Interaction

VOLUME 22, NUMBER 2, FALL 2008

Child Care and Families:
Partners for Children's Social Well-Being – Part 2

To Time-Out or Not?

Partnering to Enhance Children's Self-Esteem

PUBLICATION OF THE CANADIAN CHILD CARE FEDERATION

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Interaction

Volume 22, Number 2, Fall 2008

Supporting Our Children's Social Well-Being: It's a Team Effort – Part 2 (see page 25)

Partnership with parents for social development – part two

Departments

Four new resource sheets accompany this issue:

#89 *Parents as Partners: Enhancing Self-Esteem*

#90 *Problem-Solving Skills: Enhancing Children's Social-Emotional Well-Being and Resilience*

#91 *Families and Practitioners: Working Collaboratively to Support Cultural Identity in Young Children*

#92 *Encouraging Aboriginal Cultural Identity at Home and in Child Care*

The photo on the front cover was taken by Mickey MacGillivray of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan.

OPINIONS

Behind the Scenes

As I write this column, it's summertime in Canada. Politics fade into the distance making way for painterly sunsets and campfire s'mores. In the US, however, the presidential race is moving full steam ahead and it's hard not to get caught up in the excitement. For many Americans, Barack Obama is a symbol of change and hope. To me, he exemplifies the importance of cultural identity, self-esteem and resilience. Senator Obama is an African-American, raised by a single parent, yet has believed that he could one day be President.

Whether or not you're caring for a child who could be the next world leader, you do have a unique opportunity to make a difference in children's social well-being – by encouraging strong cultural identity, self-esteem and resiliency skills. Your contribution is even more significant when done in partnership with the child's family. Find out how to work together with families in the focus section which presents Part 2 of a series of CCCF resources on practitioner-family partnerships to enhance children's social well-being (see *Interaction*, Vol. 22, No. 1 for Part 1 of this series).

The Ideas section presents a thought-provoking look at the "time-out" and questions this popular behaviour guidance technique.

Finally, with this issue, I step out from "behind the scenes" of *Interaction*. It has been my honour to bring you *Interaction* over the past five years. The magazine is in the capable hands of Claire McLaughlin, who will continue to bring you inspiring stories from early learning and child care settings across Canada.

Lana Crossman

Erratum

The photographer of the photo used on the cover of the spring 2008 issue of *Interaction* was incorrectly identified. Our apologies to **Anni Kolbe**, the actual photographer, for this error.

Interaction

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Canadian Child Care Federation
Fédération canadienne des services de garde à l'enfance

Inside the Federation

Member of CCCF's Leaders Circle Awarded Order of Canada

CCCF congratulates the Honourable Landon Pearson for her appointment to the Order of Canada, one of the country's most prestigious awards. Landon was appointed an officer of the Order of Canada "for her commitment and leadership in advocating for the rights of children and youth, nationally and internationally, for more than four decades." A former senator, she is currently head of the Pearson Resource Centre for the Study of Childhood and Children's Rights at Carleton University. Landon is a strong supporter of CCCF and quality early learning and child care. We are proud to count her as a member of our Leaders Circle!

Editor's Desk

Farewell…

Lana Crossman – CCCF's Communications Manager is no longer with the Federation. Lana had been with the CCCF for five years and quickly became known as the cornerstone of quality for *Interaction* and *Interaction.ca*. Co-workers, colleagues and CCCF members wish Lana much success in her new position with the Canada Council for the Arts.

Welcome…

Claire McLaughlin – On July 28th, Claire joined the CCCF as Publications Manager. Claire comes from a background of journalism, communications and international travel and development work. Claire's two children keep her busy and abreast of early learning and child care issues as they both attend child care in Wakefield, Quebec. The Federation is truly delighted to welcome Claire to this position and look forward to her first issue of *Interaction* and *Interaction.ca*.

Welcome to New Member Council Reps

CCCF welcomes three new representatives to its Member Council table, effective August 1, 2008.

- Vi-Anne Zirnhelt of the Early Childhood Educators of BC
- Karen Ohlson of the Manitoba Child Care Association
- Allen Murray of the Society of Yukon Family Day Homes

We also wish to thank the outgoing representatives Toni Hoyland, Caryn Lafleche and Karen Macklon, respectively, on behalf of CCCF during their tenure. Their great work over the years to the CCCF has been invaluable.

Keep Your Files Safe *and* Support CCCF!

Worried about the safety of your electronic files? Think of the consequences of losing important information and privacy details about the families at your child care program.

A Winnipeg-based company, Seerx, offers a service called GotData™ that provides secure back-up of files and off-site storage at a reasonable cost. Now, through a special partnership, whenever a CCCF member uses GotData™, the company will donate a percentage of its proceeds back to CCCF. For more details, visit the CCCF website (www.qualitychildcarecanada.ca) and click on the Got Data™ ad.

INSIDE THE FEDERATION

Numeracy Survey – It All Adds Up to New Resources for CCCF Members!

Thank you to all who took the time to participate in our online survey on numeracy and early learning. Congratulations to the four survey participants who won $75 gift certificates from Wintergreen Learning Materials. Some one thousand early learning and child care practitioners replied, providing information on their awareness and attitudes on numeracy learning and techniques and activities they use in their practice. Based on these responses, CCCF and Carleton University are partnering to develop resources, to be launched with the spring 2009 issue of *Interaction*, which will help you incorporate numeracy into your program. This project is funded by the Canadian Council on Learning and the Canadian Language & Literacy Research Network. See page 12 for more details on the survey results.

Free New Tools on Early Aggression

The Early Childhood Learning Knowledge Centre (ECLKC), in collaboration with Invest in Kids, created cards specifically designed for parents of children from birth to age five. A set of three *Comfort, Play & Teach™* cards, each focusing on a different age group, will provide information, positive parenting recommendations and ideas on how to address young children's aggressive behaviour. When put into action, comfort, play and teach, three core interactions between parents and their children, can have tremendous effect on a child's development.

The cards will be available in the fall on ECLKC website: www.ccl-cca.ca/childhoodlearning.

Online Courses Not Offered this Year

Due to limited resources, CCCF is not able to offer its *Meeting the Challenge Online* and *Family Child Care Training Online* courses this year. Thank you to everyone who expressed an interest in these courses. We're keeping your names on hand and will notify you if we are able to offer the courses at a later date.

Children's Social Well-Being: It's a Team Effort – Part II

In the last issue of *Interaction*, CCCF launched the first set of resources created to enhance practitioner-family partnerships to improve children's social well-being. Articles, resource sheets and online workshops (offered on the CCCF website as free downloadable pdfs) were created around the themes of building partnerships, working together to support positive behaviour and supporting language and literacy at home and in child care. Now, we are pleased to present the second set of resources – also in the form of articles, resource sheets and online workshops – based on the themes of **partnering to enhance children's self-esteem, cultural identity and problem-solving (resiliency) skills**. Check out this issue for the articles and resource sheets. Don't forget to download the free workshops – they include everything you need to host a learning event with your staff or to the wider community. If you host an event, be sure to send us the evaluations to receive free posters for your program.

Who's Counting?

Congratulations to the four winners of $75 gift certificates from Wintergreen (www.wintergreen.ca).

- Allison Simard, Winnipeg, MB
- Haley Dubrule, North Battleford, SK
- Janice Oikle, Halifax, NS
- Olayemi Okunnu, Winnipeg, MB

Thanks to all for your participation in this important survey.

WINTERGREEN
LEARNING MATERIALS

National Child Care Conference 2008 in B.C. Highlights International Perspectives on Early Child Care and Education

Don Giesbrecht,
President of CCCF at Gala

Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia's (ECEBC) 37th Annual Conference, held May 29 - 31, 2008 in Richmond, B.C. brought together a myriad of Canadian and international perspectives on child care research and practices to some 750 delegates. Co-sponsored by ECEBC, the Canadian Child Care Federation and University of Victoria School of Child and Youth Care, the conference explored "Bridging Children and Communities." The 2009 conference, to be co-hosted with the Manitoba Child Care Association, is planned for May 28-30 in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

(left to right at table) Sheila Davidson, Executive Director of Early Childhood Educators of BC. (ECEBC), Carol Anne Wien, Canadian keynote speaker, Alan Pence, Professor of Child Care at the University of Victoria, Sandra Griffin

Mary Dolan, winner of the Gayle Davies Award for excellence in early childhood care and education

Performance night at Gala with Pied Pumpkin

Jamie Kass of CUPE

Conference Workshop at ECEBC

FROM WHERE I SIT

Dear CCCF Members,

The **Canadian Child Care Federation** is proud to count you as one of our 11,000 members. Most of you are members because you have joined one of our 20 affiliate organizations. About 500 – individuals, students and organizations – are direct (national) members of CCCF. For over 20 years, we have together made tremendous progress in having the CCCF and its affiliates recognized as **leaders in early learning**.

In the past 1½ years however, we've faced serious challenges as a sector and as an organization. As you know, with the election of the current federal government, political priorities changed dramatically. Not only were the bilateral agreements on early learning and child care cancelled, so was the funding that has supported CCCF and other national organizations concerned with healthy child development. This is funding that has throughout the years helped us to create valuable resources for the sector and to bridge the gap between member fees and the true cost of serving our members.

CCCF is too important to early learning and child care in Canada to be dependant on the funding whims of the government of the day. While we have continued to work diligently on diversifying the funding and revenue base of the CCCF, in order to move forward we need our member fees to cover more fully the cost of running the organization.

It is for this reason that the CCCF Board has taken the decision to raise member fees by $10 effective January 1, 2009. For those who are members through an affiliate organization, this means that the portion of your provincial/territorial membership fee that your organization pays to CCCF will increase from $15 to $25. For this reason you may see a $10 increase in the membership charged by your provincial/territorial organization. If you're a national member, you'll notice the $10 increase when you renew your membership.

We assure you raising member fees was *not* our first choice to increase revenue and we have made significant expenditure cuts over the past 1½ years: reducing office space, letting go of ¾ of CCCF staff, cutting *Interaction* printing and mailing costs by ½. But now, one fundamental question must be posed to our membership: Do you believe that having a credible, professional national voice for early learning and child care is not only important, but necessary?

We're asking that you show your commitment to your national professional organization, and stand up to the devaluing of our sector and the crucial work we do for all Canadians that is happening due to political posturing. All this for a mere 83 cents per month… less than a cup of coffee. ***Note that this is only the second time in 10 years that we have raised our affiliate member fees.***

Despite our current funding situation, the CCCF remains a relevant force in early learning and child care with a strong future. Through a diplomatic and reasoned approach to government relations we have positioned ourselves as a key national, non-partisan organization that the federal government can call on for advice on issues relating to early learning and child care, making CCCF one of the few national organizations that the government continues to consult on issues affecting our sector. We have a fund development plan in place and are confident that support from corporate and foundation sponsors will steadily grow. We are proud of the evidence-based products we've been able to provide to our members (just this year we've provided free resources on language and literacy and children's social well-being to all members) and that we will continue to provide in the months to come.

Now is the time when we need your support more than ever to ensure that what has taken all of us 20 years to build does not falter at a time when it is needed most. Together we're stronger. Together our organizations can make a difference in achieving excellence in early learning and child care and our members will benefit from a stronger, more sustainable national organization.

Don Giesbrecht
President, CCCF

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Our Children, Our Ways: Early Childhood Education in First Nations and Inuit Communities

Told through beautiful images and in voices of Elders, parents and caregivers, this series emphasizes the importance of programs for children that reflect the values, experiences, language and priorities of their communities.

Titles in the series are:

- Childcare in Our Communities
- Speaking Our Languages
- Exploring the Natural World
- Music and Dance
- Telling Stories, Reading Books
- Supporting Children's Art

Programs can be ordered individually or as a set.

Family Resource Programs

A series of programs that celebrate the diversity, scope and value of family resource programs across Canada.

Titles in the series are:

- Supporting Communities
- Supporting Babies
- Supporting the Early Years
- Supporting Families

Programs are available in English and French and can be ordered individually or as a set.

Emergent Curriculum–A Machines Project

This program depicts a realistic and entertaining example of an emergent curriculum project.

For more information and to order visit
www.rrc.mb.ca/ece

Prime Minister's Awards Honours Top ECEs

During a national ceremony in Ottawa on May 15, 2008, the Honourable Monte Solberg, Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, congratulated the 2007 award recipients for excellence in early childhood education and in teaching.

Early childhood educators and teachers from elementary and secondary schools from across the country were rewarded for their achievement and successful innovative teaching practices. This year, 10 early childhood educators received the Certificate of Excellence and 18 received the Certificate of Achievement for their work, accomplishments and dedication to our children.

The Prime Minister's Certificates of Excellence – a national award – are awarded to the 15 top-ranked nominees while the Certificates of Achievement – a regional award – go to the next 50 top-ranked nominees. Each recipient has carefully been selected by a committee of early learning practitioners and other education stakeholders. Additional information is available at www.pma-ppm.ic.gc.ca.

— Valérie Bell

CCCF congratulates the 2007 early childhood PM's Award recipients:

Certificate of Excellence

Alberta
Terri Calder

British Columbia
Kim Atkinson
Jennifer Durkin
Brenda Rempel
Glenda Treffry-Goatley

Manitoba
Vivian Scott

Northwest Territories
Celeste Goulet

Nova Scotia
Bobbi-Lynn Keating

Ontario
Lori Kanters

Quebec
Geneviève Whittom

Certificate of Achievement

Alberta
Christopher Jones

British Columbia
Christine Braunagel
Lisa James
Tania Lucich
Gillian Crawley
Annabelle Cutting
Debra Esposito
Paola Filippin
Mary Kelly
Olga Toth

Nova Scotia
Cheryl Benedict
Amani Omar
Joann Sweet

Ontario
Sandra Copenace
Leslie Cunningham
Maurice Sweeney
Kim Smukavic

Quebec
Mélanie Leblanc

Joann Sweet: CCCF Member Council Rep

CCCF is proud to announce that one of its Member Council representatives was awarded a Certificate of Achievement on the occasion of the PM Awards. One of the first in her province to undergo certification as an early childhood educator, Joann remains on the Certification Council of Early Childhood Educators of Nova Scotia as a mentor and facilitator. She works with children up to 18 months at the Kingstec Campus Learning Centre in Kentville, N.S.

HIV & AIDS in Early Childhood

by Catherine Macnab

Introduction

There are 2.5 million children under the age of 15 living with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. HIV itself does not make people sick, but it breaks down their defense against illnesses that a healthy body can easily fight off. When this happens, it becomes AIDS. Of the 2.1 million people who died from AIDS last year, 330,000 of them were children.

Most HIV-positive children are infected during pregnancy, delivery or breastfeeding. In developing countries, there is a one in three chance that an HIV positive mother will transmit HIV to her baby. In Africa, where 90 percent of HIV infected children live, one in three newborns with HIV develop AIDS and die before their first birthday, half die before their second, and most do not reach five years of age.

In Canada, fewer than one in fifty children born to HIV positive mothers is infected due to prevention practices. Those who are infected generally receive treatment that enables them to survive, often into adulthood.

Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission

Without treatment, 15-30 percent of HIV-positive women may transmit HIV to their infants during pregnancy and delivery. The most basic treatment to prevent transmission includes a single dose to the mother at the onset of labour and to the baby after delivery. This low-cost treatment cuts the rate of transmission in half. In developed countries, complex treatment is provided to mothers throughout pregnancy, during labour and to infants after delivery that reduces the risk of transmission by 65 percent.

Although breastfeeding is normally the recommended way to feed babies, there is a 5-20 percent chance of infants being infected through breast milk from an HIV-positive mother. If these mothers have access to resources, the advice is clear: do not breastfeed, use formula.

Challenges for Early Childhood

Children may not tolerate taking medicines very well and they have to live with side-effects, including nausea and diarrhea. Childhood illnesses, such as mumps and chickenpox, pose a bigger risk to children with HIV since they have weakened immune systems. Illnesses are more frequent, last longer and do not respond as well to treatment. Vaccines and good nutrition are critical to avoid serious infections.

Other issues complicate healthy development for children living with HIV. Usually the mother, though likely both parents (and possibly siblings) live with HIV or AIDS. These families fear stigma and discrimination. Family finances are often depleted because ill family members cannot work; this jeopardizes healthy nutrition and erodes standard-of-living. Many children face the trauma or threat of one or both parents dying from AIDS.

HIV and Child Care

The stresses faced by families affected by HIV may undermine their capacity to support the healthy development of children. Early learning and child care facilities can support families by providing basic child care, parenting advice and other social supports. It provides children with social stability, stimulation and new skills while giving them the opportunity to play with peers.

Children with HIV pose no direct threat to others in a child care setting, therefore their status does not need to be known. Child care practitioners monitor children's well-being, regardless of their HIV status and they intervene when necessary. In AIDS endemic regions, caregivers and volunteers can be trained in HIV counselling and life-skills to help families provide the best care for children affected by HIV. Child care programs may also support families by providing basic needs, such as food and clothing.

Finding Hope

Children worldwide might easily avoid infection if there were sufficient funding, training and political will to implement low-cost programs to prevent mother to child transmission. Once infected, it is thought that children on treatment may have a better chance at recovering from the damage caused by HIV than adults because their immune systems are still developing. Indeed, many fatally ill children have miraculous recoveries once they begin treatment. This offers us hope for their future and enriches their lives today.

HIV/AIDS and Early Childhood Education in Botswana and Canada

by Catherine Macnab

They arrived in the midst of Ottawa's biggest snowstorm of the winter. Unfortunately, their luggage didn't arrive. Unfazed, the six visitors from Botswana donned borrowed winter clothing for a week-long visit hosted by the Canadian Child Care Federation (CCCF), funded by Health Canada's Global Engagement Program.

Visiting Andrew Fleck Child Care Centre in Ottawa.

Our new friends from Botswana!

CCCF collaborated with House of Hope to organize the March 2008 visit. House of Hope is an orphan centre in rural Botswana that delivers innovative programs for children made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS. Its early childhood development programs were modeled after Canadian examples of child care that were adapted to suit local needs. Care providers are also trained in HIV counseling to support children and families affected by HIV and AIDS. Since the staff began providing this support, no child in the program has died.*

The need for qualified early childhood educators far outstrips the supply in Botswana. Currently there are only about 25 graduates of preschool teacher training annually to supply 150 orphan day cares and over 500 p rivate day cares. House of Hope could help fill the gap by providing specialized training for those who work with vulnerable preschool children. With support from CCCF and the Global Engagement Program, House of Hope invited key stakeholders for a tour of Canadian programs serving children and to spend a week considering how best practices might be adapted into a training program back home.

It was a rich week for everyone. Canadian organizations generously shared their knowledge about early learning and

child care models, specialized support programs, training, policy research, and child protection. The visitors shared their expertise about vulnerable children affected by AIDS. This left both the Canadians and the Batswana with a stronger understanding how critically important early childhood programs are for children with family members who are sick or who have died due to HIV and AIDS.

> *I learned a lot when I was there (in Canada), and I can tell you I will never be the same for it, nor will the organization I serve. I received a lot of inspiration and strength, to focus more strongly on what I already know and new knowledge to help me and my organization to move forward. I feel so privileged for having been part of the whole experience.*
> – participant

Individually, the Batswana returned home to work, reflecting on how child care practices in Botswana might be improved. Canadians returned to work reflecting on how their work might be used for HIV and AIDS related programs. The challenge remains to turn this first step into on on-going network for Canadians and Batswana to exchange technical and policy expertise (e.g., curriculum, printed material, lessons learned).

CCCF would like to thank the following Canadian organizations for their generous contribution of time and technical resources:

- Andrew Fleck Child Care Services
- Early Years Centre
- Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario
- Children's Aid Society
- Canadian Association for Child & Play Therapy
- Centre of Excellence in Child Mental Health
- Odawa Aboriginal Family Support Program
- Centres of Excellence for Children's Well-being
- Early Childhood Learning Knowledge Centre
- Andrea Gingras (family child care provider)
- Algonquin College, Early Childhood Education Program
- Reaching In, Reaching Out
- Teresa Group
- Canadian International Development Agency
- Interagency Coalition for AIDS and Development

* For more details on the House of Hope, please consult *Interaction*, Volume 21, Number 2 (Fall 2007).

Who's Counting?

Like literacy skills, early numeracy skills are important too!

by Jo-Anne LeFevre and Lisa Fast

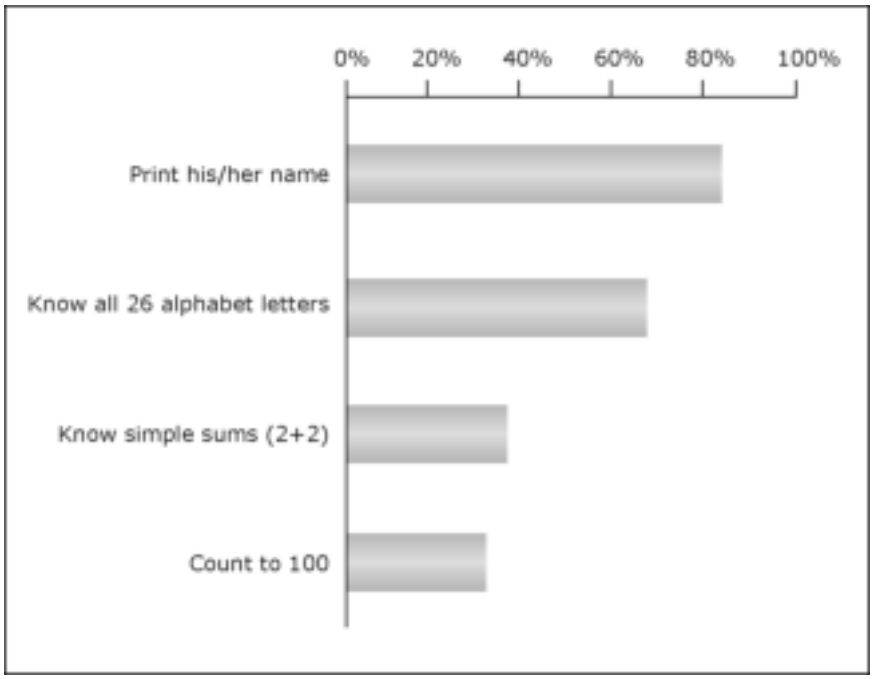
Over the last decade, child care practitioners and parents have learned how best to help children acquire literacy and communication skills. In contrast, knowledge about how to introduce children to number concepts (or numeracy) is less clear. Canadian Child Care Federation members from across Canada recently took part in a survey to find out how child care practitioners introduce young children to both number concepts and literacy skills, and how their training prepares them to do so. CCCF members told us about their knowledge and training in early literacy and numeracy, and about many of the activities they do with young children to help them acquire these skills.

We know that children's acquisition of numeracy and literacy skills in school is strongly related to their early experiences. With regards to literacy, responses from over 800 CCCF members show that professional development and information about early literacy have been successful. Over 70% of those surveyed have attended one or more professional development activities devoted to early literacy. In contrast, only 40% have *ever* attended any professional development about early numeracy.

One of the messages about early literacy that seems to have been well received by the child care community is about the gradual process of learning to listen, speak, read, and write. Caregivers know that they can help children acquire literacy and language skills by providing print-rich environments and by reading aloud — over 80% of those surveyed believe that it's important for children to be able to print their name before they enter Grade 1. But when it comes to numeracy, respondents felt that only simple counting was a priority in the early years. The chart below shows that child care practitioners saw learning small sums and counting to one hundred as less important before grade 1 than learning equally complex literacy skills. In fact, studies in the field have shown that early numeracy skills are just as important as literacy skills in achieving success at school.

...studies in the field have shown that early numeracy skills are just as important as literacy skills in achieving success at school.

Percent of Respondents Who Agreed that "Children should acquire these skills before Grade 1"



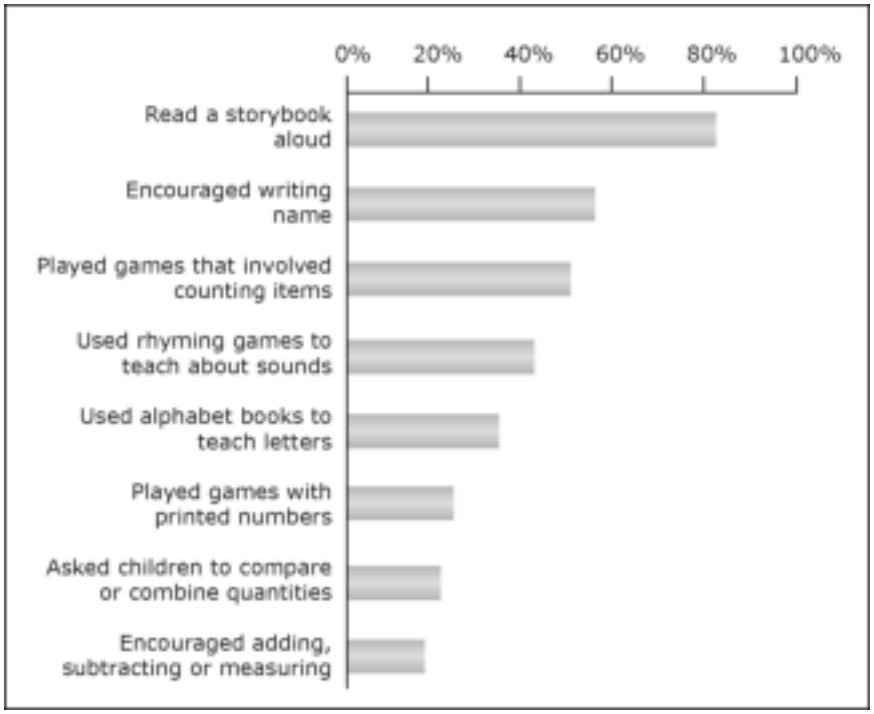
The survey data show that child care practitioners focus their early numeracy activities on counting. CCCF respondents told us how often they do certain activities with the preschool children in their care. Counting songs and games happen often – almost 50% stated that they play counting games almost every day. Games involving comparing quantities, adding or measuring are much less frequent – only about 20% of respondents rated these as daily activities. In contrast, the frequency of literacy and language activities was much higher. From story book reading (80% do this daily) to encouraging children to write their names (55% daily) to asking children to retell stories (35% daily), literacy and language activities are performed more frequently than equivalent numeracy activities.

There is growing evidence to show that, like literacy skills, early numeracy skills are important too! Building on what early child care practitioners already know about children's language and literacy skills, we can work toward similar goals and activities for numeracy. By using early literacy tools and resources as models, we can bring early numeracy into alignment with early literacy. Together with the Canadian Child Care Federation, the survey authors will be developing resource sheets and workshops for CCCF members. We look forward to working with you! Thanks again to all those who participated!

Jo-Anne LeFevre has conducted research on mathematics cognition for 20+ years. She is Director of the Centre for Applied CognitiveResearch at Carleton University in Ottawa. Lisa Fast joined Jo-Anne at the Centre as Research Coordinator in 2003. The survey was designed by a team of researchers, funded by the Canadian Council for Learning.

Team members include Sheri-Lynn Skwarchuk, in the Education Department at the University of Winnipeg in Manitoba; Helena Osana from the Department of Education at Concordia University in Montreal, Quebec, and Anne Maxwell of the Canadian Child Care Federation in Ottawa, Ontario. For more information about their research, including further details of the survey results as they are completed, please see the Count Me In website at http://www.carleton.ca/cmi. Further reports will also be available through the CCCF site.

Percent of Respondents who indicated that they perform these activities with their children 'Almost every day'



Using Technology to Improve Fee Collection

Collecting and processing payments – your centre's financial health depends on it. It can also be one of your most time-consuming and unpleasant administrative tasks. Fortunately, it's an area where appropriate technology can provide dramatic benefits.

Effective accounts receivable & billing systems

The first and most important technology for managing and collecting fees is an effective and efficient accounts receivable system. Today most child care centres use a computerized accounting system, but many still struggle with general purpose programs that lack important features for handling the unique aspects of child care. *Note: A good checklist of features to look for is available at http://www.childcaresoftware.org/checklist*

Even with a good accounting system, fee collection can be time-consuming, and the work can be dramatically reduced by offering parents the ability to pay electronically.

Electronic payments

Offering electronic payments makes sense for most childcare centres and school-age programs! Why? Because your centre can collect payments more quickly and with less effort, and parents love the convenience as well as perks, such as airline mileage, that they get when they pay by credit cards.

Electronic payments can encompass not only credit & debit card payments, but also payments by direct bank account debit via the Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) network. Electronic payments can be preauthorized to be made automatically on a recurring basis, or your parents can make their payment each billing cycle – either online or processed by your staff.

Pre-authorized Recurring vs. Parent-initiated One-Time Payments

Preauthorization is where parents agree to have their payment made automatically each billing cycle. Because the centre initiates the transaction, it eliminates late payments and reduces the work for both parents and centre administrators.

To manage pre-authorized recurring fee collection most effectively, you will need software that provides for following features:

- ✔ Securely encrypt and store credit card or bank account data
- ✔ Automatically generate, and send for, processing transactions each billing cycle
- ✔ Allows for recurring amounts that can vary each billing cycle due to extra charges and adjustments
- ✔ Provides ability to process payments on the timing cycle (e.g. weekly, monthly, 1st and 15th, etc.) you need
- ✔ Ability to handle both credit cards and EFT transactions
- ✔ Integration with your accounts receivable system

For more information on establishing a successful preauthorized payments program, you can download an article we've written called *The Six Secrets to No-Hassle Fee Collection* at www.ezcare2.com/sixsecrets

Although preauthorization has grown in popularity, some centres still prefer to give their parents the freedom to make their payments individually when due. Electronic payments can still make the process significantly more convenient for parents and their staff.

Self-Initiated vs. Staff-Processed One-Time Transactions

Regardless of whether the payment is processed by staff or parents, the key challenges are the same:

- ✔ Collecting the correct payment amount
- ✔ Reducing the risk of human error
- ✔ Ensuring data security
- ✔ Maximizing administrative efficiency

Collecting the correct payment amount – A simple e-mailed invoice can communicate the charges and amount due, but some systems even provide a pay online link to take parents to a prefilled payment form.

Reducing the risk of human error – Real-time authorization where the card number, expiration date and available funds are validated immediately is critical for online or staff processed transactions. This way any data entry error or need for a different credit card can be identified and corrected immediately.

Of course, the best solution is to eliminate entering the credit card data each time by saving the data. The challenge is doing this in a way that is secure and protects this sensitive data.

Ensuring data security - The credit card industry continues to impose tighter rules on the handling and storage of credit card data. In brief, any credit card data that is stored must be secured. In computer terms, this means both password protected and encrypted, with similar protection of paper records that include credit card information. Any online payments have to be processed on secure web-servers (note: you can tell if the site is secure by seeing if the web address starts with https:, not just http:

Keeping a list of parents' cards to process each month or using e-mail to receive credit card data are bad practices that put parents' information at risk and expose your centre to fines.

Maximizing administrative efficiency

To eliminate the need for any double entry of payments, you'll want processing solutions that post the payment automatically to the parents' ledger in your accounting system. Non-integrated solutions not only mean more work, but also increase the potential of human error.

Here are a few other features to look for to simplify payment administration:

- Payment receipting via printed or emailed receipt
- Ability to review completed (as well as non-completed) payment transactions
- Ability to issue any necessary credits/refunds
- Availability of online tools for reporting and analysis of transactions

Final Thoughts

We hope you now have a better understanding of the various tools and technologies that can be used by your centre to improve fee collection. By knowing the subtleties of transaction processing, you are well on your way to ensuring that your centre has the right solution in place. The benefits can truly be significant for both parents and your centre.

About the Author
Douglas Schoenberg is CEO of SofterWare Inc. He has spent over 25 years working with technology for child care center administration and pioneered the use of electronic fee collection by child care centers. He has written numerous articles, contributed to several books on child care administration, and presented at dozens of national and regional child care conferences. He can be reached at dschoenberg@softerware.com

HEALTH WATCH

Finding Reliable Child and Youth Health Information on the Internet

The Internet can be a rich source of information on child and youth health, but how do you know whether the information you've found is reliable? The Canadian Paediatric Society (CPS) has developed a resource sheet to help child care practitioners and parents find high-quality health information on the Internet. **Here are some things to consider**:

Who is hosting the website?

Many websites are designed to sell products or promote a particular opinion. Here are some questions to ask:

- Is the site trying to sell a product or service?
- Is the site hosted by a for-profit organization? If a site is anonymous, then you should disregard it.
- Is the site sponsored by a for-profit organization?
- Are you being asked to fill in a questionnaire?
- Is the site hosted by a widely recognized authority on the subject?
- Watch out for special interest groups, which may publish information that is supported only by a small number of practitioners, and may not be based on evidence.
- Is the information 'peer reviewed' by other experts in that field?

Is the information high quality?

High-quality information is based on up-to-date evidence that comes from proper research. Here are some questions to help you judge the information from a scientific point of view:

- Is the information recent, and does the website indicate when it was posted?
- Is the advice based on opinion or is there true evidence to support it?
- Does the site describe the kind of study on which the advice is based?
- Is the advice based on evidence taken from research data that are collected retrospectively (from old, often incomplete, records or memories, which are usually less reliable) or from data that are collected prospectively (on a go-forward basis, which is more reliable but often more difficult to study)?

Watch out for observational evidence (weaker evidence that is more subject to bias) such as:

- Testimonials or anecdotes (stories): "From our experience…"
- Case reports (studies on a single patient).
- Case series (studies on just a few patients).
- Case control studies ('observational' studies on patients, where patients with the condition are compared with individuals who do not have the condition.

Look for experimental studies that are designed to reduce bias.

The following list of studies is in order from the most to the least potential for bias):

- Clinical trials;
- Controlled clinical trials;
- Randomized, controlled clinical trials; and
- Double-blind, randomized, controlled clinical trials - this study design produces the strongest evidence where a treatment is compared with a 'control'('placebo' or different kind of treatment). Neither the parent/child nor the doctor knows whether the child received the treatment until the end of the study.

The Health on the Net Foundation accredits medical websites that follow a voluntary code of conduct, and can be found at www.hon.ch. Be sure to discuss information you find with your child's doctor.

For more information on how to find reliable child-related health information on the Internet, download *A parent's guide to health information on the Internet* from the CPS' Caring For Kids website at www.caringforkids.cps.ca.

ideas

Emotional Well-Being in Child Care

Time-out or Time-In?

by Jan Blaxall

One of the most important roles of early childhood practitioners is guiding young children to develop the social skills and emotional literacy that will prepare them for success in relationships, learning and life. There are many approaches and strategies for supporting social, emotional and behavioural development. Some were made popular by advocates looking to move parents and educators beyond spanking and yelling while others were backed by an understanding of child development. Time-out has been a highly popular and oft used discipline and parenting technique for children of all ages. A quick search on the internet reveals it to be one of the most common parenting strategies since physical spanking has come into question.

But is time-out a strategy that can be justified in early childhood settings? Is it appropriate for young children? Should time-out be used as frequently as it is in early childhood and child care settings and classrooms?

Origins of Time-out

Time-out had its origins in behaviourist theory, which argued that taking away rewards for unwanted behaviour would cause the child to give up the behaviour. Time-out was advocated as a way to reduce social rewards such as attention that a child might be seeking. Behaviourists believed that carefully and consistently used rewards would encourage desirable behaviour, while the absence of reward would discourage unwanted behaviour.

> "Time-out was introduced to child care programs in the 1980s and 1990s. While some child care providers understood the ideas about carefully used praise and rewards, not many used them consistently. Praise and reward must be so consistent that they are taken for granted in order for time-out to work as it was meant to." (Milnes, 2006)

In practice, the theory behind time-out was not usually followed. If children are not getting regular positive attention and interactions, then "time-out is not an effective strategy because that child's always in a time-out in a sense" (Kemp, 2006,)

Unfortunately, time out has been misused as a negative consequence or punishment to stop or change unwanted behaviour in many child care and school situations. Often a child is sent to a specific spot (chair or bench) until either a specific amount of time elapses or the adult decides that the child is "ready" to come back and behave. It is expected that the child will use the "time out" to think about her mistaken behaviour and to decide not to repeat the behaviour in the future.

Dan Gartrell, an advocate of guidance rather than traditional discipline, is concerned that early childhood educators and teachers have confused two very different reasons for using time-out - punishment and cooling-down. (Gartrell, 2003) While practitioners may believe that they are assisting the child to cool down by placing them in time-out, in fact many children experience time-out as a punishment, leading to negative outcomes including diminished self esteem and negative feelings towards the educator and the early childhood program overall. (Marion, 2007)

Is time-out a developmentally appropriate strategy?

In terms of the adult's goal of encouraging the child to think about her or his behaviour, it is highly unlikely that a young child will be able to do this, given the developmental nature of the preschooler's thinking. Gartrell reminds us that young children "have difficulty conceptualizing the intricacies of social situations. The ability of young children 'to think about what happened' is limited, especially when put on a chair by themselves". (Gartrell, 2003, 393) Preschoolers also have difficulty connecting cause and effect, even when the cause and effect are closely related in time and space.

If Lucas disrupts the play of Leah, and if Lucas is taken away from the situation, left by himself to sit on a chair and asked to think about the situation, Lucas will most likely think about the incident only from his own perspective. Preschoolers think in the "here and now", so if the here and now is sitting on a chair, Lucas will be focused on his feelings about sitting on the chair, his feelings about the adult who put him there, or his feelings about his own "badness". It is unlikely that Lucas will be able to think of ways to resolve this situation without assistance from the adult.

Thus, time-out, used as a way to stop or change behaviour, most often fails in its goal of teaching children skills that allow them to be more successful socially.

According to research into children's perceptions about time-out, young children do not come to better understand their behaviour while sitting in time-out. Instead they experience feelings of sadness, loneliness and fear, as well as feeling disliked by the practitioner and ignored by peers. Whether it is intended or not, children perceive time-out as punishment for their "bad" behaviour. (Readdick & Chapman, 2000)

Anecdotes from early childhood programs illustrate a common understanding shared by the child being "timed-out" and his or her peers.

> Nicky was an active and impulsive child who typically entered play in a disruptive and unwelcome way. He was often in "time-out" for grabbing, pushing or interfering with other children. One morning his educator had had enough and she again put Nicky on "the chair". An ECE student who had been discussing children's emotions in her college class, observed the lengthy time-out, and decided to see if she could help Nicky by talking about the situation. She asked him if he knew why he was in time-out and he said "Yes". She asked for him why he thought he was there, and sadly he said, "Because I'm the bad kid and the teacher hates me." A lengthy period of thinking had left him feeling hopeless, unlikable and negative.

In another example of a young child's perception of time-out, two young girls were good friends in the early months of their program. In the winter months, the mother of one realized that she had not heard her 4 year old daughter talking about her friend for several weeks.

> She asked "*Is Kathleen still in your group*?"
> "*Yes*."
> "*Do you still play with her*?"
> "*No.*"
> "*Why not*?"
> "*Cause she's bad.*"
> "*What do you mean*?"
> "*She doesn't sit still in circle time, so she has to sit in time-out. I don't want to play with her 'cause I don't want to get in time-out.*"

And so, very quickly, the use of time-out contributes to negative self-esteem and social neglect or rejection, in imitation of the teacher's perceived view of the "misbehaving" child. "A child placed on a chair experiences public loss of group membership. Other children become apprehensive that they may be the next to be excluded from the group". (Gartrell, 2004, 65) This can lead to an atmosphere of discouragement

in the program that interferes with social inclusion, with children basing acceptance on the ability to behave and conform (Gartrell, 2004).

"Time out" as punishment

The National Association for the Education of Young Children, an international organization advocating for young children, has posted on its website a position article about time-out which warns about the misuse of time –out in child care:

> **Warning**
>
> Used often or inappropriately, time-out may not only be ineffectual—it may be damaging to the child.
>
> NAEYC, 1996

A punitive time-out for preschoolers has primarily negative consequences. If the child is thinking about being on the chair, he may be thinking about being centred out, and feeling embarrassed or upset about other children seeing him. Another child, who needs social attention, and is upset about being taken out of the group, may wiggle around, make noises, try to sneak off the chair, etc. to regain attention and acknowledgement by her peers.

Often a child in time-out thinks about the interaction with the adult that led to being placed in time-out. The child may become angry or fearful of that adult, and less willing to seek out this adult's help in the future. Thus the relationship that is so needed for emotional security by the young child becomes compromised, because the adult is the source of both positive and negative outcomes. If the negative outnumbers the positive, the child ends up feeling alone and vulnerable.

> "Time-out should not be humiliating, nor should it make children feel threatened or afraid. There should not be a special chair or area assigned for time-out—this reinforces the idea that time-out is a punishment and may cause undue anxiety. Adults should never make a child feel ridiculed or isolated during time-out periods."
>
> NAEYC, 1996

Even more concerning is the possibility that the child will internalize guilt, shame and low self esteem if time-outs are frequent. According to Weininger (2002), most children experience being sent to time-out as rejection, which can lead to dejection, depression, and withdrawal from others. Weininger, a child psychologist, believed that it is preferable for a child being punished to feel anger rather than depression, because anger is the child's way of defending himself from shame and negative self esteem.

David Elkind, a long-time advocate for children, believes that time-out communicates to children that their feelings, and their problems, are not important to the educator because the educator refuses to discuss them or engage in interaction during time-out (Elkind, 2001). Like Weininger, Elkind believes that time-out often leads to anger and repetition of the behaviour, because the underlying cause of the behaviour has not been identified or resolved.

Similar concerns about the outcomes of time-out have led many early childhood educators to rethink their goals for young children and their use of time-out.

> "Perhaps we used time-out for punishment. Punishing children for doing the wrong thing rarely works as well as teaching them how to do the right thing…. Our role is to guide them toward appropriate behavior. Teach them how to gain self-control. Then, work on consequences. They may need to repair or replace what broke, clean up a mess, or give up a privilege. Often as a consequence of misbehavior we must deal with a friend we hurt or offended. Most of us need to calm ourselves first. Then, we can face the consequences." (Wilson, 1994)

Time-away as cooling off time

There is a place in early childhood programs for a cooling off period called "time-away" or what is sometimes called "renewal time". Renewal time can be as simple as changing to a different activity or involvement in quiet solitary activity or time with a supportive adult, "but not the negative, punishing time-out that is so frequently used". (Gestwicki, 2007, 258). The concept of "renewal time" or "time-away" is a strategy taught to children to be used when they are feeling stressed so that they can regain control of their emotions.

As with adults, the type of activity that enables the child to calm will be different for different children.

> "Many children and adults cannot calm down by sitting still in a chair. They need a time-out that allows for the release of physical tension like …, walking, or running. Most programs have outdoor play areas, indoor motor rooms, and large and small motor activities such as play dough, woodworking, and climbing that meet these needs… You could encourage the child to choose a calming activity such as sand or water. …Teach children a variety of acceptable ways to deal with their anger and frustration. *Then trust them to choose the time-out that will work best for them* (Wilson, 1994).

The options for "time-away" that are offered to children need to be available to children most if not all of the time. In order to be used effectively, each child must have the permission and the freedom to use her or his option for "renewal" when needed. Hence, adults need to accept of the child's perspective on a situation and trust in the child's ability to know what she needs.

> Melanie was new to the child care center, having begun just a few days earlier. She was clearly anxious, but was watching the others tentatively from a position on the edge of the playroom. When the educator called the children for snack, Melanie said "*No, I don't want to.*"
>
> The practitioner encouraged and tried to coax Melanie to come.
>
> Melanie was insistent, *"No, I don't want to."*
>
> The practitioner said, *"Melanie, here's your chair, you need to come and sit here."*
>
> Becoming increasingly distressed, Melanie looked toward the book corner and said, *"No, I need to sit over there."*

In order to support children's self control, practitioners need to respect and trust the child who indicates the need for "time –away" and recognize its power as a means to regain emotional control when stressed.

The use of a cozy corner is recommended for child care, with quiet games and stuffed animals. "While timeout is punitive, a cozy corner acknowledges that the child is having difficulty controlling his emotions and gives him a place to pull himself together. Once the child regains control, you give him tons of praise…You need to give these kids a different sense of themselves, a sense that they are capable of managing their feelings and pulling themselves together..." (Lerner, in Kemp, 2006)

When the child is calm, acknowledge the effort it took to regain control. Offer her the choice of rejoining the group or selecting a quiet activity. If the child wishes to join the group, coach by giving the words to use when joining the other children in their play. Provide some extra support to ensure that the child is successful in interacting with peers.

Guidelines for using Time-away

- Avoid using time-away for infants and toddlers. Very young children should not be isolated, nor should they be ignored or left without proper stimulation. Infants or young toddlers who do not understand why their behavior is unacceptable should gently be directed to more acceptable behaviors or activities.
- Whenever possible, offer children positive alternatives to their actions [rather than moving them away from the situation] Asking a child to help rebuild a block structure she has knocked down is more productive than removing her from the area entirely.
- Time-away should not be humiliating, nor should it make children feel threatened or afraid. There should not be a special chair or area assigned for time-away—this reinforces the idea that time-away is a punishment and may cause undue anxiety.
- Never use words or voice tone that makes a child feel ridiculed or isolated during time-away periods.
- The child should not be left alone, unless he wants to be. Young children need adults' support to work out their feelings. If adults show children that their feelings count, they will be more likely to respect the feelings of others.
- When suggesting that a child take time-away, the child will feel safe with the knowledge that people care for her.
- Time away is always ended by the child's choice.

Adapted from NAEYC (1996)

Time-in as support for children's emotions

There will be times when a child is very upset and cannot calm down, even with the option of time-away. What can we do if children are out of control? In his book, *Time-In*

Parenting, Otto Weininger discussed the importance of "lending oneself" to a child as a source of calm and security. Weininger called this emotional support "time-in". He advocated time-in as an important strategy for young children who are just learning emotional control. He described time-in as

> "a parenting strategy and style for helping children who are experiencing episodes of emotional, behavioural or developmental stress, by staying with them while you resolve the feelings together" (Weininger, 2002, 139)

> *"When children are upset, out of control or angry, what they need most is to be with a safe and accepting adult. They need to be with someone who is calm and non-punitive, and can recognize that anyone can get very upset at one time or other. They also need someone who can help them express these strong emotions appropriately."*
>
> Otto Weininger, 2002

Elkind likewise describes time-in as an instructive guidance technique, where the educator sits with the child and seeks the cause of the child's distress, leading to a "much better chance of helping him to calm down and rejoin the group… [The child] learns that his feelings are important and will be attended to." (2001,8)

The upset child's need for caring support is also recognized by Milnes. "Unless a child would clearly rather be left alone to calm down, it is better to stay nearby. Offer to hold the child. Some children calm down best in the arms of a caring adult." (2006) Once the child is calm, it is beneficial to her self-awareness to talk to her about her

feelings, perceptions and intent. As in other areas of learning, "we try to discover what children misunderstand by speaking to them and listening to them. Discipline is no different: Speaking and listening are powerful ways to communicate what we expect and want." (Milne, 2006)

Creating a safe emotional environment

As an early childhood practitioner, you have an immense impact on the children in your programs and an important obligation to choose carefully the techniques you use to guide their behaviour and emerging social skills (Marion, 2007). All adults, whether practitioner, educator or parent, needs to follow these principles when dealing with children's strong emotions or immature or inappropriate behaviour:

- Be supportive and accepting of children's strong emotions, offering yourself as a calm and safe place to regain composure and self control.
- Determine places or activities for "time-away" for children who are able to regain self-control without your help, and encourage children to choose these any time they feel stressed or overwhelmed by their emotions.
- Talk to children about their feelings, the different outcomes of different ways of expressing their feelings, and the impact on others when control is lost.
- Help children to deal with consequences of their behaviour, such as offering to help repair hurt feelings, disrupted play or damage to the environment.
- Recognize and support all prosocial and social behaviours, conveying that you value caring and consideration in interpersonal relationships.
- Refrain from time-out and its negative emotional and social impact on the child and the group.

As early childhood practitioners make the shift from adult-controlled

to child-centred guidance, the use of time- away and time –in will replace time-out. Both of these alternatives have been shown to meet the goals of improved self-regulation and increased ability to express feelings and solve problems related to group involvement. The benefits of making this shift are experienced by both children and adults, in terms of higher self esteem, a more secure and harmonious social and psychological environment, reduced stress, and increased resilience.

Jan Blaxall is a certified Early Childhood Educator and a professor at Fanshawe College in the Early Childhood Education program. Her concern for the emotional well-being of young children has lead to extensive reflection and professional development in the areas of children's stress, self esteem and the impact of varying guidance strategies on both individuals and groups.

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To Time-out or Not?

by Margaret Dixon and Diane Gordon

The Wilfrid Jury Early Childhood Education Centre, operated by Whitehills Childcare Association, is located in the Wilfrid Jury Elementary School in northwest London. This centre is attended by 64 children from two to six years of age. Some of the children are in the child care for a full day. Some children attend junior or senior kindergarten programs down the hall for 2 ½ hours a day. Our children live in the neighbourhood which is culturally and economically diverse and predominantly made up of working families and families attending school.

In response to a request to write an article for IDEAS about our experiences regarding the use of "time-out", we engaged in a reflective discussion about changes in our use of time-out and our corresponding shift to alternative guidance practices which we now use, based on several years of experience in our early childhood program.

Can "time- out" be an effective strategy if it is used appropriately? *How, when, where, who or if to "time out"*? These questions which we discussed are questions that have been debated by Early Childhood Educators for many years

The definition of time out that is currently included in our program's behaviour guidance policy has been in effect for at least 15 years and reads as follows:

> "Time-out" is defined as a brief calming down period used for children 30 months to 5.8 years in situations of extreme repetitive behavior i.e. behavior that jeopardizes the safety of the child or those around them. "Time out" is never used for children under the age of 30 months who should instead be redirected to another activity or area.

We believe strongly that time- out should only be used as a calming down period (described as time-away in the accompanying article). We use it rarely and only in situations of extremely dangerous and repetitive behaviour. We have come to recognize that the automatic use of time-out as a consequence or punishment for misbehaviour did not actually change children's inappropriate behavior

and had some unintended negative consequences for classroom atmosphere and children's self esteem.

Supporting Emotional Regulation and Problem Solving – No Corner, Chair or Humiliation

In our program, what happens during this calming down period has changed over the years, as we have gained skills in improved behavior guidance techniques, including de-escalating behaviour and child- directed approaches to problem solving. The emphasis on redirection and child- directed problem solving has grown. An upset child is encouraged to talk with one of us about her or his feelings, what happened and to think about possible solutions. With our help, the child is given the opportunity to decide when he or she is calm enough to return to the group.

Time-out in our program could be on a carpet, sitting next to a staff member, or going for a walk with an educator for example. It depends on the needs of the child and the particular situation. There is an emphasis on not overly-engaging the child, but keeping it simple and short. The time- out or time away period provides the child with an opportunity to regain control of emotions and behaviour with the support of a caring adult. It is not a "punishment" but a cooling down period. Logical consequences then follow e.g. apologizing to a friend or picking up thrown toys. The child is helped to solve the problem, make reparation and restore social harmony. This is followed up with positive reinforcement from teachers for appropriate behavior.

As the needs and behaviours of children are varied so are the strategies used. Some children may require more support than others.

As the needs and behaviours of children are varied so are the strategies used.

"Johnny is enrolled in an Early Intervention program as well as attending the child care centre. He experiences frequent and unpredictable outbursts resulting in aggression and needs more assistance when his behaviour quickly escalates. Johnny became agitated and lashed out suddenly. One of his friends was hurt. The teacher lets Johnny know that hurting others is not acceptable. She sits quietly with Johnny during his time out period. Her presence helps him to regain control of his emotions and behavior. When the teacher can see that Johnny is calmer she might say "you look like you are calm now, are you ready to join the group." This might be followed up with "what do you need to do now?" if Johnny has hurt a child and needs

to apologize for example. The teacher will continue to look for opportunities to praise Johnny's positive behaviour.

Time-Away as Prevention

Preventing children's misbehavior is always preferable to dealing with it after it has occurred. The approach we take has been very helpful in preventing problems before they escalate. Using time away as a constructive way to re-gain control of strong emotions and engage in problem solving with children has helped us to identify the source of some children's difficulties and take a more preventative approach.

"Matthew has a hard time with the noise level in the classroom. He becomes irritable and will try to talk loudly above the noise level and becomes aggressive towards his peers. Through staff observation of the timing of these episodes and helping Matthew talk through them, he was able to identify that the noise level was bothering him. Together they were able to come up with a solution to help Matthew. Matthew is now able to independently access a Discman and headphones when he is feeling agitated by the noise thus heading off the possibility of extreme behavior."

Shifting Adult Attitudes

In our experience, moving beyond the use of time-out as a consequence to viewing "time away or time in" as positive strategies has been successful in supporting children's self regulation skills. We have been able to guide behaviour without having a negative impact on children's self esteem. A change of attitudes has accompanied this change in strategy. We no longer see children's behaviour as something to be punished, but as an indication that the child needs our help to stay calm, understand their feelings and solve their problems. Our use of time- away or time- in is a process that reflects our belief that children's misbehaviours are problems to be solved in partnership. One of our primary roles as adults and educators is to provide individual children with the type and amount of support needed for emotional and behavioural regulation as well as coaching the individual child with the cognitive problem solving process.

The use of the word "time- out" definitely has negative connotations within the early childhood education profession', and it has sometimes been misused in early childhood, kindergarten and elementary settings. At Whitehills, we are now looking at changing the wording in our behaviour guidance policy to better reflect our practice e.g. "calm down time". We continue to believe that children under 30 months should experience emotional support and redirection and should not be left alone to calm down, unless it is their choice. Even with older children, we are committed to never using time-out as isolation, except in an extreme or dangerous situation, and even then, an adult would remain close by to reassure the child of protection and support. Children who choose to be alone are always free to re-enter the group as soon as they feel ready.

In place of time-out, we will continue to implement preventative and positive guidance techniques in order to assist children to achieve the ultimate goals of self control and increased self confidence.

Margaret Dixon has been a Program Supervisor with the Whitehills Child Care Association for 20 years. She has always been committed to providing high quality child care for all children in an inclusive environment. Margaret continually looks to best practices to further improve the care and experiences for the children in her care. Margaret will be retiring from her work at Whitehills in December 2008 and will be sadly missed but her legacy of caring for children will remain evident in the program.

Diane Gordon has been Executive Director of Whitehills Childcare Association for 16 years. She is committed to high quality child care within her organization, ensuring that her staff members are informed and current regarding best practices as well as in her community work as an advocate for quality child care environments.

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Emotional Well-Being in Child Care

The Canadian Child Care Federation publishes IDEAS twice a year in partnership with George Brown College, Centre for Early Childhood Development and the Hinks-Dellcrest Institute. For submission to IDEAS please contact Connie Winder. Phone (416) 415-5000 extension 3018, fax (416) 415-2566, email cwinder@gbrownc.on.ca.

Supporting Our Children's Social Well-Being: It's a Team Effort – Part 2

Who am I? Where do I belong? Is it ok to be who I am? How do I face everyday challenges and disappointments? How do I feel about myself and my abilities? These are questions are at the core of our well-being, or our happiness. For many of us, these questions are answered over the course of a lifetime. Yet this journey of self-discovery starts in earnest in the early years and is deeply influenced by relationships with the adults in our young lives.

The focus articles and resource sheets in the previous issue of Interaction (spring 2008) explored how practitioners and families can work together to support language and literacy skills and positive behaviour in young children. This second installment highlights the role of strong partnerships in supporting cultural identity, resilience or problem-solving skills and self-esteem in the young children in our care.

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PARTNERSHIPS WITH PARENTS FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT – PART 2

Culture as Medicine

Families and Practitioners Working Together to Support Aboriginal Cultural Identity

by Robin J. Miller

We hear the terms "culture" and "cultural identity" a lot these days, but they can mean very different things to different people. For some, they simply mean belonging to a particular, identifiable group, such as people who come from Scotland, or people who prefer rap to opera. For other people, however, particularly in the Aboriginal communities of Canada, culture and cultural identity are a matter of well-being for individuals and communities.

"Culture is medicine," says Karen Isaac, executive director of the BC Aboriginal Child Care Society, using a phrase she read in an article just recently. "Our culture has so much to offer to our children, and through them our communities, because if our children are healthy and happy, our community is healthy and happy too. That's why we are working so hard in our child care programs to involve our children in traditional teachings and values, to the medicine of knowing where you come from and who you are."

Unfortunately, many Aboriginal people in Canada – First Nations, Inuit and Métis – have lost touch with their own cultures and languages, customs and traditions, some by choice and some by force.

"If you don't know who you are, what your identity is, you have no pride, no self-esteem."

The loss of a sense of belonging

For example, of the 40,000 Inuit in Canada today, about 22 per cent or 8,400 currently live in urban centres far to the south of Inuit homeland that stretches from the Northwest Territories to Labrador. Most chose to move south to find what they couldn't at home: advanced education, steady work and specialized health care. Only recently, within the past few years, have Inuit-specific groups – many clustered in Ottawa, which is home to the largest Inuit population in

the south – sprung up to help urban Inuit retain ties to their heritage within the much larger mainstream culture.

This type of help wasn't available to earlier Inuit immigrants to the south, or to the Métis who ventured outside their own communities, or to the people of the First Nations who were particularly devastated by the residential school system.

Canada's residential school system lasted for more than 100 years, right up to the mid-1970s. In that time, more than 100,000 First Nations children were forcibly taken from their families and placed in church-run boarding schools, where they were forbidden to speak their traditional languages or practice their traditional customs. Many were also subjected to years of emotional and physical abuse and missed out on parent role models and traditional child rearing practices. "The impact of the residential school system on First Nations families to this day cannot be underestimated," says Karen Isaac.

At the same time and continuing even later, to the 1980s, a large number of Aboriginal children were removed from their homes by child protection services and placed in non-Aboriginal foster homes or adopted by non-Aboriginal families. For most, this resulted in loss of identity and a wealth of health and social issues that only now are beginning to be fully understood and overcome.

"If you don't know who you are, what your identity is, you have no pride, no self-esteem," says Elaine René-Tambour, "and it's so easy then to be taken advantage of or bullied or just relegated to the sidelines." René-Tambour herself – now the Director of Katl'odeeche First Nation Children's Centre on the Hay River Dene Reserve in the Northwest Territories – is the product of parents who lived within mainstream society and simply didn't talk about their Aboriginal roots. "They just wanted us to fit in," she says. "It wasn't until I got to university that I started to learn more about where I came from and I was finally able to grow inside. You don't know who you are if you don't know your language and your culture."

Culture Plays Key Role in Quality Inuit Child Care Programs

Pauktuutit, a national organization that advocates on behalf of Inuit women, has developed a document that outlines the elements of a quality Inuit child care program. According to this document, quality programs:

- are rooted in Inuit culture, values and traditions;
- preserve traditional knowledge with the involvement of Elders;
- provide traditional country food;
- incorporate materials and activities that are culturally based;
- celebrate the natural curiosity of children and fosters a love of learning; and
- promote the retention of Inuktitut

Source: *Piaranut for Our Children: Quality Practices for Inuit Early Childhood Education Programs*

Supporting culture, building pride

Today, René-Tambour runs what is known as a "language nest" at her centre, where toddlers and preschoolers, along with their child care practitioners, learn South Slavey, the language once spoken by everyone on the Hay River Dene Reserve. "When their language was taken from them through the residential schools, so was their tradition and, really, their reason to communicate," she says. "By giving these children back their language, we are also giving them back their ability to communicate and their pride in who they are and where they come from."

And this pride is translating into concrete results. The first graduates from the language nest are now in Grade 3, and all have perfect attendance at school. "That's a huge change," says René-Tambour. "We also know that our children from kindergarten up are now more apt to want to read in English and are generally much happier in school than they used to be. Their attitude has changed."

Combined with language lessons, given by an Elder until the centre's child care practitioners become fluent in South Slavey, René-Tambour's program also includes activities that showcase the other aspects of the Hay River Dene culture, such as making traditional crafts and singing songs based on local legends. She also recommends trying to incorporate Aboriginal culture into the very fabric of the child care centre – by placing a small tepee in the corner, for example, or making the centre's kitchen look like an Aboriginal kitchen, complete with a stick for hanging meat.

Child care's challenge… and opportunity

This kind of intense cultural focus is relatively easy when your child care centre is located on-reserve, with all the children coming from the same culture. It's harder when your program is off-reserve and involves children

from a number of different Aboriginal cultures – or, harder still, is a mainstream program with only one or two Aboriginal children. But no matter how hard it is, supporting Aboriginal cultural identity can and must be done, says Larry Railton, an Aboriginal early childhood development consultant and author of a range of culturally-specific resources for Métis child care practitioners.

"I grew up in the Vancouver area and didn't know my culture at all," says Larry. "But when I visit my cousins, who grew up in our native homeland, I *feel* their culture, it resonates with me. I was missing a component in my life that discovering my heritage gave back to me. Helping a child find his or her culture is complicated but doable and, for me, it really starts with outreach to the families. Child care practitioners must be keen listeners, because a lot of Aboriginal families will not ask or tell you things directly. You have to set up a dialogue and hear their needs and then be prepared to become a part of their extended family. It's not a mainstream practice, but in Aboriginal families, you'll probably get invited to family gatherings. Take that opportunity to share in their culture. Not only will you learn, but you will help promote healing within the Aboriginal community."

Karen Isaac of the BC Aboriginal Child Care Society also does not downplay how complicated it is to "try to combine mainstream curriculum and training with Aboriginal culture and traditions and language. It takes dedication and effort to integrate language and culture in a meaningful way in a child care program. It can't be just an add-on or something we do for five minutes a day." But she agrees with Larry that it can be done, especially if mainstream practitioners understand the "forces and influences" that have affected Aboriginal families. "We need everyone to understand where our people have been, but I think they also need to recognize how much we have to offer them – particularly through our belief in the total being of a child, emotional, physical and spiritual – and how important it is for our children. When our children feel good about themselves, they do better – in school and in life."

Please see the *Resource Sheet: Encouraging Aboriginal Cultural Identity at Home and in Child Care* for more information on working with Aboriginal children and parents to support cultural identity.

Please see *Practitioners and Families Together: Supporting Cultural Identity* for materials to help you host a learning event on the topic (available for free download at www.qualitychildcarecanada.ca).

Robin J. Miller is a Victoria-based writer and editor. She has written about child care issues and the latest in child development research for a variety of organizations and publications, including the Canadian Child Care Federation, the BC Government, Health Canada and Canadian Living magazine.

PARTNERSHIPS WITH PARENTS FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT – PART 2

Families and Practitioners

Collaborating to Support Cultural Identity in Young Children

by Karen Chandler

I want to make sure my child learns Korean and English… I want to be there for every precious moment of my child's life, for if I were not able to communicate and know how she thinks and feels, I would be devastated. – *Korean parent*

Early learning and child care settings in Canada bring together children and families with different abilities, challenges, resources, and cultural backgrounds. Each of these families has unique life experiences and orientations, and belongs to multiple communities that may support or thwart their ability to augment young children's optimal development. Newcomer families are not only dealing with complex changes, they may also be attempting to balance traditional cultural values as well.

Culture is a fundamental building block in creating children's identity. Quality early learning and child care supports the development of identity by providing experiences that are in harmony with the culture of the home, practitioners who are able to understand diverse perspectives and appropriately interact with members of other cultures in a variety of situations, and curriculum that is developmentally, culturally, linguistically responsive.

It's important that practitioners clarify their own goals for family involvement, respect the parents' goals for their child, and work with families to foster these goals. When practitioners and parents recognize each other's expertise, and acknowledge that differences in opinions are natural, they can use their combined strengths to develop trust, set goals, make plans, and solve problems. When early learning and child care settings reflect the values and practices of children's homes, then they reinforce the idea that children learn in the home.

Cultural diversity and children's social development

A significant and increasing percentage of the Canadian population is foreign born. Many children attending

early learning programs are recently immigrated and their families often experience isolation and loneliness when they first come to Canada. Some children may feel like they are moving "from one world to another" as they go from home to their early childhood program with its unfamiliar environment and language.

Different cultures have unique ways of viewing the world, preferred ways of social organization, and specific language patterns, learning styles, and concepts of acceptable behaviour. In some cultures, children learn social relationships and appropriate interactions by observing and participating in large, extended family networks that are traditional. Each culture has different expectations for children's role in these networks, expectations that contribute to children's emotional development and concept of self.

Intertwined with cultural diversity is linguistic diversity. When children observe family members speaking in two languages, they learn that there are multiple acceptable ways to express ideas and that both languages have value.

It [would] be a perfect program if the teacher's read not only popular stories but also Somali stories at the circle time. – *Somali mother*

Building partnerships with culturally-diverse families

Partnerships with parents and other family members are a crucial component of any high quality early learning setting. Parental and family involvement can have additional benefits for immigrant families, as it may be an opportunity for parents to learn English and literacy skills themselves and to be introduced to the formal education system from the beginning of their child's experience.

Families must feel welcome – that the early learning and child care program is their own. Some newcomer parents fear that their child rearing practices will be criticized. Others may feel inhibited due to their own experiences with school. Practitioners can help by communicating feelings of acceptance and respect to families based on the following premises:

- The family is central to the child's life.
- Each family has its own strengths, competencies, resources, and ways of coping.
- Every family is respected and accepted without judgments or preconceptions.
- Each family's race, culture, ethnicity, religion, language, and socio-economic status are appreciated.
- Family is the first and most powerful influence on children's early learning and development.

Essential role of culturally-competent practitioners

Beginning the journey toward increased cultural competence (the ability to understand diverse perspectives and appropriately interact with members of other cultures in

Muna, an ECE, noticed that Aram was sitting alone in the block area looking sad. As she approached Aram, another child Caitlin asked, "why does Aram talk funny?' Muna explained that "Aram doesn't talk funny, she speaks Chinese". You speak English like your mommy and daddy." 'Aram is speaking Chinese like her mommy and daddy." It is okay to ask questions about what Aram is saying, but it is not okay to say she speaks funny because that hurts her feelings."

a variety of situations) requires practitioners to rethink their assumptions and consider life's issues through the lenses of people who come from backgrounds different from their own. They need to acquire an understanding of socio-cultural and economic issues pertaining to the communities they serve. Practitioners also need to continually reexamine any preconceived notions they may have about certain cultures as these notions can create barriers and prevent children and their families from truly engaging in the program or from achieving equitable outcomes.

Early childhood practitioners gather information about each child's family's cultural context and learn how to respectfully bring it into the early childhood environment. Goals of the practitioner should be to create a sense of belonging and acceptance where each child feels valued by others.

Directors need to actively recruit practitioners who reflect gender, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversities. Some parents prefer that a practitioner speak the child's home language rather than have a teaching credential. A diverse staff is more likely to aid family members from all backgrounds feel welcome in the setting.

Program evaluation tools, or quality rating systems, can collect information on the effectiveness of a program's practices in supporting children from different cultures. With this information in hand, programs can incorporate new standards in order to encourage the recruitment of bilingual and bicultural providers, create and implement culturally appropriate practices, and make the case for financial supports to programs to help them meet these goals.

Please see *Resource Sheet #91* to assess how well you and your program are working with families to support children's cultural identity.

Please see the workshop *Practitioners and Families Together: Supporting Cultural Identity* for materials to help you host a learning event on the topic (available for free download at www.qualitychildcarecanada.ca).

Karen Chandler is a professor at George Brown College's School of Early Childhood and author of *Administering for Quality: Canadian Early Childhood Development Programs*, which has just been released in its 3rd edition. She recently participated as Senior Policy Advisor to the Best Start Expert Panel, which developed Ontario's framework *Early Learning for Every Child Today* facilitating early childhood development. Karen was one of the founders of the Canadian Child Care Federation, represents CCCF on the Child Care Human Resources Sector Council, and is a member of CCCF's Leaders' Circle.

Strategies for working with families to support cultural diversity

Adapt your program to meet the needs of diverse families.

- Make extra efforts to engage newcomer families.
- Create opportunities to learn about childrearing practices from families of different backgrounds.
- Provide information about relevant resources in the community, including parenting information and ESL classes.
- Provide information in first languages.
- Support the development of informal social networks among families with young children.
- Because some children live in newcomer, immigrant and refugee families, during intake, collect information on migration experience.

Use culturally and linguistically appropriate teaching approaches.

- Encourage children and their parents to share aspects of their culture and lifestyle with other children.
- Build an understanding the child's culture and the values and beliefs within that culture.
- Learn a few key words in the first language of the children.
- Build knowledge of dietary practices.
- Provide a learning environment with books, print materials, and other artifacts in home languages that respect and promote language and literacy learning, and that reflect diversity in unbiased ways.
- Actively identify and counter any practices, curriculum approaches or materials which reflect a degrading bias toward language, race, religion or culture.
- Recognize that children may be dealing with complex changes.

Please see *CCCF Resource Sheet #91* for more strategies and to assess how well you and your program are working with families to support children's cultural identity.

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PARTNERSHIPS WITH PARENTS FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT – PART 2

Partnerships to enhance children's problem solving skills

by Jennifer Pearson and Darlene Kordich Hall

As long as we are living and breathing, we can expect challenge and frustration in our daily lives. And while adversity is inevitable, we all have the innate capacity to steer through life's challenges.[1, 2]

However, this natural capacity for resilience can be hampered by the high levels of stress many face in trying to juggle family, job and day-to-day demands. Children also experience stress due to changes in routines, family structure, difficult relationships with other children, hectic schedules etc. They may need support to uncover hidden resiliency abilities that can develop their capacity to handle daily stressors, cope with change and lead their lives in a meaningful way. The significant adults in a child's life, specifically parents and child care practitioners, can play an important role in helping children to enhance their resiliency skills – through role-modelling, providing warm responsive relationships and opportunities to explore cause and effect.

One of the key abilities associated with resilience is problem solving.[1, 2] Learning problem-solving skills is a significant contributor to children's socio-emotional well-being. Luisa Della Croce is a manager of a municipal child care setting that serves a very diverse community. She speaks avidly about the benefits of giving children an early start to develop problem-solving skills. "Learning how to identify the root of the problem, develop empathy and broaden perspective are life skills that build self-esteem and self-efficacy. Problem-solving skills empower children to think about themselves and others, and encourage them to develop an understanding of self in the bigger picture of society. We

Problem-solving skills empower children to think about themselves and others, and encourage them to develop an understanding of self in the bigger picture of society.

need to create a culture where problem solving is a natural part of our day."

Problem-solving skills that promote resilience

Programs to teach social problem solving and conflict resolution skills have many of the same basic steps: 1) calming down, 2) identifying the problem, 3) brainstorming alternative solutions, 4) choosing and implementing a solution, and 5) evaluating the success of the strategy.

Our ability to implement these steps is greatly affected by the *accuracy* of our assumptions about the problems we face. Research shows that we can develop *resilient thinking habits* about life's challenges by becoming more accurate about what caused the problem and how it will affect us.[2, 3]

When we're looking at what *caused* the problem, it's important to be as accurate as possible about how much of the problem is our responsibility and how much is due to others or circumstances outside of our control. Most problems are not 100% the result of just one person's errors or actions, yet many of us find it easy to get into a habit of blaming ourselves or others for problems we face.

We can also be more accurate about the *impact* the problem will have. It's helpful to be realistic about how long the problem will affect us and how much of our life is affected. While some problems are permanent and affect many areas of our lives, many daily challenges are temporary and affect only the parts of our lives that are specific to the problem. For example, if we are having a problem with someone at work, it doesn't mean our relationships with friends or family need to suffer. When we see everyday frustrations as temporary and their effects as limited, we feel less overwhelmed and more in control. This allows us to be flexible and creative as we search for realistic solutions.

Developing accurate thinking is a life skill that supports successful social problem solving and is a hallmark of resilience.[2]

How adults can help enhance children's problem solving skills.

Role Modeling

Children as young as two years mimic the thinking and coping style of adults around them.[4] When adults model a calm, flexible approach to problem solving, young children will emulate these behaviors.[5]

One way to do this is by talking "out loud" about our daily challenges. For example, as a practitioner is tidying up a play area, a bin topples over and the toys spill out over the floor. She can demonstrate an effective problem-solving approach by voicing her feelings aloud: "That's frustrating, but now I need to calm down – three deep breaths. Now, I'm going to pick up the toys and stop rushing. It doesn't help me get the job done any faster."

Adults also can model an alternative view when a child's perception about a peer has the potential to cause a problem. For example, when young Hannah wailed, "Chandra is always copying me!" her teacher "reframed" the situation by saying, "Chandra thinks your ideas are so good, she wants to use them, too. You must be very proud of your ideas!"

Relationships

Andrea Brown, an early childhood educator, emphasizes that children need relationships with warm, responsive adults and a safe, non-judgmental environment to maximize their social problem-solving potential. "Children learn about problem solving through interaction. Even in early infancy, they figure out what they need to do by reading the facial expressions and body language of the significant adults in their lives." Empathy – understanding one's feelings and the feelings of others – is a crucial problem-solving ability and children learn to understand and support others by being understood and supported themselves.[5]

Resiliency Skills

While the quality of our relationships with children is crucial, Brown suggests that during a child's first two years it is also essential to give them rich opportunities to explore cause and effect, an important building block of problem solving.

Play-based experiences that allow young children to transform materials with their own hands – such as sand, water and play dough – help them see they can effect a change in their environment.

Children as young as four years old can benefit from child-friendly approaches that help them learn not just what to think, but *how* to think about problems they encounter. Puppet plays, games, role plays and children's literature can be used to explore problem scenarios and give children experience generating solutions to social issues and conflicts.[5, 6]

Adults can promote a proactive problem-solving atmosphere by checking children's perceptions about what caused the problem, how they feel about it and what can be done to solve it.

Children learn by directly experiencing the outcome of their problem-solving efforts.

Kathy Misetich has been working with children and families living in disadvantaged circumstances for over 15 years. She says it's also vital to demonstrate faith in children's ability to solve problems themselves and not interfere by taking over. Children learn by directly experiencing the outcome of their problem-solving efforts. When adults model that making mistakes is simply part of the learning process, they encourage children to persevere to find other solutions.

Adults can also foster children's "I can do it" attitude, or sense of self-efficacy, which in turn helps young ones develop *genuine* self-esteem.[2, 4, 5] Achieving this can be done, in part, through the feedback we give them. Accurate, specific feedback that describes their effort or accomplishment enhances children's confidence and sense of self-worth because it helps them see the relationship between their actions and the outcomes.[2, 5] For example, "You decided to take turns with the fire truck. That's a good solution. Now you both feel happy."

Partnerships with Parents

When practitioners develop partnerships with parents to enhance children's problem-solving skills, we bring the child's two worlds together and provide security and consistency about expectations in each environment. Della Croce says this promotes faster integration of the skills and makes them more sustainable. Brown adds that partnering with parents is the best way to create a "data base" for the child. Parents can share information about what works and doesn't work at home; practitioners can share their knowledge about successful approaches to building resiliency skills.

This partnership is particularly important for children and families in disadvantaged circumstances. These children may have delays in cognition, language and social-emotional development and require extra assistance to develop skills to succeed at school. Misetich says their parents also need to feel valued and heard, and to learn positive approaches to problem solving themselves.

There are challenges to overcome in order for partnerships with parents to reach their potential. Brown, Misetich and Della Croce all agree – parents need to feel their knowledge is valued and their diversity respected. It's important for practitioners to find creative ways to welcome and empower parents.

Developing these partnerships is crucial for long-term benefits to society. Home and community environments rich in problem-solving opportunities and skills promote children's resilience. Resilient children grow into resilient adults who foster resilience in children, and so on. It's possible to establish this circle of support, but it takes effort, planning and problem solving to do it!

Please see *CCCF Resource Sheet #90* for more information on how families and practitioners can work together to enhance resilience in young children.

Please see *the CCCF website (www.qualitychildcarecanada.ca)* for workshop materials that you can download for free to help you host a learning event on this topic.

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PARTNERSHIPS WITH PARENTS FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT – PART 2

Early Childhood Practitioners and Parents

Partnering to Enhance Children's Self-Esteem

by Jan Blaxall

"… the fundamental biology of human species: we are social mammals and could never have survived without deeply interconnected and interdependent human contact. The truth is you cannot love yourself unless you have been loved and are loved."[1] *– Bruce Perry*

"Self-esteem is the value we place on ourselves. It is the feeling we have about all the things we see ourselves to be. It is the knowledge that we are lovable, we are capable, and we are unique."[2]

The nurturing of self-esteem starts the day a baby is born, as her parents respond to her with deeply felt emotions of love, connection, and protection. Parents and other family members will be the primary source of self-esteem for the rest of the child's life journey.

Beyond the security of home, others will share this responsibility with parents. Early childhood practitioners, teachers and peers will all be significant influences on the child's sense of self as valued, lovable, capable and unique. Self-esteem is inseparable from social well-being. Successful relationships depend on having a view of oneself as being worthy of caring and respect, and a view of others as equally worthy of kindness and respect.

This is true for parents as well as children. Parents who see themselves as competent, empowered, valued and respected by other adults have the positive self-esteem that enables them to support self-esteem in their children.

Feeling lovable and loved

> "Showing children that they are loved and accepted simply because they exist is the first and most important step to building a healthy self-esteem. Children need to get the message that they are worthy of love (even if they behave badly sometimes) from the most important adults in their lives – their parents."[3]

The "degree of love, concern, acceptance and interest that they show to their children"[4] greatly impacts the development of self-esteem. Stanley Greenspan, internationally respected child psychiatrist, advocates the importance of "floor time," which is time spent with the child, doing things that the child initiates, following the child's lead, and conversing with the child.[5]

In early childhood settings, "floor time" is essential for new relationships to develop. Children away from home need to feel lovable and cared about by each of adults who care for them. When genuine caring is modeled by practitioners, it is noticed and imitated by other children, who also come to value other children. "Floor time" between a child and a practitioner can be easily extended to include peers, and becomes a vehicle for modeling and coaching kindness, social and prosocial skills.

When parents and practitioners work together with young children, "floor time" provides opportunities to observe and discuss the child's unique characteristics, strengths, style of learning and developmental achievements. Parents and practitioners can both engage in enjoyable interactions, and convey their mutual caring and respect to the child. When needed, practitioners can model strategies for following the child's lead, giving meaningful feedback and ensuring that the child's perspective is acknowledged.

Feeling valued and protected

In the video, "A Simple Gift", experts in children's mental health say that the way parents comfort their child is just as important for the child's self-esteem as their play with the child.[6] Comforting the child when he is upset, hurt or ill supports the child's sense of worth, that someone values them and cares about the way he feels. Children who are upset need to know that they can count on the caring response of an adult to help them deal with emotions that may be confusing or overwhelming. This support is crucial for the development of the child's self-esteem, as well as the ability to show caring and empathy towards others.

A children's sense of self is reflected in his behaviour. When adults seek to understand the reasons for children's behaviour and come to better understand individual children, children's self-esteem can be protected and enhanced. Through the partnership between parents and practitioners, parents can share their knowledge of their child's needs and typical response style. Practitioners can share information about biological and developmental factors which influence children's behaviour. Practitioners and parents can share and select appropriate strategies for assisting the child to be successful in managing challenging situations.

Feeling competent and autonomous

> "A child's self-worth and positive self-esteem are rooted in relationships that support her initiative and ability to solve problems. The lived experience of engaging with and overcoming challenges makes real her belief in her own powers."[7]

Emotionally healthy children continuously engage in exploring and becoming adept in their environment. As they play and interact, they learn that they can impact the outcome of their experiences. Repeated experiences in successfully mastering skills and abilities enhance self-esteem and empower children to solve their own problems. A belief in one's own competence frees the child to take the risks necessary for ongoing development and learning.

When parents and practitioners set goals and provide experiences to ensure that each child can be successful, children experience pride in their accomplishments and self-esteem increases. Inappropriate expectations can cause some children to constantly feel like failures. Practitioners and parents who understand the unique and individual pace of development and learning, can ensure that they are providing opportunities for the child to experience success. With feedback about their child's accomplishments, parents' knowledge of their child's strengths and gifts is affirmed.

Factors which may negatively impact self-esteem

While many children are easy-going and adaptable, some children have temperament qualities that are more challenging. Adults' reactions to temperament characteristics such as high intensity or withdrawal can communicate understanding and empathy or frustration or even rejection. If a parent or practitioner perceives the child as being difficult, they may respond insensitively to the child's behaviour, leading to negative self-esteem.

Similarly, when children display behaviours that interfere with development, learning or social interaction, it can be difficult to view the child positively. It is important to discuss possible reasons for the child's behaviour in an empathetic way, while acknowledging that some behaviours can be difficult to deal with. Remember that the child is not "bad", but inexperienced, and not trying to "defy the adult" but seeking autonomy. Practitioners can point out positive developmental outcomes in terms of the child's future qualities, choosing words like "being assertive, expressing emotions, trying to solve problems and developing leadership skills".

Parent Practitioner Relationships

The parent-practitioner relationship provides an ideal opportunity to support self-esteem in both parents and children. The Primary Caregiver Model (which assigns a small number of families to each practitioner – see *Interaction*, Vol 11, No. 1, pp. 15-22 for more on this model) enables the establishment of relationships that support self-esteem. Parents who interact primarily with one practitioner will feel comfortable more quickly, enhancing the sense of partnership.

Still, there may be challenges in establishing effective partnerships. Both parents and practitioners may feel unsure of themselves. They may have different expectations for children, in areas such as independence, expression of emotion and assertiveness. Parents and practitioners may feel differently about the importance of the children's academic achievement, social behaviour, creativity or physical competence. When practitioners and parents have different goals for children, there needs to be open and

respectful discussion, so that parents feel that their values and goals are respected. Barriers to communication may mean that families who are especially in need of support are the least likely to receive it.

Supporting Struggling Families

Some of the most difficult situations practitioners have to deal with involve children who experience or are exposed to child abuse, neglect and family violence. "Physical and sexual abuse are especially damaging for children's feelings of self-worth."[8] The very nature of harsh and abusive parenting is to emphasize the failures and/or unlovable qualities of the child when interacting or disciplining.

Coping strategies of vulnerable children are often misunderstood as problematic behaviour, leading to discipline strategies that negatively impact their self-esteem. Practitioners can make the error of trying to manage or change the behaviour rather than looking for the underlying causes of the behaviour. They need to seek for the reasons behind a child's behaviour when that child lives in difficult circumstances.

For vulnerable children, Bruce Perry advocates that

> "…it is paramount that we provide environments which are relationally enriched, safe, predictable, and nurturing…. We can also be good role models: in all our interactions with children we can be attentive, respectful, honest, and caring. Children will learn that not all adults are inattentive, abusive, unpredictable, or violent."[9]

Within secure relationships, children will experience the ingredients needed for self-esteem.

These same strategies can provide the encouragement needed for parents to make positive change as well. While society tends to expect parents to manage their children's behaviour, the situation or dynamics in the home may make that next to impossible. Families involved in violence or abusive situations will need specialized help. However, the practitioner's non-judgmental attitude and sensitive listening can still be a support for both children's and parents' self concept and self-esteem.

Making a Difference

Early childhood practitioners clearly have an important role to play in supporting both children's and parents' self-esteem. Parents are reassured when practitioners understand, accept and genuinely care for their children. Parents benefit when early childhood practitioners share their expertise on child development, which assists parents to maintain a positive and optimistic view of their child.

Please see *CCCF Resource Sheet #89* for more tips on how practitioners and parents can enhance children's self-esteem.

Please see *Practitioners and Families Together: A Self-Esteem Workshop* for materials to help you host a learning event on the topic (available for free download at www.qualitychildcarecanad.ca)

 Jan Blaxall is a member of the faculty of Early Childhood Education at Fanshawe College in London. Her teaching combines her background in developmental psychology with research and understanding of brain development and current principles of early childhood education. Jan says "When asked to write about self-esteem, I initially thought that this would be an easy task, because I teach about it in all my courses. However, after several drafts of the article, I am reminded that this is a very complex topic, one worth revisiting on a regular basis, since it is the foundation of all that we are as individuals and members of our community."

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RESEARCH UPDATES

Canadian Labour Congress Gives Federal Government a Grade "D"

The Canadian Labour Congress gave the federal government a failing grade for its lack of action on providing working parents with more access to affordable, quality child care spaces. At a news conference held on Parliament Hill, on June 12th, 2008 Barbara Byers, executive vice-president of the Canadian Labour Congress, released a full set of report cards, grading the provinces and the federal government on their overall performance when it comes to delivering the child care services working families need. Based on public data provided by or through governments, the report cards measure progress (or lack thereof) in three areas: 1) affordability, measured by what it costs parents to access child care services, 2) quality, measured by the salaries paid to child care staff, and 3) accessibility, measured by the creation of new public child care spaces. Manitoba scored the highest mark, with a grade of B+ while the lowest mark, a D-, was awarded to British Columbia. The federal government, meanwhile, was given an "incomplete" grade. For more information visit www.canadianlabour.ca.

Children from troubled families get a boost from daycare: study

Students who are at risk of developing behavioural problems and learning difficulties can be identified as early as Grade 1, a new Quebec study shows. The study links risk factors like poverty, dysfunctional families and lack of neighbourhood safety to difficult behaviour and poor grades. The author, Christa Japel, a Université de Québec à Montréal researcher who presented the study in June as part of the Institute for Research on Public Policy symposium says that from a very young age, these kids are already behind. Better access to quality daycare early in life would help them succeed in Grade 1 and beyond. The study recommends "early, intensive and continuous interventions from pregnancy to school" to help children come out ahead. The study, *Vulnerable Children in Canada: Research Insights and Policy Options* evaluated more than 2,000 children born in Quebec between October 1997 and July 1998. The study shows that children from at-risk households are more likely to experience anxiety at school and be physically aggressive with other students. In addition, their cognitive development, such as vocabulary, problem-solving and decision- making, is behind that of other students. Although Japel acknowledged Quebec's $7-a-day subsidized child-care system is "avant-garde," more must be done to target children at risk and reduce waiting lists for daycare.

New Child Care Privatization Project

The Childcare Resource and Research Unit (CRRU) has developed a new project aimed to gather and develop resources to inform and encourage Canadian dialogue on this important public policy issue. To this end, the CRRU has gathered pertinent documents available online and in print, which includes a comprehensive bibliography of key research. The project will be ongoing and the website will be updated on a regular basis. Subscribers to CRRU's weekly e-broadcast will be informed of new additions. For more information visit www.privatization.crru.ca

ACROSS CANADA AND BEYOND

International

Senator Barack Obama flagged the importance of education beginning in early childhood in his acceptance speech on August 28, 2008 and positioning early childhood education and care as a key part of the agenda for the 2008 United States presidential election. Obama also released his platform for education on his website and within it his plan for early childhood education and care. In his acceptance speech, Obama said that the "time has come to put children first by focusing investments where research and effective practice tell us we will have the greatest opportunity for long-term success". Highlights of the early childhood education plan include:

- A Zero to five plan to provide critical support to young children and their parents with a key emphasis at early care and education for infants which is expressed as being essential for children to be ready to enter kindergarten. Early Learning Challenge Grants will be created to promote state 'Zero to Five' efforts and help states move toward voluntary, universal preschool.
- Expand Early Head Start and Head Start
  Obama will quadruple Early Head Start, increase Head Start funding and improve quality for both.
- Affordable, high quality child care

Obama will also provide affordable and high-quality child care to ease the burden on working families.

National

On September 3rd the federal government's department of Human Resources and Social Development announced a $434,150 investment for the Child Care Human Resources Sector Council to undertake the "Occupational Standards for Early Childhood Educators" project. The project will develop a comprehensive set of occupational standards that will describe the knowledge and skills that a person interested in early childhood education must have to be considered competent in that occupation. The funding aims to support the people who work in the sector and the project will identify the key skills, abilities and knowledge early childhood educators need to work effectively with young children and meet the needs of Canadian families. The occupational standards are a critical element for the successful development of the child care sector, and will help shape everything from the design and delivery of training programs, to the analysis of work force trends and issues, to assisting in recruitment and retention initiatives.

Statistics Canada released a new report called, *Father's use of paid parental leave* on June 23, 2008 examining the increase in use of paid parental leave benefits by fathers since federal and provincial changes in 2000. Since changes 1 in 5 fathers now claims parental benefits. In 2001, shareable parental leave benefits under the federal Parental Benefits Program increased from 10 to 35 weeks, and in 2006 Quebec introduced its Parental Insurance Program. As a result, the proportion of fathers claiming paid parental leave jumped significantly—from 3% in 2000 to 10% in 2001, and again from 15% in 2005 to 20% in 2006. The most common reasons for fathers not claiming the benefits were family choice, difficulty taking time off work and financial issues. For Quebec's part, in 2006, 56% of eligible fathers in Quebec claimed benefits for an average of 7 weeks compared with 11% of fathers outside Quebec who did so for 17 weeks. Fathers were significantly more likely to claim benefits if they lived in Quebec and if they had a co-claiming spouse who earned the same or more than they did. More than half of fathers outside Quebec who claimed parental leave benefits were the sole person in the household to do so. Internationally, 13 of 20 OECD countries have national paid parental leave programs with at least two weeks available to the father. Of these, nine use legislation to encourage fathers' participation.

Alberta

The Alberta government unveiled a $242-million child-care plan to address funding and staff wages this spring. Set to launch in September, the funding will create 14,000 new child-care spaces in three years, increase staff wages by up to 60 per cent, provide new subsidies for low and middle-class families, and grant daycare operators with direct funding for infant care spaces for the first time in over a decade. The new subsidy program for parents will work on an income-based scale, which depending on the number and age of children, and gross family income, gives recipients a maximum of $628 a month per infant and $528 per preschooler. The subsidies are targeted to low-income people. According to the Childcare Resource and Research Unit (CRRU), the province spent $1,093 per child-care space in 2005-2006, the lowest amount in Canada, while the national average was $3,259. In Alberta's booming economy, attracting and retaining trained staff has been an issue for daycare operators. In recognition of the problem, the province will be increasing wage top-ups for those working in licensed daycares. However, in order to qualify for the maximum top-up of $6.62, a worker requires a level three certificate and must work in an accredited centre, which will leave those working in licensed centres unable to take advantage of the full increase. Along with the wage top-ups, the government has also expanded its incentive allowance for daycare workers, which includes a one-time payment of $2,500 after one year of employment, and a new $2,500 scholarship for high school students enrolled in a post-secondary childhood education program.

BC

A report was released May 6th by the Auditor-General John Doyle criticizing the B.C. government over its care of aboriginal children. "More than half the

children in its care are aboriginal, yet the B.C. government has no idea how they're doing," states Doyle. According to the report, the disproportionate number of aboriginal children in need of protection likely indicates that government programs are falling short. But rather than scrutinizing those programs and making changes, the government has little information on what's working and what isn't. Neither the federal nor the B.C. government knows enough about the outcomes or what happens to these children who receive child welfare services? The report recommends that our legislatures and aboriginal and first nations communities need to know if the services being provided make a difference. The report also found that the B.C. government knows little about what services aboriginal children need, nor how many social workers and other employees are required to deliver them. As a result, the ministry hasn't been able to make a strong case at the cabinet table for more money and in turn faces funding gaps. The issue is of major concern because aboriginal children account for only eight per cent of the population, but make up 51 per cent of children in the province's care.

New Brunswick

The Liberal government rolled out its new plan for French second-language education in New Brunswick on August 5th. The program will have a universal kindergarten to Grade 2 system that introduces French in separate modules focused on art, songs and games. Immersion will begin in Grade 3 and students don't enter the program will be required to take an intensive French course by Grade 5.

The revised plan was a result of a public furor caused by parents of immersion students who protested the government's original intention to set back to Grade 5 the beginning of immersion instruction in New Brunswick schools. The heart of the issue was the lack of public consultation conducted by the Department of Education on the change. Parents sought a court ruling and won, forcing the government seek public input before it released its current program.

Former lieutenant-governor Margaret Norrie McCain is an expert on early childhood development and is advising the province's cabinet committee on designing a system of specialized sites that will offer a wide range of integrated services to children and parents. "The science of language acquisition shows us that the best time for it to happen is when the brain is malleable and developing the language function is between six months and two years."

The New Brunswick Department of Social Development released a strategy outlining New Brunswick's commitments and action items to improve the early childhood sector. The strategy, *Be Ready for Success: A 10-year early childhood strategy for New Brunswick* was released June 25th and includes plans to provide new community-based resources, enhanced subsidies for parents, and the piloting of four new early childhood development centres. The four new early childhood development centres are being established to provide integrated and co-ordinated community services to parents and children. The demonstration sites will be located in provincial elementary schools, and will be piloted over a three-year period. The centres will be designed to offer parenting programs and support groups, toy libraries, child-care services, early childhood programming, and information on nutrition and healthy lifestyle choices. In addition, a $13.7-million Early Learning and Child Care Trust Fund has been established to provide training for child-care workers, develop and implement a new early learning and child-care curriculum, and provide financial incentives for the creation of new child-care spaces in the province. In *Charter for Change*, the province committed to double the number of infant spaces. From October 2006 to March 2008, the number of infant spaces has increased by over 30 per cent.

Ontario

A new mentoring program for child care supervisors is coming to Ontario. *Mentoring Pairs for Child Care* is a new Ontario-wide program designed to support enhanced child care quality by matching less experienced child care supervisors with more experienced child care supervisors in their own communities. The members of each mentoring pair work their way through a process of group learning, one-on-one conferencing, networking and guided communication to develop their supervisory skills. The Child Care Human Resources Sector Council's Occupational Standards for Child Care Administrators provides the framework for the program, allowing both mentors and mentees to deepen their understanding of the requirements for excellence in their careers as child care supervisors. There is no cost to mentors, mentees or their employers. To learn more, please visit www.mentoringpairsforchildcare.org.

PEI

In June, Prince Edward Island Liberal Premier Robert Ghiz appointed former Tory treasurer, Pat Mella, to be Public Kindergarten Commissioner to lead the province into public kindergarten. As commissioner, Mella submit a report in June 2009. The report will set out a vision and goals for the kindergarten program and will recommend a plan to move kindergarten into the school system by September 2010. Issues addressed in the report will range from the delivery model and curriculum to credentials for instructors and sensitively addressing the impacts on existing early childhood educators. Mella has stated that she will seek input from stakeholders and the general public in her effort to strengthen the province's public education system.

Quebec

The province of Quebec announced on August 12th that it will be distributing fairly, the 18,000 new public child care spots across Quebec including regions suffering from a shortage of subsidized child care. Quebec Family Minister Michelle Courchesne said the new spots will benefit handicapped children and those from poor or immigrant families. About 9,500 of the 18,000 will be reserved for the greater Montreal area including the island's suburbs, and a third of the new spots will be created in workplaces or educational centres. Another 575 of the spots will be reserved for children from First Nations communities, she said. The Quebec Liberal government originally announced it would create 18,000 new spots in July 2007. The new spots will increase Quebec's annual daycare costs to about $2 billion a year.

Saskatchewan

The Government of Saskatchewan is providing $1.7 million in additional funds to pay employees at provincially licensed child care facilities. The increase will result in child-care workers making an average of $14.40 per hour -- a four-per-cent increase over the current average wage of $13.90 per hour. The higher wages are intended to help child cares in the province recruit and retain staff, something that has been a challenge for child-care centres across Canada. The move is intended to make wages better reflect (child-care workers') post-secondary credentials in the way they do in other, comparable occupations. Besides funding for higher wages for child-care workers, the government plans to create 500 more child-care spaces in the province, as announced in the spring budget. While the province doesn't directly set wages of child-care workers, the money will be made available to agencies in charge of child-care services. It is hoped that the four-percent increase in funding will allow licensed child care facilities to bump their pay grid to be more comparable.

CALENDAR

OCTOBER 2008

2-4
Vancouver, British Columbia
Childhood and Adolescent Obesity 2008
How We Live, How We Learn, and How We Work: Implications for the Prevention and Treatment of Childhood Obesity. Hosted by UBC Interprofessional Continuing Education. Info: www.interprofessional.ubc.ca

3-5
Richmond B.C.
Western Canada - Provincial Family Child Care Conference-2008
Western Canada Family Child Care Association of BC is having a Provincial Family Child Care Conference, Hand In Hand. See http://www.wcfcca.ca/ for more information

9-10
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Developmental Disabilities and Autism – 17th Annual St. Amant Conference
The conference is hosted by St. Amant, a Winnipeg based organization that serves individuals with a developmental disability, acquired brain injury or autism. Presentations cover topics that affect pre-school children, school-age children, adults and seniors and deal with innovative practices, Practical Training and Wellness.

16-18
Alliston, Ontario
Ontario Physical and Health Education Association (OPHEA) Kids' Health Conference
37th annual Kids' Health Conference, hosted by OPHEA. Info: www.ophea.net/kidsconference.cfm

24- 25
Markham, Ontario

Growing Up Healthy and Green: A Dialogue Environmental Health and Green Practice in Child Care hosted by Seneca College's School of Early Childhood Education.

The conference brings together experts in children's environmental health and child care sectors. For more information or to register visit: www.senecac.on.ca/ece/conference

27- 29
Ottawa, Ontario

HCCAO Conference - "Hear our Voice!"

Join other home child care professionals along with the Ottawa Baobab Tree Director and Ghanaian drummer, Kathy Armstrong to celebrate "Hear Our Voice!". Information: www.hccao.com

NOVEMBER

20th

National Child Day

MARCH 2009

11- 14
Victoria, British Columbia

Third International Conference on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

Integrating Research, Policy, and Promising Practice Around the World: A Catalyst for Change Hosted by UBC Inter-professional Continuing Education. Info: www.interprofessional.ubc.ca

MAY 2009

28- 30
Winnipeg, Manitoba

2009 Canadian Child Care Conference

Details coming soon on the 2009 Conference on Early Learning and Child Care, co-hosted by the Manitoba Child Care Association and the Canadian Child Care Federation. www.qualitychildcarecanada.ca

RESOURCES

The Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development (CEECD) has just produced two new information sheets to help parents and practitioners gain a better understanding of **parenting skills** and **discipline**. Other publications on children's aggressive behaviours, **sleeping behaviours**, **crying behaviours**, the **role of attachment**, and the **effects of tobacco during pregnancy** are also available online on the CEECD Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development website: www.child-encyclopedia.com/en-ca/home.html

To receive these publications free of charge, please contact Lucie Beaupré at: lucie.beaupre@umontreal.ca

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder (FASD) Tool Kit for Aboriginal Families

The Ontario Federation of Indian Friendships Centres has created a user-friendly resource to help front line workers working with children, youth, adults, and families affected by FASD. The toolkit accompanies the report: Aboriginal Approaches: FASD. For more information visit www.ofifc.org

Food Aimed at Children has Poor Nutritional Value - Article

An article, entitled, *Assessing 'fun foods': nutritional content and analysis of supermarket foods targeted at children*, written by Charlene Elliot of the School of Journalism and Communication, Carleton University, in Ottawa provides a nutritional profile of foods targeted specifically at children in the Canadian supermarket. Excluding confectionery, soft drinks and bakery items, 367 products were assessed for their nutritional composition. The article examines the relationship between 'fun food' images/messages, product claims and actual product nutrition. Among other findings, it concludes that approximately 89% of the products analysed could be classified as of poor nutritional quality owing to high levels of sugar, fat and/or sodium. Policy considerations need to be made in light of the fact that 'fun food' is a unique category that poses special challenges; as such, recommendations regarding food labelling and packaging are presented. To access the complete article, go to: http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/120091183/abstract.

Grief in Young Children – A Handbook for Adults by Atle Dyregrov

It is a common misconception that preschool children are not capable of experiencing grief in the same way that older children do. *Grief in Children* explains children's understanding of death at different ages and gives a detailed outline of exactly how the adults around them can best help them cope.

Whether a child experiences the death of a parent, sibling, other relation or friend, or of a classmate or teacher, it is important for those caring for bereaved children to know how to respond appropriately to the child's needs. This book deals with a range of common physical and psychological responses and describes the methods of approaching grief in children that have been shown to work best. The author provides guidance on how loss and bereavement should be handled at school, explains when it is appropriate to involve expert professional help and discusses the value of bereavement groups for children and support for caregivers.

Illustrated with case studies and incorporating current research, this book is essential reading for parents, caregivers, counsellors, teachers and all those concerned with the welfare of bereaved children. To find out more or buy this book, go to: www.jkp.com.