

Interaction

VOLUME 20, NUMBER 2, SUMMER 2006

Highlights of Current Research on Quality

A young child with dark hair, wearing a white dress with colorful floral patterns and pink sandals, is leaning forward to smell a large red flower. The child is standing on a paved path next to a flower bed. The background shows more greenery and a blurred path.

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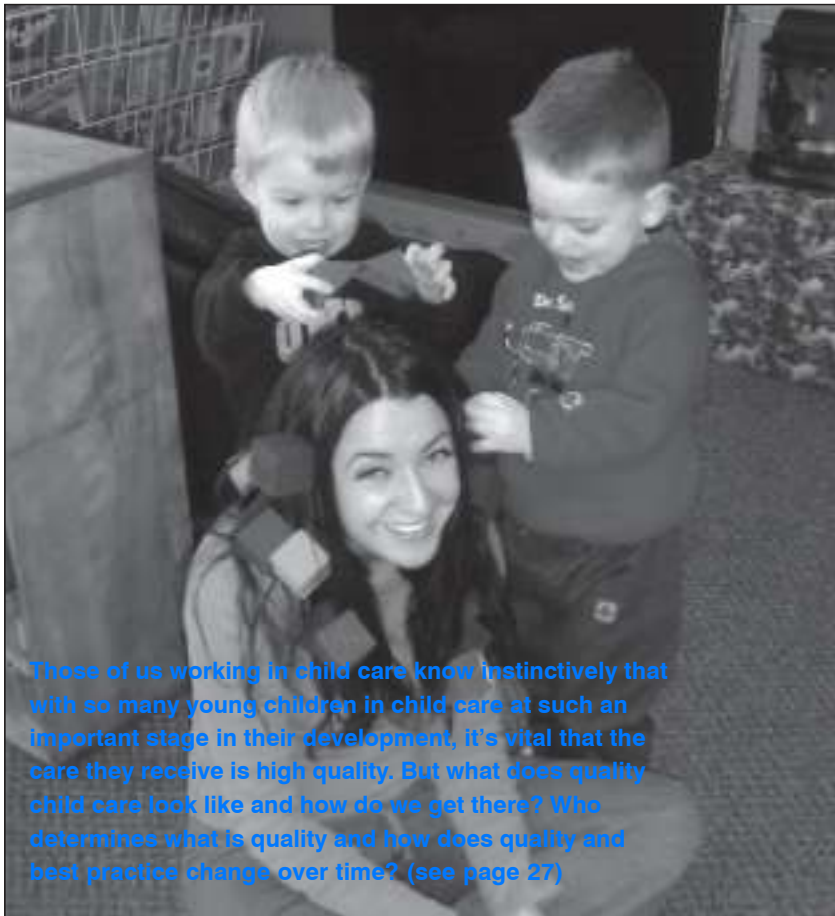
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Those of us working in child care know instinctively that with so many young children in child care at such an important stage in their development, it's vital that the care they receive is high quality. But what does quality child care look like and how do we get there? Who determines what is quality and how does quality and best practice change over time? (see page 27)

Highlights of Current Research on Quality

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A new resource sheet (#80) accompanies this issue – *Outdoor Play Environments*.



The photo on the front cover was taken by *Shoot for Cover* winner, Sirivan Quangtakoune.



Behind the Scenes

On the bus, in coffee shops, in the news and at family get-togethers – talk of child care is everywhere. Unfortunately, instead of rich discussions about how Canada as a country can best meet the diverse early learning and child care needs of Canadian families and their children, much of the public discussion has become framed in tired debates that pit working moms against stay-at-home moms and informal child care against so-called institutional care.

One thing that cannot be debated is the reality that over half of the children in Canada are using some form of early learning and child care service. Further, no one can argue that with so many children in child care, it's crucial that they receive the highest quality care possible.

The variety and scope of articles in this issue of *Interaction* show that quality is top of mind within the child care community. Several articles profile innovative practices, training tools and community models that focus on elements of quality care.

The focus section brings together overviews of research on quality child care from a number of perspectives – including an article that highlights some of the discussions taking place that attempt to broaden and deepen discussions of best and promising practice. In times like these, open discussion based on sound research is just what we need.

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The mission of the Canadian Child Care Federation is to achieve excellence through early learning and child care. Its core focus areas are best and promising practice; capacity building; and collaborations, networks and partnerships.

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Inside the Federation

CCCF is Knowledge Broker for New Early Childhood Learning Centre

The Early Childhood Learning Knowledge Centre (ECLKC) is a consortium of organizations led by the Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development. The ECLKC will focus on research knowledge and mobilization, monitoring and reporting and knowledge exchange by:

- gathering the best scientific knowledge about the conditions that foster learning in children from conception to age five
- determining the work that Canadian researchers could carry out to improve scientific knowledge about the conditions that foster learning in young Canadian children
- identifying best ways of monitoring the progress of learning outcomes for young children in order to inform Canadians
- transferring this knowledge to the general public and particularly to Canadians who are likely to improve the conditions that foster learning in young children

The Canadian Child Care Federation is responsible for coordinating the knowledge exchange component of the ECLKC's work. Through bulletins, Lessons in Learning, conferences, learning events, tools for parents and tools for Aboriginal communities, ECLKC will ensure that knowledge about early childhood learning issues is shared among practitioners, policy makers, researchers, the learning community and the broader public.

The ECLKC is one of five knowledge centres across the country created by the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) – a national, independent, non-profit corporation funded by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada in 2004. CCL's mandate is to promote and support research to improve all aspects of learning across the country and across all walks of life. CCL has identified five key areas of learning that require urgent attention, and to ensure that these areas are addressed from a pan-Canadian perspective, it has created the following regionally-based knowledge centres across the country:

- early childhood learning (Quebec)
- adult learning (Atlantic Canada)
- health and learning (BC/Yukon)
- work and learning (Ontario)
- Aboriginal learning (Prairies/NWT/Nunavut)

To find out more about the Early Childhood Learning Knowledge Centre and CCL, visit www.ccl-cca.ca/childhoodlearning.

– Valérie Bell



Centre of Excellence Work Extended

The Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development (CEECD) ended its first five-year mandate in March; however, it is pleased to announce that it will pursue its work for another year.

Over these last five years, CEECD collected 219 papers written by international early childhood development experts from 13 different countries (USA, Canada, Great Britain, New Zealand, Australia, Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Israel, Germany, France and Italy) and 33 Voices from the Field written by Canadian professionals in early childhood learning.

Keep checking the CEECD website regularly for new content, including an upcoming issue of the bulletin, which features a special focus on attachment.

From conception to five . . . childhood at your fingertips: www.excellence-earlychildhood.ca.

– Valérie Bell

INSIDE THE FEDERATION

CHN Children's Affiliate Now Using Health Promotion Assessment Tool

Over the past several months, the Health Promotion Affiliate of the Canadian Health Network has been developing a tool to help us assess and select resources for our collection.

The tool is intended to enrich and strengthen our collection by providing a checklist that helps to evaluate the health promotion messaging in a concrete way.

The content on CHN (whether a collection, resource, website or original article) should reflect multiple health promotion strategies and take a positive focus. Health promotion content should promote participation, enabling and empowerment, and building of individuals' assets and strengths. Furthermore, it should have a selection of the following characteristics:

- **targets** – content is written for the population group(s) the document targets (e.g., parents)
- **relevance** – content is written about the population group(s) the document is about (e.g., children)
- **levels** – content indicates the level(s) of change with people and at what point it happens
- **settings** – content notes the place(s) or environment(s) where the change happens
- **strategies** – content outlines the approach(es) taken to facilitate the change
- **prevention** – content comprises the three levels of prevention: primary, secondary, tertiary
- **determinants of health** – content considers the broad social and living condition(s) that affect individual health

In addition to keeping this information top of mind, we also ensure that our resources contain relevant information for early learning and child care practitioners, parents and others working with and caring for children up to the age of 12.

For more information on the Canadian Health Network, contact Kim Tytler, health promotion manager, ktytler@ccc-fcsge.ca.

This following working definition reflects how health promotion fits within Canadian Health Network's scope of work:

"Health promotion is the process of enabling people to increase control over and improve their health. This process is based on the understanding of the important influences that determinants of health (such as income and social status, social support networks, education, and employment/working conditions), have on an individual's health. Health promotion activities include the three levels of disease, injury and disability prevention, and move beyond health education and changes in personal behaviours to address social change, institutional change and community change."



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As the Children's Affiliate of the Canadian Health Network, the Canadian Child Care Federation offers you over 1,000 online resources on topics that are essential to your work, including nutrition, breastfeeding, parenting and child care, special needs, environmental health and child development. Our lively homepage features a variety of articles of interest and our FAQ section connects you directly to some of parents' and practitioners' most commonly asked questions.

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INSIDE THE FEDERATION

Resiliency Training Program Reaches Out Across the Country

In February, CCCF was invited to gather a group of experienced trainers from across the country to attend a four-day train-the-trainer program called Reaching In...Reaching Out (RIRO). Attendees participated in the first stage of this innovative training program, which aims to develop resiliency skills in children.

RIRO is an evidence-based skills training program designed for adults so they can help children develop a resilient approach to handling life's inevitable stresses and challenges. RIRO helps adults and children "reach in" to respond more resiliently to challenges they face and "reach out" to others and opportunities. RIRO was piloted with early childhood educators to be used with children from ages zero to six. It is a fully researched adaptation of the world-renowned Penn Resilience Program, which is designed for children eight years and older.

Research shows that children as young as two begin to copy how adults in their lives think about and handle daily stress, frustrations, change and challenges. Once adults begin to use the resiliency thinking skills themselves, they become positive role models for young children by demonstrating resilience in everyday situations.

The RIRO train-the-trainer program will continue in Ontario through the support of the Ontario Trillium Foundation over the next three years. For more information on this training initiative, contact the project coordinator at info@reachinginreachingout.com.

For more information about the RIRO program, please visit RIRO's website at www.reachinginreachingout.com.

— Jeanine Plamondon

Register Now!
Meeting the Challenge Online

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

Meeting the Challenge Online is a nine-week e-learning course that will provide you with tools to 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 from the comfort of your home or child care facility.

To learn more, visit the *Meeting the Challenge Online* subpage at www.cccf-csge.ca.

I was surprised that you could feel close to people through cyberspace!
— pilot participant

This course has given me so many more "tools" that can help me plan ahead for behaviours and challenges that may occur.
— pilot participant

Cost: \$449



INSIDE THE FEDERATION

Family Child Care Training Goes Online

The CCCF is currently developing an online version of the Family Child Care Training Program – Level 1, which will be available in English and French starting this fall.

Further updates on this exciting new professional development opportunity and the benefits of online learning for family child care providers will be posted to the Family Child Care website in the coming months.

For more information on the *Family Child Care Training Program Online*, contact us at fccinfo@cccfcfcsge.ca or visit the CCCF website at www.cccfcfcsge.ca and click on “family child care” on the left sidebar. If you’d like to take the course, download the interest form from the website and mail or fax the completed form to CCCF.

– Jeanine Plamondon

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Lawson Award Recognizes CCCF's Contributions to Child Care

The Canadian Child Care Federation (CCCF) is honoured to receive the Lawson Foundation Achievement Award, a \$25,000 grant recognizing



the contributions to community and society made by Lawson grantees. The award acknowledges CCCF for excellence in its work and strong leadership in fulfilling its mission. CCCF also gained recognition for its success in putting research into practice, influencing systemic change in its field, sharing its knowledge and learning with a broad base of stakeholders and achieving project sustainability.

Currently celebrating its 50th year of philanthropy, the Lawson Foundation is a London-based family foundation that strives to enrich the quality of life in Canada through grants to registered charitable organizations. The foundation was established by the Honourable Ray Lawson in 1956, and still operates as a family organization – the board of directors is composed of many third and fourth generation family members. Over the last 50 years, the Lawson Foundation has donated more than \$50-million to charities across Canada.

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How can you reach child care providers, educators, parents and policy makers across Canada? Advertise in *Interaction*, the flagship, quarterly publication of the Canadian Child Care Federation. *Interaction* reaches 11,000 members/subscribers and has a shared readership with 50,000 others coast to coast. Contact us to find out more about our ad rates, the advantages of advertising in *Interaction*, and other ways we can help you get your message to the child care sector!

Lana Crossman, publications manager, (613) 729-5289 ext. 221; lcrossman@cccfcfcsge.ca; or visit the CCCF website (www.cccfcfcsge.ca) and click on the *Interaction* cover.



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FROM WHERE I SIT

An Interview with Barbara Coyle

Effective June 30, Barbara Coyle will step down as executive director of the Canadian Child Care Federation. As this issue of *Interaction* goes to print, CCCF is in the process of hiring a new executive director to be announced in the fall issue.



This edition of From Where I Sit features an interview with Barbara, in which she discusses her views on CCCF and the child care community, including changes over the past year and looking ahead to the future.

An important employee with CCCF over the past 10 years, Barbara has led the organization as ED since August 2004. Throughout her time at CCCF, she has brought to the organization a passion for healthy child development and a collaborative approach to leadership. She has a Master of Management degree for National Voluntary Sector Leaders from McGill University and more than 20 years' experience in the corporate and voluntary sectors.

Barbara, you have been working with CCCF for over 10 years. How has the child care environment changed since you joined the organization?

That's a great question because the first assignment I had at CCCF in March 1994 was to prepare a report on a 1993 survey of 7,000 child care providers in Canada. There were 1,724 members of CCCF then (now we have close to 11,500). Looking back on that report, many of the issues have remained pretty constant. At the time of the survey, there

was solid agreement that wages and working conditions, training and staff development were the top issues for the child care sector, followed closely by quality, child development, new resources and funding.

So on the surface it looks like not much has changed – but all of us in the field know there have been great changes in the past decade. The field itself is more politicized and certainly more articulate about how it will speak up for early learning and child care. New organizations have emerged through the hard work of the field through those years – organizations such as the Child Care Human Resources Sector Council. And of course some organizations have had to dismantle, despite courageous efforts of committed volunteers. The introduction of computers and Internet communication has changed the field of practice tremendously. I laugh when I think that I prepared that report on my Apple IIE computer. Through the work of the past two years we've seen considerable agreement from the field that it is a profession, and that it has a national voice despite the diversity of service provision. It also seems that there is more of a sense of urgency to make change – and perhaps others would say that has been a constant too!

How have these developments changed CCCF?

CCCF has had to stay focused on bringing together the organizations that are leading child care across the country and to make solid connections to the national leaders working on issues relating to children and families. Our organization has grown to become a full federation of affiliate members. We've had to learn how to speak with one voice and we've expanded our table to include practitioners from all settings and jurisdictions in the country. It's hard to believe that we are now an office of 21 staff with 21 provincial territorial affiliates. CCCF is now a network of networks with early learning and child care at the centre. As a result of this rapid growth and the fact that it has had to stretch project funds to support all its network development, the organization has emerged as a leader using a results-based management accountability framework to guide its path to its long-term outcomes.

What are some of the organization's strengths?

I think that CCCF's key strengths are its team approach and commitment to quality. There's tremendous energy when people know they are valued and expected to offer their best – it makes a solutions-based approach the norm



and moving forward the only way to go. I'm always pleasantly surprised to discover and rediscover how much the organization actually believes in itself and its mission to achieve excellence in early learning and child care.

What do you see as some of its immediate challenges? Long-term?

As I see it, the immediate challenge for the organization is to stay focussed on its core work of best practice and capacity building while seizing the opportunity ahead with the new government – to develop policy solutions for early learning and child care that can work in the tremendously complex political environment. We have to find a way to sustain the good work that everyone is doing across the country to support optimal outcomes for children. Infrastructure support for child care organizations – provincial, territorial and national – is an immediate and long-term challenge. I see mergers and joint ventures in my crystal ball!

Barbara, your work has helped solidify CCCF's position as a leading national organization. What have been some of the personal highlights for you while you've been with CCCF?

It has been a personal highlight to have worked with so many intelligent, hard working, curious, fun-loving, committed people on an issue of such importance to the future of the country. I don't think I could have asked for a more interesting and challenging portfolio than the one I have enjoyed at CCCF. The organization is so highly networked, the issue of children's developmental health so connected to every other issue, the work so pan-Canadian, that it has been truly rewarding to be at the centre of such interesting work for children and families. I consider it a personal highlight to have helped build this organization and to have witnessed the tremendous leadership growth of the volunteers on our Board and Member Council.

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Federal Budget 2006 and Child Care: No Mention of Quality

On May 2, the federal government released its 2006 Budget – which includes a child care allowance of \$1,200 (taxable) directly to parents for each child ages 6 and under.

The Canadian Child Care Federation issued a press release in response to the budget, maintaining that while it gives parents some extra money to raise their children, it provides no guarantees that families will be able to purchase high-quality child care. The following is an excerpt from the release (the full version is available on the CCCF website):

CCCF is determined to work with the government of Canada, maximizing the expertise of its broad network on the critical issue of child care and the important role it plays in communities across the country.

“We are calling on the federal government to take a leadership role in investing in national quality standards for child care. Parents need to know that they are leaving their children in a warm and caring environment that truly optimizes their learning and development,” said Don Giesbrecht, CCCF's president.

Currently Canada has national standards for health, education – even lightbulbs. However, it has no quality standards for child care, despite the overwhelming research on the importance of the early years and the fact that over 50 per cent of Canada's children (ages 6 months to 5 years) are in some form of child care.

“The opportunity to consult on the process of creating new spaces beginning next fiscal year is pivotal,” said Barbara Coyle, CCCF's executive director. “Quality and quantity are inextricably linked. There is lots of hard work to be done to ensure that children in Canada have access to quality child care. This requires a permanent, lengthened and deepened investment – something we didn't see in this budget. Those of us who work with parents and their children every day – our 11,500 members – know that quality matters and we're determined to work more closely with the government on solutions that work for Canada's families.”

CCCF is actively meeting with government officials from all of the three major political parties to impress upon them the importance of quality child care. You are urged to continue the excellent work you're doing in your communities across the country in helping to inform MPs, MPPs and MLAs of the need to ensure that children have access to quality child care.



Member Studies to Steer CCCF's Development

By Yvonne Dionne

If you receive *Interaction*, you are probably a member of the Canadian Child Care Federation – either through your provincial or territorial affiliate organization or as a national member.

Recently you may have been informed of an adjustment in your local membership fee to reflect an increase in CCCF fees. Over the past few years, the CCCF's membership has grown significantly and the activities in support of excellence in early learning and child care have intensified. With this work, the cost of serving the organization and members increased steadily yet there was no corresponding increase in affiliate fees for over 10 years.

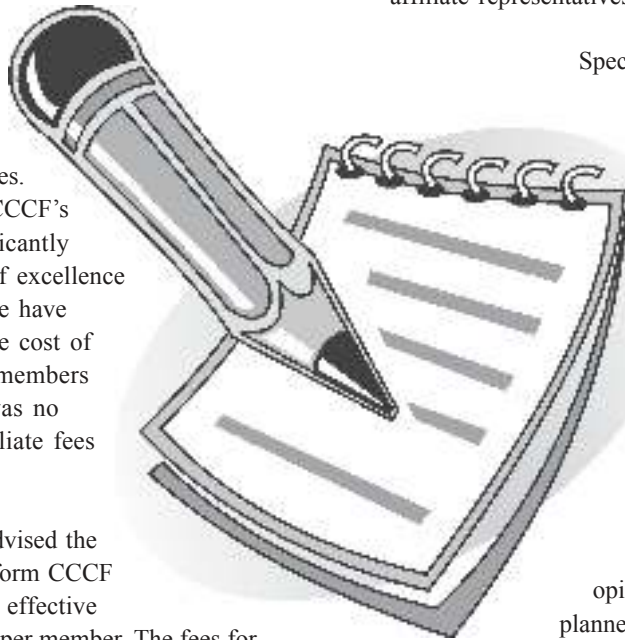
In late 2005, CCCF's Board advised the 21 affiliate organizations that form CCCF of a decision to increase fees, effective April 1, 2006, from \$10 to \$15 per member. The fees for national (direct) members were also adjusted upward.

Are we on the right track? To determine whether we are, the CCCF is undertaking three important pieces of work: a development strategy, a fee and benefit review and a member survey.

First, the development strategy is planning and implementing activities to vary our sources of revenue while building upon the core strengths of the CCCF as a non-profit charity. We are implementing creative ways to promote and deliver our current suite of products and services. We are developing new products that directly support excellence in early learning and child care. We are exploring new ways to meet your needs. We are working to grow donations from individuals, foundations and corporations.

Second, a formal fee and benefits review is underway with CCCF's affiliate organizations. This review will give us an in-depth understanding and assessment of our member fee structure and associated member benefits. The resulting data and the associated recommendations are intended to provide a base from which to develop a long-term strategy for fees and benefits for the CCCF.

The review is also collecting information on each affiliate's fee structure and benefits in order to inform our work together. The resulting report of the cross-Canada view by affiliate, in aggregate form, will be shared with your affiliate representatives at Member Council in June 2006.



Specifically, we will use the results of this review to guide how we communicate to current and prospective members the rationale for the fee and benefit configuration; ensure that the potential and value of affiliate membership in the CCCF is maximized; and develop a long-term strategy for fees and benefits.

Third, to fill out the larger picture and to learn directly about individual member needs and opinions, a formal member survey is planned for late 2006 or early 2007. Your participation in this survey will be invaluable.

We welcome your questions, thoughts and recommendations – and look forward to hearing from you.

Yvonne Dionne is CCCF's director of Development, Marketing and Communications.
© CCCF 2006



Roots, Wings and a Purpose

by Sharon Sangster

Sharon Sangster is a former early childhood educator and a single parent of two children ages 4 and 6. As a young mother she was struck by the awesome responsibility parents have to nourish a child's spirit and was inspired to write this reflection for Interaction magazine:

The spirit of a child is very delicate. It can be ignored, dampened, forgotten and misplaced. The spirit of a child is the seed for growth. A parent's responsibility is to nurture this seed in all capacities to help the child become a whole person.

It is truly a joy to see children's talents and personalities emerge as they develop. A holistic approach, roots, wings and a purpose ensures that this process is a joyous one.

Roots. Many of us know a story about the beginnings of our own families, a story about where we came from and all the ancestors involved.

Wings. Some of us know where we want to go. We have an understanding of who we are that leads us to our beliefs.

Purpose. Few of us have had an easy journey finding these beliefs. Our strengths as well as our weaknesses needed to be defined.

A parent's role is to provide their child with these three elements – roots, wings and a purpose. These will secure in them confidence about themselves, clarity about where they fit in the world and success in whatever they wish to accomplish. Children's busy lives, filled with schedules and routines, begin when they enter a formal environment away from their parents. This can start when a child is as young as 10 months old.

In our world, the emphasis on physical and mental development is everywhere while the emotional and spiritual is sometimes overlooked. Roots, wings and a purpose provides this spiritual component and gives balance to children to enhance them as a whole person. Inner stability comes from your sense of self – where you are going and why. It's a strength that needs to be developed over time with the consistent support and information only a parent can give. This information – the stories of our families – can be found all around. Roots can be as deep as you want them to go. The important thing is that children can identify with some of these roots.

The roots could start when a child is born, in the house or city he or she was born in – as long as a beginning to which the child can trace back is established.

The wings have to fit each child. If you give a child wings that are too big, she won't be able to fly. Take your cues from the children. Their interests are what come most naturally to them, so by encouraging their interests while providing appropriate opportunities to learn about these interests, you will have started them on their journey.

A purpose is the most difficult element because it is more specific to the individual. The most

successful way is to follow a natural path as closely as you can. This path should encourage the children's strengths and incorporate their weaknesses. This will create a role they can fulfill to become a participating adult in any society.

A parent has the most difficult, most important and most rewarding job of all. Helping your child to become a whole person is the best gift you can give them.



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A Dream for Rural Child Care Choice

by Sharron Arksey

Currently, the federal government's approach to child care in Canada emphasizes choice. A \$1,200 annual child care benefit given directly to families will ostensibly allow parents to choose their own preferred child care option. So it is worth noting that in many rural communities, choice in child care is a dream, not a reality. This is especially true for families in isolated areas who are caring for school age or special needs children or for those with socialization needs. The availability of quality, licensed early learning and development programs in rural Canadian communities should not be a matter of luck; instead, making sure such programs exist should be a priority for families, communities and governments.

The dream is not impossible to attain, and the Childcare Family Access Network (C-FAN) in Manitoba is a case in point. It began back in the late-1980s, when a group of community members in the small rural community of Langruth, about 100 miles northwest of Winnipeg, got together to talk about the needs of area children and their families. Because Langruth was – and is – almost exclusively a farm community, priority was given to the establishment of child care services to ensure the safety of area children while parents were working on the farm. What should this child care look like? In response to this question, the community clearly identified flexible usage policies, pay-as-you-go services, extended hours and multi-age settings as priority components of the program.

This is a success story. Langruth's one small centre grew into the Childcare Family Access Network. Over the past 16 years, C-FAN has had as many as eight programs in eight different communities, each offering a variety of community-based services. As needs and conditions changed, so too



If you dream alone it is only a dream but if you dream together, it is the beginning of reality

— Dom Helder Camara

did the total number of programs offered. But a success story is not a fairy tale. Some programs flourished, others failed. At the present time, C-FAN has programs in four communities, as well as a centrally-based resource centre. In addition, negotiations are currently underway with three communities for the provision of new programs. However, these negotiations are going on against a backdrop of media and government suggestion that such programs are not needed and will not work.

Rural communities have always been known for their ingenuity at overcoming obstacles and making things work. The idea behind C-FAN – that of communities working together and pooling resources to reach a shared goal – is what built rural communities in the first place.

It would be a mistake to use this history of community engagement as an excuse for failing to act at higher levels. Policy makers need to speak with rural parents. They need to see what is happening in rural, remote and northern Canada. And they need to move forward to support Canadian families in those communities. Those families deserve no less.

Sharron Arksey is executive director of the Childcare-Family Access Network. © CCCF 2006

For more information on how rural communities are responding to needs for quality child care, see "Pathways to Success" on page 16.



Olympic Athlete Says Keeping Children Active is Child's Play

by Sara Tarle

At a recent book launch, author Silken Laumann, four-time Canadian Olympic rower, faced an audience of loud and boisterous children. The children at the Dovercourt Recreation Centre in Ottawa climbed on a play structure, ran around the room and simply played. No adult intervened to shush them, organize them or start planned games. Despite this lack of adult direction, all of the children who were there with parents or caregivers were being physically active – a perfect real-life illustration of the points Laumann makes in her new book, *Child's Play*.



the fact that her own children often have so many hours of homework a night that they don't have time to play. She spoke about her goal to come up with a way for children across Canada to safely play with their friends in an unstructured, unorganized, imaginative way.

As an example, Laumann described Play in the Park – an initiative that she spearheaded through the Silken Laumann Active Kid's Movement, a non-profit organization that helps promote the health benefits of physical activity. This is an easy-to-start program where parents or caregivers from a particular neighbourhood volunteer one night a week to supervise the park. This provides the children of the neighbourhood with a safe place to engage in unstructured play without requiring each caregiver to be at the park every night.

As the children continued to play in the background, Laumann ended the book launch event with two simple words: "Go play!"

For more information on *Child's Play*, visit www.silkenlaumann.com.

Sara Tarle is business operations assistant at the Canadian Child Care Federation. © CCCF 2006

After playing with the children for a half hour, Laumann took the stage, slightly out of breath, to give her message – the importance of unstructured, unorganized play. In her book, she stresses that with all our good intentions of giving children every opportunity, we may be organizing their lives to the point where they don't have time to simply be bored. She believes that coming up with activities on their own, creating games and finding things to do are all a part of childhood – but a part that is becoming less and less common.

According to Laumann, "Play used to be so integrated into our lives and in our school systems that we hardly noticed when it began to slip away. It is only today when we see the visible signs of obesity, the devastating physical and psychological effects of inactivity that we begin to really value what play and sport do for our kids."

Laumann went on to tell the group that the fondest memories of her childhood are of playing with friends until her mom called her in for supper. She spoke about

Did you know... ?

Silken Laumann's message in *Child's Play* goes hand in hand with several resources the Canadian Child Care Federation has recently produced around play and how it encourages physical activity in young children. For example, CCCF recently launched a

CD entitled *Quality Environments and Best Practices for Physical Activity in Early Childhood Settings*. The CD contains interviews, resource sheets, workshops and other resources all of which emphasize the importance of physically active play and give practitioners the tools to share the information with their peers. For more information, contact CCCF at (613) 729-5289 ext. 234 or order from the E-store at www.cccf.fcsge.ca.





Get to Know Your Family Tree During National Family Week[®]!

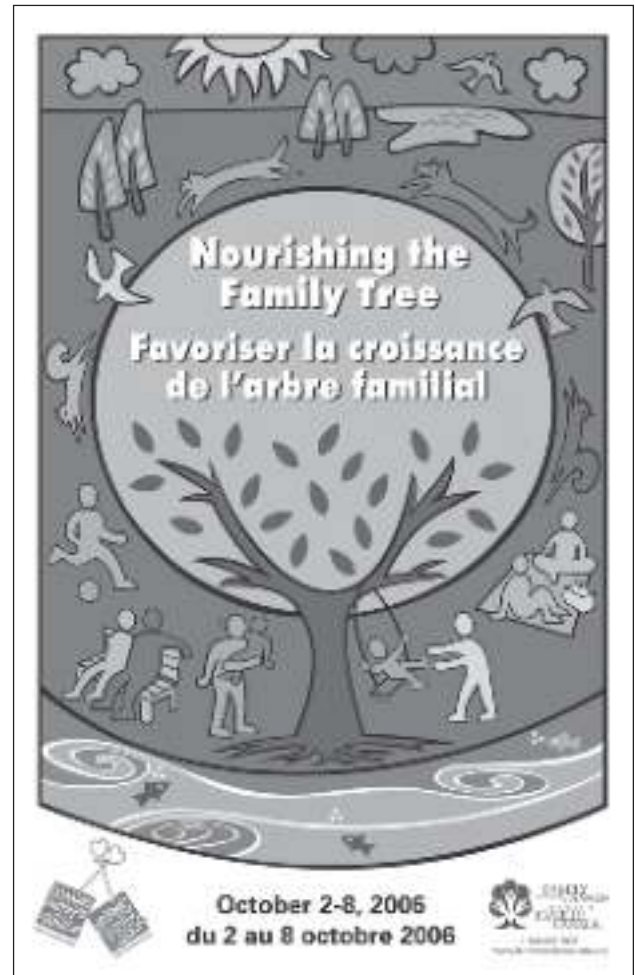
by Michael Olson

What do trees have in common with families? They have strong roots that provide the stability to weather life's storms, branches that stretch out to explore new and exciting opportunities and a protective canopy of leaves offering shelter and a place to play. And just like families, trees come in a wonderful variety of shapes and sizes.

Nourishing the Family Tree is the theme for this year's National Family Week[®]. From October 2 to 8, 2006, Canadians will be encouraged to celebrate families in all their diversity and reflect on their meaning in our lives through National Family Week[®] celebrations taking place in communities across the country. Now in its third decade, National Family Week[®] is always held the week before Thanksgiving, a traditional time for Canadians to connect with their families.

Recognizing that families are a fundamental source of nurture and support for individuals, this year's theme calls on us to promote the optimal growing conditions for Canadian families. By fostering positive environments for family well being, we can nourish and sustain the healthy growth and development of all members of society, so that everyone can achieve their full potential.

Our own "family trees" are rooted in child care facilities, schools, workplaces and neighbourhoods. During National Family Week[®], family members will have an opportunity to draw on their strengths and assets and direct them



outwards for the betterment of the communities in which they live, work and play.

National Family Week[®] is a time to celebrate families. This can be as simple as spending time together with your family. You and your family could write thank-you notes to the people who help support your family, volunteer at a local non-profit organization, hold a family-friendly community activity such as a walk for a local charity, participate in International Walk to School Day or get together with other families in your neighbourhood for a family supper.

Looking for some more ideas? Then have a look at the National Family Week[®] kit! Every year, Family Service Canada and a team of national partners – which includes the Canadian Child Care Federation – create and distribute a kit loaded with useful resources and suggestions for fun, hands-on activities that families can do together. The kit also includes a beautiful colour poster and an outline



version that kids can use as a colouring page. Kits can be ordered directly from Family Service Canada for a small fee of \$2 each or you can download individual kit pages for free from www.familyservicecanada.org/nfw.

For early learning and child care practitioners, the National Family Week[®] kit can be a great springboard for learning opportunities. Children can explore their family histories and learn more about the qualities that make their own families unique and special. It's a chance to highlight the importance of intergenerational relationships and the valuable role played by extended families. You can plan activities to get kids thinking about our connection to the environment and the importance of making environmentally sound choices. National Family Week[®] activities can be used to show the value of including everybody, showing respect for others and understanding that everyone has something to offer.

You can also celebrate by attending a National Family Week[®] event or by organizing your own celebration. Every year, child care centres, homes, schools, community centres, faith organizations, businesses and family service agencies across the country plan events to celebrate National Family Week[®]. This year, Family

Service Canada is introducing an online calendar of events so you can check out what's happening in your community. If you're planning a special event, post the details to the website and let everybody know!

Family Service Canada produces a wide range of fun promotional items like stickers, balloons and T-shirts that you can give to families at your celebration. They're also a great way to show your appreciation for the volunteers who help make it all happen.

Michael Olson is communications coordinator at Family Service Canada.
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Please join Family Service Canada and its national partners in "nourishing the family tree" during National Family Week[®], October 2-8, 2006! To learn more, call 1-800-668-7808 or visit www.familyservicecanada.org/nfw.

If you'd like to be added to the e-mail distribution list for updates on National Family Week[®] activities, please forward your e-mail address to Michael Olson at communication@familyservicecanada.org.

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Pathways to Success

Working for Change in Rural, Remote and Northern Communities

by Jane Wilson and Carol Gott

Many small rural remote and northern communities across Canada are looking for ways to respond to the unique and flexible early learning and child care needs of local community children and their families. These communities have identified needs that include quality child care for working and non-working parents; parenting programs and supports; responsive services for children with special needs; family supports in areas such as nutrition or mental health; stronger links with health, education and social services; culturally responsive programs; and opportunities that promote literacy or recreational experiences. As individuals, community members know what they want or what they would like to see happen in their community; however, individual community members rarely have the opportunity to explore and/or build their wants and needs into one collective community vision. The development of a collective vision for communities must be a process that respects the diversity of families – one that allows them a voice in the creation and delivery of services developed for them. What binds these communities together is their belief that their community's children, like all children, should have access to quality early childhood education and care experiences that promote their optimal development.



Pathways to Success is a program that focuses on developing community partnerships, beginning with a series of community-driven events where each event builds on the work of the previous community gatherings.

Rural Voices for Early Childhood Education and Care, a project that aims to develop responsive public policy in rural communities, receives many requests each year from small rural, remote and northern communities looking at developing or enhancing early learning and child care supports in their own community. In response to this need, Rural Voices developed Pathways to Success, a program that focuses on developing community partnerships, beginning with a series of community-driven events where each event builds on the work of the previous community gatherings. This process requires that different sectors of the community agree to work



together for the common good; participant groups develop a common community vision, community values and a community action plan. The aim is to increase public awareness of and access to services. To get these responsive services underway, the program draws on community resources (both government and non-government).

To facilitate community participation, infrastructure change and capacity building within a local community or area, Pathways to Success promotes and uses the Integrated Hub Model process. In this approach, support is focused on infrastructure changes that improve how organizations operate internally and with other organizations in their community to ensure access to

responsive services for rural, remote and northern families both now and in the future. The goal of Pathways to Success is to ensure that the development of government policy and programs are responsive to the needs of rural, remote and northern families and children, not that their needs are required to fit into government policies and programs. It is the collective community vision fostered by this program that provides a foundation for potential future community investments and ensures that future service development remains responsive to community members.

Jane Wilson and Carol Gott co-manage Rural Voices, a virtual support network that provides a means for communities in rural remote and northern Canada to benefit from knowledge, learning and best practices in early childhood education and care locally, provincially/territorially and nationally. For more information on Pathways to Success, email ruralvoices@kmts.ca. ©CCCF 2006

Rural Partnerships in Action

Childcare Family Access Network (CFAN) has developed programs using many partners over the years, but perhaps none as successfully as the partnerships built around the need for a parent-child program in a small rural community.

With identified needs and without resources to pursue them, CFAN set out to mobilize area partners to make the new service a reality. The idea was to offer parallel programs in the community – one for the parents and one for the children.

In the end, after much negotiation, the program became a reality. The local school division provided some program funding; the local child protection agency provided staff for the parent component; the federal government’s prenatal nutrition program provided funds for meal preparation, snacks and cooking appliances; the community school offered its kindergarten room as space; the Public Health Unit provided workshops for the parents and CFAN provided toys and resources as well as parenting education on childrearing and literacy. As well, Manitoba Day Care office provided a subsidy so that parents could afford the child care component of the program.

The partnership was deemed so important that the local school principal went door to door in the community introducing the new staff of the program.



In April 1998, South East Grey Community Outreach (SEGCO) held a community forum called “Our Promise to Children.” Nearly 60 community members took part. In one of the sessions, community participants built a wall of community resources to illustrate the potential resources right in their own community.

One wall was covered in paper. On this paper the organizers wrote headings such as Business, Health, Education, Faith Communities, Media, Service Clubs, etc. Then members of the forum were given separate pieces of paper. They were asked to not only give examples of each category in their region, but to list examples of potential contributions each one could offer to supporting children, youth and families in their rural area. For example, the United Church was listed as having available space for a parent program, while local businesses were listed as being able to donate door prizes for events or for fundraising efforts.



Narrowing the Gap between Research and Practice

New Project Bridges Science and Early Childhood Development

by Janet Jamieson

About five years ago, many of us who had been working in early childhood education for numerous years found ourselves re-energized by a surge of new ideas and information related to early development. Since our careers began in the 1970s, knowledge of child development had not changed substantively. Suddenly, an explosion of research in neurobiology and genetics, as well as new thinking about developmental health, placed the early years at the forefront of discussion on human development. As a result, many questions arose:

- What does all this new information about brain development really mean?
- Are the early years really that important? If they are, what kinds of experiences should we be providing for young children in our care so that we give them a firm foundation for later development? Should we be doing anything differently?
- How does the social environment get “under the skin” and affect biological pathways with long-term outcomes on health, learning and behaviour?
- Why are some children more vulnerable than others?

- Should programs be targeted to children who need it the most or should they be provided for everyone?
- Does what we do when children are young really affect the long-term health and well being of the population?

While many of us working in early childhood education had always believed in the importance of the early years, it was invigorating to finally have wider public attention focused on the field. At Red River College, we asked ourselves how we could get this information to students. Soon to be frontline workers, they would need to understand the social and biological determinants of health and how their work fits with these new views of development. Fundamentally, for us the big question was, how can we narrow the gap between research and practice?

For the most part, we didn't feel we had to teach differently. The core values of quality early childhood care and development (ECCD) – nurturing care; respect for children and families; supporting children to learn, grow and thrive; listening to their ideas and embracing each stage of development – were affirmed by the new scientific evidence. But we decided that if our students understood the bigger picture, they would be empowered, motivated to provide the very best care and less susceptible to slipping in the “real” world.

This new way of looking at early development, known as the developmental health perspective (Keating & Hertzman, 1999), was not reflected in course materials for college-level students. We decided to create our own core curriculum that would be useful not only to ECCD programs but to anyone who needed to learn more about child development. In 2002, in partnership with the Atkinson Centre for Society and Child Development (ACSCD) at the University of Toronto and the Founders' Network (led by Fraser Mustard), we began the process of developing *The Science of Early Child Development* (www.scienceofecd.com), an online, multimedia curriculum resource.

Functioning as a sort of multimedia book, the resource allows users to navigate using icons to explore readings, videos, games that review content and links to websites. We were fortunate to be able to interview world-renowned researchers, many of whom are part of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research's Early Biological and Brain Development group. We soon



realized that much of the most advanced work on the early years is coming from Canada. Our partners were invaluable in terms of providing us with academic guidance, opening doors and ensuring academic integrity. The online medium works because it allows content to be updated as research emerges.

The project evolved over several years and was challenging technically as we aimed for a very high degree of interactivity. We also had to stretch ourselves to present research findings coherently and link them to practice. It was important to balance scientific explanations with images of children, families and caregivers, and to make the learning experience engaging, relevant and fun. We were able to benefit from our previous experience in video production (the *Our Children, Our Ways* series and *Family Resource Programs*), which provided us with wonderful footage of children and programs across Canada, in addition to the skills and resources to gather more.

It was important to balance scientific explanations with images of children, families and caregivers, and to make the learning experience engaging, relevant and fun.

During the first three years of development, *The Science of Early Child Development* was piloted in several colleges in Canada, in the ECCD community in Winnipeg and abroad at the Aga Khan University. We are now in the dissemination phase of the project, which involves presenting it at conferences and other meetings across Canada. All profits from sales are directed towards keeping the project sustainable and the content up-to-date.

In a visionary and generous effort to create a common, current and new knowledge base, the Province of Manitoba has purchased this resource for all licensed childcare centres, nursery schools and family child-care homes in the province. Manitoba is known nationally for its high standards and commitment to quality care. The free dissemination of this resource is one more example of the province's continuing effort to support early development.

Since the project began, other organizations such as the Canadian Child Care Federation and the Centre of Excellence for

Early Childhood Development have made valuable contributions to narrow the gap between research and practice to benefit children, families and early childhood professionals. We hope that *The Science of Early Child Development* is one more tool that will move this process forward.

Janet Jamieson is a faculty member in the Early Childhood Education program at Red River College. She has worked as an ECE instructor, coordinated community-based training programs and co-produced two video series, *Our Children, Our Ways* and *Family Resource Programs*. ©CCCF 2006

The Science of Early Child Development project was generously funded by The Lawson Foundation with additional support from Red River College and The Winnipeg Foundation.

Reference:
Keating, D., and Hertzman, C. (eds.). (1999). *Development Health and the Wealth of Nations*. New York: Guilford.



Let's Have a Class Meeting!

Building Self-Help Skills in Young Children

by Julie Hansen

Have you ever taken a few minutes amid the controlled chaos of your early childhood education environment to observe the power of self-help skills at work? Recently, I was wondering if my efforts to encourage the children to be self-reliant and to work together have made an impression on them. Happily I have discovered the answer is a resounding yes!

Earlier this year, all the faucets at our school were changed to push taps. The children were euphoric – what a fascinating new addition to find in their very own school washroom! But the teachers were less enthused at the prospect of children camping out in the washroom to play with “the new toy.” How could we help the children adjust to this change to their surroundings with minimal disruption? When in doubt, have a class meeting! Engaging the children in coming up with solutions has become a new theme in my personal teaching philosophy in the past few years. Why not give the children an open forum where they can share their thoughts and ideas? So that is exactly what we did on the first day of school. Our ever-so-resourceful focus group (the four-year-olds) got together to talk about the new additions to our classroom. We talked about new classmates, our new gerbil Charlie – and the push taps in the washrooms.



Providing daily opportunities and experiences for children to put their communication and problem-solving skills to work is important in all areas of child development and is essential in early learning and child care environments.

First, we looked at the taps as a science experiment. What makes them turn off so quickly? Why does hot water not come out of them? And then the big question came up: How could we keep them on long enough to rinse all the soap off our hands? One prolific artist mentioned that she likes to paint her hands while working on masterpieces at the paint easel so having the tap turn off so fast would be a problem for her. Another child reminded the group that the washroom can become a busy place when we all have to wash our hand before snack. After much brain-storming and of course diplomatic deliberation, the children came up with a solution. They decided that whenever they needed to use the tap, they would take a buddy along and turn the taps on for each other. From that day forward children



could be seen walking to the washroom together, ready to help any friend who may have a pair of dirty hands in need of a wash.

We must make sure to notice and celebrate these small daily milestones that take place in our centres. Providing daily opportunities and experiences for children to put their communication and problem-solving skills to work is important in all areas of child development and is essential in early learning and child care environments. These skills help children foster a positive sense of self and enable them to work successfully together as a group.

The best inspiration can come from within our own learning environment. It is important to make a conscious effort to observe the children in our programs because these observations can inform our decision-making practices. Putting aside time on a daily basis to watch how the children respond using their problem solving skills and interpersonal communication strategies can be very beneficial for educators; these observations help guide us when we set our curriculum and stage the play environment.

Learning occurs not in the achievement of our goals but in the process of moving towards our objectives. It is this aspect of the learning process that inspires me to take a risk and try something new every time I step into the classroom.

I would like to say thank you to the Lions Bay Playschool parents for their help over the last six years. A special thank you to my students past and present for inspiring and reminding me how much I enjoy being part of the field of early childhood education.

Julie Hansen has been a director and teacher at Lions Bay Playschool in British Columbia for six years. Also a children's author, her first book, *Jack's Magic Hat*, was published by Trafford Publishing in 2004. ©CCCF 2006

LOOK! BOOKS TO SHARE!

It's a Party!

Anholt, Catherine. *The Snow Fairy and the Spaceman*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1990.

Bunting, Eve. *Flower Garden*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1994.

Caseley, Judith. *Slumber Party!* New York: Greenwillow Books, 1996.

Hest, Amy. *Nana's Birthday Party*. New York: Morrow Junior Books, 1993.

Hutchins, Pat. *Happy Birthday, Sam*. New York: Greenwillow Books, 1978.

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Reid, Barbara. *The Party*. Richmond Hill, Ont.: North Winds Press, 1997.

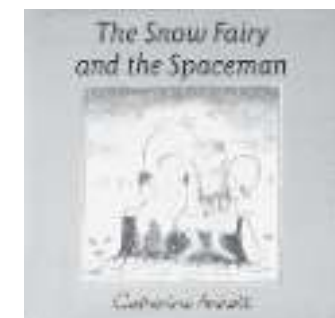
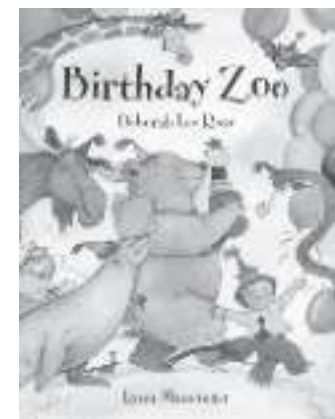
Rose, Deborah Lee. *Birthday Zoo*. Morton Grove, Ill.: A. Whitman, 2002.

Rylant, Cynthia. *Birthday Presents*. New York: Orchard Books, 1987.

Wells, Rosemary. *Bunny Cakes*. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 1997.

Yolen, Jane. *Mouse's Birthday*. New York: Putnam's, 1993.

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





Children Speak in Many Languages through Art

by Sandra Braun

The first time Patricia Tarr, professor of education at the University of Calgary, saw the *Hundred Languages of Children* art exhibit in Vancouver in 1994, she wondered how young children could produce such complex, beautiful and creative works of art. It's a common response to the exhibit, which documents the projects of schools based on the Reggio Emilia approach to early learning. Recently shown at the university in Calgary, the exhibit consists of 12 free-standing structures that display images and text along with some interactive components. The works embody the philosophy of the Reggio Emilia approach and are an active demonstration of the schools' philosophy. Perhaps more importantly, they show what children are capable of. Through these works, viewers witness the thinking, questioning, and reasoning processes of children and gain an understanding of how children construct meaning in their world.

The approach to childhood learning that has become known by the Northern Italian city of its origin, Reggio Emilia, began after the Second World War. Led by founding director Loris Malaguzzi, educators, parents and children in the municipality began working together to build a system of preschools and infant toddler centres. What began as a community cooperative program evolved into a city-run system that has had a far-reaching influence on approaches to childhood learning.



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One of the key aspects of Reggio Emilia, stresses Tarr, is that it is an approach, not a method that can be copied. "A common question is 'how do I *do* Reggio?'" she explains. But the approach is not a set way of teaching; rather, it is a way of viewing children (as resourceful, capable, curious and imaginative protagonists in their own learning) and the teacher's role in the children's learning process (as observer, listener, collaborator, co-researcher, guide and resource provider).

The principles of Reggio Emilia reoccur on many levels. For instance, the classroom environment is often referred to as the third teacher (each Reggio class has two teachers). The rooms are carefully organized yet rich in potential for creativity. Much thought is put into the beauty of the rooms and the use of space and light. Teachers stay with the same students for three years and form relationships with their families. The centres themselves are not seen as a second-best care option for



children (where being home with mother is the first choice). Reggio philosophy believes that children have the right to the best care possible, and therefore the centres, which function as child care centres as well as schools, aim to fulfill that role.

The role of the teacher also differs greatly. According to the Reggio approach, knowledge is shared between the teacher or caregiver and the children. Other approaches to learning tend to position the adult as the owner of knowledge, which is then imparted to children, who are passive receivers.



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In more teacher-directed programs, “children may be given worksheets or pre-cut crafts,” Tarr says, “things that don’t require thinking. This is work that silences children.” On the other hand, the Reggio approach allows children to speak in their many languages – using words, movement, drawing, painting, building, sculpture, shadow play, collage, dramatic play, music and so on. The approach encourages children to look at things from multiple perspectives; it supports children’s thinking and theory-making and provides materials for them to use to express their ideas.

The *Hundred Languages of Children* art exhibit, which documents this unique approach, drew a great deal of attention during its time in Calgary. Its long run at the university (it has been on display since January of this year) allowed for visitors to come again and again to view and explore the works. The exhibit is a key illustration of Reggio Emilia’s core principles so seeing the exhibit helps make the approach real for many practitioners. “For people who have heard something about Reggio,” Tarr explains, “it really gives them a greater sense of what it’s all about.” And it leaves a lasting legacy. A previous version of the exhibit was shown in Calgary in 1997 and it’s inspired quite a few teachers to take up the approach. “To have it back,” says

“It’s not a destination, it’s a journey.”

Tarr, “has really helped those who have felt like a lonely voice.”

For those new to the approach, the exhibit helps people find an entry point into the Reggio philosophy, which can be overwhelming to some. As Tarr explains, “some people hear that Reggio is grounded in many of the philosophers of ECE (for example, John Dewey) and so dismiss its approach as something they already do or a flavour of the month – ‘it’s just a fad and in a year, we’ll be onto something else.’ But they can consider, ‘if some of the ideas make sense or challenge me, what could I do to incorporate these ideas into my practice?’” Even one small change, to the classroom environment, for example, can have a significant effect. Because, as Tarr points out, “it’s not a destination, it’s a journey.”

The *Hundred Languages of Children* will continue its journey within Canada in Toronto from September 2006 to February 2007. A new version will be unveiled and travel throughout the U.S. beginning in the fall. Additional information about the exhibit and its tour dates can be found at <http://zerosei.comune.re.it/inter/100exhibit.htm>.

Sandra Braun is communications specialist at the Canadian Child Care Federation.
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ETHICS CORNER

A Program You Recommended to a Parent Disappoints... What Do You Do?

by Janice Mackinnon and Paula Leblanc

Current Dilemma

The last issue of the Ethics Corner featured the following 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

We've chosen to approach this dilemma using the Nine-Step Model of Ethical Decision Making as used in past editions of the Ethics Corner. The best choices in this situation would vary depending on the values and beliefs and personal situations of the people involved.

Step 1: What are your initial reactions?

- We are shocked about our friend's reaction to the child care program.
- We are disappointed in the program.
- We question what to say to the parent.
- We question what to say to the supervisor.
- We second-guess recommending that program and other programs.

Step 2: Who will be affected?

- the director/supervisor of the other program
- the child
- the child's parent
- myself
- the staff of the other program

Step 3: What values and principles are in conflict?

Based on the Canadian Child Care Federation's *Code of Ethics*, the following principles are in conflict:

- Child care practitioners work in partnership with parents, recognizing that parents have primary responsibility for the care of their children, valuing their commitment to the children and supporting them in meeting their responsibilities to their children.
- Child care practitioners work in partnership with colleagues and other service providers in the community to support the well-being of children and their families.
- Child care practitioners demonstrate integrity in all of their professional relationships.

Step 4: What are the potential choices?

- Speak to the supervisor.
- Explain reasons for the philosophy of the program to the parent.
- Encourage the parent to talk with the staff and/or director.
- Never recommend a program again.
- Meet with all people involved.
- Encourage parent to remove child from program.

Step 5: What are the consequences to each stakeholder for each potential choice?

(see table 1 on next page)

Step 6: Which Way Are You Leaning?

- To speak with the program supervisor.

Step 7: Which Is The Best Choice?

- To encourage the parent to meet with the program director.

Step 8: What Action Will You Take?

- We will encourage the parent to meet with the program supervisor, and encourage the parent to document their concerns and will check back with them after their meeting.

Step 9: Evaluate.

- I will wait to see the results of the meeting to see if this resolved the problems.
- If it did, I will check back in a month's time to make sure that the parent is still happy with the resolutions.
- If not, we will go through the process again to find the next best choice.

Janice Mackinnon and Paula Leblanc are ethics trainers based in Nova Scotia.
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TABLE 1 Consequences to each stakeholder for each potential choice

	Program Supervisor	Parent	Child	Staff of the other center	Myself
Speak to the supervisor	It may resolve the difficulties. The supervisor may be upset that we were involved instead of the parent.	The parent may have the problem resolved. She may not have the problems resolved.	The child may remain with his friends and teachers. The child may have to move to another program.	The staff may be aware of the parents concerns and be able to resolve them. The staff may feel disliked by the parent. The staff may be upset that other ECEs are involved.	It may resolve the difficulties. It may make my relationship with the supervisor at risk.
Explain to the parent the reasons for the philosophy of the program.	No effect.	May help them to understand what is happening in the program, and why.	The child will remain in the centre.	No effect.	It would keep my professionalism.
Encourage the parents to speak to the staff and/or program supervisor	It would allow the supervisor to be a part of the problem solving.	It would build the parents' confidence in resolving the issue with the people involved.	It would allow the child to remain in the program.	Allow the staff to be part of the problem solving.	It would maintain my professionalism.
Never recommend a program again.	They may lose child care spaces	They may have a problem finding a program, or knowing what to look for in a program	The child may be in a program that does not meet their needs.	They may have limited enrollment and, therefore, limited job opportunities.	I may appear to be unknowledgeable or unaware of the programs available.
Meet with all people involved.	They may feel awkward with my involvement.	The parent may feel supported by my presence.	May or may not remain in the program.	May feel awkward with my involvement.	I may have conflict with my duties with parents and colleagues.
Encourage the parent to remove the child from the program.	They would lose a child.	They would be without child care, and would have to look for a new program.	The child may miss his teachers and friends.	The staff wouldn't have an opportunity to work with the family on the problems.	I would feel responsible for helping the parent find another program.

Next Dilemma

A training session has been arranged with a group of people on an important safety curriculum for children on an issue that has recently surfaced in the centre. The contact person in the organization contracting with the presenters mixed up the dates. The day before the group expected the training, the organization contacted the presenters to confirm the event – a week earlier than the presenters were prepared for. The presenters would have to make changes to their schedules, not be fully prepared for the training and one of the guest speakers (with key information) would unlikely be available for the “new” date. If the training does not happen now it is unlikely the childcare staff and the children will get this important safety program for several more months. Do you go ahead with the training and make it “work” now or not?

— 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. Fellow ethics guides 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@cccfc-fcsge.ca.



HEALTH WATCH

Playground Safety

Kids love playgrounds. But the playground is also a place where children can get hurt. Children are most often injured when they fall from the equipment. Be sure that children younger than five years of age are supervised by an adult.

You can help make sure the playground is a safe place for the children in your care.

Check the children's clothing

- Clothing can get trapped in equipment and strangle a child. Remove drawstrings and other cords from clothing.
- Children should not wear bicycle helmets while they are on playground equipment because a child's head may get stuck in narrow openings.

Check the playground

- Choose playgrounds that "fit" the children in your care. Children five years of age and younger should use only playgrounds that are designed for preschool children because the equipment is smaller.
- Look for proper surfaces. Grass, dirt, asphalt or concrete are not safe surfaces for playground equipment.
- Good materials for playground surfaces include sand, pea gravel (smooth, round, pea-sized stones), wood chips and synthetic (man-made) materials that are soft. These materials will help absorb a child's fall.
- The fill should be deep and loose. For preschool equipment, the fill should be at least 15 cm (6 inches)

deep. With full-sized equipment, the fill should be at least 30 cm (12 inches) deep.

- If you are concerned about the safety of your local playground, contact the people who operate it. Check the blue pages of your phone book for local contact information.
- Playground safety checklists are available to evaluate basic playground hazards. Contact your local or provincial injury prevention centre or call your nearest children's hospital, or Safe Kids Canada (1-888-SAFE-TIPS, 1-888-723-3847).

Be aware, get involved

You should ensure that your playground or your local community public playgrounds meet Canadian standards. How can you do this?

- Have a certified expert inspect the playground to look for dangers. The expert will prioritize any changes that should be made.
 - Ensure that the necessary changes are made so that the playground is safe.
 - Keep the playground equipment, surface and grounds in good shape.
 - If you use a community playground, report any injuries to the playground operator (the municipality, school, etc.).
 - When planning future play areas, be sure they meet Canadian standards.



Some communities create nontraditional outdoor play environments instead of playground equipment. These play areas are less expensive to develop, and can be designed to challenge children's development without the risk of a child falling from equipment. Visit www.evergreen.ca for examples of alternative playgrounds.

The Canadian Standards Association is currently reviewing its standards for playground equipment. Look for a full update on revisions to the current code in the fall 2006 issue of *Interaction*.



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



Highlights of Current Research on Quality

In April 2006, Statistics Canada released its latest figures on child care use showing that in 2002-2003, 54 per cent of children ages 6 months to 5 years were in some form of non-parental child care. This represents a 12 per cent increase since 1994-1995.

Those of use working in child care know instinctively that with so many young children in child care at such an important stage in their development, it's vital that the care they receive is high quality. But what does quality child care look like and how do we get there? Who determines what is quality and how does quality and best practice change over time?

Some of the current research in early learning and child care touches on these key questions and is highlighted in this focus section. These articles highlight the lessons we've learned about quality child care and its link to early learning, ways to support quality in family child care, and discussions that include a wide range of voices to define quality.



HIGHLIGHTS OF CURRENT RESEARCH ON QUALITY

Broadening and Deepening Definitions of Best Practices in the Canadian Early Childhood Development Profession

by Rachel Langford and
Zeenat Janmohamed

In the past ten years, several research studies have enriched our understanding of best practices in the Canadian early childhood development (ECD) profession. What is less well known to the ECD community are cross-cultural discussions and research that can broaden and deepen definitions of best practices. This article introduces some of the literature that explores these issues, which has been usefully collected in *Canadian Early Childhood Education: Broadening and Deepening Discussions of Quality*, the 13th volume of the *Research Connections Canada* series.

As Alan Pence and Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw remark in their introduction to *Research Connections Canada 13*, cross-cultural research “is a very *Canadian* area of interest” because of our growing racial, ethnocultural and linguistic diversity (2005, 5). Although ethnocultural groups with wide-ranging histories and circumstances share common ideas about best practices in ECD, they often have diverse beliefs about childhood, child care and the purposes of early learning (Friendly, Doherty, & Beach, 2005). Yet when Canadian early childhood educators encounter cross-cultural situations, they often wonder what to do or how to draw on practices that more broadly define understandings of children, families and communities.



In some communities, early childhood educators work with families who are newcomers to Canada. A research study conducted by Mehrunnisa Ali suggests newcomer families are highly committed to their young children’s success. This parenting capacity significantly shapes children’s emotional and social development, helping them to become contributors to society in their adopted country. But these parents’ commitment and capacity is often negatively affected by social and economic circumstances; as a result, they are perceived as having parenting deficits. The study demonstrates that these parents are less likely to raise children who will become full, participating members of Canadian society. This research suggests that early educators need to broaden their best practices to include strategies to strengthen the capacity of newcomer families to access a variety of resources.

Many early childhood educators also work with immigrant families who wish to raise bilingual children. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw and Onowa McIvor’s research results indicate that early educators want to support these children but they have very little knowledge about issues of first language maintenance and practical ways of



assisting children to maintain their first languages. Pacini-Ketchabaw and McIvor’s article offers a variety of best practices “for adapting curricula to better meet the needs of linguistically diverse populations” (121).

Canadian early educators work in ethnocultural communities that face social and economic challenges. Some of the discussion papers in *Research Connections 13* suggest that ECD training programs do not fully prepare their graduates to think about best practices for diverse communities. In their article, Prochner and Cleghorn discuss a globalizing trend in which Western notions of early education are imported into local cultural communities. Jessica Ball’s description of an innovative training program, the First Nations Partnership Program, also points to a common assumption in social services that the “more oppressed and needy” a community seems to be, the more the service provider needs to be helpful in offering imported resources (39).

However, Ball’s research indicates that a more effective and respectful role for a service provider is two-fold: to recognize and value the community’s knowledge of caring for and educating young children and to support the community’s own capacity and knowledge to build local resources that will contribute to the well being of children and families. This discussion suggests that ECD training programs need to offer coursework that focuses on best practices for supporting community capacity-building initiatives within a cross-cultural context.

Cross-cultural research and discussions suggest that the principle of diversity needs to be at the heart of best practices. Instead of understanding a best practice as the one right way based on a dominant and prescriptive response, best practice can be understood as a range of possible ways, responsive to diverse contexts. Patricia Corson, in an article on the social and cognitive benefits of multi-age grouping, illustrates this shift in understanding: “as many in the field of early childhood education reexamine the assumption that age-segregated care is ‘best practice,’ a viable alternative which is growing in popularity is multi-age grouping,” an approach that is responsive to diverse family and community needs (106).

Many Canadian early childhood educators are seeking to move forward with new understandings of best practices. To provide an opportunity for further discussions a group, Reconceptualizing ECE Canada (RECEC), has been established. RECEC is a forum for early childhood educators, university and college instructors, advocates and researchers interested in broadening and deepening

perspectives on research, theory, practice and policy in the Canadian early childhood education field. If interested in participating in this forum, please contact Rachel Langford, rlangfor@gbrownc.on.ca.

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Quality and the Future Child Care Workforce

Research has consistently shown that the skill-level of the child care practitioner and the stability of the workforce is key to providing quality child care. However only about half of the students currently in early childhood education (ECE) programs in Canada plan to be working in regulated child care in five years. This is just one of the valuable insights gathered by the Child Care Human



Resources Sector Council (CCHRSC) in its 2004 labour market study, *Working for Change*. Last winter, the CCHRSC prepared a backgrounder bringing together the data from *Working for Change* that touches specifically on ECE students. Here are a few other details from a backgrounder of the study, entitled *The Future Child Care Workforce: Perspectives of Early Childhood Education Students*:

- Most students felt very positive about the education they were receiving, but only one-third felt they were adequately prepared to work with children with special needs.
- Field (practicum) placements had a major impact on whether younger students and students with no previous child care work experience would consider a future in the sector. Unfortunately, most students expressed concerns about their field experiences.
- Immigrant students were distinct from other ECE students in that they were older, had more education and were more likely to plan to work in a child care centre, both immediately after graduation and five years hence.

For more information on this research, visit the CCHRSC at www.ccsc-cssge.ca.



HIGHLIGHTS OF CURRENT RESEARCH ON QUALITY

Why is High-Quality Child Care Essential?

The Link between Quality Child Care and Early Learning

The following is an excerpt of an article that was first published as part of the Canadian Council on Learning's series called Lessons in Learning. It was prepared by the Canadian Council on Learning's Early Childhood Learning Knowledge Centre and is available in full online at www.ccl-cca.ca/childhoodlearning/home.

Lessons in Learning, in Canada and Elsewhere

Research clearly establishes both the importance of quality child care to the intellectual, emotional, language and social development of young children as well as the elements that are essential for delivering high-quality care. It also establishes the need for the following:

Well-trained and well-educated child care providers who are compensated fairly for their work

Training requirements currently vary across Canada for licensed child care (centre-based or regulated). Most provinces require at least some staff to have a one- or two-year post-secondary diploma. No province requires all staff to have a post-secondary credential in early childhood care, but some provinces are now working to raise education levels. For example, in 2002, Newfoundland



began encouraging more well-trained child care providers by offering an education supplement to anyone who completes a one-year certificate or two-year diploma. Quebec provides financial support for current child care staff who enrol in a college-level course.¹

In Sweden, by contrast, where child care is integrated into the educational system, children are cared for either by preschool teachers with three-year university training or by child minders with vocational three-year training.²

However, while training is essential, training alone is not enough. Studies have also shown that quality child care work is also dependent on good wages.³ A fair wage is linked to greater job satisfaction and better performance (including more responsive and higher quality relationships between care providers and children), as well as lower staff turnover. In turn, lower staff turnover is associated with calmer, less aggressive children, stronger attachment between children and caregivers and better language development.⁴



Quality Matters

“Results from a number of studies demonstrate that child care quality matters. In fact, the importance of child care quality is one of the most robust findings in developmental psychology. Children who experience high-quality care have higher scores on achievement and language tests, show better social skills and fewer behavioural problems [than children who experience low-quality care].” (McCartney)¹⁶

In New Zealand, teachers in half-day kindergarten programs for three- and four-year-olds are paid the same rate as elementary school teachers; teachers in full-day early child care and development centres are currently paid less than kindergarten teachers, but the difference will be reduced by 2007.⁵

In the early 1990s, Ontario became the only Canadian jurisdiction to include child care-centre staff in provincial pay equity legislation and specially earmarked funds to raise wages to specified levels. Over the past eight years, five other Canadian provinces have set aside funds to improve wages for child care staff.⁶ Quebec is the only province with a province-wide wage scale.

Enough child care spaces and enough child care providers to ensure a high adult-child ratio and small group sizes

In Canada today, there are not enough child care spaces – particularly the regulated spaces shown by research to be of higher quality – to accommodate all the children who need care, let alone enough staff to ensure the good adult-child ratio or small group size necessary to provide all children with ample time and attention.

Only about 15.5 per cent of Canadian children who need child care can find licensed spaces,⁷ as opposed to nearly 64 per cent in New Zealand.⁸

Quebec, the only Canadian province with a highly developed system of early child care programs, is also the province that provides the most regulated child care spaces. Approximately 40 per cent of preschool (0–5)

children had access to regulated child care services in Quebec in 2004.⁹

Child care centres in Quebec are required to have a ratio of one adult to eight children aged 18 months to 4 years, and one adult to ten children aged four to five years. In family child care homes, child care providers may care for no more than six children at time.

Throughout the other Canadian provinces, the child care centre ratios are similar, but the ratios for family child care homes vary greatly, with some provinces allowing up to 12 children under one adult’s care.¹⁰

Child care that is affordable for all parents

Studies show that high-quality child care can help to compensate for a child’s economic disadvantages, particularly by helping the child get ready to learn in school.

In countries such as Sweden and France, where child care is an integral part of the educational system, all children automatically have the opportunity to participate in it, regardless of their parents’ income.

In Canadian provinces other than Quebec, low-income parents may apply for a subsidy to help cover child care costs, but all other parents must pay full fees. In these provinces, parent fees typically account for up to 80 per cent of the costs of child care, while governments provide most of the remaining funds through grants to child care providers. However, all Canadian parents who are working or studying may claim a tax deduction up to a maximum of \$7000 per year for each child under the age of seven. In addition, the federal government has announced a new initiative, the Universal Child Care Benefit, under which families will receive \$100 per month for each child under six years old, starting in July 2006. This financial support may or may not be used to pay for child care.

In Quebec, the provincial government provides base funding for child care spaces (about 83 per cent of operating costs) while all parents pay the same \$7 per day user fee. The situation is similar in New Zealand, where the government funds up to 85 per cent of basic operating costs for early-childhood-care programs and parents pay a nominal fee. The programs themselves cover any remaining costs through fundraising.¹¹



The Benefits of Quality

“Higher quality child care (in the form of responsive and stimulating care) is associated with better cognitive and language development, positive peer relations, compliance with adults, fewer behaviour problems, and better mother-child relations.” (Owen)¹⁷

The role of government

Child care is often associated more with child-minding than with education. Throughout Canada, responsibility for the very young tends to be split among a variety of ministries responsible for such issues as health, the status of women and child or family development; ministries of education, at either the provincial or territorial levels, have little or no responsibility for preschool child care programs. Yet experts today are unanimous in believing that child care can be a vital component of early learning, contributing to greater social and academic success in later years.

From an economic standpoint, a number of recent benefit-cost analyses have shown that even small-to-moderate benefits from quality child care are important enough to warrant government both regulating and financially supporting child care.¹² A 2005 examination of the costs and benefits of universal preschool in California that focussed on the benefits of child care for disadvantaged children notes that quality child care can lead to the participants staying in school longer, earning higher wages later in life and committing fewer crimes.¹³

Through regulation, governments can set standards and ensure consistent levels of quality across all child care services through such measures as requiring child care providers to meet minimum levels of training and education, and child care centres to meet basic standards for staff-child ratios, group size and range of available activities.

Many advanced, developed countries – such as Sweden, France, Denmark and New Zealand – have accepted early child care as a government responsibility and an appropriate government function, and built a system of fully regulated, universal (or near universal), community-based child care services. In New Zealand, for example, all child care programs for preschool children are administered centrally, through the federal Ministry of Education, alongside and equal to elementary, secondary and post-secondary programs. To ensure consistency and quality, the education ministry provides direct operating funds, develops curricula, trains teachers and regularly evaluates programs.¹⁴

In contrast, each province in Canada has a different approach to overseeing and regulating early-childhood care and education.

Within the past few years, five Canadian provinces – Newfoundland, Quebec, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick and Manitoba – have taken steps to strengthen their child care regulations (and improve child care quality) by introducing or increasing training requirements for centre-based and/or family child care workers. At the same time, however, two provinces have increased the number of children who can be cared for in an unregulated family child care home. Today, four provinces allow family child care providers to care for up to 12 children without following the stricter regulations that apply to child care centres.¹⁵



Implications for the Future

Child care is essential for parents who work. Child care makes it possible for women to pursue jobs and education – boosting the Canadian economy while ensuring greater economic security for their families. But even parents who can provide full-time care themselves occasionally need help or believe it is good for their children to play and learn with other children: these parents, too, can find themselves searching for child care.

However, parents should not settle for just any child care.

Research shows that the *quality* of the child care is key, that *quality* is the most powerful promoter of positive child development, early learning and school readiness. Further, quality child care can also serve as a family support program, providing parents with valuable and up-to-date information on child health, development and nutrition, and how they can help prepare their children for school. It can help families, particularly those at risk, to create a more supportive and caring home environment.

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Child Care Linked to Quality of Life of Canada’s Families

A recent large-scale study on the situation of children and families shows that child care is a major part of a larger policy mix that affects Canadian children. In April the Canadian Council on Social Development launched its 2006 *Progress of Canada’s Children and Youth* – which tracks trends in family life, economic security, physical safety, health and learning, as well as many other realities of raising children. It also illustrates that some families are losing ground in their efforts to provide stable family income. According to the report, in 2004 it cost about \$166,700 to raise a child from birth to age 18. The single largest expense was \$54,000 for child care (based on the cost of raising a child in Manitoba).



“Family income is recognized as one of the keys to healthy child development,” said Peter Bleyer, CCSD President. Yet job security eludes many Canadian parents, and that has an enormous impact on what their kids eat, how they learn, and where they play.”

Bleyer maintained that governments need to invest directly in programs that support families. “When you do the math, you see that the smart money invests in early learning and child care and provides community supports for parents as their children grow into young adults.”

Other findings include:

- 63 per cent of mothers of children under age 3 were employed in 2003.
- One-third of Canadian children living in poverty have a parent who works at a full time job.
- Temporary, part-time, contract and seasonal employment now make up 37 per cent of Canadian jobs, compared to 25 per cent in the mid-1970s.

This report is the seventh edition of the CCSD’s *Progress of Canada’s Children and Youth* Project, which began in 1994. For more information, visit the CCSD website at www.ccsd.ca.



HIGHLIGHTS OF CURRENT RESEARCH ON QUALITY

Supporting Quality in Family Child Care

What Does the Research Tell Us?

by Gillian Doherty



Data from the 2002–2003 cycle of the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY) indicate that 30 per cent of children ages six months to five years who receive regular non-parental care receive this care in a family child care home, 28 per cent receive it in a centre and the remainder receive care through some other arrangement. On average, children in family child care spend 27 hours a week in that setting¹. We know that children's social, language and academic skills in elementary school are linked to the quality of the family child care they received prior to age five^{2,3}. Therefore, as a society, we cannot afford to settle for care that is purely custodial. This article uses Canadian and American research to identify those predictors of family child care quality; that is, variables that *cause* the level of quality that exists,⁴ that are regulable or influenced by government action.

Predictors of family child care quality

Researchers have identified three regulable predictors and two predictors where government policies and practices can play a role even though the predictors are non-regulable. The regulable predictors are (1) the extent to which the provider has training related to child care provision^{5,6,7,8,9}; (2) provider level of general

education^{10,11,12}; and (3) child-to-provider ratio¹³. The non-regulable predictors are (1) provider use of support services, such as provider networks and toy lending libraries^{14,15}, and (2) the extent to which the provider has "intentionality."^{16,17} Intentionality refers to a set of characteristics that includes enjoyment of children, a desire to work with them and a commitment to family child care as a long-term career. Fischer and Eheart (1991) report that specialized training of the provider accounted for 52 per cent of the quality differences across their sample, the extent of provider use of support services accounted for 13 per cent and the provider's years of general education accounted for 5 per cent. Another study that explored the influence of the provider's level of general education found that it made the most difference when comparing the practices of providers who had or had not completed high school¹⁸.

Implications

The provision of high-quality child care requires specific knowledge and skills, so it is not surprising that the strongest predictor of family child care quality is the extent of the provider's child care training. Currently, only



four jurisdictions require providers to have or obtain training with the required length ranging from 30 to 60 hours and none identify the required content¹⁹. Simply implementing a regulation requiring providers to have training is not sufficient. Consideration must be given to the necessary content, how best to ensure that training is available at convenient hours and is affordable, and how to address the reality that the requirement may be a disincentive to joining the regulated sector when unregulated providers do not have to have training. The Family Child Care Training Project, sponsored by CCCF, involved six provincial family child care organizations and Ryerson Polytechnic University in the development and pilot-testing of a 36-module program that starts with the basics of health and safety, organizing the environment, child development and partnerships with parents then proceeds to more advanced issues such as addressing children's challenging behaviour and self-reflective practice (available online at www.cccf-fcsge.ca). A facilitator's guide is also available. This provider training can be done online by an individual or in a group with a facilitator outside working hours. Providing incentives to become regulated is one way to address the possible disincentive to become regulated if so-doing required taking training. Incentives might include government operating grants to regulated providers only and the right to care for more children than their unregulated colleagues.

The other two regulable predictors are ratio and provider level of general education. The failure of some researchers to identify ratio as a predictor should not be taken to mean it is unimportant; it may be the result of the similarity in ratio regulations across jurisdictions. Therefore, any endeavour to increase quality must include maintaining ratio requirements that permit the provision of individualized attention to each child. The issue of level of general education is particularly sensitive in those areas where many family child care providers are immigrants who have not had the opportunity to finish high school. Preventing them from becoming regulated would isolate them and severely deplete the pool of regulated providers in their communities. An alternative is to ensure that they are linked with a mentor and receive formal training early in their careers.

Use of support services and provider level of intentionality are not regulable but can be influenced by governments. The research is clear that quality is enhanced when providers have access to the support and mentoring of their peers and the availability of supports such as training, provider and child drop-in programs and toy/equipment lending libraries. These can be provided by family child care agencies or child care resource programs but are not affordable for many providers when access requires the payment of a high fee. Realistically, ensuring access to support services requires government funding of the agencies providing them. The importance for quality of provider intentionality also has an implication for government practice. Both Canadian and American findings are unequivocal that pushing or requiring people to provide family child care as part of a work-for-

Quality by Design

In spring 2006, the Childcare Resource and Research Unit, University of Toronto, published a major literature review entitled *Quality by Design: What do we know about quality in early learning and child care, and what do we think?* The review is one part of a larger project of the CRRU to stimulate dialogue about quality early learning and child care in Canada, focusing primarily on the policy or system level.



Prepared by researchers Martha Friendly, Gillian Doherty and Jane Beach, it brings together Canadian and international research to summarize ideas about quality from the perspective of children, parents, practitioners and the community, and from different countries. It also identifies factors that contribute to quality at the individual child care centre level. Finally it presents eight broad categories of elements of quality that are needed at the system or policy level in Canada. These elements are:

1. The ideas: A conceptual framework
2. Governance: Roles and responsibilities
3. Infrastructure: Coordinated program administration
4. Planning and policy development: A strategy for implementation
5. Financing: Substantial well-directed public investment
6. Human resources: Qualified personnel and support at all levels
7. Physical environment: The program setting
8. Data, research and evaluation: Collection and analysis of information for evaluation effective practice and ensuring accountability.

For more details on these elements and their basis in research, visit the Quality by Design section of the CRRU website at www.childcarecanada.org.



welfare program when they have no interest in working with young children is incompatible with providing care that will enhance children's development.

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Footnotes

1. Bushnik, 2006
2. NICHD Early Child Care Network, 2005
3. Kohen, Hunter, Pence, & Goelman, 2000
4. Variables that enable prediction of quality level provide much more powerful support for policy development than do variables that are simply associated with higher quality at a better-than-chance level.
5. Burchinal, Howes, & Kontos, 2002
6. Clarke-Stewart, Vandell, Burchinal, O'Brien, & McCartney, 2002
7. Doherty, Forer, Lero, Goelman, & LaGrange, in press
8. Fischer & Eheart, 1991
9. NICHD, 2003
10. Clarke-Stewart et al., 2002
11. Fischer & Eheart, 1991
12. Raikes, Raikes, & Wilcox, 2005
13. NICHD, 1996
14. Doherty et al., in press
15. Fischer & Eheart, 1991
16. Doherty et al., in press
17. Kontos, Howes, Shinn, & Galinsky, 1995
18. Clarke-Stewart et al., 2002
19. Childcare Resource and Research Unit, 2005

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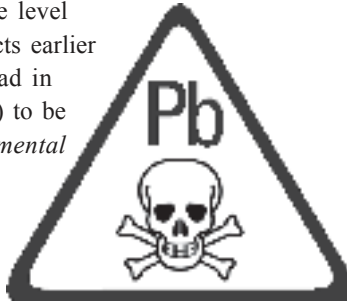
RESEARCH UPDATES

No Level of Lead Exposure Acceptable for Children

Researchers have found that there is no safe level of lead exposure for children. This contradicts earlier hypotheses that considered low levels of lead in blood (less than 10 micrograms per decilitre) to be “normal.” The study, published in *Environmental Health Perspectives*, concludes that even low-level environmental exposure to lead can have significant negative health effects, such as intellectual deficits.

Lead levels have also been linked

to reading problems, school failure, delinquent behaviour, hearing loss, tooth decay, spontaneous abortions, renal disease, and cardiovascular disease. The study advocates eliminating any non-essential use of lead and further lowering the allowable levels in air emissions, house dust, soil, water, and consumer products.



Immigrant Women Show Greater Incidence of Postpartum Depression

A recent study of pregnant immigrant women in Montreal indicates that they are more likely to suffer depression during pregnancy and after birth than the general population. Of the 120 women surveyed, 42 per cent scored above the cut-off level for depression. The study found that immigrant women encountered many of the same stressors, such as a lack of social support or general life stress, but the incidence of these risk factors was much more widespread. They also have to cope with stressors specific to immigrants, such as discrimination. Lead author Phyllis Zelkowitz, director of research in the psychiatry department at the Jewish General Hospital, explains that often postpartum depression can result in mothers being less responsive or emotionally attentive toward their infants. As a result, babies may be more irritable. Long-lasting effects on the cognitive and social development of the children have also been observed. The study suggests that the stigma associated with postpartum depression exacerbates the issue because most mothers are unwilling to acknowledge they have a problem. Immigrants, in particular, are less likely to seek help, which makes services such as child care and outreach support programs vital to this group.

The Changing Face of Child Care in Canada

A Statistics Canada has released *Child Care in Canada* chronicling the child care experiences of Canadian children aged six months to five years has found a significant rise in the percentage of children in non-parental care between 1994 and 2003. The study also reveals that there was an overall decline in the use of non-relatives to care for children and a corresponding increase in the use of child care centres and care by relatives. It also illustrated that care outside the home with a relative was more prevalent in rural communities while immigrant families choose care with a relative inside the home. Child care centres were more commonly used by low-income families and families from Quebec. Examining the change in care over the years, the data showed that more children are in the care of licensed and trained professionals than previously and that children in more than one care arrangement spend an average of 12 additional hours per week in care. The full report can be accessed online at www.statcan.ca.





ACROSS CANADA AND BEYOND

NATIONAL

A recent Report on Business survey reveals that many Canadian executives do not strongly support the cancellation of the federal-provincial early learning and child care agreement.

The poll, released in March, questioned a random sample of 150 of Canada's top 1,000 C-suite executives (CEOs, CFOs and COOs) about their expectations of the Canadian economy and the new federal government's policy initiatives. More than 20 per cent of the respondents said the government should not cancel the federal-provincial agreement signed last year, 37 per cent ranked it as a low priority and only 9 per cent considered it a high priority for the government.

A new Ipsos-Reid poll shows that the majority of Canadians do not share the federal government's vision for the future of child care and early learning services. A majority (59 per cent) of respondents said that support for families should be achieved by paying employers and communities to "create child-care spaces in the workplace or through a cooperative of community associations." Only 39 per cent of those questioned agreed that the \$1,200 annual child care benefit for each child under six was the best option for families. When asked to prioritize the Tory five-point plan, which outlines objectives for eliminating patient wait-times, passing the accountability act to clean up government, cracking down on crime, establishing an annual child care plan and reducing the GST, respondents ranked child care fourth. Improved wait times in health care ranked number one, followed by decreasing crime and ensuring government accountability in second and third respectively; cutting the GST rounded out the list in last place.

La Coalition des services de garde et des services aux familles and the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada have joined forces to pressure the federal government to provide annual funding to the provinces for child care services. Together, the groups hope that their mobilized efforts will help secure at least \$1.2-billion in annual federal funds to secure high-quality child care in each

province and territory. The group also encourages income supports but does not back the federal government's \$1,200 taxable family allowance in the belief that it discriminates against single-parent families and those with more than one income earner while simultaneously benefiting the wealthy in its tax scheme.

Finance Minister Jim Flaherty presented the federal budget in May. The 2006 budget confirmed that the cancelled federal-provincial early learning and child care agreements would be replaced by a \$1,200 income supplement to be given to families for each child under the age of six. The government also pledged \$250-million in the form of tax credits to businesses beginning in the 2007-2008 fiscal year. According to the new scheme, called the Community Child Care Investment Program, businesses will receive up to \$10,000 in credits for each child space they create. The government says it plans to create 250,000 spaces through this program.

ALBERTA

On March 27, Education Minister Gene Zwozdesky announced that the Alberta government would not fund junior or full-day kindergarten for schools in the province, as recommended by the 2003 Commission on Learning. The Commission comprised a nine-member panel appointed to conduct an in-depth review of Alberta's k-12 education system. They reported on the benefits of junior and full-day kindergarten to at-risk students, citing several US studies that illustrated the profound positive effect such programs can have on children's future development and success, such as higher monthly earnings, fewer arrests, and higher level of schooling completed.

Mayor of Edmonton, Stephen Mandel, has written to Prime Minister Steven Harper expressing his belief in the importance of honouring the federal-provincial bilateral child care and early learning agreements. A poll of over 800 Albertans conducted by Public Interest Alberta was released in April that indicates that the majority are opposed to the cancellation of the agreements.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Premier Gordon Campbell has announced the creation of a new government position to represent children. The position, which will be granted the same status as the provincial auditor general and the ombudsman, will be chosen and overseen by an all-party committee of the legislature. The announcement comes in response to recommendations made by retired judge Ted Hughes, who presented a sharply critical report in April on the government's handling of child protection.

MANITOBA

On March 6, the provincial government presented its annual budget. Since 1999, government funding for child care has increased by 107 per cent; however, for the 2006 year, money for child care increased by only 1.9 per cent over the previous year – from \$103-million in 2005 to \$105-million this year. Manitoba will lose \$126-million in federal funding over the next three years with the cancellation of the early learning and child care agreement.

Delegates at the Manitoba chapter of the Canadian Union of Public Employees' convention agreed that federal government should preserve the federal-provincial child care agreements. It is estimated that 70 per cent of the union's 24,000 members, which includes workers in healthcare, school, municipal and social services, are working parents. While many delegates supported the Conservative \$1,200 payment, they believed that it cannot replace a comprehensive plan to provide high-quality child care services in the province.

NOVA SCOTIA

Circle Time for Child Care, a network of almost 20 Nova Scotia organizations, has collected over 9,000 names on a petition calling on the Harper government to uphold its 2005 agreement with the province to fund early learning and child care. Two years of the five-year agreement will be honoured, directing \$39-million in funding for more day care spaces; however, losing the remaining three years will cost the province \$98 million in lost funds for child care.

On May 8, the Nova Scotia government presented its 2006 budget. Among the



announcements was a non-refundable tax credit of 8.79 per cent to be applied, starting July 1, 2006, to the full value of the new \$1,200 federal child care allowance. The provincial government also promised to continue funding the child care system in Nova Scotia once the federal-provincial early learning and child care agreement ends. The province has committed \$130-million to a 10-year child care plan that will provide money for training for child care workers and support for families. Additional provincial funding of \$4.7 million per year will continue once the federal funds are spent.

NEW BRUNSWICK

On March 15, Education Minister Claude Williams released the government's report on inclusive education as part of province's Quality Learning Agenda. The report outlines 95 recommendations on inclusive education, provides an account of the public consultations undertaken across the province, and provides a summary of research, practices and legal considerations. The minister detailed a three-part approach the government will use to implement the report's recommendations. This will include establishing a steering committee to ensure integrated delivery of support services for inclusive k-12 education; creating a forum in cooperation with department of health and the department of family and community services, which will give stakeholders the opportunity to participate in developing a plan; and implementing the plan itself. To read the full report, go to www.gnb.ca/0000/index-e.asp.

The Welcome to Kindergarten project, created by The Learning Partnership was launched in New Brunswick in April as part of a 12-school pilot project designed to prepare pre-school children and their parents for kindergarten. The program, launched in 2005 in select Ontario and BC schools, offers children and caregivers a welcome bag of resources and activities, as well as an orientation session. The session is meant to provide future students with a sense of comfort and familiarity with the school setting, and to give parents and caregivers some tools and strategies to help their children in the coming school year.

ONTARIO

Ontario released its 2006–2007 budget on March 23. The document notes that

the termination of the federal-provincial early learning and child care agreement translates into the loss of \$1.4-billion of federal funding earmarked for the creation of new licensed child care spaces and family subsidies for child care. To accommodate this shortfall of funding, the province has stated that the remaining \$63.5-million in funding will be spread over next four years to maintain the existing 14,000 spaces.

Ontario's public school boards and teachers' unions have united to form a coalition against Prime Minister Harper's \$1,200 day care plan. Support for the group, made up of the Ontario School Boards' Association and Ontario public elementary and high school teachers' unions, has been garnered from the Canadian School Boards' association, municipalities, and other child advocacy organizations. The coalition plans to build awareness by encouraging all those concerned about the elimination of the early learning and child care agreement – such as individuals, parents' groups and school councils – to lobby their MPs.

Several Ontario communities will receive new child care spaces, despite the federal government's cancellation of the early learning and child care agreement. The new money will come under the province's Best Start initiative, an early childhood development program created to help prepare children for grade 1. Among the cities receiving money is Sudbury, which has announced it will receive \$5.188-million to create 422 more spaces for 2006–2007. This is in addition to the 270 new spaces over three years promised last July by the Best Start program. The Simcoe/Muskoka region will see 315 new spaces in September through the YMCA of that region using start-up money from Best Start. YMCA vice-president Karen Pulla has pledged not to close the new centres once the federal government ceases funding of the program in March 2007.

PEI

Child care centres may raise their rates to match Prime Minister Harper's \$100 per month child care cheques. Some child care operators have vowed to increase their costs to match the new federal child

care allowance, claiming that they have been subsidizing care for too long by offering low rates.

QUEBEC

The Coalition of the Consolidation of Child Care and Family Services, an organization made up of child care associations, unions and groups representing women, families and communities in Quebec, argues that the new federal child care allowance is inequitable. Under the proposed plan, the organization claims, families with a modest income of between \$20,000 and \$40,000 would receive less of the after-tax benefit amount than more well-off families. The coalition would like to see a reimbursable tax credit implemented as an alternative – and more equitable – means of family support.

SASKATCHEWAN

The 2006–2007 budget, released on April 6, has pledged \$4.6 million to support child care, both in the form of new spaces and increased subsidies. In response to the cancelled federal-provincial early learning and child care agreement, Finance Minister Andrew Thomson announced that the proposed universal pre-kindergarten program has been removed from the budget plan; however, the province will still direct \$300,000 to expand existing pre-kindergarten programs for vulnerable children ages three to four.

Learning Minister Deb Higgins has stated that the province's commitments to enhanced quality and availability of child care and early learning services will be honoured by the province, but progress will be slower without federal funding. On March 16, she introduced a motion to support a made-in-Saskatchewan early learning and child care system, which would have expanded pre-kindergarten services to all four-year-olds, increased subsidies, created new spaces and increased professional development opportunities for early childhood educators. She expressed a renewed commitment to follow-through on the province's existing goals, which include wage increases and targets for new spaces, despite the lack of federal support.



CALENDAR

AUGUST

19–22

**Vancouver, British Columbia
Brain and Development Learning:
Making Sense of the Science**

The conference is devoted to enriching and improving the lives of children 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.

SEPTEMBER

28–29

**Winnipeg, Manitoba
Celebrating the Power of Families and
Communities**

This year, Family Service Canada's (FSC) conference aims to highlight community initiatives, agency programs and research that look at the strengths and power of families and communities. The conference will draw attention to the strengths, assets and power for positive change in all families, even those that seem most disadvantaged and vulnerable. For more information, contact FSC at 1-800-668-7808 or visit www.familyservicecanada.org.

OCTOBER

5–7

**Vancouver, British Columbia
Childhood and Adolescent Obesity
2006**

This conference will foster discussion on practical, evidence-based issues around obesity in children and adolescents. An update on existing programs and new initiatives will also be presented, as well as interventions for prevention and/or treatment of childhood obesity. Visit our website www.interprofessional.ubc.ca for updated information. For additional

information, e-mail ipad@interchange.ubc or call (604) 822-752.

14

**Halifax, Nova Scotia
Fall Convention and Annual General
Meeting**

A convention held by the Nova Scotia Child Care Association, a non-profit association for child care practitioners in Nova Scotia and an affiliate member of CCCF. For more information, visit the NSCCA website.

15–18

**Fredericton, New Brunswick
2006 Recognizing Learning**

This is the Sixth International Forum on Prior Learning Assessment and Qualification Recognition at the Delta Fredericton Hotel. You will find inspiring speakers, important networking opportunities, key initiatives, innovative practices and public policy discussions. For the Call for Presenters and Contact Information check the Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA) website at www.capla.ca or call 1-877-731-1333.

23–27

**Montreal, Quebec
Journées annuelles de santé publique**

The Journées annuelles de santé publique (JASP), Quebec's annual public health conference, is celebrating its 10th anniversary with a five-day international edition! This major training and information-sharing event will unite about 2000 people working in public health or with an interest in public health interventions, to share knowledge, build bridges between research and practice and promote cooperation – all in a spirit of improving health and well being. For more information, visit the JASP website: www.inspq.qc.ca/jasp.

NOVEMBER

3–4

**Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
The Future Generations**

This conference, hosted by the Saskatchewan Early Childhood Association Inc., will explore the future of

early learning and child care in Saskatchewan. For more information send an e-mail to saskcare@sasktel.net, visit the website www.sasktelwesbsite.net or call (306) 975-0875.

19–22

**Vancouver, British Columbia
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 www.worldforum2006.ca.

RESOURCES

**Weight of the World: Facing Obesity
(2004)**

The health of Canadian children is quickly becoming a critical issue: in the last 15 years, obesity has doubled for pre-teen girls and tripled for boys. To deal with this emerging problem, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation partnered up with the National Film Board to produce the *Weight of the World* DVD. Hosted by David Suzuki (*The Nature of Things*), the film's aim is to inform Canadian youth about health, to spark discussions and to inspire activities in school and communities. The program challenges youth to become more active and eat healthier. The DVD is available free for order from the website (www.cbc.ca/weightoftheworld) and companion materials, including a series of users' guides featuring tools and activities to promote physical activity and healthy eating tips, poster, pamphlets and teachers' resources can be downloaded from the website.

**Playing it Safe: Service Provider
Strategies to Reduce Environmental
Risks to Preconception, Prenatal and
Child Health (2006)**

New research in the area of environmental health and increasing awareness about environmental issues prompted the Best Start Resource Centre to create this manual,



which addresses concerns about the long-term effects of environmental contaminants on reproductive, prenatal and child health. Since this area of study is relatively new, there are no established best practices or widely accepted approaches for health care providers, prenatal educators, early learning and child care practitioners and others to consult for guidance. This manual, a companion to *Child Health and the Environment – A Primer*, seeks to address any gaps in education that may exist in this area of prenatal and child care. Using program examples, insights and tips, it provides some strategies for preventing and reducing exposure to contaminants to help professionals answer questions and offer guidance to concerned parents, clients or co-workers. For more information, visit: www.beststart.org/resources/env_action/index.html.

PREVNet

York and Queen's universities recently launched a national network called PREVNet (Promoting Relationships and Eliminating Violence Network) to address

bullying and other relationships among children and youth. The network is a collaboration among university researchers and non-governmental organizations that will focus on building tools and policies that can be implemented in communities across the country. As part of the network, Queen's University associate professor Wendy Craig has established The Bully Lab, a website that offers a host of useful information, including web resources and a bibliography, that are relevant to a broad spectrum of individuals – parents, teachers, caregivers, researchers and kids. See <http://psyc.queensu.ca/~craigw/index.htm> for more information.

Healthy Start for Life

Habits – good or bad – start young, and this initiative, a collaboration between Dietitians of Canada and nine other partner organizations, aims to help parents and caregivers set preschool children on the path to a healthy life. The project provides an online course and resources to help parents and caregivers learn about and promote nutrition and physical activity for

young children. The materials provide strategies for dealing with common preschool feeding issues, planning nutritious meals, and keeping kids active. To view the resources and download the online course, visit <http://www.dietitians.ca/healthystart/index.asp>.

World Health Organization Child Growth Standards

The World Health Organization has released revised growth standards for infants and children up to the age of five. Improving on the old standards, which were developed in the 1970s based on data collected from a single country, the new standards assume a more international perspective by assessing growth from different regions of the world. The results show that children from all over the world can achieve similar standards of height, weight and development if they are given the proper nutrition, health care and a healthy environment. Information on the new standards, in addition to the series of growth charts and a training course to help interpret the new information, can be found at www.who.int/childgrowth/en.

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Nadine Girard
Ste-Julie, Québec

Heather Kerr-Gauthier
Nepean, Ontario

Sirivan Quangtakoune
Regina, Saskatchewan

Danielle Robert
Prince Albert, Saskatchewan



Honourable Mention

in alphabetical order*

Karin Bradley
Middle Sackville, Nova Scotia

Cyndi Desharnais
Whitehorse, Yukon

Anick Dupont
Mascouche, Québec

Nadine Girard
Ste-Julie, Québec

Gail Kelly
London, Ontario

Rachel Leblanc
Ottawa, Ontario

Tammy MacKinnon
St. Peter's Bay, Prince Edward Island

Wee Folk Centre
Greenwood, Nova Scotia

** To preserve the children's anonymity, names and places are not matched with photographs*



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