

# Interaction

VOLUME 20, NUMBER 4, WINTER 2007

## Innovative Approaches in ECE: An International Dialogue

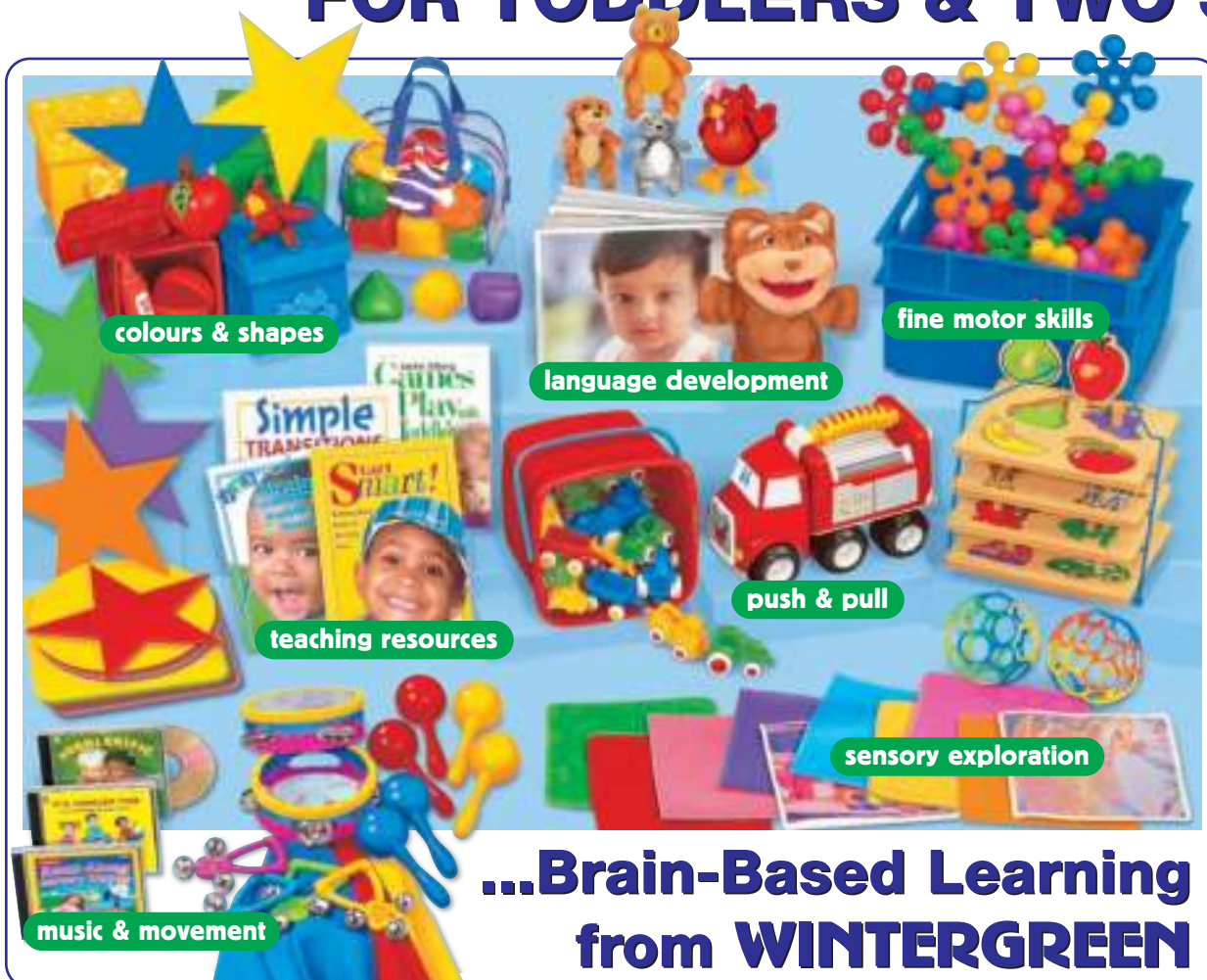
A photograph of two young children sitting on a wooden arch in a playroom. The child in the foreground is a young boy of East Asian descent, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt with a blue graphic and red pants. He is smiling and looking towards the camera. Behind him, another child is partially visible, wearing a striped shirt. The background shows a playroom with red walls, a wooden arch, and other children in the distance.

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This issue's focus section is sure to inspire you to broaden and deepen your understanding of quality in your own practice and in the larger field of early learning and child care. (see page 23)

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A new resource sheet (#82) accompanies this issue – *Physical Punishment – It's Harmful and It Doesn't Work*

The photo on the front cover was taken by *Shoot for Cover* winner, Heather Kerr-Gauthier.





## Behind the Scenes

Winter is a season of introspection for most Canadians, interrupted briefly by a flurry of holiday activities. This is the time when, like the imaginative mouse in Leo Lionni's classic children's book, *Frederick*, we draw on our store of colourful images and stories to brighten the grey days of winter.

The focus of this issue of *Interaction* provides plenty of food for introspection. Guest editors Alan Pence and Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw from the School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria, have assembled a group of articles that challenge us to broaden our ideas of quality and best practice. They invite us to find ways to incorporate cultural differences into our practice in a way that honours the families we work with.

Also inside this issue you'll find the first in a series of articles on resiliency that *Interaction* will publish over the next few issues. These articles will give you ideas on how to reach inside yourself and out to others when faced with adversity – and how to role model this skill to the children in your care.

Be sure to take some time to browse through the colourful images of quality child care that you've gathered throughout the year. Choose a few favourites and submit them to the 2007 Shoot for Cover photo contest (see entry form with this mailing of *Interaction*).

**Next issue – Spring 2007:** Special commemorative issue to celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Canadian Child Care Federation!

**Lana Crossman**, editor  
lcrossman@cccf-fcsge.ca

# Interaction

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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



## ECLKC Update

*Children need time, space, materials and the support of informed parents and thoughtful, skilled early-childhood educators in order to become “master players.” They need time to play for the sake of playing. (From Let the Children Play: Nature’s Answer to Early Learning)*

The latest paper prepared by the Early Childhood Learning Knowledge Centre (ECLKC) as part of the Canadian Council on Learning’s series called *Lessons in Learning* focuses on learning through play. To read this paper, entitled *Let the Children Play: Nature’s Answer to Early Learning*, visit [www.ccl-cca.ca/childhoodlearning](http://www.ccl-cca.ca/childhoodlearning).

This fall, ECLKC took part in a number of events to promote the importance of the early years to childhood learning. ECLKC general coordinator, Claire Gascon Giard, presented a workshop and a keynote presentation in Moncton, New Brunswick, at the New Brunswick Training and Networking Conference for Early Childhood Development. The ECLKC exhibited at the symposium, Understanding Early Childhood, Acting for the Future: The Contribution of Longitudinal Studies, held as part of the Journées annuelles de santé publique (JASP) in Montréal, Québec.

The ECLKC is also proud to sponsor the upcoming national conference, Set Sail for Quality on an Ocean of Caring, in Halifax, Nova Scotia, from June 15 to 17, 2007. Richard E. Tremblay, PhD, director of the ECLKC and the Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development, is among the confirmed keynote speakers.

The first ECLKC *Bulletin* features an article on the aspects of child development that influence school transition. Enjoy your copy mailed with this issue of *Interaction*!

— Valérie Bell

## CCCF’s “Family” of Online Courses is Growing!

Building on the success of *Meeting the Challenge Online*, the CCCF has developed an online version of its popular Family Child Care Training Program – Level 1. Registration is now open for the winter session, which begins on January 29, 2007. Book now as spaces are limited!

For more information on the *Family Child Care Training Program Online*, contact us at [fccinfo@cccf-fcsge.ca](mailto:fccinfo@cccf-fcsge.ca) or visit the CCCF website at [www.cccf-fcsge.ca](http://www.cccf-fcsge.ca) and click on “family child care” on the left menu. If you cannot take the upcoming winter session but are interested in participating in a future session, download the interest form from the website and mail or fax the completed form to CCCF.

— Jeanine Plamondon



In 2007, CCCF will celebrate its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary with new products, special events and a special commemorative issue of *Interaction* in spring 2007! Watch the CCCF website ([www.cccf-fcsge.ca](http://www.cccf-fcsge.ca)) for more details.



## INSIDE THE FEDERATION

## CCCF Lends Expertise to Federal Consultation on Spaces

During the summer and fall, CCCF was pleased to bring the shared experiences and expertise of its members to the federal government's consultation on its child care spaces initiative. Through this initiative, the federal government has promised to create up to 25,000 spaces per year through \$250-million in grants and tax credits to businesses and community groups that create spaces.

CCCF participated in the consultation on a number of levels:

- It was the first national organization to meet with officials from Human Resources and Social Development.
- CCCF's affiliate organizations were represented in provincial/territorial meetings held across Canada by HRSDC officials.
- CCCF's president, Don Giesbrecht, was a member of Minister Diane Finley's Advisory Committee on the

Child Care Spaces Initiative. Read about this from Giesbrecht's perspective in "From Where I Sit" on page 6.

Throughout these consultations, CCCF emphasized that spaces are only one piece of the overall quality child care picture, and that there needs to be a mechanism in place to ensure ongoing operating funding for new spaces created. CCCF also outlined the HR requirements of setting up spaces – i.e., the need to recruit and retain workers to fill new spaces – and how this relates to sustaining these spaces over the long-term.

At time of printing, the results of the consultations and the details of the plan are not yet known.

## Meeting the Challenge Online

**Register now for the winter and spring sessions. Space is limited!**

**Winter session: January 15 - March 23, 2007; Spring session: April 2 - June 8, 2007**

Are you feeling challenged by the children in your care?  
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To learn more, visit the *Meeting the Challenge Online* subsite at [www.cccf-fcsge.ca](http://www.cccf-fcsge.ca).

*This is one of the best  
courses I have been  
through since college.  
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at our child care centres  
reflect on their practice  
as I do the same. Awesome!*  
— course participant

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## INSIDE THE FEDERATION

### CCCF Presents to House of Commons Finance Committee at Pre-Budget Consultations

In September, Yvonne Dionne, director of Development, Marketing and Communications, presented on behalf of CCCF at the Finance Committee's pre-budget consultations. Both the presentation and an accompanying policy brief focused on the federal government's commitment to create spaces under the Child Care Spaces Initiative, reiterated its concerns about the plan (see page 4) and suggested additional supports needed to help it work.

### Brief on School-Age Child Care to Inform Middle Childhood Project

CCCF was pleased to contribute a brief on school-age child care to a series of briefs on middle childhood prepared for the National Children's Alliance (NCA). The NCA used the briefs to inform and guide community consultations across the country as part of its Middle Childhood Initiative. Earlier research conducted by the NCA found that the middle years have become the "forgotten years" in terms of policy – as governments focus more on early childhood and youth issues. The aim of the project is to submit overall recommendations on how to improve the healthy development of children ages 6 to 12 in Canada. Watch the next issue of *Interaction* for updates on the initiative.

## Letters to the Editor

"I was so pleased to get my summer issue of *Interaction*. The cover photograph is simply wonderful!"

— Lise Beaubien-Jeffrey, Clarence Creek, ON

"Just thought I'd take the time to express my appreciation for the great work all of you are involved in. In my work at the Neighbourhood Centre and beyond, I try to keep abreast of what's current in relation to children's health and the environment, so your resources are timely and useful for ideas in programming development and operations."

— Carol Coiffe, Healthy Community Advisor, The Fairlawn Neighbourhood Centre, Toronto, ON

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## FROM WHERE I SIT

# Sharing Our Expertise with Government

by Don Giesbrecht

Leadership, as we know, is a combination of many diverse skills, attitudes, characteristics and abilities. Leadership in early learning and child care is no different in its complexity and many dimensions and requirements – especially now, at such a critical juncture in Canada.

With this in mind, the Board of Directors' task to hire a new executive director for the Canadian Child Care Federation seemed to take on a heightened sense of importance and urgency. When Barbara Coyle retired at the end of June, we knew it would be difficult to replace her dedication, professionalism and commitment. We also knew we needed someone who could bring new opportunities, visions and energy for CCCF and its crucial role for early learning and child care in Canada.

We are extremely pleased to have found this person in Brigid Rivoire. Brigid joins CCCF after five years working as the executive director of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture. She brings with her a wealth of experience working with government, the media and a member-based organization. Her skills, enthusiasm and knowledge will serve CCCF and the child care sector well.

Brigid comes to CCCF at a time when the organization is playing a leading consultation role to the federal government. Throughout the fall, the government consulted

across the country on its commitment to develop 125,000 child care spaces over the next five years. CCCF was pleased to be the first national organization to meet with government officials on this initiative. CCCF affiliate organizations contributed regional perspectives in consultations across Canada. I was proud to represent CCCF on the Minister's Advisory Committee on the child care spaces initiative. While there was some controversy about the members composing this committee, we could not pass up this valuable opportunity to share our expertise with government. CCCF is well positioned to provide direction, advice and practical knowledge, and is backed by a commitment to quality early learning and child care and representation from a wide range of networks across the country.

As this issue of *Interaction* goes to print, I don't know what the result of the consultations will be. The issue of creating child care spaces has been debated for many years and is very complex as early learning and child care systems across the country have evolved independently of each other. Further, the needs of Canadians vary so dramatically; there is no one-size-fits-all solution.

However, as we continue to emphasize in all our discussions with the federal government, there is one defining characteristic that ties all systems and spaces – the need for quality based on developmentally appropriate

and best practices, current research and standards. CCCF will continue to ensure that the principles of quality are at the front and centre of its consultations as the federal government's spaces initiative moves forward.

Also imperative to creating spaces across the country is sustainability, addressing the field's human resources, training and specific urban, rural and remote needs to name just a few. These, and other

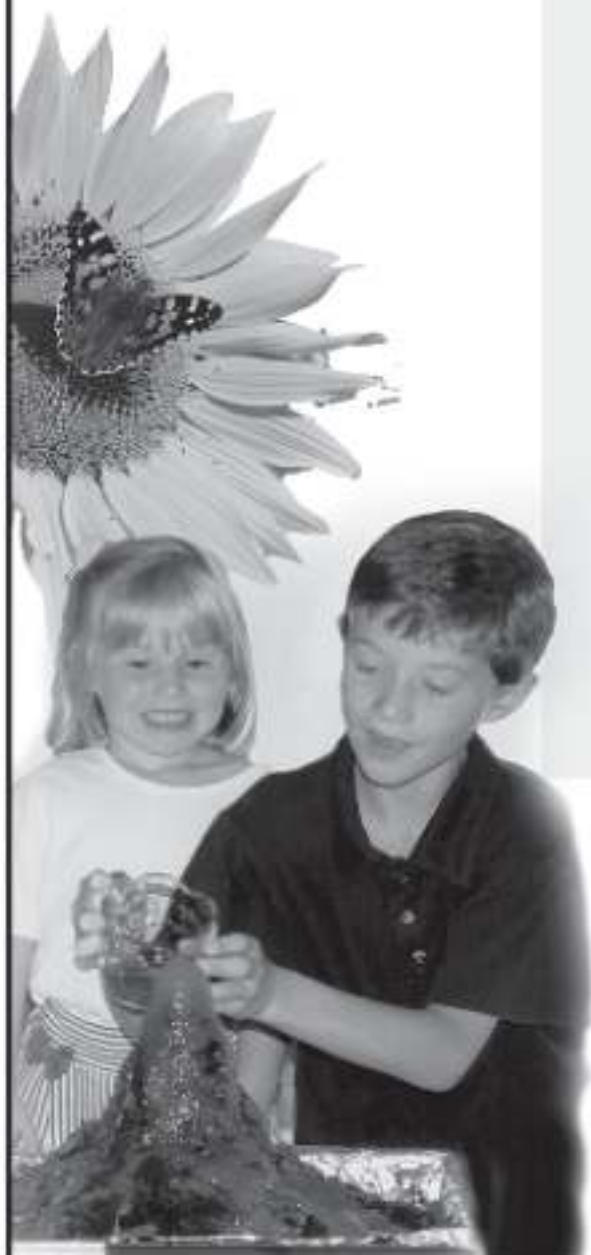
issues, will continue to be at the forefront in CCCF consultations.

These are indeed interesting times for our sector. As CCCF moves into a new chapter in its history and leadership, there are opportunities and challenges ahead, not only as an organization but as a national leader in early learning and child care. This is an enormous responsibility, but one that we accept and embrace in our shared commitment to excellence in early learning and child care.

Don Giesbrecht is president of the Canadian Child Care Federation. He is executive director of the Assiniboine Children's Centre in Winnipeg, Manitoba. © CCCF 2006.



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# Miles to Paint on the Road to Peace

by Dianne Rogers

In August, 19 preschoolers and two child care practitioners at the Andrew Fleck Child Care Centre in Ottawa created a 12' x 5' mural that portrays caterpillars comprised of circles of colourful scenes. The mural, entitled *Nature's Renewal*, is beautiful on its own, and it will take on a new life when it joins hundreds of other murals to become part of the Art Miles Mural Project – a large-scale exhibition that will eventually spread over 12 miles in length.

The Art Miles Mural Project was initiated to celebrate the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) Decade of the Culture of Peace and Non-Violence Amongst Children and the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*. The project provides an opportunity for children and youth of all ages around the globe to use the universal language of art to express their vision of a peaceful world fit for children.

The mission of the Art Miles Mural Project is to teach peace through the creative, collaborative process of mural painting. Children and youth paint images of global harmony, peace, healing and unity one mural at a time. The project aims to exhibit 12 miles of murals in Alexandria, Egypt in March 2010 – wrapping the perimeter of the Great Pyramids as a visual declaration of peace by and for children.

## The beginnings of the project

There are now over five miles of murals inventoried by Art Miles Mural Project founders Joanne and Fouad Tawfilis.



Lise Arseneault, Linda L'Orange and a group of enthusiastic preschoolers at the Andrew Fleck Child Care Centre proudly display their contribution to the Art Miles Mural Project.

**Joanne and Fouad Tawfilis have been facilitating the mural collection since 1997 when the first mural was painted by Bosnian children on a bullet-ridden bed sheet.**

This dedicated couple has been facilitating the mural collection since 1997 when the first mural was painted by Bosnian children on a bullet-ridden bed sheet. Each mile of murals has a theme and sub themes. For instance, the Peace, Unity and Healing Mile also includes a focus on HIV/Aids. Each community, organization, child or youth group who participates chooses a theme for their mural – there is lots of room for creative expression.

I became involved with this project at an international children's environmental health conference in Washington, D.C. The conference was underway when



the tragic terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, took place. The conference closed down immediately and I spent the next few days and nights with over 400 international delegates, many of whom felt their safety and security was at stake. Together we painted a mural to restore a sense of calm and hope for the future while waiting to return to our homes around the world.

### Art Miles in Canada

Back in Canada, I decided to continue to work with Joanne and Fouad to encourage child and youth organizations in Canada to join this consensus-building peace initiative. At the General Assembly of the United Nations at the Special Session on Children in May 2002, a child delegate stated, "We want a world fit for children, because a world fit for children is a world fit for everyone." The question we need to have in our hearts always is ... what kind of world is fit for our children and grandchildren and how can we build it?

The goal for Canada is to contribute two miles of murals, 960 murals, one mural at a time or dozens at a time organized

by large community events. They will be sponsored by individual philanthropists, foundations, corporate sponsors or government departments. We are also inviting youth to participate as a Youth Advisory Council and Canadian champions, corporate partners and sponsors, celebrity artists and interested organizational representatives in an advisory capacity to support the Canadian objective.

Some murals in the Art Miles project have already become part of the permanent collection at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington. We are hoping to interest Canadian cultural institutions to house and exhibit the Canadian murals. Products such as calendars, bookmarks, children's books and coffee table books will share the story with children around the world.

Child care programs are also encouraged to contribute a mural to the project. For more information, please contact me at (819) 459-4402 or [diannerogers@sympatico.ca](mailto:diannerogers@sympatico.ca), or visit the project website at [www.the-art-miles-mural-project.org](http://www.the-art-miles-mural-project.org).

Dianne Rogers is country director for the Art Miles Mural Project in Canada.  
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# Resilience: Coping Effectively with Life's Challenges

by Jennifer Pearson and Darlene Hall

This article is the first in a three-part series about resilience that is being published in *Interaction*. Coming next: Critical Abilities that Help Develop Resilience.

*Four-year-old Jeremy is despondent when a friend accidentally knocks over his carefully built block tower. He cries out miserably, "You've ruined my whole day!" Jeremy never quite recovers and is easily distressed the rest of the day.*

Families today are exposed to high levels of daily stress, and the incidence of childhood depression is increasing.<sup>1</sup> Despite our best efforts, we cannot prevent adversity and stress. We can, however, help children like Jeremy cope more effectively with life's challenges. Over 30 years of research shows we can *learn* to be more resilient by changing how we *think* about challenges and adversities.<sup>1,2,3</sup>

## What is resilience?

The definition of resilience varies in different cultures and contexts, but generally refers to one's ability to "cope well with adversity" and "persevere and adapt when things go awry."<sup>1</sup>

Resilience helps people deal with stress and adversity, overcome childhood disadvantage, and reach out to new opportunities.<sup>1</sup> Researchers have found that resilient people are healthier, live longer, are more successful in school and work, are happier in relationships and are less prone to depression.<sup>1,4</sup>

## 3 Cs

Studies show that people who manage stress and adversity best have "3 Cs" in common:

**Control:** a belief in their ability to take charge of the controllable aspects of the situation and "influence a more positive outcome."

**Challenge:** a view of mistakes as opportunities for new learning, and change as potential for growth.

**Commitment:** an active engagement in work and other pursuits that gives meaning to their lives. 6, 7

**A resilient view** is characterized by accurate and flexible thinking, and consists of

- creative problem solving
- the capacity to see other points of view and to challenge one's own views the ability to move on with daily life despite obstacles

## What role does our thinking play in being resilient?

Stress, adversity and challenge are inevitable parts of daily life – and sometimes out of our control. However, the way we *think* about stress is very much in our control and makes a substantial difference in how we handle daily bumps in the road.

Some people feel helpless in the face of stress and adversity, so they easily give up attempts to change or improve the situation. Other people hold more resilient views. They see the situation as a challenge that can be overcome if they look for options and keep trying.<sup>4,5</sup> Most importantly, research suggests that resilient thinking patterns can be learned.<sup>1,2,3</sup>

## How can children's resilience be promoted?

Programs to promote resilience in children have existed since the 1970s. These have focused primarily on building self-esteem, increasing school readiness and supporting the parent-child relationship.<sup>4,8,9</sup> Most promotion efforts, however, have tended to overlook the importance of thinking processes in the development of resilience and the handling of stress and adversity.

Resiliency skills that help us think more accurately and flexibly can be absorbed by children from an early age and can optimize the development of resilience.<sup>3,10</sup> It makes good sense, then, to introduce resiliency-building strategies to children as early as possible in order to help them deal with inevitable adversity and inoculate them against depression.



## What role does adult modelling play in children's ability to develop resilient thinking patterns?

Warm, caring adults who role model resilient thinking in the face of daily stresses can nurture children's lifelong capacity for resilience.

In fact, researchers point to just how crucial adult modelling is. Children two and three years old are able to mimic the thinking styles of primary caregivers around them. By eight years of age, most children have already developed a thinking style, or habitual way of responding to stressors.<sup>3</sup>

The following example illustrates how an early childhood educator models a resilient thinking style for the children to mimic:

*When a plan to take the children to the park for a picnic seems threatened by an overnight rainfall and continuing grey skies, Martha considers the big picture. The children are looking forward to the outing, and overcast skies and cooler temperatures may mean fewer crowds from nearby child care centres. The wet grass won't be a problem if the kids wear their rainboots and coats. And if it starts to rain, they can picnic on the benches under the shelter, and finish their outing by going to a nearby library.*

Martha was able to view the situation with realistic optimism. She didn't deny the negative aspects of the weather, but instead found some positive features – less heat and fewer crowds. She put a plan into place and believed she could cope with whatever the weather might bring. And by talking about the plan with the children before the outing, Martha modelled how accurate and flexible thinking can help people look for the controllable aspects in everyday situations.

Just as children develop language in a language-rich environment, so they will develop the skills of resilience in a resilience-rich environment. Research provides the direction and tools for us to create that environment. Let's put ourselves and the children we work with on the path to a resilient future!

*This article is adapted from the Reaching IN...Reaching OUT Resiliency Guidebook. For more information about developing resilient thinking and coping styles, please visit [www.reachinginreachingout.com](http://www.reachinginreachingout.com) and click on "Guidebook & Videos."*

*Jennifer Pearson is lead writer/trainer and Darlene Hall is coordinator of Reaching IN...Reaching OUT (RIRO), an evidence-based skills training program promoting resilience in young children.*

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# Nurturing Young Minds

## Linking Brain Research to Anti-Bias/Diversity Concepts

by Valerie Rhomberg

In recent years, there has been much discussion of diversity and anti-bias concepts and their effects on practices in early years settings. At the same time, research on healthy brain development has also been in the forefront. The literature indicates commonalities between anti-bias concepts and brain research, specifically emotional well-being and wellness, relationships and environments and the development of language, cognition and emotion. This article examines linkages between current findings from brain research and anti-bias/diversity concepts and considers their implications on practices in early learning settings.

### Emotional Wellness

Two of the goals that are supported and nurtured by anti-bias philosophy are “fostering a positive but not superior sense of self-esteem” and “problem-solving and pro-action for oneself and others when faced with unfairness” (Hall & Rhomberg, 1995, p. 6). Here, unfairness refers to any of the anti-bias concepts listed in the text box on page 14. The acquisition of each of these goals ultimately results in a sense of “feeling good” about oneself, leading to a state of emotional well-being.

Findings from brain research continuously emphasize supportive responses and secure attachments beginning at birth as one of the keys for achieving optimum synaptic



connections throughout all regions of the brain, affecting healthy brain development later in life. Stressful situations over a period of time also have an impact on where and how synaptic pathways are formed. The amount of support, security and stress encountered affects the formation of the “architecture” of the brain and is closely linked to the state of emotional well-being.

Practices, such as immediate responses to infant crying, affirming and valuing children’s skills, their physical looks (such as skin colour, size and appearance) and their families, support the first goal of anti-bias. Assisting children in dealing with and problem-solving the effects of exclusionary actions related either to themselves or to others achieves the second mentioned goal. Implementation of such procedures diminishes stress and offers support and security, thus reinforcing what brain research findings communicate.

### Relationships and Environments

Anti-bias literature emphasizes that exposure to stereotypes, exclusions and prejudice may result in an inability to deal with the realities connected to diversity concepts, which in turn may lead to emotional turmoil and stress. Similarly, the literature in brain research focuses on the fact that consistent, stressful, unresponsive environments result in emotional turmoil. This, in turn, causes stress which could affect the manner in which synaptic connections are fashioned.

Supporting empathetic interactions with people and exposure to people and items reflecting differences and similarities give rise to a comfort level (i.e., emotional



stability) with respect to diversity elements. Results from brain research literature indicate that supportive relationships result in emotional stability, affecting the overall formation of a brain's architecture.

The physical environment also impacts on this emotional stability. Anti-bias/diversity writings call attention to the fact that in physical environments that mirror characteristics specific to the children and families within it positive responses to differences will result, enhancing emotional well-being for all involved. These positive responses to differences will also ensue when the environment is set up to expand an awareness of differences within the framework of global diversity.

Brain research studies suggest that supportive, stable environments lead to emotional well-being; the sense of emotional well-being impacts the release pattern of brain chemicals, causing a balance of their releases to the excitatory and the inhibitory parts of the brain. These areas are responsible for self-regulation. This balanced release enables self-regulation in the young child and has long-term effects for later behaviour. The ability to self-regulate or self-soothe creates feelings of self-worth resulting in emotional well-being. Positive self-worth or self-esteem has a great deal of influence on how child development unfolds.

It could follow, then, that providing practices and extending experiences to include empathetic awareness of "otherness" and practices that reflect positive and supportive relationship interactions with children, their families and components connected to them would sustain the brain research findings.

### Anti-Bias/Diversity Concepts and Descriptors

<b>Ability</b>	physical, mental, emotional capabilities
<b>Age</b>	perception of what makes someone old or young
<b>Appearance</b>	body height, scars, burns, freckles or other "marks" on body
<b>Belief</b>	religious, political, spiritual and "believe in nothing" beliefs
<b>Class</b>	social and economic elements that indicate a person's status
<b>Culture</b>	common traits of living shared with members of the same group
<b>Family Form</b>	structure and composition of families and roles assigned within the family
<b>Gender</b>	a person's sex; male or female and roles assigned based on sex
<b>Language</b>	spoken word and all its global variations, scripts
<b>Lifestyle</b>	ways of living one's life; i.e., on a boat, in a tent, travelling/nomadic; not related to class
<b>Race</b>	set of physical characteristics genetically determined, such as skin colour, hair; each race might incorporate many ethnic groups
<b>Sexuality</b>	sexual orientation and preferences (for younger children reflected through family form)

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Some examples of practices that advance this objective would be to invite a person in a wheelchair (someone who will be comfortable with children's curiosity and able to respond with accurate and sensitive comments) to actively participate in the children's experiences or to ensure the physical environment has access to and displays pictures and artifacts of children and families using the setting as well as pictures and artifacts of people who may be "strange" or different from them.

### Language, Cognition and Emotion

Both anti-bias principles and brain research outcomes address three specific areas of development: language, cognition and emotion.

The anti-bias approach suggests that exposure and interactions with diversity, including one's own and other languages, leads to awareness of, empathy for, realization of and a comfort level with similarities and differences.

Brain research has informed us that the brain at birth has the ability to produce any language. Through repeated exposure and use of a language, the brain will form the synaptic connections required for future extrapolation of that language.

By initiating practices for children in an early years environment that enable hearing and speaking home languages and provide exposure to various languages through songs, stories and visiting guests fluent in languages other than those spoken on a daily basis, children will continue to maintain their language(s) while at the same time acquiring the sounds and syntax for developing the basis for other languages. These practices provide one method of supporting brain research "wisdom."



When this exposure also includes tones and phrases appreciative of diversity itself as well as the languages, the message being sent to the children involved is one of value and appreciation. This leads to positive attitudes and feelings of positive self-esteem. The brain receives positive “feedback” regarding the languages, overall diversity and the “feeling” component, all of which affect the pattern of the pathways being formed.

With respect to cognition, an anti-bias method considers practices that build upon awareness and realization of self, then of others, moving onto recognition and understanding of self and others in relation to sameness and differences. This scaffolding builds upon exposure to “individual-specific” familiar concepts related to anti-bias/diversity and leads into experiences with unfamiliar diversity concepts. The intent is to integrate an “unfamiliar” concept at each step, in order for it to become a “familiar.” The anticipated outcome would be an empathetic and valued understanding and acceptance of all the diversity concept components. This would then enable a global understanding of people and items connected to them.

According to brain research findings, the brain thrives when the unfamiliar is added to the familiar. This builds and strengthens brain synapses. New pathways are created by exposure and interactions with the unfamiliar, existing ones are strengthened by the continued exposure to and interactions with the familiar.

Here, practices offering opportunities for learning experiences that combine a familiar object (e.g., bread) with an unfamiliar similar object (e.g., pita) and then integrates these two experiences in a new experience that includes both objects would compliment what brain research puts forward.

Concerning emotional development, the skills of fostering positive feelings toward self, toward others and toward differences, and the goal of promoting empathy for diversity, are intended to achieve the acquisition of positive self esteem for all involved and thus maintain healthy emotional development. In conjunction, brain research upholds the idea that nourishing emotional well being has an impact on healthy formation of the brain’s architecture. This is the key as to where synapses will form and thus it affects the future “pathway” picture of an individual’s brain.

Once more, supportive, nurturing interactions that send messages of respect and acceptance as a valuable human being support emotional well being; they are practices that both anti-bias and brain research hold in common.

## Conclusion

There are linkages between anti-bias/diversity concepts and brain research. One specific message can be inferred consistently from findings across the two fields: the importance of nourishing and sustaining emotional well being. Anti-bias/diversity concept implementation results in it; brain research indicates benefits for healthy brain development from it.

This article concludes that there is validity to the proposed linkages between brain research findings and anti-bias/diversity concepts. On this basis, consideration should be given to the implementation of practices that affirm and demonstrate these linkages in early years settings.

Valerie Rhomberg is the manager of early childhood education programs at the Mothercraft Institute for Early Development in Toronto.

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# Training to Keep Children Safe

by Carolyn Tees

It's every parent and caregiver's worse nightmare: while eating lunch in his highchair, a child begins to choke on a piece of food ... his face turns red, his lips blue. As you frantically unbuckle his safety belt, your mind races. Do you know what to do?

This happened to a new mother who had recently taken a Child Care First Aid and CPR course. Her 7-month-old was just starting on simple foods and was happily gumming a baby biscuit. The mother turned her head to clear the table and upon turning back noticed the baby was choking. She pulled the infant from the highchair, supported her child on her arm and administered back blows between the shoulder blades, as she had learned in the course. The lodged piece of biscuit came free immediately.

## Training matters

Fortunately this emergency started and ended within seconds, but statistics show that many parents and caregivers don't have the training to know what to do when a child has been injured. In most Canadian cities, the average ambulance response time is more than eight minutes (Fitch, 2005); meanwhile, permanent brain damage can occur four to six minutes after breathing stops. Knowing what to do in those critical minutes can save a life.

In some jurisdictions across Canada, legislation requires that a minimum of child care staff in each setting be trained

in first aid. However the extent of training required and the number of staff that need to be trained varies widely from province to province.

"We know that injury is still the leading cause of death for children from birth to age 14, yet recent research indicates that caregivers have limited first aid skills or knowledge," says Tracey Braun, national coordinator of first aid for the Canadian Red Cross. "A recent Ontario study showed that 98 per cent of children who suffer cardiac arrest die. The research points out that bystander CPR training would help reduce this mortality rate."

Recent changes in CPR now make it easier to learn and administer. The Canadian Red Cross' Child Care First Aid & CPR program is an ideal training program for parents and caregivers to learn this and many other lifesaving skills. This dynamic 8 or 16-hour course teaches CPR or "cardiopulmonary resuscitation," a technique that combines rescue breathing with chest compressions to keep the heart circulating

oxygenated blood. It also focuses on choking prevention and administering immediate first aid in the critical moments after an injury. Much of the training also focuses on the most important life-saving skill of all: prevention.

## The critical step – injury prevention

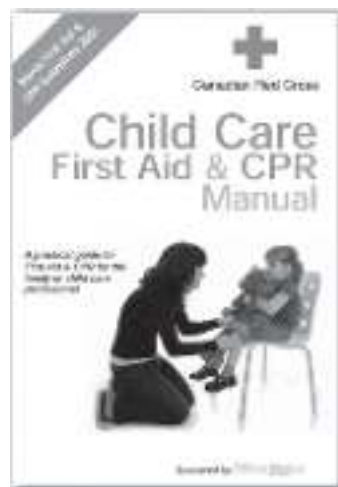
"The most important way to keep children healthy and safe is to realize that all injuries are preventable," Braun clarifies. "It's important to make a child's environment safe and limit potential injuries."

The Child Care First Aid and CPR course includes group discussion, demonstrations, role-plays, short lectures and lots of hands-on practice. Participants also receive an illustrated, easy-to-use manual full of useful information to refer to after the course.

The Red Cross also offers a wide variety of First Aid training courses for children and youth, including PeopleSavers, the Babysitting course and CPR courses. It also offers Emergency and Standard First Aid for adults. Contact your local Red Cross office or call 1 877 356-3226 to find the authorized provider closest to you. For more information, visit the Red Cross website at [www.redcross.ca/firstaid](http://www.redcross.ca/firstaid).

Carolyn Tees is national marketing and business development officer with the Canadian Red Cross. © CCCF 2006

**Reference:**  
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**"All injuries have one thing in common: they are preventable."**



# Opening a Doorway to a Successful Child Care-School Partnership

## A Thunder Bay Model

by Kelly Massaro-Joblin

Twenty-one years ago the Schoolhouse Playcare Centre of Lakehead Inc. was created as the first workplace child care centre in Northwestern Ontario. Initiated by the Lakehead Women Teachers Federation to serve families working for the local school boards, the program opened its doors in September 1985 in St. James Public School. I have been with Schoolhouse Playcare since its conception and through these years we have gone through many transitions, expansions and growth.

Recently, we received some funding through Ontario's Best Start Initiative that has allowed us to expand and collaborate with the school in an exciting way that encourages the school and centre staff to work together.

St. James Public School is a small inner city school with programs running from junior kindergarten to grade 6. The school will celebrate its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2007. The building is a beautiful blend of old and new

architecture. It includes a playground that is being renovated to include an outdoor classroom that incorporates many innovative ideas contributed by children, parents and staff.

Our child care program has three classrooms in the lower level of the school, which we have converted into a home-like environment where education and care are provided daily. Children ranging from 18 months to 12 years old take part in our program. Many of them attend St. James School, allowing for smoother transitions, sharing of resources and convenience for parents in that they can drop off and pick up their child at the same place.

The centre is inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach in which children, along with parents and teachers, explore the world around their interests. Children are encouraged to reach their fullest potential by experiencing wonder, curiosity and intellectual engagement. Collaboration is a key to the success of this approach so working in partnership with all staff, parents and children makes a big difference.

With the help of Best Start Initiative funding, we renovated a classroom on the main floor that is directly beside the junior kindergarten class. The aim of the renovation was to encourage the kindergarten programs of both the centre and the school to plan



Photo courtesy of Schoolhouse Playcare Centre





our curriculum together. The school principal, Wayne McElhone, myself and teaching staff from both programs have brainstormed together with the families and administrators to see our dream come true.

Wayne has been instrumental in supporting this concept and has worked together with me to see shared ideas become a reality. The set-up of the room was important to us. We didn't just want to have our classrooms side by side – we wanted to create a passageway between the two rooms to allow the sharing of space and the collaboration of the teaching staff and children when implementing the curriculum. We thought the doorway was an easy concept, but we had to convince the maintenance department – it required blasting through a very thick brick wall. After a few discussions, meetings and persistence, there was a significant breakthrough (no pun intended) and we now have a magic door that brings our programs together.



Photo courtesy of Schoolhouse Playcare Centre

We have regular meetings with both our staff and the kindergarten teacher to plan curriculum together and discuss our observations of the children in the program in order to meet their individual needs and those of the whole group.

The school and our program are also working together to offer services to the broader community. The building is a neighbourhood hub and already houses other community organizations that offer programs for children and their families. We hope to expand on the library by having an area dedicated to shared resources from both programs for preschool and kindergarten children. There is a hot lunch program for children who attend school, a toy lending library and a parent drop-in program. We plan to expand and continue our parent workshops and additional children's programs, such as music, creative dance and movement, gymnastics, sewing club and drama club.

The building is an ideal setting for families and their children – a school and early childhood development centre that puts families first and offers the support and resources that are needed in today's hurried society. We are very proud of our accomplishments to date and look forward to the many opportunities ahead. After all we have created a doorway that opens up a new and exciting adventure!

Kelly Massaro-Joblin is executive director of the Schoolhouse Playcare Centre of Lakehead Inc. She represents the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario on the Canadian Child Care Federation's Member Council. © CCCF 2006

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## HEALTH WATCH

# Head Lice

Head lice are very common among young children, especially in child care centres and schools. Head lice spread easily among children who are together in one place.



## How can you tell if a child has head lice?

To diagnose a case of head lice, you need to find live lice. On average, children with head lice will have no more than 10 to 20 live lice. They move fast, and are only about the size of a sesame seed, so they can be hard to find.

## Where to look

- close to the scalp
- behind the ears
- the back of the neck
- top of the head

## What to look for

- One of the first signs of head lice is itching and scratching the head. Still, it's possible to have head lice without any symptoms.
- Adult lice, which are 2–4 mm long, are hard to see.
- The nits (eggs) are easier to see. Nits are greyish-white and oval shaped.
- Nits are firmly attached to the hair close to the scalp. They may look like dandruff but cannot be flicked off.

## How to check

Good lighting is important. Look for nits by parting hair in small sections, going from one side of the head to the other. Check carefully, looking close to the scalp.

## How can head lice be treated?

There are a number of very effective treatments for head lice. All the treatments contain an insecticide that kills the lice.

In Canada, three insecticides are approved for use in treating head lice:

- pyrethrin (found in R+C<sup>®</sup> shampoo/conditioner)
- permethrin (Nix<sup>®</sup> or Kwellada-P<sup>®</sup>)
- lindane (Hexit<sup>®</sup> or PMS-Lindane shampoo).

Pyrethrin and permethrin are quite safe to humans. Lindane, however, can be toxic. **Products with lindane should not be used on infants or young children.**

You don't need a prescription for these products. Follow package directions carefully.

## Should children with head lice stay home?

Children with head lice should be treated, and should attend school or child care as usual. They should avoid head-to-head contact with other children until the lice are gone.

Source: Canadian Paediatric Society



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# Incorporating Culture and Storytelling into Physical Activity

by Angie Noel

Through a partnership with Ontario's Ministry of Health Promotion, the Metis Nation of Ontario (MNO) is developing new resources to increase the physical activity levels of all age groups as a means of diabetes prevention.

One of the programs offered by the MNO's Community Sport Leader in Ottawa is a Tiny Tot Exercise Program, designed for children two to six years old. This age-appropriate circuit of activities to develop balance and coordination works particularly well in a child care environment.

In addition to the program's fitness focus, it allows children the opportunity to advance their cognitive and social skills. A cultural component of storytelling encourages children to learn through play.

Below are a few activities from this program that you can try in your own child care setting:

Arrange all the equipment in a circular pattern.

1) *Leap Frog*: Toddlers learn how to bend their knees and jump at the same time. This develops coordination and works ankles and leg muscles.

2) *Gallop and Go*: Children run, trot and jump at the same time. This develops coordination and all leg and buttocks muscles.

3) *Hop and Stomp*: Toddlers hop on two legs and stomp alternating from right to left foot. This develops buttocks, leg and ankle muscles and introduces the concept of "right" and "left."

4) *Balance Beam*: Set up a row of blocks or a beam and invite the children to walk across it one at a time. The beam should be at least four inches off the floor. This exercise teaches children about balance and gravity and requires them to use all body muscles.

5) *Clouds to Mother Earth*: In this exercise, the children reach up in the sky to grab at the clouds and then bend their knees to touch the ground. This exercise works all the muscle groups and develops coordination.

6) *Bean Bag Toss*: The children pick up and toss a bean bag into a hula hoop. This exercise strengthens their upper body, teaches them patience and develops hand-eye coordination.

7) *Wings that Fly*: Children run and flap their arms at the same time. The exercise works all body muscles and develops cardiovascular fitness.

8) *Stepping Stones*: Arrange large blocks two feet apart. The toddler steps up and down, again and again. This will work all muscle groups and helps develop balance.

9) *Chief of the Mountain*: Pile about 12 pillows on top of each other. The toddler climbs to the top and rolls down the other side. This activity works all body muscles and teaches children how to climb and how to fall by tucking and rolling.

The Tiny Tots program is one of many offered by the MNO, including an Aboriginal Healthy Babies Program that provides families at risk with culturally appropriate services through home visits during pregnancy, newborn to age six. Most programs and services are Métis funded, Métis run and open to everyone.

The MNO has a rich and established history. It was founded in 1993 and established as the representative organization reflecting the values and aspirations of the Métis of Ontario, the Métis being one of the Aboriginal peoples whose treaty and Aboriginal rights are recognized in Canada's Constitution.

More information about the MNO history and its programs and services can be found at [www.metisnation.org](http://www.metisnation.org).

Angie Noel is a community sport leader with the Métis Nation of Ontario's Sport Initiative. © CCCF 2006




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# Innovative Approaches in ECE

## An International Dialogue

*Interaction* is pleased to present this focus section, courtesy of guest editors, Alan Pence and Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw. Based at the School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria, they are part of an international movement of researchers, early childhood educators, children and communities that is re-thinking practice – to re-create learning and living spaces that respect young children's social and cultural contexts.

The authors who have contributed to this focus “share a view of children as capable and full of potential, as meaningful actors in their own learning. It is a view that moves beyond literacy, numeracy and school preparedness to embrace a more holistic image of the child and her possibilities ... The articles insist on the value of difference – where differences are welcome and sought after.”

This focus is sure to inspire you to broaden and deepen your understanding of quality in your own practice and in the larger field of early learning and child care.



## INNOVATIVE APPROACHES IN ECE

# Innovative Approaches in Early Childhood Education

## An International Dialogue

by **Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw**  
and **Alan Pence**

The theme for this issue of *Interaction* is innovative approaches in early childhood education. Innovative approaches refer to ideas that attempt to broaden and deepen discussions in the field. This issue addresses some of the following questions:

- Why is dialogue around diversity necessary and liberating?
- How can early childhood education be thought of as a space for social justice and ethical dialogue?
- How can we think of assessment and dialogue taking place together?
- What is our image of the child?
- How can early childhood educators engage in transformative practice?

The contributors to this issue are international leaders in the field of early childhood education and have been working in collaboration with early childhood educators, children and communities to re-think practice – to re-create learning and living spaces that respect young children's social and cultural contexts. The brief articles are based on discussions that took place among the contributors at the University of Victoria in August 2006 as part of a summit

entitled "Rethinking Pedagogy, Training and Professional Development in Early Childhood Education." The purposes of the two-day summit, funded through a grant by the British Columbia Ministry of Children and Family Development, were to do the following:

- Bring together a small group of international leaders in early childhood education who share a perspective of young children as meaningful knowledge makers to discuss training, professional development and pedagogical issues in the field.
- Explore ways to effect change at the policy, pedagogical and training levels.
- Support the development of a sophisticated field at local, provincial, national and international levels.
- Create meaningful dialogues between policymakers, early childhood educators and researchers.

Most of the authors identify with what has come to be termed the "Early Childhood Reconceptualist" movement. While that terminology grew out of critical theory perspectives in the U.S. in the early 1990s, it relates in a useful way to earlier discussions in Europe, developments in New Zealand in the early 1990s and more recent "equity and innovation" work in Australia. Canada has been influenced by such thinking through inspirations from Reggio Emilia and has rich possibilities springing from its multi-cultural sensitivities.

The articles featured in this issue share a view of children as capable and full of potential, as meaningful actors in their own learning. It is a view that moves beyond literacy, numeracy and school preparedness to embrace a more holistic image of the child and her possibilities. The authors refer to the importance of creating enjoyable and meaningful environments for learning for, and with, young children. They insist on moving away from what Reggio Emilia leader Carlina Rinaldi (2006) calls a "culture of normality," which has "the potential to create a widespread phenomenon of standardization" and "the construction of cultural stereotypes" (p. 139). The articles insist on the value of difference – where differences are welcome and sought after. As Carlina Rinaldi concisely puts it, "We need our differences" (p. 139).

The authors are faculty at the School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria, B.C.  
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### Did you know... ?

Volume 13 of the Canadian Child Care Federation series *Research Connections Canada*, was also edited by Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw and Alan Pence. This volume brings together eight articles that focus in depth on various themes that broaden and deepen discussions of quality. To order a copy online, visit the CCCF e-store at [www.cccf-fcsge.ca](http://www.cccf-fcsge.ca).



## INNOVATIVE APPROACHES IN ECE

# Reconceptualizing Early Childhood Education in North America

### A Brief Introduction

by **Beth Blue Swadener**  
and **Gaile Cannella**

The early stages of the reconceptualist movement in North American early childhood education drew from various conversations among scholars who were concerned about the dominance of psychology and child development theory and from an array of more critical, feminist, cross-cultural and postmodern perspectives in their work. Such reconceptualist scholars, like those in other fields, question the belief that scientific truths could be “discovered” about any individual or group of children and then applied to *all* children, no matter the culture, language, belief structure or physical life circumstances. In other words, the early work from reconceptualists in our field questioned the promotion of universal prescriptions for “best practice” and other “grand narratives.” Many of the reconceptualists based in the U.S. were doing antibias, full-inclusion or culture- and gender-focused research that sought to appreciate and support diversity in people, ideas and ways of being. We shared a concern about privileging particular sets of beliefs or forms of knowledge that can create power for certain groups of people and oppress others.



**Reconceptualist perspectives and methodologies are oriented to and argue for “hope and possibility as we move toward a newly evolving, liberating ‘third space,’ an early childhood dreamscape of social justice and equity”**

Much of the early U.S. reconceptualist scholarship challenged the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) *Guidelines for Developmentally Appropriate Practices* (1987), charging that the perspectives reflected were ethnocentric and that it ignored the range of life contexts and knowledges experienced by children from diverse cultural, ethnic, linguistic and value contexts. This relates to scholarship



that focuses on how ideas are created for some groups of people while other groups are judged and disqualified as lacking or labelled as disadvantaged or “at risk,” documenting patterns of power and privilege. These concerns have been addressed using different methods and forms of critique, including historical genealogy, theory juxtaposition, critical personal narrative and qualitative research that attends to the voices of people who are often under-represented or work done by members of these groups.

Early work in North America also addressed power and privilege related to poverty and the lives of young children, as well as community-identified challenges in indigenous early childhood education. That work resonated with similarly inspired work in other parts of the world; for example, work in Aotearoa/New Zealand, and more recently in North America and internationally, addresses the colonization of early childhood education through universal prescriptions for “quality” and through “decolonizing” methodologies. Researchers have also demonstrated children’s recognition of colonialist discourses, feminist methodologies and gender issues, as well as possibilities for transformational early childhood practices in a global context, just to name a few. Still other reconceptualist scholars have worked with metaphor, using improv (theatre) as metaphor and practice for interactions between caregivers and infants and toddlers (Lobman, 2003).

Partly in response to frustrations in finding appropriate outlets for dissemination of reconceptualist work in conferences and journals, the first *Reconceptualizing Early Childhood Research, Theory and Practice Conference* (RECE) was held in Madison, Wisconsin, in 1991. Since that time, conferences have been held in locations across the U.S. and in Australia, Norway and New Zealand. Recent meetings have drawn participants from over 15 countries and reconceptualists in France have held their own conference. In 1999, a Critical Perspectives on ECE special interest group was founded within the American Educational Research Association (AERA). Several publishing companies now devote an entire series to the scholarship of reconceptualizing early childhood education, and many of us have published work in a range of journals and implemented various forms of critical practice in education and public policy work. The range of scholarship, activism and involvement in reconceptualizing has provided new forms of reflective practice in the field of early childhood education, as reflected by other articles in this special issue.

Reconceptualist perspectives and methodologies are oriented to and argue for “hope and possibility as we move toward a newly evolving, liberating ‘third space,’ an early childhood dreamscape of social justice and equity” (Soto, 2000, p. 198). Many of us believe that to ensure an equal and emancipatory early childhood education for both children and adults, all educators who are concerned about children and the future of humanity and our work – practitioners and theorists, teachers and parents, reconceptualists and developmentalists – must join together and take action in solidarity.

Beth Blue Swadener and Gaile Cannella are professors of early childhood education at the Mary Lou Fulton College of Education, Arizona State University. © CCCF 2006

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## INNOVATIVE APPROACHES IN ECE

# Transforming Early Childhood Curriculum

## Educators Making Curriculum, Making Change

by Glenda MacNaughton

*Jenny: What do you think about the new curriculum framework?*

*Susan: Well, I'm not happy with its strong focus on literacy. I think there are other important things to focus on with young children.*

*Jenny: So, what will you do about literacy objectives?*

*Susan: Oh, I've been talking to the other teachers I work with. We are going to do some action research on how literacy might help our anti-bias goals. I've been reading about critical literacy and how literacy can be used to help children question what is fair or not fair in the world. I think it will help me to rethink what literacy looks like and what it means in my classroom.*

*Jenny: That sounds great. Can I be involved? I am really worried about whose voices are not being heard in our classroom at present and what I miss because of how I approach literacy with the children.*

Jenny and Susan represent an increasing number of early childhood educators who use action research to critique their



work in order to transform it. They are on a quest to produce more equitable, fair and justifiable ways of working with children by reshaping curriculum through questioning habitual practices and traditional early childhood knowledge. As Jungck and Marshall describe it:

Teachers whose curriculum intentions are transformative and whose interests are emancipatory struggle to create environments that are enabling, democratic and just. (Jungck & Marshall, 1992, p. 100)

Thus, transformative educators “confront and engage the world critically and challenge power relations” (Sleeter & McClaren, 1995, p. 7) to work for a more just society by challenging discrimination and its effects on learners and by opening up multiple possibilities for learners. Action research is a tool to help in this process.



**Transformative educators practice “a politics of diversity and self-affirmation.”**

Transformative educators practice “a politics of diversity and self-affirmation – in short, a cultural politics – not as an end in itself but in relation to a larger politics of liberation and social justice” (McClaren, 2002, p. 250). They do this by:

- changing curriculum ideas, practices, stories and emotions that oppress learners and produce inequality
- ensuring curriculum opens up possibilities for all children
- helping children to recognize and deal with what’s fair and unfair in their world
- creating a living democracy in the early childhood program
- building social action skills in children

The words of two early childhood critical educators offer ways to reflect on why transformative education is relevant in early childhood:

In my teachers, I have found that children who come from families who are struggling to survive economically, culturally, and politically can benefit from teaching practices that are rooted in critical theory because these children already have an awareness that all is not just in their world. (Goldstein, 2002, p. 179)

One of the most powerful lessons that I have learned is that even young children are able to reflect on issues that impact on their identity and their lives. The world of children is governed by the same values and beliefs that govern the world of adults. (Segura-Mora, 2002, p. 176)

Not every early childhood educator will choose to be a transformative educator. But those who know about the possibilities and practices of transformative education face a choice: to be actively involved in the transformation of inequalities in their work or implicitly involved in reproducing inequalities. Darder challenges us to think about this choice in the following way:

As teachers we are cultural workers, whether we are aware of it or not. If teachers don’t question the culture and values being promoted in the classroom, we socialize our students to accept the inequalities of our society along lines of race, class, gender, and ability. (Darder 2002: 171)

Glenda MacNaughton PhD, is the director of the Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood, Melbourne University, Australia.

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## INNOVATIVE APPROACHES IN ECE

# Reflections on Meaning Making with Early Childhood Educators

by **Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw,  
Enid Elliot and Ahna Berikoff**

In January 2006, we began a learning journey with two small groups of early childhood educators, one group in Vancouver and one group in Victoria. This is our story of some of the highlights of that shared experience. During the time the university-based researchers and the early childhood educators spent together, we all shared our ideas, theories, understandings and insights. We worked together and built relationships characterized by caring and empathy. We engaged one another in dialogue – listening, questioning and learning from one another.

As researchers, we set out to engage the early childhood educators in discussions we hoped would enhance the quality of the learning environments they were providing for young children. Our strategy was to begin by examining our assumptions and clarifying our understandings of terms such as “early learning” and “quality.” We asked complex questions designed for reflection, such as, how do we view young children? What is our role in early childhood settings? What are the characteristics of our relationships with parents? We discussed and debated perspectives that are often taken for granted. Together we identified the challenges that distract us from the essential, meaningful aspects of our work and acknowledged the struggles inherent in our jobs – the staffing issues, the morale problems, the everyday pressures. In the



process of sharing our stories about our work with young children and their families, all of us shifted our perspectives. We all experienced ruptures in our ideas and perspectives, as well as unexpected surprises and joy of learning with others. We shared moments infused with puzzlement, frustration, laughter and tears. It was an opportunity “to create a disturbance, to avoid stagnation, and to continue to challenge ourselves and others” (Lyon, Osborne, Carducci, Schendorf-Klinger & Matul, 2006, p. 16).

We did not enter the relationships with the early childhood educators assuming we would be informing them *how* to create high quality environments for young children. We questioned the prevailing approach to “professional development” and the assumption that academics can teach early childhood educators how to create high-quality early childhood education. Instead, we were informed by Carlina Rinaldi’s (2006) description of professional development:

In fact, personal and professional development, like education, should not be seen as static or unchangeable qualities, achieved once and for



all, but rather as a process, an ongoing path that we follow from birth throughout our lives, now more than ever. Personal and professional development and education are something we construct ourselves in relation with others, based on values that are chosen, shared and constructed together. It means living and living ourselves in a permanent state of research. (p. 137)

Our journey was characterized by relationship-building, mutual support and collaboration among all of us. Sharing our knowledge, our questions and our experiences was exciting, interesting and informative. Everyone contributed and everyone benefited. We learned from the early childhood educators and they learned from each other. Everyone brought ideas, theories, concepts and challenges to share. Because our sessions happened over a ten-month period, we were able to build enough trust to discuss controversial issues; people had different opinions and perspectives on the subjects we discussed. The conversations did not attempt to achieve consensus. These differences were welcomed and enriched our discussions. Carlina Rinaldi (2006) has summarized this approach to teaching and learning:

In order to educate ourselves, we must try to understand differences rather than wanting to cancel them. This means approaching each individual in terms of his or her background and personal story, with great sensitivity. It means “listening” to the differences (what we refer to as “the pedagogy of listening”) but also listening to and accepting the changes that take place within us, which are generated by our relationships, or better, by our interactions with others. It means letting go of any truths that we consider to be absolute, being open to doubt and giving value to negotiation as a strategy of the possible. All of this means—or more precisely, can mean—greater possibilities for us to change, but without making us feel displaced or that we have lost something. (p. 140)

We were fortunate to collaborate with early childhood educators working in a variety of child care settings that reflect ethnic, cultural and even economic diversity. The unique challenges and successes in each setting were made visible along our journey together.

Allowing differences to co-exist helped to create an atmosphere of trust and openness to new ideas. We endeavored to listen with openness to the views expressed by all of the participants. By the end of our journey, we

were able to discuss issues, such as racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination. We examined these issues through diverse lenses and shared thoughts and feelings that usually remain unstated. Our conversations were revealing of ourselves. We were able to state our perspectives, be honest with one another and express ourselves. We all listened carefully and reflected on the discussions. We connected with one another on a deep interpersonal level. All of us experienced being learners together, unsure of the direction each session would take but aware that we were beginning important discussions. One of the most salient features of the collaboration was the network of relationships that developed and the sincere intention to maintain those relationships in future work together. The excitement of working together in the future lies in the fact that we do not know what that may look like and are open to new possibilities and new stories in the field of early childhood learning.

Bringhurst (1999) reminds us that “a story is not a solid object or a solitary entity but a transformative relationship” (p. 47). The stories that were told and discussed by this project’s participants grew out of relationships between researchers and early childhood educators. These relationships were integral to our own professional development. When the early childhood educators tell the stories about their experiences with the project, it is our hope that they too will conclude that it was the beginning of a remarkable learning journey.

The Investigating Quality Project was funded by the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development. © CCCF 2006

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### Did you know... ?

In the fall 2006 issue of *Interaction*, Alan Pence and Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw wrote an article entitled “The Investigating ‘Quality’ Project: Challenges and Possibilities for Canada.” The article describes the IQ project and how it is working with diverse streams of research and practice in order to broaden and deepen early childhood discussions in Canada. For more information, or to order a copy, visit the CCCF e-store at [www.cccf-fcsge.ca](http://www.cccf-fcsge.ca).





## RESEARCH UPDATES

### Many Parents Out of Touch with Their Children's Health

Results of an Ipsos-Reid poll commissioned by the Canadian Medical Association as part of the organization's annual report card on the state of the Canadian health care system show that many Canadian parents are in denial about the state of their children's health. Only 9 per cent of parents perceived their children as overweight, however a recent Statistics Canada report states that 26 per cent of children under 18 are overweight or obese. At least 40 per cent of parents give their children an A grade in physical health, yet only 6 per cent believe that the overall health of Canadian children qualifies for an A. To read the full report card, visit [www.cma.ca](http://www.cma.ca).

### Nutrition of Canadian Children Falling Short

According to the Canadian Community Health Survey: Nutrition, a poll of the diet habits of over 35,000 people, most children are not consuming the recommended daily servings of healthy food. Seven out ten children aged four to eight eat less than five servings of vegetables and fruit, the minimum number of servings recommended in Canada's *Food Guide to Healthy Eating for People Four Years Old and Over*. More than 30 per cent of children aged four to nine don't consume the recommended two servings of milk products a day. The report also found that while food consumption among adults is linked to household income, the same is not as true for children. Full results of the survey can be found at [www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca).

### Reports Debate Benefits of Universal Child Care Programs

According to a recent report by the C.D. Howe Institute, the federal and provincial governments should disregard calls for universal child care and instead invest in reasonable quality child care programs for "at risk" children. The report, "Let's Walk before We Run: Cautionary Advice on Childcare," calls into question the benefits of child care programs to children from stable, middle-class families, claiming that only children from low-income or single-parent families clearly benefit.

In response to the C.D. Howe report, the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) issued a report that points to research that consistently demonstrates the positive effects of quality care on all children, regardless of family income or other vulnerability factors. As well, BC's ongoing study of school readiness shows that 24 per cent of all children in BC are at risk for school failure, with high percentages present in some middle- and upper-middle-class neighbourhoods.

The C.D. Howe report is available at [www.cdhowe.org](http://www.cdhowe.org); read HELP's commentary at [www.earlylearning.ubc.ca](http://www.earlylearning.ubc.ca).

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## ACROSS CANADA AND BEYOND

### International

Save the Children released its annual *State of the World's Mothers Report*, detailing the best and worst places to be a mother and child. The report includes a Mother's Index, which ranks the status of mothers and children in 125 countries based on 10 indicators relating to health and education. Scandinavian countries came out on top while countries in sub-Saharan Africa filled out the bottom spots. Canada ranked ninth on the list, ahead of the United States, in tenth place, yet below Australia and the Netherlands, which tied for eighth.

Britain has implemented the Childcare Act, legislation that outlines the duty of local authorities to improve the outcomes of all children up to age five and reduce inequalities between them by ensuring early childhood services are integrated to maximize access and benefits to families; assess the local child care market and to secure sufficient child care for working parents; provide information to parents among other responsibilities. The Bill also reforms early years regulation for a new integrated education and care quality framework for preschool children. Its main provisions are expected to come into effect in 2008.

### National

The federal government has formed a ministerial advisory committee to provide counsel on the creation of the Child Care Spaces Initiative, the government's plan to create new child care spaces across Canada. Diane Finley, Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, appointed Gordon Chong to chair the nine-member committee. Chong is currently Chair of the Social Housing Services Corporation. He has worked on issues affecting communities including transit, housing and policing, with particular emphasis on the city of Toronto. The committee also includes Don Giesbrecht, CCCF's executive director. The committee will submit a formal report with recommendations to the Minister, but has no decision-making power or responsibility for implementation. Through this initiative, the federal government has promised to create up to 25,000 spaces per year through \$250-million in grants and tax credits to businesses and community groups that create spaces. A maximum of \$10,000 is available for each new space created.

Throughout the summer and fall, officials from Human Resources and Social Development also met with stakeholders from across the country in provincial/territorial meetings regarding the Child Care Spaces Initiative. Most CCCF affiliate organizations took part in these consultations, bringing forward concerns specific to their jurisdictions.

A poll commissioned by the Department of Human Resources and Social Development shows that many Canadians believe the \$1,200 annual child care benefit will not affect parents' child care choices. Sixteen focus groups of 10 people each from across Canada provided feedback on the government's benefit plan, which gives monthly payments to parents for each child under six. A report of the poll's results states that the general consensus among participants was that the money will likely be used to help with the "next bill" or with costs associated with children's extracurricular activities. Results also contradicted the common belief that immigrant families are wary of institutionalized child care; many immigrant parents who participated valued some formal early childhood education, recognizing the linguistic and cultural challenges their children may face when beginning school.

Minister of Finance Jim Flaherty has appointed a panel of health and physical fitness experts to advise on which programs should qualify for the children's fitness tax credit. The \$500 tax credit, which was announced in the 2006 federal budget, will come into effect beginning January 1, 2007. It can be claimed by parents with children under 16 who are enrolled in physical activity programs.

### Alberta

The Alberta government received 575 responses to its child care spaces survey, drawing feedback from employers, businesses, child care operators and parents. The consultation, which sought respondents' opinions on where spaces should be created and how best to create them, will be shared with the federal government to help inform its Child Care Spaces Initiative.

### British Columbia

Linda Reid, provincial minister of state for child care, announced a one-time \$2-million grant through the Vancity Community Foundation. The foundation will work with the Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia (ECEBC) to direct the funding to professional development opportunities in the child care sector.

The British Columbia Ministry for Children and Family Development has allocated \$40-million in grants to two funds to help families of children with special needs. The funds will help families buy equipment, convert vehicles and renovate homes to meet special needs. The Family Independence Fund will receive \$30-million of the funding, while the Children and

Youth with Special Needs Supports Fund will receive the remaining \$10-million.

### New Brunswick

Provincial Liberal leader Shawn Graham led his party to a majority government in the September 18<sup>th</sup> election. In Graham's election platform, he pledged to make several improvements to benefit early learning and child care. He promised to double the number of spaces for infants in licensed child care centres, establish a New Beginnings Program to focus on prenatal and postnatal care for mothers and babies, improve wages and benefits for child care workers to attract and retain qualified staff and provide \$2-million in annual funding and establish Moncton Headstart as a centre of excellence for upgrading the skills of early learning practitioners, among others.

Government departments, non-government organizations, private sector agencies and others in the province have joined together to form a broad coalition dedicated to reducing children's exposure to environmental contaminants that cause disability, disease or death. Led by the New Brunswick Environmental Network, the group will be modelled after the New Brunswick Anti-Tobacco Coalition, which encourages inclusion and mutual cooperation.

### Nova Scotia

The Nova Scotia government has announced a new low-income pharmacare program for children. The program, which according to Premier Rodney MacDonald will cost \$1 million this year and \$2-million next, began October 1. It will provide drug prescription coverage for 35,000 children whose families earn less than \$20,921 and receive the Nova Scotia Child Benefit.

### Ontario

After a meeting with Human Resources Minister Diane Finley, Ontario Children's Minister Mary Anne Chambers released a follow-up letter outlining her concerns with the federal government's Child Care Spaces Initiative. Minister Chambers notes in her letter that previous provincial efforts to create new spaces using tax incentives to businesses failed. She noted that it costs about \$18,000 to create the average child care space in Ontario – \$8,000 more than tax incentives would provide. To ensure spaces were affordable to families, ongoing operating costs in the amount of about \$75-million per year for 10,000 spaces would be required annually.

This fall, some Ontario school boards have benefited from the province's Best Start program, receiving millions of dollars in funds to upgrade facilities. The Lambton Kent District School Board alone received \$6-million under Best Start. The funding has been used to create wrap-around facilities, where rooms are



renovated to have a separate entrance and washroom facilities for before- and after-school programs. Some school boards in the province have also received funding under the Good Places to Learn project, which funds infrastructure upgrades such as replacing boilers and doing electrical work.

### Prince Edward Island

Approximately 90 per cent of child care programs in the province have increased their rates to reflect the federal government's child care benefit of \$100 taxable payments to parents with children under six. Rates across Prince Edward Island average \$41 a day for infants and between \$22 and \$28 a day for children aged two to five.

Members of the Early Childhood Development Association and their boards have been consulting with the government to review changes to the Child Care Facilities Act and Regulations of PEI. The changes are expected to enter the legislature in spring 2007.

### Saskatchewan

The government of Saskatchewan has announced the implementation of a new Child Care Subsidy rate structure that will mean increased subsidies for full-time care and new part-time subsidies for part-time care (90 hours or less per month). This is the third subsidy increase since 2003 and the largest single-year increase in the program's history. The new structure also features "tiered rates," which allow higher subsidies in communities with higher average fees. Rates have been set to cover 85 per cent of the average fees charged for particular types of care within each tier.

### Quebec

On August 31, new provincial regulations went into effect, restricting subsidized child care centres in Quebec from charging parents more than \$7 a day for each child. Previously, for-profit child care programs in the province had the option of charging above the \$7 if parents chose to enrol their children in extra activities, such as dance or music. The new regulations will affect approximately 1,500 centres, which serve almost 197,000 children in public, family and private settings.

Public sector pay equity settlements providing wage increases for 18,000 school-age and 25,000 community-based child care workers were announced by the Quebec government in the summer and fall. The adjustments for the school-age sector of 3.8 per cent for supervisory level employees and 10.6 per cent for school-age child care workers are retroactive to November 21, 2001. The settlement is part of a \$630-million final pay equity deal that will affect about 326,000

women and men in the health and education sectors. These sectors are traditionally female-dominated.

### Yukon

In August, the Yukon Child Care Association organized the largest rally ever in Yukon to let Prime Minister Harper know that quantity of spaces is not the territory's major issue – recruitment and retention of child care practitioners is. This message was reinforced in a panel of day care centre owners, staff and parents who held a news conference at Yukon College. According to the panel, low wages are making it hard to attract and keep accredited staff, which is affecting all child care centres. Government regulations stipulate that 50 per cent of staff at licensed early childhood education centres must possess level one ECE accreditation; 20 per cent must have level three. The panel claimed that in Whitehorse alone, as many as 98 per cent of centres are non-compliant, and many will be forced to close.

## CALENDAR

### JANUARY

#### 25 – 26

##### Toronto, Ontario

##### Partnership in Action: Building Our Children's Future

Celebrate and learn from research, effective practices, action and partnerships at this conference, which will feature the following sessions: Impact of the EDI; Every Child Ready to Read Program; Building Community Capacity Leads to Successful Inclusion; Playing and Learning; Social Inclusion and Policy Priorities; Children's Rights and The Environment; Quality by Design; Moving Toward Healthy Schools: Essential Partnerships; Gender, Literacy and the Early Years: What are the Implications? Speakers include David Booth, Dr. Michael Ungar, Dr. Sheela Basrur, Dr. Fraser Mustard and Terrellyn Fearn. For more information, visit [www.thelearningpartnership.ca/kwb/conference\\_jan07.htm](http://www.thelearningpartnership.ca/kwb/conference_jan07.htm) or contact Valerie Sterling at [vsterling@thelearningpartnership.ca](mailto:vsterling@thelearningpartnership.ca) or telephone: 416-440-5121.

#### 26 – 27

##### Halifax, Nova Scotia

##### Caring Connection Conference and Trade Show

This conference, hosted by Child Care Connection Nova Scotia ([www.cccns.org](http://www.cccns.org)), is attended by around 200 members of the child care community, including practitioners, administrators, and members of child care

organizations and associations from across Atlantic Canada. The conference includes eight workshops on various topics impacting the child care community, a trade show of over 30 exhibitors of interest to the delegates, a reception and fundraising auction, and a luncheon with keynote speaker Dr. Carol Anne Wien. The conference is meant to give professionals in the child care field the opportunity to network and connect with their colleagues, while gaining important skills and knowledge to help them in providing the highest quality care possible. For more information, contact (902) 423-8199 or [cccns@istar.ca](mailto:cccns@istar.ca).

### FEBRUARY

#### 19 – 21

##### Scarborough, Ontario

##### Best Start Resource Centre Annual Conference

The Best Start Annual Conference is informative, practical and responsive to the training and information needs of health promoters. Among the highlights of this year's conference will be the launch of the Best Start Resource Centre Postpartum Mood Disorder Campaign, a province-wide effort to raise issues, share resources and promote early and effective intervention strategies for families with a new baby who are living with postpartum mood disorders. For more information, visit [www.beststart.org](http://www.beststart.org).

### MARCH

#### 26 – 28

##### Toronto, Ontario

##### Spring Forward! Success By 6 Peel National Conference

Presented in conjunction with the Council for Early Child Development, the conference will provide a forum to discuss and examine current research, programs and practices promoting optimal early child development outcomes. It will offer all individuals and organizations working with children 0 to 6 years and their families an opportunity to learn about a broad range of collaborative models in communities across Canada.

The 2007 conference program will consist of a mix of keynote addresses and other significant plenary sessions by top-level experts in the early childhood development, social services and education sectors. There will also be ample opportunity to take part in a variety of participatory breakouts and networking sessions. More information is available at [www.successby6peel.ca](http://www.successby6peel.ca).



## APRIL

11 – 14

### Toronto, Ontario

#### Community-Campus Partnerships for Health 10th Anniversary Conference: "Mobilizing Partnerships for Social Change"

How do we combine the knowledge and wisdom in communities and in academic institutions to solve the major health, social and economic challenges facing our society? How do we ensure that community-driven social change is central to service-learning and community-based participatory research? Community-Campus Partnerships for Health (CCPH) will address these issues and more during its 10th anniversary conference. The conference seeks to nurture a growing network of community-campus partnerships that are striving to achieve the systems and policy changes needed to address the root causes of health, social and economic inequalities, and to build knowledge, skills and actions for achieving healthy and just societies. For more information, visit [www.ccpb.info](http://www.ccpb.info).

20 – 27

### Montreal, Quebec

#### International Meeting on Indigenous Child Health

This meeting will provide an opportunity for those who provide care to American Indian, Alaska Native, First Nations, Inuit, and Metis children and youth to come together to share, support, network, and build partnerships to improve indigenous child health care. This meeting is a collaborative effort between the American Academy of Pediatrics; the Canadian Paediatric Society; the Indian Health Service; the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch, Health Canada; the Association of American Indian Physicians; the Metis National Council and others. Additional conference information can be found at [www.aap.org/nach](http://www.aap.org/nach) or [www.cps.ca](http://www.cps.ca).

## JUNE

15 – 17

### Halifax, Nova Scotia

#### Set Sail for Quality on an Ocean of Caring

Join early learning practitioners, researchers, licensers, consultants and trainers at this national conference in Halifax. Speakers and workshops will explore new and innovative means and approaches to enrich the quality of your ELCC programs. This is an opportunity to expand the dialogue on quality and to celebrate and learn from each other.

There will be pre-conference sessions, workshops, centre visits, a trade show, and lots of fun and down-east entertainment! Confirmed keynotes are Margie Carter, Deb Curtis, Dr. Richard E. Tremblay, Dr. Alan Pence, and Dr. Peter Moss. French workshops will be available; keynotes and some English workshops will be translated for Acadian and Francophone colleagues. For more information, visit [www.cccns.org/ocean.html](http://www.cccns.org/ocean.html).

## RESOURCES

### Putting Health Promotion into Action: A Resource for Early Learning and Child Care Settings (2006)

This document, from Ontario's Best Start Resource Centre, explores how we define health in Canada, examines how we view our health system and evaluates how it works in keeping Canadians healthy. It focuses on identifying the determinants of health as well as describing health promotion and its importance to the child care sector. It aims to help practitioners recognize ways they are already promoting health in their programs, and to learn new strategies to strengthen the health promotion aspect of their work. A useful checklist helps practitioners identify areas to start or focus their efforts on health promotion. The complete document can be downloaded or ordered at [www.beststart.org](http://www.beststart.org).

### Building a Community Architecture for Early Learning Childhood and Care (2006)

This report is the result of a three-year project undertaken by YWCA Canada in collaboration with Social Development Canada to explore effective models of comprehensive, integrated early learning and child care programs. The project investigated four locations across Canada (Martensville, Saskatchewan; Halifax, Nova Scotia; Cambridge, Ontario; and Vancouver, British Columbia), chosen to represent a range of communities (small to large, rural to urban). Task forces comprised of key stakeholders – child care, education, health, special needs, Aboriginal organizations, labour and business – worked together to plan a comprehensive system that meets the principles of quality, universally accessibility, affordability and developmental care. While the study sites worked independently of one another, their conclusions were remarkably similar. They all identified the same types of challenges for

families, service providers and communities; developed comparable service plans to address the deficiencies; and made the same recommendations to senior governments to rectify problems and move forward. From these findings, YWCA suggests that a single policy framework supporting quality and accessibility is essential. See [www.ywca.ca](http://www.ywca.ca) for more information.

### The Centre of Knowledge on Healthy Child Development Website (2006)

[www.knowledge.offordcentre.com](http://www.knowledge.offordcentre.com)

The Offord Centre for Child Studies has launched a new website dedicated to providing the latest and best information on child mental health problems and the influences that shape the developmental health and well being of children and youth. Topics covered include disorders, behaviour problems and life circumstances that can have a significant impact on children's health and well being. The site also offers recommended reading materials for families, teachers and clinicians.

### CPHA Assessment Toolkit for Bullying, Harassment and Peer Relations at School (2004)

The Canadian Public Health Association (CPHA) has created this toolkit that recognizes bullying, harassment and racial discrimination as major public health concerns. The kit is designed for teachers, school administrators and ministries of education to address needs identified in the CPHA Safe School Study, which examined incidences of bullying, harassment and racism in seven Canadian schools in 2003. It provides a standard way to measure the nature and prevalence of school peer relationship problems, standards for quality programs and a common set of tools to assess the impact of school-based programs. To read the full toolkit, visit [www.cpha.ca](http://www.cpha.ca).

### Understanding Attachment and Attachment Disorders: Theory, Evidence and Practice (2006)

This book, by Vivien Prior and Danya Glaser, investigates evidence on attachment, attachment disorders and the influence of attachment on development. Grounded in attachment theory and a scientific evidence base, the authors explore the relationship between caregiving and attachment, discuss cross-cultural issues surrounding attachment and call for a disciplined, scientific approach to examining attachment disorders. For more information, visit [www.jkp.com](http://www.jkp.com).