reassert their position of authority with their children, e.g. the television show, *Nanny 911*, and the book, *Spoiling Childhood.*

2 For ease of presentation in discussing parent-child interactions, parents will generally be presented as being a mother (she) and children as being a boy (he). This is a common convention used to avoid confusion around pronouns in such discussions and is not intended to suggest that fathers and/or daughters are not involved in these dynamics.

wish to deny that any dependency exists, ushering in an ambivalent stage of infant development dubbed the "rapprochement crisis" (Mahler et al., 1975) and characterized by a child's conflicting wishes to both cling to a parent and to push her away. Margaret Mahler and her colleagues' descriptions of infant-mother dyads in their observational nursery, nicely capture the familiar infantile attempts at achieving omnipotence, so characteristic of this momentous period in personal development.

> *Around 18 months our toddlers seemed quite eager to exercise their rapidly growing autonomy to the hilt. Increasingly, they chose not to be reminded that at times they could not manage on their own. Conflicts ensued that seemed to hinge upon the desire to be separate, grand, and omnipotent, on the one hand, and to have mother magically fulfill their wishes, without their having to recognize that help was actually coming from the outside, on the other. In more cases than not, the prevalent mood changed to that of general dissatisfaction, insatiability, a proneness to rapid swings of mood and to temper tantrums.* Mahler et al., 1975, p.95

It is at this point in development that the stage is set for an infant to make an attempt at usurping control. As he slowly transitions into toddlerhood, exploring unfolding possibilities and personal capacities, the infant's dawning awareness of his need for his mother deeply threatens his fragile sense of autonomy: one solution is to take an imaginary omnipotent control of her, so that she must always provide just the desired response, all of the time. This can be done in many ways – by the infant taking flight from reality, by simply denying his dependence on his mother, and her independence of him. Mahler et. al. (1975) report, for example:

> *It was characteristic of children at this age to use mother as an extension of self – a process in which they somehow denied the painful awareness of separateness. Typical behaviour of this kind was, for example, pulling mother's hand and using it as a tool to get a desired object or expecting that mother, summoned by some magical gesture alone, rather than his words, would guess and fulfill the toddler's momentary wish.* Mahler et al., 1975, p.95

The problem for the infant is that he needs his mother to validate his strivings and to recognize him, he needs his mother to help him meet his needs, but he must deny this need and the dependency and vulnerability it entails. Ideally, the child solves this dilemma by discovering, slowly, that he can tolerate some disappointment in getting his needs met, as long as it is within manageable limits. When she remains outside of her child's omnipotent control, mother maintains her value to him as a separate other capable of recognizing and validating him. Jessica Benjamin, in her classic study of this dynamic, calls this ideal solution "mutual recognition." In this resolution to the problem, the parent maintains her position as an important other in the child's life. She continues to give legitimacy to the child's sense of self – she recognizes him and validates his independence; and the child legitimizes the mother as an other – someone who is separate from him, and therefore capable of being loved, valued and (at least at times) listened to.

But, to do this, mother must resist the infant's demand that she meet his every need, that she never fail him. She must resist his bid for omnipotence. Benjamin describes the infant's attempts to establish omnipotent control in this way:

> *...the toddler will insist that mother (or father) share everything, validate his new discoveries and independence. He will insist that mother participate in all his deeds. He will tyrannically enforce these demands if he can, in order to assert – and have mother affirm – his will. He is ready to be the master...to be party to a relationship in which the mutuality breaks down into two opposing elements, the one who is recognized and the one whose identity is negated. He is ready, in his innocence, to go for complete control, to insist on his omnipotence* (Benjamin, 1988, p.34)

In our current parenting age, when parents so easily feel obligated to meet their children's needs, and children so often feel entitled to this arrangement, it is all too easy for children to experience a sense of success in their bids for control. Ironically, though feeling in control of one's life is essential to mental health later in life, having too much of a sense of control, too early in life, is not a good thing at all. As Rousseau observed 250 years ago about the child whose caregiver will do anything not to fail him, "…if he once learns that he can interest you

in his case at his own pleasure, he has become your master, and all is lost" (Rousseau, 1762/2003, p.34).

When the reciprocity breaks down, for example when the parent's need to please the child makes her overly vulnerable to the child's demands, the door is opened for a child to obtain a frightening level of control. This is what was so tragic to see in the interaction between Alice and Ryan. It was as if Ryan had become aware of Alice's need for his acceptance and approval, and this had both frightened him and undermined Alice's value to him. Alice had lost, at least temporarily, her status as someone able to recognize and affirm him. In her need to be his mother she had lost his respect. As painful as this was for her, it was at least as problematic for her son, who now lacked a viable other to provide him with the recognition he needed. As Benjamin points out, "The painful result of success in the battle for omnipotence is that to win is to win nothing" (Benjamin, 1988, p. 35).

Children who "win" the battle for omnipotence are not just controlling, they are *anxiously* controlling. Having avoided the painful awareness of their separateness and vulnerability, children in this position must continue to assert control. Ryan clung to his sense of control and angrily resisted anything that might remind him of his lack of autonomy. He hid in the waiting room, choosing his own time to enter my office, then, when sessions were over, he would refuse to leave, choosing his own time to depart. Having taken refuge in the magical belief that he is in control of his world, the child in this position must avoid reminders that he is not. This is perhaps the most significant problem arising from these modern parent-child dynamics: Having failed to disappoint their child and slowly introduce him or her to the limits imposed by reality, the modern, obligated parent runs the risk of leaving their child in a position where they lack the resiliency to confront realities outside of the family, and must, instead, continue to exercise their tyranny within the parent-child relationship.

It would be easy to interpret this as a suggestion that we must return to the old days when parents had the "upper hand" and children were required to submit to the adult wills around them. This is not the case at all. Our modern understanding of children and their emotional needs represents a great step forward in the way we raise our children. By being attuned and responsive to their needs we help them feel secure, and by refraining from using the historic forms of oppression – strapping, scolding, emotionally dominating – we take another step toward ending the ages-long tradition of the strong oppressing the weak (Sagan, 1988). However, we do need to find a balance, giving children what they need but not allowing our sense of obligation to drive us into being *so* attentive, *so* afraid of failing them, that they develop the belief that they are entitled to this unfailing response from the world around them. Attempting to meet a child's every need is not a service to the child at all.

> In today's child-rearing environment, it is all too easy to feel like one must be perfect.

Conclusions

Daphne de Marneffe has argued that clinical "problems" such as this one too easily place the caregiver in a pathological light, showing her as a "clingy saboteur" of her child's autonomy (de Marneffe, 2004, p.73). In this sense, ironically, what I have presented potentially contributes to the very same care-giving burden it is meant to illuminate: Here is yet another thing the caregiver must get right. In fairness, overindulging in or surrendering to the demands of a child is not limited to weak or needy parents. As de Marneffe observes, "The tendency to cave in to one's child's will is as likely to show itself in the parenting of a person who is consummately able to be an "equal other" in the public world as it is in, say, a stay-at-home mother" (de Marneffe, 2004, p.73). In other words, in our need to be good caregivers we are all susceptible to this temptation.

What then can we do to stand up to these powerful forces that so easily leave us feeling overly obligated to provide children with our positive interest and attention, and the children in our care to feel unhealthily entitled to receiving it? Offering advice and suggestions in this case is rather paradoxical since adding more to-do's to caregivers' already lengthy list of do's and don'ts runs the risk of simply contributing to the pressure they already feel. Here, some concluding observations are offered with the intention of helping caregivers maintain a sense of perspective in their efforts to provide children with what they really need.

1) *Praise vs. Recognition.* As emotionally nutritious as praise might be to children's developing self-esteem, it is not necessarily what is most essential to them. Benjamin uses the word "recognition" to

capture the essential element of the self-other dialogue that occurs between a child and his caregiver. Children need caregivers' recognition to validate them as separate individuals with specific qualities and characteristics. Whereas praise responds only to a child's wish to be seen as "good," recognition is potentially directed towards any and all of a child's developing interests and strivings. And, as the word suggests, it is not about saying anything in particular, or even at all. It is about reflecting on a child and *seeing* the kind of self-state they are expressing. By recognizing a child, a caregiver can say (with or without words): "Yes, I see you. You are showing me that you … (are big, like animals, feel angry with me, etc.)."

In the case of Alice and Ryan, focusing on recognizing the meanings in Ryan's play as opposed to praising his efforts, helped Alice occupy a more helpful place in his world. Even by merely continuing to pay close attention to his aggressive play she communicated the message – "You're telling me about feeling angry and fierce. You don't want to feel vulnerable, you want to feel strong." Focusing on recognizing children's strivings helps avoid praising them routinely and leading children to take your praise for granted. Perhaps more importantly, it keeps one open to the many possible self-states that lie behind children's bids for our attention, beyond the need to feel good about themselves.

2) *Being good enough vs. being perfect.* As Donald Winnicott put it, the goal of the caregiver is, or should be, to be "good enough" (Winnicott, 1971, p.10). The truth is we are all doomed to fail the children in our care – and a good thing too. Children, naturally, want their caregivers to meet all of their needs, all of the time. When we fail them they are disappointed, certainly. But they also become acquainted with the limits of reality and are forced to begin to build the independent strengths necessary for dealing with it. More importantly, they learn that their caregiver is not subject to their omnipotent control and are forced to contend with her separateness. This is difficult, but it helps ensure that the caregiver remains a separate and therefore valued other for the child, able to recognize and validate him or her.

In today's child-rearing environment, it is all too easy to feel like one must be perfect. Of course we must be attentive to our responsibilities in helping children grow into emotionally secure individuals, but once we become afraid of failing them, we are at risk of placing the children in our care in far too powerful a position. As long as we are "good enough" at meeting children's needs they will develop the secure expectation that the world is a safe place and that the people in it can be generally trusted to meet one's needs. But failing to meet children's needs is essential too: it teaches them that caregivers are truly separate from them and not wholly prey to their omnipotent will, and it forces them to develop resiliency and the ability to cope independently. We don't need to be interested all the time, and, if we try to be, we run the risk of sending the message that a child is entitled to expect such an unfailing response from the world around her.

Times have certainly changed. Oliver's request for more food today would hardly draw the outraged response it does in the famous story. In fact, in many contexts it is unlikely he would even have to ask. We are far more available to children than we have ever been before, providing them with our careful, attuned attention. But there is a danger that we try *too* hard, that we make ourselves *too* available, that we become *too* interested. If *Oliver Twist* captures something of the old attitude toward children, the modern attitude may be best summed up by Nirvana vocalist Kurt Cobain's famous words: "Here we are. Now entertain us!" To really attend to the children in our care we must keep from becoming automatic responders, providing attuned and helpful attention every time it is demanded of us. Our interest is valuable to children only insofar as it is still appreciated.

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Rethinking the Development of Self-Esteem in Early Childhood Education

by Grimalda Royas Belliveau, Freshteh Bibishahrbanoui, Pam Byron, Laura de Vries, Sue Feltoe and Nelson Hillier, and Ebba Nickel

High self-esteem in young children is commonly viewed as an essential element of healthy development. Low self-esteem, conversely, is often linked to undesirable behaviours and outcomes, such as bullying, poor achievement in school, and a variety of other psychological and social problems. Because of this perceived importance, early childhood educators pay considerable attention to self-esteem and employ many strategies to foster it.

Kindergarten teachers and managers in George Brown College's lab schools were invited by the *Ideas* editorial board to discuss their role in development of self-esteem in young children. A questionnaire asking participants to reflect on teaching practices that either enhance or hinder this development was distributed. The questionnaire included a short discussion of current issues in the development of self-esteem and six open ended questions. Two teachers worked together and responded directly on the questionnaire. Three teachers and two managers informally met to talk about their responses. This discussion was recorded and analyzed along with the written responses for common themes.

Participants who met to talk were, also, introduced to research findings that question whether high self-esteem in young children is the solution to reducing social problems such as youth crime, teen pregnancy, drug abuse and school underachievement. Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, and Vohs (2005, 85), in their recent review of the scientific literature on self-esteem, concluded that boosting people's self-esteem has "little value in fostering academic progress or preventing undesirable behaviour." Their meta-analysis of research on self-esteem found that:

- bullies do not typically suffer from low self-esteem;
- individuals who become sexually active at an early age do not suffer from low self-esteem;
- those who abuse alcohol and drugs do not have low self-esteem;
- children who receive support in building their self-esteem do not perform better in school

Therefore, it is unclear just how useful "self-esteem" is as an explanatory concept in children's development.

This article will focus on the participants' responses to these research findings and their views on their role in the development of self-esteem. Overall, they agreed that using praise or encouragement is a common and valuable strategy for fostering self-esteem. At the same time, they identified several problems with using praise and explored strategies for avoiding these problems. The following themes were identified in their responses:

Praise as social control

Praise can be overused in early childhood settings, particularly during large group activities such as routines and circle times. Some participants described typical teacher language during these events: "Look at Jenny! See how good she is sitting! And Charles is too and Matty! Good for you!" The teacher praises children who are meeting behaviour expectations and indirectly compares them to children who are not. While we might feel that we are acknowledging some children's goodness and thus contributing to their self-esteem, it is more likely that children simply see the strategy as social control. Teachers who work together at one lab school summarized the problem this way: "We avoid using meaningless praise as a behaviour guidance strategy."

Continual versus occasional praise

It is easy to feel that one must praise a child all day long, for fear

Children can tolerate periods of time when they do not receive any external praise. This toleration builds children's resiliency and inner strength.

of failing to support the child's confidence and self-esteem. However, some participants involved in a research project focusing on child resiliency[1], believe that children can tolerate periods of time when they do not receive any external praise. This toleration builds children's resiliency and inner strength.

One participant described a situation in which a child wanted her to look at some artwork just before a transition. She was tempted to hurriedly and reflexively utter the line, "that's a good job" because, a common belief is that a teacher must respond to a child's efforts immediately or the child will think the teacher doesn't care. Although offered with the best of intentions, this type of responding can detract from the authenticity of praise, particularly when a teacher is caught up in other concerns and is not really focussed on a child's efforts. The participant pointed out that an alternative statement such as, "I am very busy now but I would like to look at your painting. Could we meet later and talk about it?" still indicates that the teacher is interested and recognizes the child. The teacher is aware of her own limits in offering praise and respects the child's capacity to wait. Of course, the teacher's promise must be kept later.

Participants concurred that teachers simply cannot be enthusiastic all the time. As one teacher commented, "there is always the danger when using

1 *Reaching In, Reaching Out* is a collaborative project sponsored by the YMCA of Greater Toronto, the University of Guelph, George Brown College and the Child Development Centre. The goal of this project is to promote resilience and healthy development in young children by helping adults who work with children to use and model resilient responses to stress.

praise of being redundant!" Furthermore, teachers are not the only ones in a child's life, and by no means their only "teachers." Several participants suggested that older children who are busy developing pro-social skills can praise and encourage each other. One teacher described how she introduced the concept of a "compliment" to a group of kindergarten children and the children delighted in the compliments they shared.

Unearned praise

In the questionnaire, participants were given Berk's (2001, pp. 221-222) description of unearned praise in the parent-child relationship and asked to comment on it:

> *Parents who deliver praise not based on real attainment actually undermine their child's development. It does not take long for most children to see through false compliments and to question their self-worth. For others, this unconditional parental acceptance may contribute to an unrealistic, overly inflated sense of self-esteem, which is also linked of adjustment problems.*

From the participants' perspective, many children receive unearned praise. Conversely, other children are given little praise and frequent criticism, perhaps a result of being compared to those children receiving all the praise. One participant provided an example of unearned praise. Sometimes all the things that a child does are given equal weight and praise. A child is told that she did a "great job" of brushing her teeth when she does this task well everyday and, then, is told that she did "great" when, for the first time, she got across the monkey bars. The child has been offered in one situation, unearned praise, and, in the other, meaningless and inauthentic praise. The feedback provided does not assist the child in evaluating her accomplishments and judging herself to be good at some things and not so good at others.

Earned praise

What, then, is "earned praise"? For praise to feel good to the recipient, it must feel earned, a point made by Berk (2002, 222), who argues that "self-esteem must be earned through commitment, responsibility and mastery of meaningful skills." The participants' descriptions of earned praise focused on these three areas.

Being committed

Earned praise reflects a child's ability to commit to learning despite difficulties, disappointments, and mistakes. However, several participants worried about commenting on children's struggles with learning because they don't want children to experience mistakes and failures and subsequently "feel bad about themselves," as one teacher put it. But teachers involved in the research project on resiliency see their role in the promotion of self-esteem as two-fold:

> *We have been working to acknowledge efforts that the children make and to also help children understand that mistakes and failures are part of learning and to encourage a realistic optimism in their attempts to master skills.*

From this perspective, when children understand that they are "not perfect" or not "always good" and that they make mistakes, they actually feel better about themselves!

In contrast to unearned praise, which is often delivered by an adult without much enthusiasm unless it is forced, earned praise that focuses on hard-won efforts creates excitement! One participant uses earned praise when children discover new things about their world through persistence and problem solving. These events make it much easier to genuinely match the children's excitement. In this example, a teacher reminded a child of her past attempts at mastering a skill:

> *Just last week, you were working at balancing yourself on that two-wheeler and you couldn't do it but you kept trying and now look at you. You can ride it without any help at all!*

Being responsible

When children help out, or act in an outwardly considerate way toward others it is natural for many teachers to respond with praise. But one participant pointed out that while such praise is certainly reinforcing, it is unlike the way we would respond in most adult situations, where we are more likely to respond to pro-social gestures (e.g. receiving unexpected assistance from someone) with thanks and warmth. Praising children's pro-social behaviours shifts the teacher's role in the interaction from a recipient of the helpful act, to a commentator on the helpful act. This sets up an adult approving-child scenario that can deprive the child of a different kind of interpersonal experience in

The mastery of meaningful skills should be praised or encouraged because children can feel good about something specific they achieved.

which their actions have a direct and natural effect on the other. In this sense, praising children can interfere with other ways of interacting with them that do not involve this dynamic of approval and encouragement.

Nevertheless, all participants agreed that sometimes a child's responsible actions are worthy of recognition and praise. One participant provided an example: a child helped fill up the water table and chose different colours for the water. Many children enjoyed experimenting with the colour combinations and the teacher broadcasted the helpful child's contributions to this enjoyable experience. In this situation, recognition of the child's activities is important in as much as they contribute to others' activities. Thus, the child's sense of responsibility to others is valued, encouraged and nourished.

Being skilful

The mastery of meaningful skills should be praised or encouraged because children can feel good about something specific they achieved. To respond in this way requires observing children and seeing what it is they are trying to do and to recognize these strivings and accomplishments. For example, two kindergarten teachers wrote together:

> *We have been more aware of the need to acknowledge children's growing skills of impulse control and self-regulation. We attempt to acknowledge and describe a child's attempts at mastering the skills (e.g., "Remember last week when you felt really angry with her and you hit her, but today you stopped yourself, took a deep breath and came to get a teacher's help.")*

And another participant helped a child recall a conflict and a resolution and draw upon a past success to be successful again: "You did that before so I know you can do it again." These examples indicate that when offering praise and encouragement, teachers should focus both on the step-by-step processes and the outcomes of learning a skill.

Conclusions

Participants who were introduced to the research findings of Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger and Vohs (2000) were surprised that children's levels of self-esteem may not play such a significant role in determining children's later behaviours. To a certain extent, these findings go against a common understanding in early childhood education that, of all of our teacher roles, the most important is to nurture young children's self-esteem to protect children them from future undesirable behaviours. So this apparent contradiction left participants wondering what they should do. The ideas generated by this rethinking of self-esteem, led to two broad practice suggestions.

1. Early childhood educators do not have to overuse praise. When it comes to praising a child in a positive, authentic manner, it is the quality not the quantity of praise that a child receives that matters more. The quality of praise lies in its focus on skill development, meeting life's demands, and being responsible to others. This suggests that key teacher roles in the development of self-esteem are the planning and implementation of learning environments in which children have sufficient opportunities and time to initiate, practice and master a range of developmental and life tasks.

Furthermore, if mastery of developmental skills is important to a child's self-esteem, then teachers need to have a sound knowledge of child development, the children's interests particularly those that matter to the child, their temperaments, and their developmental skills. Teacher reflection follows, as teachers observe and think about children's efforts and experiences within this facilitating environment. Earned praise arises naturally out of this interplay between a child's strivings and a teacher's recognition of them.

2. Early childhood educators need to be very cautious in attributing children's problems to low self-esteem. Left unchallenged, this assumption can lead to a tendency to reactively respond to children with automatic praise, hoping to build confidence and positive feedings in the child. Giving children praise, in itself, does not build self-esteem. As participants in this article stressed, teacher praise is only useful when it reflects back to children their real successes. It is what children do and accomplish that build's self-esteem. Therefore, when a preschooler is having difficulty making friends, an important developmental task in the preschool years, teaching the child peer entry skills matters much more than reassuring the child that he/she is "good at something." A teacher's role, one participant remarked, is to evaluate a child's learning needs and support new learning so that the child has something worth feeling good about.

In this article, teachers and managers at George Brown College's lab schools opened up a dialogue about the early childhood educator's role in the development of self-esteem. They invite others to rethink this issue and continue a dialogue about how adults can authentically and meaningfully contribute to the emotional well-being of young children.

The following early childhood educators and program directors contributed to this article: Grimalda Royas Belliveau, Freshteh Bibishahrbanoui, Pam Bryon, Laura de Vries, Sue Feltoe and Nelson Hillier, and Ebba Nickel.

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The Canadian Child Care Federation publishes IDEAS twice a year in partnership with George Brown College, Centre for Early Childhood Development and the Hinks-Dellcrest Institute. For submission to IDEAS please contact Rachel Langford. Phone (416) 415-5000 extension 2566, fax (416) 415-2566, email rlangfor@gbrownc.on.ca.

Bridging the Silos: Education - Child Care

Research has shown that quality child care provides children with the early learning experiences that encourage success in school and even in life. Yet in most parts of Canada, "child care" and "education" remain separated in two distinct systems, administered by different departments, with a wide range of training requirements, wages and benefits for staff, inconsistent curriculum for children, and lack of support for parents whose children straddle the two systems.

Early learning and child care experts in Canada have been calling for increased integration of child care and education. In October 2004, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) released its thematic review of early childhood education and care in Canada, adding international pressure to this issue. One of the OECD's main policy recommendations was that Canada should "build bridges between child care and kindergarten education, with the aim of integrating ECEC both at ground level and at policy and management levels."*

While most agree that the two systems need to be more closely integrated, there is less consensus on how this should happen. This issue of *Interaction* looks at some of the emerging models and the questions they raise in terms of governance, staff training, curriculum and more.

* *OECD Thematic Review of ECEC: Canada Country Note*, October 2004.

BRIDGING THE SILOS:
EDUCATION - CHILD CARE

The Unhurried Child: Visioning an Integrated System

by Susan Colley

A pan-Canadian symposium, *The Unhurried Child: Caring and Learning Seamlessly,* was hosted by The Integration Network in Toronto last November. Some 230 people attended to learn from the experiences of international and Canadian practitioners who have worked in systems that integrate education and child care.

Anne Smith, director of Children's Issues Centre, University of Otago, New Zealand, described her country's integrated early childhood education program. While divisions still exist there, integration is based on theory, philosophy, research and political action. Since the process began in the mid-1980s, status, recognition and support for early childhood education (ECE) has increased significantly. ECE has moved from an ad hoc to a planned approach with a strategic plan to bring the workforce together by 2012.

Pat Petrie of the Thomas Coram Research Unit at the University of London and co-author of *A New Deal for Children? Re-forming education and care in England, Scotland and Sweden*, provided the Symposium with a primer on the differences between England/Scotland and Sweden in the course of expanding their early childhood education sectors and integrating early learning and child care. Petrie challenged participants to address three questions:

- In traditional schools, can different professionals cooperate on equal footing?
- Does integration mean "schoolification" for children and non-teachers?
- Is a new sort of school possible?

Kristie Kauerz, past-program director of early learning at the Education Commission of the States, described efforts to introduce "P-3"which involves: a) smooth transitions from home to school, from early learning to school, and from school to school; b) teachers in early learning and early elementary having similar training requirements, professional development opportunities, career tracks and compensation; and c) a curriculum focus on social skills and self-discipline as well as reading and math.

Speakers from Canada described the introduction of a developmentally appropriate full day, every day kindergarten program in Medicine Hat, Alberta; the "Quebec Way" of offering early learning and child care where there is full-day kindergarten for children aged 4 and 5, plus out-of-school child care run by the school;

and implementation details of the flagship Toronto First Duty Pilot Project at the Bruce Woodgreen site in Toronto.

To stimulate discussion, the Integration Network Project distributed a vision paper prior to the Symposium. *Seeing the Future: An answer to questions of integration* sets out a hypothetical scenario of the key elements of an integrated system in 2010, which helps to imagine what it would look like for families and communities. This paper can be found at http://www.inproject.ca/Project_Activities/Canadian_Symposium.php.

Discussion groups embraced these exciting ideas and focused their comments on five themes:
- funding and access
- governance
- curriculum framework
- workforce reform
- program delivery

Not surprisingly, there was a high level of agreement that adequate funding and universal access were essential. On questions of governance, there was no clear consensus. Some participants supported the idea of a new Ministry of Learning to cover ages 0-8 to distinguish it from current "education" culture; others suggested combining staff from different ministries in an inter-ministerial council. As both child care and education are in provincial jurisdiction, it was recognized that different provinces might make different decisions.

The topic of curriculum – more popularly referred to as "program framework" – was very timely as at least three provinces (New Brunswick, Ontario, Manitoba) are now involved in introducing "curriculum" for early learning in their provinces. The New Zealand ideas and experiences in formulating their *Te Whãriki* curriculum, with its strong child-centred approach and consensus-building process was embraced as a possible model for future examination.

In the area of workforce reform, there was considerable consensus that integrated programs need integrated staff, that existing ECEs should be grandparented in the future system, that new ECEs should hold degrees and that additional dollars would be crucial to pay a higher-educated staff. It was pointed out that principals and administrators also need training and that a multidisciplinary team with a variety of expertise would make a significant contribution to the field.

There was also a high level of consensus on program design and delivery. Participants supported the idea of the seamless day, while recognizing that getting to integration would involve a process of communication, co-location, co-operation, collaboration, through to full integration. The Bruce Woodgreen Toronto First Duty site was hailed as an important model. Participants were clear that the seamless day was definitely not "wrap-around" (child care services wrapped around the school day).

Of course, participants also felt free to express their fears and anxieties. The concern that integrated, seamless child care and kindergarten programs might become like "literacy boot camps" if left solely in the hands of the education system. There was concern that existing ECEs would become "second class" players in a new system and that the lack of funding for training and recertification would seal the fate of ECEs. In view of the difficulties of winning funding reform for child care, there was concern that moving towards integrated programming without sustainable funding and lack of political will could spell disaster for young children. Finally, there was concern that integration between child care and education might proceed for four- and five-year-olds and leave the system for younger children under-resourced and under-valued.

Despite the concerns, there was an overwhelming desire to move forward, talk much more and encourage governments to participate in reform of both child care and education.

The Integration Network will be establishing an information clearinghouse on integration issues on its website at www.inproject.ca, encouraging more regional discussions on this topic and providing practical support to individual programs that want to move towards integration.

Susan Colley is project director of the Integration Network Project, Institute of Child Study at the University of Toronto.

Did you know... ?

Research shows that when child care and education services work closely together, children are more apt to succeed in school. The focus section of the spring 2005 issue of *Interaction*, Ready to Learn, highlights current research around school readiness and school completion and the influence of early childhood – particularly child care. It also profiles innovative programs, specifically for at-risk populations, and describes how school readiness is being measured in communities across Canada.

For more information, view this issue online at www.cccf-fcsge.ca.

BRIDGING THE SILOS:
EDUCATION - CHILD CARE

Nova Scotia Pre-Primary Pilot

Delivered by Education, Taught by ECEs

by Sue Melanson, Pat Hogan and Elaine Ferguson

Nova Scotia has introduced a voluntary pre-primary pilot for four-year-old children. The pilot, which is taking place in 19 sites throughout the province, began in the 2005-2006 school year and will run for two years. The Department of Education was tasked with the design and delivery of the pilots, supported by a committee comprised of representatives from the government departments of Education, Community Services, Health and Health Promotion.

Sites were selected by regional school boards based on availability of space in schools. The school principals of the pilot sites supervise the programs. The underlying principles of the program reflect those of the Multilateral Framework Agreement signed by the federal and provincial governments in 2000. They include: quality, universality, inclusiveness, accessibility, affordability, developmentally appropriate and family-centered.

Each pilot site offers full-day classes for up to 18 children. They are staffed by a lead early childhood educator (ECE) who holds a degree in Child and Youth Study and an assistant who holds a diploma from a recognized ECE training facility.

The underlying principles of the program reflect those of the Multilateral Framework Agreement signed by the federal and provincial governments in 2000.

To determine the curriculum, the committee reviewed the *Early Indicators of Progress: Minnesota Early Learning Standards 2005*, *Te Whãriki*, New Zealand's early childhood curriculum and the YMCA's *Playing to Learn Curriculum Booklet*. Attention was also given to guidelines published by the National Association for the Education of Young Children for implementing developmentally appropriate practice.

To date most of the pilot programs have started across Nova Scotia. Many areas have more than 18 children eligible and with no guidelines in place the children are chosen at random. Working parents are also having difficulty finding after school care. Licensed child care centres cannot accept them because of regulations governing four-year-olds in school aged programs.

The Impact on the ELCC Sector

There is ambivalence amongst the ELCC sector in regard to the pre-primary pilots. While the sector is in full agreement that quality pre-school programs have a positive affect on school and life-long success, these services are already being provided by the ELCC sector. This leaves many asking why resources are not invested in partnerships with the ELCC sector, rather than through the department of education.

The pilots immediately raised issues around retaining staff in the ELCC sector; duplication of services and competition; and the sector's fragile infrastructure and lack of resources to effectively advocate for its members and to influence opinion about who should be responsible for the care and education of children ages 0-5.

In response to these issues, an ad hoc committee was formed by the sector with representation from the Certification Council of Early Childhood Educators of Nova Scotia, Child Care Connection Nova Scotia, Coalition of Non Profit Directors of Nova Scotia, the Nova Scotia Child Care Association and the Private Licensed Administrator's Association. The role of the committee was to identify and articulate the impact of the pre-primary pilots on the sector; inform the pilot managers of these impacts; secure a means for the sector to influence the pilots; determine how the sector would have input into communication to and from the managers of the pilots; and have an effect on providing a positive environment for the children, parents and staff in the pilots. At a meeting with the Deputy Minister of Education, the committee expressed their concerns about the impact of the pilots on the sector, children and parents.

As a result of the meeting, the committee was successful in convincing the deputy minister to change the staff to children ratios from the original proposal of 1:15 (significantly higher than those required by law for child care programs) to 2:18. The committee also influenced the compensation levels for the ECE's who deliver the program and the deputy asked the committee to appoint one representative to the Pre-Primary Curriculum Committee and another to the Pilots Assessment Team.

Depending on the evaluation of the pilot, this model of school/child care integration may become a program throughout the province. The sector is anxiously watching the progress of the pilots, and is carefully monitoring its potential impacts on retention of staff, competition with existing ELCC programs for enrolment, quality of program for children and their families, and funding.

Sue Melanson is a certified early childhood educator, a board member of the Certification Council of Early Childhood Educators of NS (CCECENS) and the ELCC sector representative on the Pre Primary Pilots Curriculum Committee. Pat Hogan is a certified ECE and chair of the CCECENS. Elaine Ferguson is executive director of Child Care Connection NS.

An Island of Integration?

On Prince Edward Island, kindergarten programs are delivered in child care settings. The department of Health and Social Services is responsible for kindergarten licensing, teacher/staff certification and supports for children with special needs. The department of Education is responsible for kindergarten policy development, funding, curriculum development and in-service training.

The school boards have no jurisdiction over kindergartens, even when the child care centres delivering the program are located in schools. Half-day kindergarten is offered at no charge to the parent. Parent's whose children attend a full day in a child care service, either pay fees for the balance of the day, or if eligible, receive a child care subsidy.

About half of the kindergarten programs in PEI are offered in child care centres and half in part-day stand alone programs. About 30-40 per cent of the part day programs are in schools. Programs that are located in schools must be not-for profit with either a parent or community board.

Class sizes tend to range from 12 to 24, with teacher-child ratios at 1:12, according to the Child Care Facilities Act.

— Adapted from *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2004*, Martha Friendly and Jane Beach, Child Care Resource and Research Unit, University of Toronto, March 2005.

BRIDGING THE SILOS:
EDUCATION - CHILD CARE

"A Child is a Child is a Child"

Manitoba's Educaring Model

by Jessica Iaboni

In Manitoba, a model called Educaring is being adopted to encourage schools and child care to collaborate and better communicate to meet the needs of the province's preschool children. The model is based on the concept that "a child is a child is a child" in that all children should work, learn and communicate together in one environment.

At its most basic, Educaring is about bringing practitioners and educators together to discuss their strategies. Practically speaking, it can mean that child care facilities are located in classrooms, with teachers and early childhood educators learning from each other. Ultimately, its proponents hope it will, among many things, improve the transition for children between the two programs.

"All children, in their families, communities, schools, child care facilities, have a right to caregivers who serve the child's best interests, who collaborate and communicate to meet the children's developmental needs with coordinated services and consistent expectations."

— Educaring mission, from Educaring conference, November 2000

Educaring, a combination of the words "education" and "caring," was born at a provincial conference hosted in 2000 by the Manitoba Association of School Trustees and the Manitoba Child Care Association, funded by the province of Manitoba through Healthy Child Manitoba. The purpose of the conference was to bring together stakeholders from the school and child care systems across Manitoba to understand the roles and perspectives of both schools and child care facilities. Together, educators and practitioners discussed common goals, visions and possible ways to work together. The ultimate goal at the time and still today, was to create a partnership that will benefit families, communities and most importantly, children.

Don Giesbrecht was the executive director of Winnipeg's Lord Roberts Children's (Programs) when he heard about Educaring.

"I was really inspired by the idea. The only problem was how to translate the ideology into practice."

Giesbrecht decided to try to apply the model in his own centre. He then met with the principal of the Lord Roberts

Elementary School, who he says was equally enthusiastic about the idea of a partnership.

"Collaboration is important because facilities must meet to discuss common issues and ideas and from there the child care programs can work towards utilizing school facilities and spaces. Everyone must share resources, ownership, develop clear understanding, expectations and work together…"

Giesbrecht, after meeting with the school's administration and early years staff, began placing early childhood educators in classrooms at the school. Soon, the teachers wanted to know what children in child care centres were learning. The ECEs and teachers began gathering information from each other and bringing it back to their own classrooms or centres.

Integration, Internationally

Internationally, the idea that care and education of young children are inextricably linked is not new. New Zealand's State Services Commission made the following statement in a 1980 report:

"Whatever is provided for young children is in one sense care, and in another sense education. The two things in relation to the young child cannot be easily distinguished. One cannot provide care for young children without their learning ideas, habits and attitudes, nor can one educate them without at the same time providing them with care providing them with care."

Based on this view of the wider role of early childhood education, New Zealand would go on to integrate child care and education services under the auspices of the ministry of Education in 1986. It has developed common qualifications and training policies and a national curriculum – Te Whãriki – which is used in child care centres, kindergartens and pre-schools across the country.

For more information on this and other countries' models of integration, visit the Integration Network Project's website at www.inproject.ca.

Getting to Know Local Schools

Here are some steps you can take to develop good working relationships with local schools:

- Get to know your local elementary schools by visiting, talking to the school administration and participating in school events.
- Inform local schools about your child care program.
- Know and respect each other's system.
- Dedicate time and attention for co-operation and sharing with the schools.
- If located in a school, get to know the school staff, including the principal, the custodians, the teachers and teacher's aides and talk about ways to work together.
- Encourage joint professional development with the child care and school staff.
- Develop clear policies and a common understanding about school/child care collaboration.
- Offer joint sharing opportunities for curriculum development with early years teachers (nursery and kindergarten).
- Share resources or do bulk ordering.
- Develop a transition plan to meet the needs of each child in collaboration with parents and the child's new program.
- Help children understand the change when moving from preschool to school. Have them talk and draw about it.
- Invite teachers from local elementary schools to visit the preschool and talk about their schools.
- Attend intake meeting(s) with parents of special needs children and serve as a liaison with the school in partnership with the family.
- Offer to meet with senior high school students in your local schools to talk about early childhood education as a rewarding career or participate in local career fairs.
- Promote the three Cs of Educaring — communication, collaboration, consistency.
- With busy daily schedules, it is easy to forget to connect with education partners. Getting to know the people at your local schools and linking with them is good for children, families and communities.

— Adapted from *An Eye on Early Learning and Care in Manitoba*, Government of Manitoba, April 2005

Giesbrecht says that the Lord Roberts Children First Project, as it came to be known, was eagerly accepted by staff at both the school and the child care program, who understood that the main objective was to put children's needs first.

"Essentially we are all working with the same children and wanted to create a healthy environment and in the end healthy children," he says.

"This idea helps everyone involved to really focus on the issues for the betterment of not only a child's education, but also for their overall development" he says, "with this partnership the school can potentially get better results or measurable outcomes for the children when evaluating and the child care program can get a better idea of the whole child and their development."

Overall, Giesbrecht says the benefits are that the teachers know what to expect from their students and the ECEs can better prepare children for what they will be learning in school.

Despite these benefits, some have reservations about the Educaring Model.

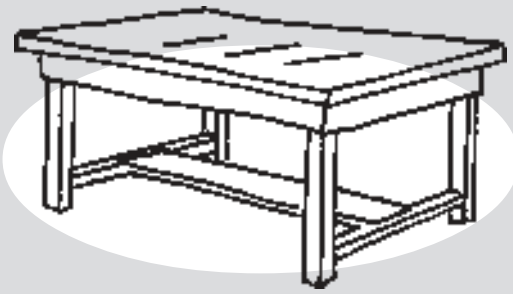
Marc Battle is a professor in early childhood education at Red River College. He says that although Educaring has tremendous possibility, questions about how to facilitate the model should be asked.

"We should wonder out loud about what our communities need," Battle says. He questions whether an institution, like a school, is the best place to support the needs of families and young children.

Battle suggests that there should be alternative models in place that are based on community needs.

"I think that communities must have an ability to decide whether education and child care should be integrated and what that model should look like. I see great advantages in integration because education and child care both hold valuable perspectives. If these perspectives are able to flourish together, in a democratic, community model, mountains will be moved," Battle says.

Jessica Iaboni is a Carleton University journalism student working part-time at the Canadian Child Care Federation.



Child Care at the Table

Early learning and child care organizations in British Columbia and New Brunswick are actively calling for consultation on integration issues currently affecting their provinces.

The B.C. government announced last fall that it would be extending the ministry of Education's mandate to include early learning and literacy. The departments of Child and Family Development (currently responsible for early learning and child care) and Education held consultations last November/December and have promised to release a joint report. The Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia has sent letters to school districts in the province to strongly recommend that any new preschool programs developed under the department of Education complement and not replace existing early learning and child care programs, and should be developed with the ELCC community. It also recommends that curriculum be developed by committees that comprise kindergarten teachers and early childhood educators, and that programs be staffed by licensed early childhood educators and comply with provincial child care licensing regulations. For more information, visit the ECEBC website at www.ecebc.ca.

The N.B. government announced that it intends to launch a pre-kindergarten program in September 2007. The province's department of Family and Community Services and the department of Education are working together to develop plans for the program. The premier plans to meet with stakeholders this spring. Early Childhood Care and Education New Brunswick took part in initial consultations on the pre-kindergarten program and it remains a key issue for the organization. Several major issues are still undecided, such as which ministry will house the program and whether early childhood educators or teachers will staff it. For updates from the ECCENB, visit the website at www.eccenb-sepenb.org.

BRIDGING THE SILOS:
EDUCATION - CHILD CARE

A Seamless Day: The First Duty Approach

by Katherine Solomon

Imagine three-year-old Derek, a wide-eyed and animated child who lives with his mom and seven-year-old sister in the Greater Toronto Area. Derek hears his sister talking about her friends at school and all the things she's learning, and he's eager to start school too. Derek could continue to stay at home with his mother – who never had the opportunity to finish school and is unable to find a job – until he's old enough to start kindergarten. Or, he could take part in his neighbourhood's First Duty program where he can learn and grow while his mother finishes her degree with the parenting support the program will offer her.

The second option gives Derek a better chance to make a seamless transition into kindergarten, and the opportunity to jump start his early learning experiences, surrounded by educators and other children.

First Duty is a Toronto initiative to bring early learning and child care together with education. Last spring, *Interaction* reported on the Toronto First Duty program, a $5-million program designed with the goals of creating a community centre that includes the family as a whole and offers services to the parent and child under six alike. Currently, there are sites placed strategically around the city to best reflect all levels of socio-economic status. A report on the project has just been released that shows it has been an overwhelming success and recommends that it be continued and expanded.

"The report shows that the program makes a difference in the community and home," says First Duty communications manager Kerry McCuaig. "Parents are more likely to talk with the teaching staff and take the time to participate in learning activities. They see the teachers modeling proper early learning techniques. These parents are also more likely to be involved in the school system after their children move on from child care and kindergarten. They are likely to be involved with the school board and participate in school-related activities."

Children and their parents are able to participate in ways never before thought of as possible. Some parents enrol their young toddlers upon the arrival of a newborn baby. The parent is then given a choice of scheduling that works best for their situation, and the program accommodates accordingly, either part-time or full-time. Other parents use the program to ease their children into the school setting knowing their children are in the care of well-educated and dedicated professionals.

Parents are not the only ones who benefit from the program. The early learning team, including teachers and ECEs from various backgrounds, come together in one centre where their individual strengths and skills are utilized to their full potential. You might see a teacher with a background in school-aged children reading to toddlers

one day and a parenting teacher in the playground the next. "Everyone finds their niche," says McCuaig. "Peer learning is behind the improvement of the program."

Penny Morris, child care supervisor and site coordinator of the Bruce-WoodGreen Early Learning Centre, says the equality among the teachers and facilitators is welcomed by the parents. "Staff members feel valued," says Morris. "They feel on par with all teachers because of the respect they are getting from parents."

Morris says the program maximizes the contact among all parties, allowing teachers to communicate any challenging behaviours in children with those who can help. There are joint meetings between the parents and school to promote open relationships, although no information is shared without the parents' consent. "It's a positive dialogue," says Morris. "We talk with the school and parents about special issues and challenging behaviours. We've developed a seamless program in terms of children facing walls in education."

In this type of environment, children's special needs can be identified and addressed sooner. Some of these children might otherwise be placed in classes for children with special needs when what they truly need is early intervention in a program designed specifically for them. McCuaig says children who are identified early on in the First Duty program with challenging behaviours have a better chance of being fully integrated with their peers when they begin school. Morris adds all children – especially those with special needs – benefit the most from participating in the full-time program.

"This program supports the whole child," says Morris. "The positive self-esteem you see in the

School-Age Child Care in Québec

Since the introduction of the new Family Policy in Quebec in 1997-98, children ages 0-4 attend child care programs run by the Ministère de l'Emploi, de la Solidarité sociale et de la Famille (now the ministère de la famille, des aînés de la condition féminine). At age 5, children can attend non-compulsory, full school day kindergarten in the education system. In inner city schools, there are also pre-kindergarten programs for four year olds operating for half a day. The other half-day is spent in the school child care which is part of the school system. It is run by the school boards; the principals have ultimate responsibility and the child care centres are expected to meet the child care licensing requirements. As one staff team, there is extensive coordination between the teachers and the child care staff. There are currently over 140,000 school age child care spaces in the province.

— Adapted from *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2004*, Martha Friendly and Jane Beach, Child Care Resource and Research Unit, University of Toronto, March 2005.

children is even being recognized by teachers not involved in the program." Grade One teachers who have "graduated" children in their classrooms can see the difference. "The graduated children have focus. They exhibit solid emotionally appropriate behaviour," Morris adds.

And because of the continued interest some parents express about an ongoing program after their children have moved on, some ECEs (grade one transition staff) have been asked to come in part way through the day and run after-school programs. This particular outcome was never anticipated but didn't come as a surprise for the staff. "This is high-quality education that cares," says Morris.

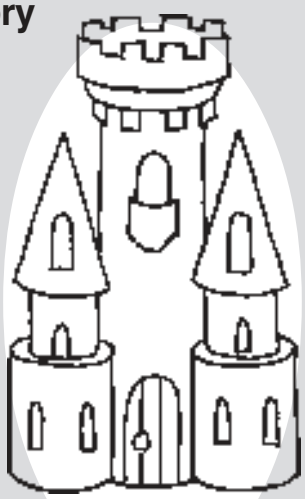
The First Duty program runs in the same vane as Best Start, a province of Ontario resource centre where information and health promotion programs are offered to expectant parents and those with newborns and young children. Approximately $1.1 million in federal funding will be used over the next three years to meet local child care needs. With 124,442 spaces already created as of March 31, 2004, the Best Start program intends to produce almost 25,000 more licensed child care spaces by the end of April 2008, a start for the estimated 130,000 children born in Ontario every year.

First Duty's seamless day approach and Best Start's school-readiness programs are taking the changing child care needs Canadian parents are facing today. Considering these are two similar programs run in the province of Ontario alone, needs are in fact growing and are being met.

For children like Derek, First Duty is changing the way they move through early childhood and education. For parents like Derek's mother, the experience is a positive one of support, information, and reliability. Derek knows he's in a place that nourishes his spirit, his curiosity, and his family as a whole.

Katherine Solomon is an Algonquin College public relations student. She prepared this article during an internship at the Canadian Child Care Federation. For more First Duty information and manuals on CD, contact Kerry McCuaig at kmccuaig@rogers.com, or visit www.toronto.ca/firstduty. For more information on Best Start, visit www.beststart.org.

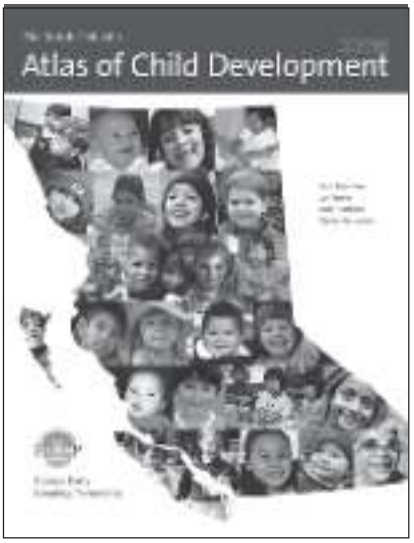
Beyond the Ivory Tower Report



In December 2004, the Canadian Education Association (CEA) held its annual forum on the theme, "Beyond the Ivory Tower: Systems Integration in Early Learning." The forum brought together government officials, NGOs, and educators from both the education and the child care systems to address a number of questions about how best to provide services to young children and their families, especially those who attend both child care and kindergarten. The forum report looks at a number of models currently in place in Canada and identifies their pros and cons. The CEA is a non-profit organization that "initiates and sustains dialogue throughout the country influencing public policy issues in education." For more information on the CEA and the forum, visit the website at www.cea-ace.ca.

RESEARCH UPDATES

Childhood Development by Neighbourhood



A unique study that uses maps to determine various factors affecting child development in neighborhoods and school districts has been completed by University of British Columbia researchers. The study, *B.C. Atlas of Child Development*, looks at child development risk factors in relation to social and economic conditions for school districts and neighborhoods in the province. Using census data and teacher evaluations of kindergarten students, it maps social issues such as poor housing, single parenting and income and how they affect childhood development. The study can be found at http://ecdportal.help.ubc.ca/publications.htm.

Improving the Health of Canadians

Improving the Health of Canadians: Promoting Healthy Weights, published by the Canadian Population Health Initiative, highlights relevant research in understanding adolescent health and development. The report analyzes data from various children and youth health surveys and explores the association between a child's social environment and their health behaviors and outcomes. The report also looks at an individual's social, economic, cultural and physical environments, and how these factors both affect and influence weight. This is the second individual report in the *Improving the Health of Canadians 2005-2006 Report Series*. The report is available at www.cihi.ca/cphi.

Are We Doing Enough?

The Canadian Paediatric Society (CPS) has released a status report on public policy across the country and how it affects both children and youth. The report, entitled *Are We Doing Enough: A status report on Canadian public policy and child and youth health* looks at how effectively the Canadian provinces and territories are using their legislative powers to promote the health and safety of children and youth. It specifically addresses three major areas: disease prevention, health promotion and injury prevention. The report thoroughly looks at these three areas in every province and rates the status of their legislation. The report is available on the CPS website at www.cps.ca.

Federal Election Reaction . . . *continued from page 9*

"The Conservatives' plan for a "Choice in Child Care Allowance" is seriously flawed. Because the new program will trigger reductions in federal and provincial/territorial income-tested benefits and increases in income taxes, most families will end up with less – for modest-income families in the $30,000-$40,000 range, much less – than the gross $1,200 annual payment for every child under six. The Child Care Allowance also will favour one-earner couples over single parents and two-earner families."

— Ken Battle, executive director, Caledon Institute. Abstract from *Choice in Child Care Allowance: What You See is Not What You Get*, January 2006

"(Q)uality child care is essential to the prosperity of Canada [1] . . . We look to the opposition leaders to table legislation of this nature in the very near future . . . We must to protect this burgeoning national program."

— Paulette Senior, CEO, YWCA Canada. YWCA Canada press release, January 25, 2006

"Income support, although welcomed in rural communities where family incomes are often low, does not address the need to support communities to build responsive flexible child care infrastructure. A national plan needs to be developed that has a variety of components to build real choice in child care."

— Colleen Ross, farmer and women's president of the National Farmers Union. Rural Voices for Early Childhood Education and Care news release, February 14, 2006

"The aim of the [child care] act is to protect and build on programs now at risk and also to enshrine child care in Parliament, just as health care has been enshrined in the Canada Health Act, so that child care will become a cornerstone of Canada."

— Olivia Chow, NDP Democrat MP for Trinity-Spadina. NDP plans bill to maintain program, *Toronto Star*, February 10, 2006

"I think the announcement yesterday that they're going to honour year two of the agreement is very good news… In the campaign, (Mr. Harper) wasn't honouring any part of the agreement. In the space of a few short days we're up to year two. I think we're doing fine."

— Linda Reid, minister of state, British Columbia. Child-care announcement welcomed by B.C., *CBC News*, Feb 8, 2006

"My feeling is that families in Alberta need to be reassured that adequate child-care help is going to be there and will continue. I know that it made a tremendous difference in some lives of families in this province when that agreement came through, so our hope is we're going to be able to keep the status quo."

— Weslyn Mather, Liberal MLA. Alberta Liberals call on feds to keep national child-care program, *Fast Forward Weekly* (Alberta), February 2006

"[The early learning and child care agreements were] probably one of the most significant social programs that we've seen put forward in Canada since medicare . . . (They would have) a huge impact, a huge improvement for families, a huge improvement on the start in life for many young children, it has a huge implication for the future of our province."

— Deb Higgins, minister of Learning, Government of Saskatchewan Province consults with child care representatives, *The Star Phoenix*, February 22, 2006

Our reality is we've already spent money and invested money on spaces, and we've invested in training and salaries and staff. We can't go backwards . . . The real question for us is, how do we allow Mr. Harper to implement the promise he made to Canadians, and also take into consideration the investments that have already been made . . . by Canada close to a year ago."

— Gary Doer, premier of Manitoba. Premiers to meet with prime minister, *CBC.ca*, February 24, 2006

"All I know is that we worked long and hard to land the agreement we have in place and we are very reluctant to give that up. We think that serves the interest of Ontarians and serves them well."

— Dalton McGuinty, premier of Ontario. Premiers want old child-care deals upheld, *CVT.ca,* February 8, 2006

"There's an agreement that was signed between the federal government and ourselves. So there's some time for us to sit down and look at how we can come at a reasonable and good solution for everyone on this issue,"

— Jean Charest, premier of Québec. Harper, Charest to discuss day care, *Canadian Press*, February 13, 2006

"As long as I'm minister of community services, I will be advocating for the sector . . . and if that means advocating for the early learning and child-care agreement, then that would be the case."

— Nova Scotia Community Services Minister David Morse. Child-care at risk, *The ChronicleHerald.ca*, February 22, 2006

"We have an opportunity to negotiate a plan that is perhaps better designed or better formulated for us."

— New Brunswick Minister of Family and Community Services Joan MacAlpine-Stiles. Lord Tories will let $109-million day-care deal die, *CBC.ca*, February 13, 2006

"We want to make sure we have viable day care centres with operators that are well trained. We want to make sure the staff is reasonably paid. We want to make sure as many kids as possible have an opportunity to get into this child-care."

— Pat Binns, P.E.I. Premier. Ghiz urges Harper to maintain child-care deal signed with P.E.I, *The Guardian* (Charlottetown), February 15, 2006

"This government is firm on what it plans to do in terms of child care. It seems to me we have to embrace this and move forward in the betterment of the interests of the children of our province."

— John Ottenheimer, minister of Health, Newfoundland and Labrador. Accept new day-care deal: Ottenheimer, *CBC News*, February 22, 2006

ACROSS CANADA AND BEYOND

National

On January 23, 2006, Canadians elected a minority Conservative party to lead the federal government. During the election campaign, a main issue on the party's platform was to end the early learning and child care agreements negotiated between the federal and provincial governments over the past year. These agreements would be replaced by a "Choices in Child Care" strategy — a combination of payments of $1200 (taxable) to parents for each child under six and funding to businesses and community organizations to increase spaces. Just days after being sworn in as the Prime Minister on February 6, Stephen Harper announced that the bilateral agreements would be ended by March 2007, and that parents could expect their child care allowance payments by July 1. For reactions to this announcement from federal and provincial leaders, see page 8 of this issue of *Interaction*.

On February 9, 2006, Trinity-Spadina MP Olivia Chow, announced that her party would introduce a National Child Care Act in Parliament when it reconvenes in April. Chow is the New Democratic Party's child care critic. She said that legislation would protect a national child care program and build on the existing child care agreements the federal government has forged with the provinces.

On February 8 and 9, representatives of rural municipalities, national farm organizations, child care organizations, labour unions, women's organizations and rural business groups representing hundreds of thousands of rural families, gathered in Ottawa to discuss the critical issue of child care in rural, remote and northern communities. The meeting, From Vision to Action, built consensus on rural Canada's child care crisis and developed draft actions to begin working collectively on the issue. For more information, visit the Rural Voices website at http://ruralvoices.cimnet.ca

Alberta

In February, Alberta Children's Services launched a new award to recognize child care professionals. The Child Care Professional Awards of Excellence will be given to child care professionals: in a rural and urban day care program; a rural and urban family child care setting; a rural and urban school age child care program; and a rural and urban nursery school program. The eight award recipients will be recognized at a special gala during the Leading the Way to Quality national child care conference on June 16, 2006 in Calgary.

British Columbia

On February 21, the government of British Columbia released its 2006 Budget, which allocates an additional $421-million over four years to expand children's services, an area that has been controversial since the death of an Aboriginal child while in government care. This funding will also include $31-million to start five regional Aboriginal child and family development centres, and enhanced funding for support services in regular child care settings for children with special needs. Critics of the budget say that it failed to address the dire need for more child care spaces in the provinces.

The co-chair of the Provincial Child Care Council, Heather Northrup, resigned in February to protest Stephen Harper's decision to cancel the child care deal with the provinces and the Campbell government's failure to defend the deal. If the agreement is cancelled, B.C. stands to lose $633-million in child care funding over five years.

Manitoba

In late November, the province announced that it would fund an accreditation feasibility study. The study is being undertaken by the Manitoba Child Care Association in partnership with the Canadian Child Care Federation. The province is paying for the study through funding from its bilateral agreement with the federal government.

The provincial government announced that surplus school space was to be prioritized for new or expanding early learning and child care programs and that a capital grant fund for these school spaces was to be made available to ELCC programs. It also announced that funding was to be made available to study the feasibility of alternate governance models for ELCC programs.

New Brunswick

The New Brunswick Department of Family and Community Services and the Department of Education are working together to develop plans for a pre-kindergarten program to begin September 2007, dependant on the new government's plans. Premier Bernard Lord will meet with stakeholders to discuss the program in the spring. Currently, there is no time frame for completing the program's development. New Brunswick Early Childhood Care and Education took part in a consultation on the pre-kindergarten to discuss the program and its opportunities. Several major issues are still undecided, such as which ministry will house the program and whether early childhood educators or teachers will staff it.

Newfoundland

The province has invested $200,000 in a new voluntary program for child care centres, *Enhancing Quality and Inclusive Practices* (*EQuIP*). This program is a 12-month, on-site consultation program for child care centres. The first phase involves an assessment and consultation with a consultant, coupled with support in the form of professional development and advice for staff. The second phase is a maintenance period where staff implement their own collaborative plan. During the first phase approximately 30 child care centres, with full time programs for children between the ages of 2 ½ to five years of age, will be eligible for participation. The long-term goal is to have participation from all eligible centres in the province.

Nova Scotia

The Nova Scotia government didn't release their five-year early learning and child care plan in December 2005 as planned – choosing instead to wait until after the federal election. As this issue of *Interaction* went to press, plans for the $20.4-million held in trust that represents the first year of the agreement-in-principle had still not been announced. An ad hoc coalition has been formed by the Non-Profit Director's Association and the Private Licensed Association to petition the federal government to honour the agreement.

Ontario

In December, the Ontario government in partnership with the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres (OFIFC) established a new community-based program to help urban Aboriginal children and youth succeed. The program is named Akwe:go, which means "everybody" or "all of us" in Mohawk. More than $2-million annually has been allocated to the OFIFC to operate the program in 27 communities. In each Akwe:go program, children ages seven to 12 receive a personalized plan of action and access to resources, including teaching by elders and other culturally relevant supports, after-school programs where students can get peer support or help with homework, health resources and referrals to community resources and agencies.

Ontario has been moving full-steam ahead with its Best Start plan to create more than 12,500 child care spaces by April 2006; 25,000 by April 2008. The provincial government has been vocal in calling on the new federal government to honour its early learning and child care agreement with Ontario. The province had planned to use $1.1-billion in federal funds between 2005 and 2008 to support Best Start – which includes a massive expansion of child care, predominantly in Ontario's publicly funded schools, more child care subsidies and neighbourhood hubs that provide one-stop services for families in communities across Ontario.

The Home Child Care Association of Ontario has prepared and distributed a position paper, entitled, *Best Start and Licensed Home Child Care*. The paper is designed to help the HCCAO's member agencies as they work within their communities and governments to integrate home child care into the local Best Start plan.

Prince Edward Island

On December 21, the Prince Edward Island government announced how it would spend one-half ($1.5-million) of the federal funding it received in the first fiscal year of its early learning and child care agreement signed in November. The funding was allocated to wage enhancement grants, program grants, training opportunities, infant care, capital expenses and per diem rates with the child care subsidy program.

The Early Childhood Development Association has launched a new website with online resources. It has also produced a booklet, *Parent's Guide to Quality Child Care on PEI*, to provide answers to parents' questions, checklists to choosing centres, and helpful hints on looking for quality early learning and childhood education on the island.

Quebec

In December, Bill 124 was passed, moving control of family child care from centres de la petite enfance to new regional coordination offices. The province has established a working group mandated to create a plan for establishing these new offices. CPEs are preparing to hand over their home child care agencies to these new offices.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Premier Jean Charest spoke in February about a possible transition period once the federal commitment under the early learning and child care agreement is phased out in March 31, 2007. As this issue of *Interaction* went to press, no further details had been announced.

Saskatchewan

On January 5, the Saskatchewan government announced $11-million in funding to increase the wages of staff working in licensed child care centres. This funding, which includes a retroactive six per cent wage increase effective November 1, 2005, is in addition to the three per cent funding increase that was announced April 1, 2005. Community Resources and Employment Minister Joanne Crofford says that the new funding acknowledges the "profoundly important role" of quality child care staff, and aims to address the need to retain and recruit quality staff in the province. In 2004, the average gross hourly wage for trained early childhood educators in Saskatchewan was $11.33.

In January, the final report of a province-wide study of Saskatchewan's early learning and child care sector was released. The study was commissioned to assess the impact of the licensed child care expansion and the levels of training that are required, and to determine how training could best meet the needs of early childhood educators. In general, the study reflects the retention and recruitment problems experienced by the sector nationwide and shows that inadequate wages and benefits, and lack of training are the two largest areas of dissatisfaction among licensed child care staff. For more information, download the report at www.sasked.gov.sk.ca.

On February 23, the province announced that a pre-kindergarten plan that was supposed to go ahead in the coming fall would be cancelled due to the threatened loss of the early learning and child care agreement. The province says that without the promised federal money, the program cannot be expanded. The plan would have allowed all four-year-olds in the province to attend two half-days a week in school, beginning this fall. Currently only 1600 of Saskatchewan's 11,000 four-year-olds have access to pre-kindergarten.

Yukon

A new coalition has been formed to work together with government to improve the quality of Yukon's early learning and child care services. The Child Care Coalition of Yukon includes the Society of Yukon Family Day Homes, the Yukon Child Care Association and the Yukon Child Care Awareness Committee. The coalition has been funded by Yukon Health and Social Services to raise public awareness of the importance of early learning and child care, how Yukon's child care providers meet the cultural and special needs of children, child care providers as a professional body and the value of their work, and the importance of quality child care to the Yukon's economy.

CALENDAR

MAY

12 – 13
Richmond, B.C.
Expanding Our Horizons
This annual conference hosted by the Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia offers insight to innovative ways of thinking and doing in relation to daily work in early learning and child care. Keynote speaker: Dr. Frances Ricks, who will discuss leadership management, inspiration and motivation. For more information, contact the ECEBC office at (604) 709-6063, toll free at 1 800 797-5602; ecebc@direct.ca; or www.ecebc.ca

11
University of British Columbia, B.C.
Supporting Children's Social and Emotional Health: Assessment Tools, Research and Practice
This session will feature a new, stimulating discussion and debate on assessment of children's social and emotional development. The day is designed for parents, and those working in early childhood care and education, public and mental health settings, infant development, supported child development, post secondary early childhood programs, primary education, and special education environments. For further information please contact EventAbility at info@eventability.ca.

25 – 27
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Soaring to New Heights Early Childhood Education and Care Conference
This annual conference by the Manitoba Child Care Association will feature 60 workshops, a variety of seminars, keynote presentations and child care centre tours. For more information, contact the MCCA at (204) 586-8587; clairefunk@mccahouse.org.

31 – June 3
Toronto, Ontario
AECEO Provincial Conference 2006
The Association of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario is co-hosting this annual conference with the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care. The event will organize lobby prep workshops and lobby sessions with all of the MPPs and the Premier. This session will allow delegates an opportunity to address their local representatives. Various Common Table groups will contribute to the workshop sessions. For more information visit the AECEO website at www.cfc-efc.ca/aeceo.

31 – June 3
Halifax, Nova Scotia
BGCC National Conference
Over 30 workshops held to help build skills and knowledge to assist Boys and Girls Clubs. A conference highlighted by such keynote speakers such as BGCC National Board member and Executive Director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society, Cindy Blackstock. For more information, visit www.bgccan.com

JUNE

1 – 3
Vancouver, BC
Maternal Child Youth Conference 2006: Optimizing the Care of Mothers, Children and Youth
This national conference will provide an exciting opportunity to explore current trends

in maternal, child and youth health. Participants will learn about evidence-based programs or services from across the country and strategies for promoting linkages between the hospital and community. This conference will be of interest to an interdisciplinary audience who work in the field of maternal, child and youth health. For more information, contact the conference organizers at (604) 822-2801; ipinfo@interchange.ubc.ca, or www.interprofessional.ubc.ca;

5 – 7
Toronto, Ontario
Working Together for Ontario's Children and Families
The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies and Children's Mental Health Ontario are jointly hosting this conference, which will discuss innovative programs, new research and exciting outcome studies that will help agencies work with families and children. For more information, contact Meeting Management Services Inc. at (905) 335-7993 or janice@mmsonline.ca.

15 – 18
Calgary, Alberta
Leading the Way to Quality
This conference is co-hosted by the Canadian Child Care Federation with its affiliates the Early Childhood Professional Association of Alberta and the Alberta Family Child Care Association. Approximately 800 participants from across Canada are expected. The theme of Leading the Way to Quality will be showcases through such topics as quality programming and the benefits of accreditation. For more information visit the CCCF website at www.cccf-fcsge.ca

18 – 20
Charlottetown, P.E.I.
5th Annual Network Conference
Join the Canadian Language and Literacy Research Network in their 5th Annual Network Conference. The conference is expanding the number of workshop and tutorials offerings to include these as part of the program. The Network is seeking proposals from potential workshop and/or tutorial presenters to incorporate into their program on Tuesday June 20, 2006. For more information, contact Jennifer Starcok, Network conference coordinator at Jennifer@cllrnet.ca or (519) 850-2901.

21
National
National Aboriginal Day
National Aboriginal Day is an occasion for all Canadians to celebrate the rich contribution Aboriginal peoples have made to Canada. For suggestions on how to celebrate this special day, either on your own, with family and friends, or with hundreds and thousands attending events held in locations across the country, visit the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada website at www.ainc-inac.gc.ca.

27
National
Canadian Multiculturalism Day
Canadian Multiculturalism Day is an occasion to recognize and celebrate the economic, social and cultural benefits that various communities make to Canadian society, and an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to democracy, equality and mutual respect. For more information, visit the Canadian Heritage website at www.pch.gc.ca.

AUGUST

19 – 22
Vancouver, B.C.
Brain and Development Learning: Making Sense of the Science
The conference is devoted to enriching and improving the lives of children and by making cutting edge research in psychology and neuroscience understandable to nonscientists (including parents) who work with children on a daily basis. Continuing education credits available for educators, physicians, lawyers, psychologists, allied health professionals, and more. For more information, visit www.interprofessional.ubc.ca/brain_dev_and_learning.html.

OCTOBER

15 – 18
Fredericton, New Brunswick
2006 Recognizing Learning
This is the Sixth International Forum on Prior Learning Assessment and Qualification Recognition. You will find inspiring speakers, important networking opportunities, key initiatives, innovative practices, and public policy discussions. For more information, visit the Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA) website at www.capla.ca.

17–20
Montréal, Québec
Beyond Borders: Caring for the Future of Children, Youth and Families
This international conference is an exceptional opportunity to share and reflect on the most promising developments in prevention and intervention. For more information, visit www.icycc2006.com.

NOVEMBER

19 – 22
Vancouver, B.C.
World Forum 2006: future directions in child welfare
The conference will explore and share knowledge, information and data on promising practices and innovative approaches to child abuse and neglect. New trends and developments in child welfare practice, research and networking will be emphasized. The presentations will highlight practical and innovative solutions, cutting-edge research and evidence-based practice. For more information, visit the website at www.worldforum2006.ca.

RESOURCES

AboutKidsHealth Website (2005)
Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children has launched a new website, designed to help families learn more about health conditions through providing current research and information on child development, common health problems and overall health care. The site features regular columns, news, features and a series on the latest in child health research. A useful resource section also provides information on how to better understand the present and long-term effects of a particular condition. The health information provided on the site is oriented towards children and youth, providing feature games, narrated animations and it is designed to promote health knowledge through fun. For more information, visit the website at www.aboutkidshealth.ca.

Healthy Parenting Home Study Program (2005)
This free, self-directed parenting education program is for parents with children from infancy to age five. As a self-led study or course, the program enables parents to expand their knowledge of parenting from their homes. Growth and development, physical and emotional needs, and positive discipline strategies are some of the topics that are discussed in this home study program. It is provided by the Saskatchewan Prevention Institute and maintained through a partnership with SaskTel. For more information, visit the website at www.healthyparenting.sk.ca.

Let's All Read Together (2005)
The National Film Board of Canada (NFB) has created an interactive kit to encourage children ages 5 to 9 to read at home. The kit features approximately five stories that look at household chores, culture, tradition and family, alongside an activity guide with craft activities. For more information visit the NFB website at www.nfb.ca.