

# Interaction

VOLUME 24, NUMBER 1, SPRING 2010

## Global Perspectives in ECE

**A Model for Canada – A Look at European Union Policy on Early Childhood Education and Care**

**Full-Day Learning for 4-and 5-Year-Olds: A Day in an Integrated Early Childhood Program**

PUBLICATION OF THE CANADIAN CHILD CARE FEDERATION



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There is no shortage of international organizations, practices and approaches in ECE and child care around the world. Like you, they all share a passion for children and their well-being. (see page 33)

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One new resource sheet accompanies this issue:  
**#95 – Ages & Stages of Numeracy Development**



The photo for the front cover was photographed by Judith Gustafsson, Ottawa ON.

# Behind the Scenes

Since my early years of traveling and working for children in Malawi, Africa, I am forever drawn to cross-cultural experiences and ideas. I like that I'm forced to self reflect in almost everything I do when traveling and working on foreign soil. What we take for granted in our own culture as being a 'normal' habit can stick out like a sore thumb to the locals in another country. And when working with another culture to find solutions through our own tried and true approaches, we may be surprised to find they just don't work outside Canada. So our mind opens a little more to their ideas, and together we explore new approaches.

The focus of this issue of *Interaction* will challenge us to broaden our Canadian ideas on ECE practice and policy with international perspectives. Look at how a cross-cultural Indonesian project transforms early childhood educators to overcome their own cultural assumptions and biases and to practice in more inclusive ways. Discover how art is both a universal right and a universal language for children as they unite cultures around the globe through painting and drawing to bring world peace. Explore Reggio Emilia when a CCCF board member visits Italy. And read how the European Union Policy on Early Childhood Education prioritizes child care as the route to economic competitiveness.

The Ideas section discusses why an integrated early childhood program is crucial to the success of full-day learning for 4- and 5-year olds. We are taken through a day in an integrated early childhood program to learn about its impact on the well-being of parents and children. We'll read parents' and children's views about their daily life in school communities that offered *integrated* or *non-integrated* early childhood services.

Finally, join us in Montreal, Quebec along with your fellow colleagues across Canada at the upcoming 31st annual AECEQ Conference, *Our Time to Shine*, taking place on May 27-28, 2010.

**Claire McLaughlin**, editor  
cmclaughlin@cccf-fcsge.ca

# Interaction

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# Inside the Federation

## Occupational Standards Reflect the Work of ECEs in a Changing World

Sector stakeholders involved in developing and validating the revised Occupational Standards for early childhood educators are pleased by the project's "recognition of the value of the work ECEs do and the continuing changes in the sector and the field," said Sector Council board member and project steering committee chair, Stephanie Seaman.

The draft revised Standards—reviewed by stakeholders across Canada in the Fall—were developed in large part by ECEs who identified the skills, knowledge and abilities required for their job. These new Occupational Standards update the first set of Standards, the *Occupational Standards for Child Care Practitioners*, produced by the Canadian Child Care Federation in 2003.

"When they are finalized, the revised Standards will reflect the increasing complexity of the job due to rapid changes in the sector," said Seaman. "For example, today's ECEs have increased responsibility, work a lot more closely with families and related professionals, and also have a stronger connection with schools."

The Standards are expected to be widely used by those working as ECEs, as well as employers and trainers. They will be very comprehensive, outlining the detailed tasks in all areas of the ECE core job, as well as tasks that are specific to school age and family child care practitioners. The areas covered include childhood development, programming, health and safety, family and community relations, professional development and record keeping.

### A mirror and a tool

"Not everything in the Standards may be done by an ECE, but everything an ECE does should be in the Standards," Seaman said. "ECEs looking at the Standards should be able to recognize their role, and use them to set a standard of quality for themselves."

The Occupational Standards will also provide a valuable tool for employers, who may use them for support when dealing with a range of human resource issues.

"At minimum they will help employers look at job descriptions and make sure they reflect the work," said Darcelle Cottons, Sector Council board member and project steering committee member. "An employer could look at designing

their whole hiring and evaluation of staff and long-term planning of staff growth within using the Standards—whether it's a new centre or whether they are looking at redoing what they already have."

Knowing the ever-evolving complexities of the job is also critical to post-secondary institutions training the new generation of ECEs. "There's no question the job is growing and changing," said project steering committee member and Sector Council board member Karen Chandler. "Ideally [the Standards] should affect post-secondary curriculum review so people can look at how well they are addressing some of these developments. You don't want to have gaps."

The final Standards will be available in April 2010.

## Free Environmental Health Checklist for Practitioners

CCCF is pleased to announce the upcoming bilingual release of a great environmental health checklist for practitioners from our partners at the Canadian Partnership for Children's Health and Environment (CPCHE). This user-friendly checklist is designed to assist child care practitioners and public health inspectors in identifying practical steps to reduce children's exposures to toxic chemicals and pollutants in various indoor and outdoor child care settings. *Advancing Environmental Health in Child Care Settings: A Checklist for Child Care Practitioners and Public Health Inspectors* will be available for **FREE** as a downloadable on-line resource from the CCCF website in both official languages this April. This document was developed with the help of CCCF, additional CPCHE partners and environmental health experts. It is intended for use by child care staff and the public health inspectors who work with them as a tool for identifying options and tracking progress over time.

## INSIDE THE FEDERATION

# CCCF Launching National Social Marketing Campaign

In the spring of 2010, the Federation will begin to roll out a national social marketing and awareness campaign across Canada. Key components of the campaign will include:

- A short motivational video that expresses why quality early learning and child care is important, why we are committed to being the best practitioners, researchers, educators, and policy-makers we can be. The video will be launched at our national conference in Montreal in May, and simultaneously launched at regional events in other parts of the country.
- A series of lively, provocative print advertisements that will be distributed to national publications, but also made available to Affiliates and our education partners for placement in their print publications.

The social marketing campaign has been developed over the past twelve months in partnership with our Affiliates, and includes a comprehensive analysis document and a number of other key projects that we hope to deploy over the next couple of years.

The entire campaign and communications strategy is based on this Core Branding Statement, developed in partnership with our Board and Member Council.

*"We are the Canadian Child Care Federation.*

*Our organization is about the value of children. We value children.*

*In order to protect and enhance our children, to ensure their safety and their healthy growth and development, we are*

*committed to providing Canadians with the very best in early learning and child care knowledge and best practices.*

*Our tools are research and knowledge dissemination, the creation and nurturing of active networks.*

*Our strengths are:*

- *Our national scope – giving us a unique, informed frame of reference;*
- *Our national network – Affiliates from coast to coast who give us strength, knowledge, perspective, and credibility; and*
- *Our history – a legacy of excellence spanning over a quarter of a century that gives us a level of trust and credibility with Canadian institutions, individuals, and families.*

*Working in partnership with our Affiliates, we are committed to:*

- *The importance of quality early learning and child care as an essential Canadian value and a right worth protecting and enhancing;*
- *The importance of quality delivery of early learning and child care as crucial elements in the healthy development of our children;*
- *The importance of competent, well-trained professionals who deliver quality early learning and child care with passion and pride."*

For more information about the CCCF's plans for social marketing, advertising, and promotion, contact Kim Tytler, Marketing & Development Manager, [ktytler@cccf-fcsge.ca](mailto:ktytler@cccf-fcsge.ca).

## CEECD Free Key Messages for Practitioners, Parents and Aboriginal Parents

The Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development (CEECD) regularly publishes key messages for practitioners and parents. These information sheets summarize the best scientific work on the social and emotional well-being of young children and are available free of charge on the CEECD online Encyclopedia at <http://www.child-encyclopedia.com/en-ca/key-messages-list.html>.





## INSIDE THE FEDERATION

# Building a Foundation for Numeracy is as Easy as 1, 2, 3!

*New Professional Development and Training Resource for building a foundation for numeracy in young children – FREE early years volume for members of CCCF.*

CCCF has joined together with the Canadian Language and Literacy Research Network (CLLRN) to develop a Resource Kit containing 2 volumes of practical and research information on building a foundation for numeracy with young children.

The aim of this resource is to provide early learning practitioners with information from recent findings of well-designed research studies on the development and teaching of mathematics. The resource has been divided into two volumes: one for early learning and child care practitioners, and the other for elementary school teachers. Both volumes can be used as a reference tool in daily practice. It is a useful professional

development resource for those working with young children and a learning resource for those in training to become practitioners.

As a benefit of being a member of the Canadian Child Care Federation, you will be receiving the early years volume for **FREE...hot off the press in April 2010**. For more information, visit our website [www.qualitychildcarecanada.ca](http://www.qualitychildcarecanada.ca).

**COMING SOON!**

### Reflections on Shaping an Integrated Early Learning and Child Care/Education System

Coming soon from the Canadian Child Care Federation  
Watch the CCCF website ([www.qualitychildcarecanada.ca](http://www.qualitychildcarecanada.ca))

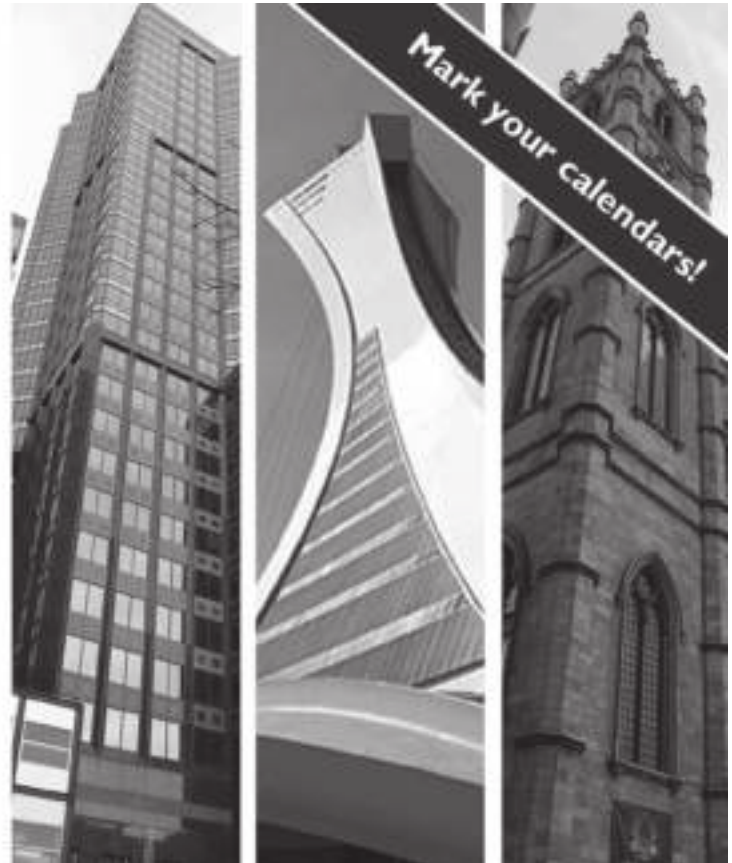
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## FROM WHERE I SIT

# What Should it Mean to be a Child in Canada?

by Charles E. Pascal

Special Advisor on early learning to the Premier of Ontario & Executive Director of the Atkinson Charitable Foundation

Released in June 2009, *With Our Best Future in Mind: Implementing Early Learning in Ontario*, is an Ontario government-commissioned report written by our author, Charles E. Pascal, to advise on the best means of implementing full day learning for 4-and 5-year-olds. It is comprised of three documents: the main report; A Summary of the Evidence, which reviews the research that informed the report; and, Every Child, Every Opportunity, the curriculum for the new Early Learning Program. A brochure is also available. All documents are online in French and English at [www.ontario.ca/earlylearning](http://www.ontario.ca/earlylearning)

It seems like yesterday. Fourteen years passing like a speck cannot interfere with the indelible memory of walking my 18 month old to the front door of her very first out of the home learning centre. Wobbly walk, very hesitant holding my hand, squeezing my hand harder as I prepared to hand over my little girl to these strangers, two early childhood educators. A few tears, hers visible, mine suppressed until I was out of sight. It was about the morning of day three on our way to the “day care” that she broke my clasp and ran to the front door of the centre, excited about her home away from home. And then there was that difficult end of the day pick-up trying to

**“Forty years later, to paraphrase Dickens, we live with the tale of two pathways. When it comes to support for Canada’s children, it is the best of times, it is the worst of times...”**



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pry her away from her play, learning beside other kids, still a few months shy of actually playing *with* other kids. This was the beginning of a joyful and confident lifelong learner that remains evident today.

While the evidence about the importance of highly skilled early learning practitioners on the development of young children is clear, my respect for the transformational talents of a capable early childhood educator is grounded in my role as a parent. My respect for and need for early childhood educators as partners to support the development of my children actually began forty years ago with the birth of my eldest daughter. I was a freshly minted young professor with a research interest in learning, co-parenting anew with a partner also pursuing a professional career. It was obvious that our “village”

wasn’t ready and able to support us in raising our child. So a few other pros and I founded a “family centre”. Still stands





today, still flourishes, still provides a safe and healthy place of learning all because we were fortunate to hire a remarkable early childhood educator who asked us all to answer a simple but powerful question: “What should it mean to be a child in this centre?”

Forty years later, to paraphrase Dickens, we live with the tale of two pathways. When it comes to support for Canada’s children, it is the best of times, it is the worst of times...

Here’s the disturbing news first, because I am pathological optimist always wanting to “end” a moment of reflection with hope. Our investment in early childhood education at .25 percent of GDP according to prestigious Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development puts us last among the top 20 developed countries. The artificial divide between child care and education remains far too prevalent across our nation, with fragmented policies and structures that prevent the kind of progress necessary to improve the quality, accessibility, affordability for children, parents, guardians and governments alike. This divide, or “hardening of the categories”, remains an obstacle to the further development of a coherent well-supported workforce of early learning professionals—teachers and early childhood educators -- with a common understanding of what it should mean to be a child and a common and organic curriculum informed by this understanding. I still witness so many elected officials use fiscal challenges as an excuse to avoid investing in early childhood education, hoping we might forget that other excuses were offered when times were better.

But I am encouraged by signs of progress. We are able to witness provinces investing in comprehensive changes for the better, moving to eliminate the divide, acting on what we have known for far too long...that quality child care is about learning and great education is caring, and attending to plans that focus on a pre-natal to 12 year old continuum. I can walk into an elementary school and see the magic of early childhood educators and teachers working as a team engaged in reciprocal mentoring to ensure that the curiosity and discovery learning of their young charges are only matched by their own enthusiasm about learning from the kids. Key in this is the growing importance of the wonderful gifts of early child development knowledge and skills with both kids and parents that well-trained ECE’s can bring to the team approach necessary for a truly transformational change. I have witnessed the development of wonderful play-based curriculum in several

different provinces, curriculum and pedagogy that dramatically impacts on the social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development of our children.

Most important, I have seen a remarkable rise in the diversity of leaders---the parent, the banker, the labor leader, the politician—who understand the importance of investing in the early years. And I have witnessed up close the vision and courage of a premier and his government as they move forward during tough economic times, knowing that an investment today will yield more resilience in dealing with tough times down the road.

In my view, there can be no better measure of the progress of our society, our nation, than how well we support the youngest of our young through a shared and consistent commitment about the needs of all of Canada’s children. But our Federalism’s balance seems to have shifted increasingly into a remarkably decentralized non-nation. Like a teeter totter

with a decentralized block of cement dropped on one end, our nation seems up in the air. While we still have some glue left that seems to define what it means to be a Canadian, the obvious binder being universal health care, we need more... much more. High quality early childhood education which is a very key determinant of health, one that can dramatically reduce health care expenditures, should be the stuff of getting our nation moving to a more cohesive and balanced society.

We had a promising start with a previous federal government that fostered a national conversation about the early years culminating in first principles to loosely guide our national progress, supported by money to encourage provinces. All provinces and territories signed on -- a remarkable opportunity to pursue a common national understanding of the rights of our children and how best to support their development.

But with breathtaking short-sightedness and ideology trumping evidence, this opportunity was cut short....at least for the moment.

Somehow, sooner rather than later, we need space and place to continue that conversation, to pursue that ever-elusive common understanding. And early childhood educators and teachers who are attuned to needs of young children by training or nature or experience, need to play a key role in this nation building process in order to move the clock forward more quickly to a time when we no longer ask what it should mean, but what it does mean to be a child in Canada.

**“In my view, there can be no better measure of the progress of our society, our nation, than how well we support the youngest of our young...”**



# Cultural Behaviours of Attachment

## Beauty in the Eye of the Beholder

by **Suzanne Major**

BA, CE, MA Ece

Always wanting to do well by the children we take care of in our child care services, we focus our attention on provisional factors of quality and on the different aspects of development within the framework of stage development. We observe, document, measure and analyse in order to contribute to the development of children and their education. To do so, we use tools like the COR from High Scope and checklists on physical and socio-affective development. Lately, many educators and workers in social services are using attachment behaviours to explain children's behaviour and even developmental problems.

In the past decades, attachment behaviours have been defined by cognitivists for research purposes, but lately, practitioners in different child care fields are attempting to use them in their practice. There are universal elements that secure attachment brings to affective development, such as a sense of safety, of belonging, of worth, a promise of a future, and to cognitive development: the original encoding of language and the mechanisms of communication. But the behaviours of attachment defined by some cognitive researchers are cultural. To expect children from all parts of the world in our child care services to behave the same way and to label them with insecure attachment if they don't, is something to think about.

For Cooper, Hoffman, Marvin and Powell (1999, p.110), to give but one of the many references, the secure attachment behaviours they use for research are:

- The child remains in close proximity to the person of attachment.
- The child likes staying close while exploring, and signals that specific need by looking back and making eye contact.
- The child seems to want the adult to look out for, to look at and find pleasure in him or her.
- At one point, the child returns to the adult and climbs on or snuggles against him or her.
- The adult responds patiently over and over again and verbalizes affection to the child as well as the child's needs.

To use these behaviour criteria for research is one thing, but to use them for psycho-social evaluation, intervention and education is risky. Those behaviours are indeed expressed by our happy children but they are learned from us. We reinforce those behaviours from the moment of birth. It's beautiful to see a happy child close to its mother and father. We are satisfied with that order of things, but attachment behaviours are cultural:

beauty in the eye of the beholder. A little history can perhaps better illustrate.

"Heaven's gift," "the Awakening" or "Happy Dreams" were in the twenties, thirties and forties the picture perfect images of adorable children drawn by Bessie Pease Gutmann, a famous American magazine illustrator. As I searched in antique shops across Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia for artefacts linked to early childhood, I came across those rosy cheeked faces peering through the dust and clutter, and found myself moved by their cuteness. They were the faces and the ultimate representations of the object of maternal attachment in those days. They were also powerful symbols, as those sweet, plump, clean, almost powdery babies were shown dressed in simple clothes, bundled in soft textured blankets, often with a toy at hand. Not a worry or a care in the world! Those images represented warmth, safety, health and the luxury of a little amusement: social values of the times marked by the great depression and the world wars. Those values represented how things should be for little children and what adults should do to nurture that! But those images were also representations of the measure of success of those adults who are taking care of the children.

Magazine covers nowadays show images of happy, slim, curious, bright-eyed, little children — the object of parental attachment. Things have changed in that children now belong to the realm of the affection of both parents. Values have shifted towards wanting our small children to be literate, autonomous and savvy at an early age rather than innocent and dependant.

So we portray them dressed in t-shirts, jeans, sportswear and party clothes, playing in open spaces among their peers, in the name of GAP, Nike or Klein babies — in the image of the successful adults that we wish to be. Those images represent the object of parental attachment but with capability, potential, action, intelligence and equal opportunity. And this is as it should be for small children nowadays and for adults to do to insure such positioning and survival. Insuring survival is what has not changed through recent early childhood history, but basic survival being insured with modern medicine, social welfare, peace and prosperity, in our part of the world, of course. Positioning has become a prominent need. The images we create of our small children say a lot about what we want and need them to be and about the environment and the culture they come from.



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Showing off our well dressed, handsome, healthy babies signals success and announces status. Little children need to be taken care of and, in the process, take care of the adults. Attachment has different functions: insuring survival of small children and social positioning of the adults who take care of them. Margaret Mead (1930, p.25) outlined this clearly when she studied the Manus children of New Guinea.

Attachment is recognizable by specific behaviours in both parents and children, but they are cultural. We like small children to be calm, affectionate, bright-eyed, curious, docile but not to the point of becoming dependent. We need them to be patient, capable of waiting and obeying, buckled in their car seats and strollers, standing in line or quietly sitting down at the child care. All of this is as it should be --sound preparation for the 12 to 15 years of schooling ahead, which is their lot in our culture! The parents of the Manus children needed them to be physically strong and autonomous, "poling" their own canoe at the age of three by themselves on the lagoon, displaying attachment behaviours which included screaming, whining, hitting and pestering --a sound preparation for their adult life as skilled negotiators and traders later on. That was the order of things valued by the parents of the Manus children.

Behaviours of attachment are designed to respond to specific environments. A child that grows up by the sea in a warm and peaceful place or on a farm with chores and responsibilities or in a war zone marred by loss and fear will need to develop attachment behaviours in accordance. Furthermore, children's persons of attachment are not always the mother and the father and attachment does not always take place from 0 to 3 months and then 18 months as we believe it. In areas where there is high infant mortality, attachment is delayed until physical survival is probable.

The behaviours of secure attachment borrowed from researchers and valued these days are no magic wands. They can help with children from our environment but can hardly be applied to all cultures. Furthermore, educators require extensive training to be able to use them. We would do well to seek the images of children that parents of different cultures of the world desire, in order to understand the qualities parents value in their children. This would yield the attachment behaviours defined by their respective environments.

Suzanne Major is a PhD student in anthropology of health and education in day care services, a teacher and the program director for the early childhood and family certificate, early intervention and prevention at the University of Montreal.



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# Using Inclusive Language in ECE

## A Caregiver's Responsibility

by Jess Woods

BASc Child Studies, University of Guelph

For decades, scholars in developmental psychology have recognized the avoidance of gender-exclusive language as an imperative in the establishment of a truly equitable environment. Male generic language is one of the most common forms of gender-exclusive language. We are all aware that both men and women work for the fire department and the postal service, so calling the people in these positions “firemen” and “mailmen” involves using male generics: intending male-specific terms to refer to both males and females. As early childhood educators (ECEs), most of us make efforts to ensure our ‘verbal environment’ is gender-inclusive, by avoiding “fireman” and mailman” and using “fire fighter” and “letter carrier” instead.

Research on children and language confirms that our efforts have a healthy effect on developing minds and self-concepts. Experimental studies lend strong support to the idea that male generic language doesn't work. In fact, it encourages children to generate thoughts and imagery only about boys and men. What's more, using gender-specific language in reference to certain occupational positions (such as calling janitors “cleaning ladies”, or constantly referring to doctors and scientists with male pronouns), actually affects children's perceptions of how well men and women can perform in certain careers.

A few years ago, I became fascinated with the impact that a caregiver's words could have on the developing mind. In familiarizing myself with this area of research, it became easier to identify the different forms of gender-exclusive and gender-inclusive speech I heard around me. I created an observational device so that I might record them in a more formal and impartial manner. The device was designed to record any instance of gendered-speak – that is, any utterance

that revealed the gender of the subject to which an ECE was referring. It allowed for the recording of gendered referents (like he, she, lady and man) and gender-specific terms (like businessman) for both representative people and animals (like toys, stuffed animals or characters in books); and hypothetical or non-present people and animals (as in when a caregiver asks a child about a trip to the dentist by saying, “Did she clean your teeth?”). Gendered referents meant to indicate children or other people in the room were not recorded. Then, after studying 10 ECEs in different programs in a small southern Ontario city, I published a study in the *Canadian Journal of Infancy and Early Childhood*.

In analyzing the results I found that the ECEs were indeed quite vigilant about avoiding the use of male-generics like mailman and fireman, as only a few instances of these terms were recorded. However, what was surprising was the overwhelmingly large percentage of gendered-speak that was decidedly male-specific. In compiling the results I took note of the context in which gendered-speak was likely to occur. When ECEs read storybooks to their children, for example,



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108 of 132 of the recorded referents were male-specific. That is, most (and you might say, nearly *all*) of the gendered words used were he, him, his, man and boy, with only a few she, her, hers, woman, and girl sprinkled in. Moreover, when talking about animals, as caregivers so often do, seven of the ten ECEs were shown to use at least 80 percent male referents. Several of the ECEs used 100 percent male referents. Overall, a large number of these instances of male-specific language occurred while caregivers read books and sang songs to their children.



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The issue raised does not pertain so much to gender-exclusive terms used in early childhood environments. My study provided evidence for my initial hunch that we have moved on from the use of male generics. Still, the extremely unbalanced use of male and female forms of language illuminates an issue that warrants concern. No, we don't use male generics anymore. But we do seem to over-use male-specific language. And if a child is exposed to a verbal environment wherein the vast majority of referents they hear pertain to males, the vast majority of thoughts and images they create will involve men and boys. This suggests that, ultimately, a male-biased verbal environment has the same or similar effect as one full of male generics!

The fact that most instances of male-specific speech occurred while ECEs read books and sang songs suggests that the problem is not so much individualized as it is systemic to systems of early childcare and education. That is, many of the books and songs that are employed by the typical ECE can also be found in the repertoires of caregivers throughout a wide geographical area. Still, ways of bettering the situations within respective classrooms are easily within reach. A simple perusal through the stories in the book corner can quickly reveal whether or not they feature an unbalanced ratio of male and female characters. Some substitutions might need to be made in order to achieve balance. The lyrics in familiar songs can be altered slightly to include more 'she's' and 'hers'. Finally, new books and songs about female characters can be integrated into programming. An easy way of learning new songs is to share with other caregivers at conferences. When I heard a new song I liked about an alligator, for

instance, I made it a 'she'! In our toddler room, we fit it into our repertoire to balance out all of the male referents found in many of our traditional favorites.

Among scholars in psychology and human development, concerns abound that a male-biased verbal environment will lead children to believe that the male is the "norm", with the female a somewhat less-important counterpart. When the things we say in the presence of little girls encourage them to create

thoughts and images of boys, we run the risk of inadvertently preparing them for supporting roles for boys who feel pressured to run the show! Regardless of how we manage our playrooms, a child's mind is a powerful thing. If we want certain worldviews to grow in the minds of young boys and girls – in this case, that the genders are equally essential in the creation of a progressive and healthful society – we must strive to create environments that sew these seeds. Unfortunately, many of the resources designed for young children leave much room for improvement. But with a little awareness and creativity, we can ensure it is our own mindful influence that reaches the ears of the children within our care.

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# Setting Sail Toward New and Innovative “Practice” Shores...

by **Corine Ferguson**

Executive Director for the Alberta Resource Centre for Quality Enhancement (ARCQE)

## Then...

As an early childhood educator and previous centre director there was often a sense of wonder—as time was jostled between ratios, administrative demands, and pressing daily issues—what it would be like to work in an environment where one could ‘test-drive’ theoretical knowledge (education) timely with ‘teachable moments’ (experience) as opportunities unfolded? In the world of child care, it seemed sadly ironic that as one acquired increased knowledge of value to share back with other professionals, less seemed the opportunity to share and mentor others on insight being learned. Who knew some 25 years later, the occasion to lead an organization framed entirely around the creation of innovative and best practice strategies to support the child care community would become a full time job?



- Community Building
- Professional Development and Training
- Research and Best Practice
- Resource Development and Distribution
- Mentorship and Coaching

With numerous creative resources and services introduced daily, and over 20,000 hours of support provided in the past five years alone, demand for ARCQE services has grown exponentially, reinforcing tremendous value the sector attributes to this type of agency.

## Looking Forward...

So... where to from here? With an interactive website registering 10,000 hits per month, activity also

suggests that interest both nationally and internationally is increasing with over 35 countries world-wide now viewing innovative practices developed by ARCQE. To that end, the organization continues to broaden its role as a leader in the child care community with requests for service training coming from as far away as Newfoundland/Labrador, and calls for speaking engagements translate to over 700 presentations being delivered at conferences, symposiums and most recently, sessions provided at the National Association of Education for Young Children (NAEYC) in November 2009.

Now the only thing there is time to wonder about in a day in the life of ARCQE is... “What new practice direction can we set sail to tomorrow?”

For more information on ARCQE services visit our website at [www.arcqe.ca](http://www.arcqe.ca)

## Now...

Today, the Alberta Resource Centre for Quality Enhancement (ARCQE) marks its fifth year of operation as a vibrant newly incorporated organization focused on building capacity and enhancing quality of programs in Alberta. The organization was initially launched as a project under the partnership of the Alberta Child Care Association, the Canadian Child Care Federation and the Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs. In its brief five year history, ARCQE has not only introduced and piloted new ground-breaking services, it also works with an active caseload of over 850 licensed child care programs to provide ongoing quality enhancement support. Centered on strengths and a relationship-based approach, ARCQE addresses program needs through application of theory and practice strategies as it relates to:



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# Making the Case for Natural Playgrounds

by Adam Bienenstock

*“Natural Playgrounds should be the standard for all our playgrounds. They truly connect children with nature through play and are a sort of classroom for the next generation of environmental stewards.”*

—Dr. David Suzuki

We’ve been designing and building playgrounds across North America for child care centers, schools and public parks and institutions for some time now. Our work began intuitively. We were just making playgrounds out of the stuff we played with when we were kids...rocks, logs, hills, dirt, sand, water, big trees...We began doing this in 1982 before they were called ‘playscapes’ or ‘natural playgrounds’. The work was called school ground greening and was considered a fringe movement. In the last decade everything changed. Richard Louv’s book, *Last Child in the Woods* shone a bright light on the cause of connecting children to nature and his work along with the work of so many on the fringe, has moved us all into the mainstream.

Although natural playgrounds are still intuitive to experiential educators, now they are backed by an ever growing body of evidence that connects healthy child development to their exposure to nature. By placing playground theory and practice under the lens of how they contribute to child development, twenty years of playground work is now being challenged.

The diversity and complexity of experience and the child’s ability to interpret and grow with their playground features are fundamental to their development physically (Grahn et al.,



1997, Fjortoft & Sageie, 2000, Fjortoff 2004), cognitively and socially (Moore & Wong, 1997, Lieberman & Hoody, 1998, Taylor et al, 1998, Wells & Evans, 2003, Burdette & Whitaker, 2005, Ginsburg, 2007).

There is an exercise we go through with adults every time we are speaking at conferences or hosting a design facilitation. It goes like this: first we ask by a show of hands who remembers playing unsupervised in a natural setting with the instruction to be home for dinner or before the streetlights came on. Most people put up their hands. Then we ask who has children. Again, most people put up their hands. Finally, we ask how many would let their children out to play unsupervised until the streetlights come on. Everyone nervously laughs and usually two people in the audience apprehensively put up their hands. This type of freeplay is over, now our kids play in fenced pens (Hillary et al., 2005, Department for culture, media and sport.UK, 2006 , Chancellor 2007). Our playgrounds must be the front lines of the quest to connect children to nature when and where they play. However, there are still myths about playgrounds that become obstacles to bringing nature to our children every time we consult on a natural playground project.



The three most common natural playground myths and how we combat them.

**Myth 1: Playgrounds are for kids to blow off steam and natural playgrounds don't provide enough gross motor activity.**

A study by Danner in 1991 showed that as much as 60% of unsupervised children in a traditional playground are completely sedentary. Fjortoft and Sageie's playground study in 2004 showed a direct positive correlation between the number of natural features (trees, hills, grass, sand, water, et cetera) and the amount of gross motor activity with children, and Fjortoft in 2004 showed increased scores on balance and agility in a natural setting when compared to the same time spent in a traditional playground.

From what our team has observed, the kids that do best on a playstructure are the 'A' type kids. They are the fit, aggressive kings and queens of the castle and the ones most in need of learning about nurturing and collaborative play. In a natural playground, the kids on the sidelines become engaged in social, creative, collaborative, quiet, nurturing, and dramatic activities spread throughout the space. By adding nature to your playground, the 'A' type child naturally calms down and



collaborates. The other 60% have an activity that they can excel at while enhancing their gross and fine motor skills at their own pace. The result of a natural setting is better focus in the classroom, better marks on standardised tests (Lieberman & Hoody 1998, Bartosh 2003) and better overall fitness of the student body (Moore et al., 2003, Fjortoft, 2004).

**Myth 2: Neat, tidy, and sterile are best.**

My father was awarded the Order of Canada for his immunology research and I grew up as the only kid on the block who was regularly told NOT to wash my hands before dinner so that I could build a healthy immune system. Chrysene off-gassing from rubber play surfaces has been shown to increase risks of cancer to three

times the acceptable limits (Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, 2007), and the benefit to child development of mud, wet sand, loose parts such as leaves sticks and pine cones (Chancellor, 2007) has been shown to be an effective tool against the symptoms of ADHD (Taylor et al., 2001, 2004, 2009).

Kids need dirt! Dirt is GOOD (Ruebush, 2009)! It is one of the few mediums that allow them to be totally engrossed in an activity to the point where they do not notice they are being supervised. This is the closest many of them will ever get to unsupervised, uninterrupted, outdoor freeplay. Finally, if we







are to have shade, we need a canopy, the best and least expensive canopy is a tree and it will require dirt and water (and even bacteria) to survive.

### **Myth 3: Natural Playgrounds are not CSA approved.**

The Canadian Standards Association (CSA) does not approve or endorse anything. They have created a document called CAN/CSA Z614-07 that is their suggested guideline for the safe installation and use of playstructures. The CSA playground standard writing committee is a body comprised of professionals involved with the design, manufacture, sale, inspection, maintenance, ownership and insurance of playgrounds. One is either compliant with the standard or not. Our natural playground components are compliant with the standard. Any ideas you have may be compliant as well. Simply pick up a copy of the standard, read it, and consider it when installing your natural features.

Remember that the application of the standard is in the hands of the educated opinion of your certified playground safety inspector. So consult with him or her early in the process and see where they stand on natural features. You may want to ask



the opinions of more than one inspector before you decide on the one that is most helpful to you in reaching your goals. You are the expert in child development for your students, and they are the expert in the application of the safety standard. It should be possible for you both to win.

Three things to keep in mind:

1. 'Intended use' is an important tenet of the standard;
2. non-compliance can often be

overcome through supervision; and

3. 'natural landscape features' are not regulated by the standard unless they encroach into the impact zone of an introduced structure with a fall height.

There are so many more of these myths, but these are the big three. The next hurdle is how to approach the design and installation of your natural playground.

### **So you want to build a natural playground? Here are a few tips:**

#### **Planning is people**

Playgrounds should be designed with the people who use them. Form a stakeholders committee and invite parents, children and teachers to be a part of it. Planning, as the great urban planner, Jane Jacobs wrote, needs to be focused on people – the users of the space.

#### **Start with nature**

One of our favourite stories on the importance of reconnecting children to nature is from the renowned playground designer, Rusty Keeler. The moment he shifted from designing children's play equipment to working with nature came when he was asked to draw the ideal piece of playground equipment. After spending some time thinking about it, he drew a tree.

We adults tend to complicate things. Start with the simple stuff first...a big log, a boulder, a small hill, some big trees (white pine is a favourite), and add some sand. Add at least five





items in your first push and add more elements as budget allows. The kids will love one item to death...it is better to spread the love.

### Add open-ended play

Remember that greater child benefit hinges upon the diversity and interpretive quality of the play elements (Fjortoft & Sageie, 2000, Cosco and Moore, unpublished). A raw log can be a dinosaur, a serpent, a plane, a locomotive, anything the child can imagine but a toy car is a car... and then it gets boring. Install the raw item and then let them figure it out (Chancellor, 2007).

### Finish with art and music

Art and music are inclusive. They help to break down barriers presented by age, language, and physical ability while they encourage collaboration and less aggressive behaviour.

Murals, sculpture, bongos, xylophones and chimes are all good places to start. John Dewey said it best in 1932 in his ground breaking book *Art as Experience* 'It is the experience of art that matters'.

From this article, I hope you take away one main thing. This work is not complicated; in fact the opposite is true. If you want to see how many other people are doing this work across the country, simply log onto [www.childnature.ca](http://www.childnature.ca), check out the map of projects and programs, and add yours to the growing list.

Research, experience and most importantly, our children, are telling us that we need to get on with the work of creating the environments where they can connect with nature. Educators, school boards and public park managers are now embracing this fact. The child-nature connection is not a fringe movement any more and it is time for all of us to take our place in the sun.

Adam Bienenstock is the CEO and principal designer of Bienenstock Natural Playgrounds ([www.naturalplaygrounds.ca](http://www.naturalplaygrounds.ca)) and a Director of the Canadian Child Nature Alliance ([www.childnature.ca](http://www.childnature.ca)).

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# “Going Purple” for Change

## ECE’s Role in Reducing Child Abuse

by Naila Felix, Sharon Marie Sitaram, Vicki Brown

On the playground, in the street or at home, research suggests that we are living in a violent society. Many children are being exposed to violence on a daily basis. The Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect estimated that, “two to six children in every Canadian school classroom have witnessed some form of abuse in the home over the past year” ([www.boostforkids.org](http://www.boostforkids.org)).

Do you ever get weary and frustrated with news articles about children living in violence or being mistreated by an adult? Of course we all do, and directing that frustration in a positive way is how one particular group of ECE students, front line ECEs, parents and professionals dealt with it. This is an invitation to all readers to join with us in our fight to stop mistreatment of children...by “Going Purple!” one day a year.

As early childhood educators, we feel that it is important to be advocates for children because often times they do not have a voice. How many times do we ECE professionals make this point? Do we believe that all children can live in peace in our province and country? In Ontario during the month of October, the resounding answer is *yes we believe*, and this message carries on throughout the year. This energy is felt by students and community partners alike, and is what inspired the 2009 Child Abuse Awareness and Prevention campaign at Humber College in Toronto.

This year’s campaign reached a new height and breadth as community partners became integral to the advocacy and message. The “Go Purple” Campaign is an annual event across Ontario that is initiated by BOOST – a “non-profit, community-based organization that provides programs

and services for children, youth and their families after abuse or violence has occurred” ([www.boostforkids.org](http://www.boostforkids.org)).

The campaign is one that Humber ECE students have participated in for a number of years, raising awareness and funds for BOOST and the Children’s Aid Society (CAS) within the college community. Humber’s two child care centres participate in the campaign, along with the students and faculty. This is also an inter-disciplinary campaign as nursing students have been active advocates in the campaign for some time.

At Humber’s new Orangeville campus, students reached out to the community and received a remarkable response. As the campus is situated in the local recreation centre, it attracts



From Left to Right: Mabelle Sandoval, Pulcheria Mathurin, Naila Felix, Maggie Ferreira, Sharon Marie Sitaram, and Filipa Saraiva.





families, many of whom were touched by the student campaign that continued throughout the day and into the evening. In a rural community such as this, partnerships are essential. Students, faculty and community members noted that one of the great things about holding an event such as the Go Purple Campaign in a small town like Orangeville, is that it is very community oriented. This is because the funds raised throughout the day go directly to Dufferin Child and Family Services — the money goes right back to support community programs.

The students in the Early Childhood Advanced Studies in Special Needs post-diploma program took the lead and brought the campaign to families at an Ontario Early Years Centre in Brampton. This was inspired by a student on placement sensing an opportunity to reach out to parents she was working with weekly. Student organizers contacted representatives from BOOST who presented a workshop entitled *Stress Free Parenting*, providing child guidance and behaviour management strategies. Parents were also encouraged and assisted to build a network amongst themselves and the community. As a result of the workshop,

the centre has received numerous calls for similar events and opportunities.

Let's take more of the lead in talking, discussing, questioning and reaching out to our communities in joint efforts to eliminate violence in the lives of children.

Public education is important as there are many of us who do not know how to recognize when an adult, the elderly or a child is being abused, and what we can do to help. Advocacy and public education opens one's eyes to what is happening in the country and even in our own backyard. When you educate the public, you educate for change. Making a difference starts with small steps; when students, ECEs, parents and concerned citizens become involved, we can all have a big influence on the safety and well being of children across Canada.

Authors: Naila Felix, Sharon Marie Sitaram, Vicki Brown. Naila and Sharon are students in the Early Childhood Advanced Studies in Special Needs Program at Humber College. Vicki is a full time student in the Early Childhood Education Program at Humber College, Orangeville Campus.

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Philosophy: The North American Montessori Centre subscribes to the view that education should be progressive and needs to provide an open-ended view of the Montessori approach to Early Childhood Development. It seeks to harmonize the classical Montessori method within contemporary psychological, educational and social wisdom. Blending Early Childhood Education with the Montessori method has been proved to be sensitive, intelligent and fruitful.



# Who Knew Science Could Be So Simple? With *Wings of Discovery*® It Can Be!

by Mary Quinn, ECE

Who knew that a few slices of bread could hold so much wonder and inspire a sense of discovery for children? Upon finding a piece of stale bread left over from snack, educators at Assiniboine Children's Centre in Winnipeg, Manitoba used a few slices of bread as the starting point for one of their weekly science experiments. The children, who are always eager to explore science, gathered around a table to discuss where bread comes from, what kinds of bread there are, how bread tastes (while naturally sampling a few delicious bites!) and how important bread is across the world. After guessing what might happen to bread if left out in the open over a period of time, answers were recorded by the staff and pictures were drawn of their predictions by the children.



For a week's time, bread slices were stored in various ways – out in the open, in a paper bag, in a sealed plastic bag and in a sealed plastic container. Every morning the children gathered around the table where their pictures and hypotheses hung and the bread samples were displayed. They were intrigued by what they saw, felt and smelled. As the bread changed, so did the comments. One educator commented, “It was such an easy experience to provide for the children. The responses the experiment generated were so genuine, truthful and funny!” To list a few:

- “Oh, look at that colour.”
- “It’s as hard as rock.”

- “That looks like the lunch I left in my locker.”
- “That’s the grossest thing I ever saw!” (And as the educators observed, the grosser the better!)

A simple science experience opened the door to discovery, exploration, story-telling, socializing, language and involvement – who knew?

Science does not have to be complicated, forgotten on a table in the corner of the room, or an activity done in isolation from all other programming? Science can be an inspiring means of actively observing, thinking, sharing and discovering what

## ***Wings of Discovery*® Preschool Explorations in Science and Technology:**

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- projects currently available are: Discovering Dinosaurs, Food Chemistry, Grocery Store, My Healthy Body and Plants Up Close
- each project includes 10 explorations, possible points of entry, guided questioning suggestions, background information for educators and ideas to engage families



is happening in the world. A single observation, like bread going stale, can lead to an abundance of learning opportunities.

Based on an exploration from the new ***Wings of Discovery®* Preschool Explorations in Science and Technology** (Exploration #4, Fresh Bread, from the ***Grocery Store*** project), the above story could be the basis for further investigations. Why not try some yourself? What happens when bread is stored in a freezer? How do different types of bread react when stored by the same means? How does the longevity of fresh bread to store-bought bread compare? Better yet, why not make your own fresh bread (see Exploration #4, Making Bread, from the ***Food Chemistry*** project) and explore the best way to store it? Further enhance the learning by taking science beyond an isolated activity. Add different types of loaf pans to



the discovery table along with some play dough, use stale bread as a sponge painting tool or stuff various bread bags with old newspaper and add them to the dramatic play centre.

By doing science with your children, you will be providing opportunities for children to develop lifelong learning skills. Observation and analysis are key skills developed through doing science. Research has shown that children's level of competency and abstract thinking increases with exposure to such problem-solving experiences. Furthermore, children's cognitive, social, language and motor skills are enhanced through science-based explorations. Who knew?

### Want to provide more science-based learning opportunities for your children?

Start by visiting [wingsofdiscovery.ca](http://wingsofdiscovery.ca) for sample explorations from ***Wings of Discovery®***. Want to know how to incorporate ***Wings of Discovery®*** explorations into your programming? Do you need ideas on how to integrate science into your learning environment? We developed an Orientation and Support DVD to help guide you in bringing more science to your classroom.

Go ahead; explore science with your children! Who knew how much fun it could be and who knew just how easy?

Do you already have ***Wings of Discovery®***? To supplement the existing User Guide, contact Let's Talk Science, by phone at 1-877-474-4081, or by email at [info@wingsofdiscovery.ca](mailto:info@wingsofdiscovery.ca), to receive a copy of the new Orientation and Support DVD.







## HEALTH WATCH

# Swimming lessons and water safety for young children

Many young children love being in and around water, whether it's a backyard pool or the local beach. But without proper safety measures, water can be dangerous for young children.

Drowning is one of the leading causes of death among children 1 to 4 years of age. Babies and toddlers drown most often at home, in bathtubs and swimming pools. Drowning only takes a second and is almost always silent. Children can drown in as little as 5 cm (2 inches) of water.

## When can my child take swimming lessons?

There is not a lot of research about the exact age when young children are ready to learn how to swim. Several studies show that children do not have the skills to swim on their own until they are 4 years old, even if they start lessons at a younger age.

If your child is younger than 4 years old, look for swimming programs that focus on building water confidence and that teach parents about water safety. These are great opportunities

for families to participate in fun activities that contribute to a healthy lifestyle.

## Water safety tips

- All children should be supervised by an adult when they are in or around water and should never be left alone in a pool or bathtub, even for a moment.
- Infants and toddlers should always be **within arm's reach** of an adult when they are in or around water. This includes pools, bathtubs, and beaches, and other water sources.
- Infants who cannot sit unsupported and are too young to wear a PFD should be held by an adult at all times.
- The Lifesaving Society recommends an adult supervision ratio of 1:1 for infants (one adult supervising only one infant) and 1:2 for children younger than 3 years old (no more than two children under 3 years for each adult). Teens should not supervise infants and toddlers without a "buddy" adult supervisor.
- PFDs or life jackets should be used by all infants who weigh at least 9 kg (20 lb) and by toddlers who are swimming or playing near or in the water.
- Home swimming pools should be fenced on all four sides and have self-closing and self-latching gates, latched from the inside. The gate latch should be above the reach of children and locked when not in use. Check local bylaws for the height and type of fence required in your area.
- Parents and pool owners should learn how to swim and how to rescue a drowning victim, and should maintain certification in first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). Pool owners should have an emergency action plan, rescue equipment, and a telephone on the deck or poolside.

**For more information visit the** Canadian Paediatric Society's Caring for Kids website at [www.caringforkids.cps.ca](http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca)

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# School-based Integrated Early Childhood Programs: Impact on the Well-being of Children and Parents

*Tomoko N. Arimura and Carl Corter*

Parenthood can mean very different things to different people, but nearly everyone can agree that it is hard work and can be stressful at times. In Canada, parents of young children are navigating their way through a patchwork of fragmented services, since there are no coherent systems for delivering early childhood programs (Cleveland et al., 2006). Instead, kindergarten, child care, and family support programs operate as distinct entities with different funding arrangements (Beach & Bertrand, 2000). Consequently, many parents have to piece together a variety of services. The nature and success of these arrangements usually depend on the availability of programs in the community, parents' work and family requirements, and their own financial resources (Friendly, Beach, & Turiano, 2002). The choices for lower-income families may be limited to low-cost and, often, low-quality care - which can have negative implications for their children's school readiness (Anderson et al., 2003; Burchinal, Cambell, Bryant, Wasik, & Ramey, 1997) and later academic success (Bartnett, 1995; Reynolds et al., 2007).



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Universal, school-based, integrated early childhood programs are one of the most promising approaches to improving access to and quality of early childhood programs (Zigler, Gilliam, & Jones, 2006). By offering a comprehensive range of services

at the school site, families are able to access multiple programs such as kindergarten, child care, and family support programs through a single enrollment process. Staff are expected to work in partnership to deliver a coherent array of programs. In North

America, research has shown that integrated early childhood programs at school sites improve children's cognitive and social-emotional development, and increase parent involvement (e.g., Corter et al., 2006; Corter, Patel, Pelletier, & Bertrand, 2008; Desimone et al., 2000). Although these findings suggest great promise, we know very little about the impact of these interventions on the everyday lives of children and families. For example, we don't know whether children experience greater continuity in their day as a result of participating in integrated kindergarten and child care programs. We also don't know whether parents experience less daily stress and greater social support because they are able to access multiple programs for their children at a single site.

In this article, we review some of the thinking about, and discuss the importance of understanding, the impact of integrated early childhood programs on the well-being of parents and children. We then describe a study that examined parents' and children's views about their daily life in school communities that offered *integrated* or *non-integrated* early childhood services.

## Normative Parenting Stress: Parenting Daily Hassles

Parenting stress is an important area to examine because it is known to directly impact parenting behaviours, which, in turn, influence the well-being of children (Creasey & Reese, 1996; Crnic & Low, 2002). Until recently, parenting stress was primarily thought to stem from major life events such as divorce or separation, relocating to a new city, or experiencing a death in the family. Researchers also focused on problematic parent-child relationships as a source of parenting stress for families. These perspectives

emphasized the idea that parenting stress arises from *infrequently* occurring *major events* or '*abnormal*' parenting processes. However, several researchers have begun to consider *frequently* occurring, *minor events* and '*normal*' parenting processes as important sources of parenting stress.

In order to understand the impact of everyday frustrations and irritations that accompany childrearing and children's typical but often challenging behaviours, Crnic and Greenberg (1990) created a questionnaire called *Parenting Daily Hassles*. This questionnaire includes items that describe various 'parenting hassles' related to 'normal' challenges associated with *parenting tasks* and dealing with *children's behaviours*. According to their initial study, the stress associated with normal "daily hassles" of parenting was found to be a better predictor of children and parents' adjustment when compared to stress related to major life events. There is much anecdotal evidence to indicate that one of the stressors for parents of young children is experienced in the years of junior and senior kindergarten, because of the need for balancing child care with the limited hours of kindergarten. Children have to make several transitions either daily or weekly, and parents must deal with two separate organizations, with different staffing, funding, rules and communication patterns.

## Social Support Matters

Social support networks provide parents with much needed emotional and practical support, which can impact their beliefs, attitudes and behaviours (Cochran & Niego, 2002). Like parenting stress, researchers have found that social support is strongly related to parenting behaviours. In fact, social support has been found to moderate the impact of parenting stress and enhance the well-being of

families (Ostberg & Hagekull, 2000); in other words, positive supports reduce the effects of stress. In the context of children's learning, social support for parents is also thought to be a resource that enhances children's educational outcomes. For example, Lareau and Shumar (1996) found that parents of elementary school children who maintained ties with teachers and other parents regularly gained access to and exchanged information about their children's progress at school. Similarly, Sheldon (2002) have found that parents' social network of individuals at school predicted the degree to which parents were involved at home (e.g., how often the parent engaged in activities that supported the child's learning at home) and at school (e.g., how often parents were at the school, participating in school events, etc.). These findings suggest that having social ties with individuals who are part of the school community can enhance parents' ability to be involved in their children's learning, which, in turn, is associated with positive outcomes for children.

## Talking to Children about Their Day

Although children are the direct recipients of many programs, very few studies in the past have incorporated their voices when evaluating the impact of services or interventions. In general, children's responses to experiences are inferred by parent reports, observing development and behavioural signs of coping and stress. However, there is an emerging trend among researchers to use developmentally appropriate tasks, such as drawings and narratives, to elicit children's views and experiences. For example, the Toronto First Duty researchers examined children's views of their daily activities as a component of the evaluation framework for assessing integration of child care, and kindergarten, and family support



programs. Specifically, kindergarten children were asked to talk about their day from the time they arrived at school until the time they went home at the end of the day. Children were also asked about what kinds of things they liked and did not like about their day (Corter et al., 2006). Many children chose play as the topic of what they did, and did not, like about their day, suggesting that play may be highly enjoyable for children when it goes well, but can also be the source of unhappiness when it does not go well. These findings are interesting and highlight the salience of play for children at this age. However, researchers were not able to infer the positive impact of integration on the daily lives of children, because they did not include a comparison group of children who did not experience integrated services.

## Exploring the Daily Life of Parents and Children

In order to understand the influence of integrated early childhood services on the daily lives of parents and children, we conducted an exploratory study that compared groups of parents and their kindergarten children from two different types of school sites (Arimura, 2008; Corter et al., 2009). We selected *two intervention school sites* that had implemented the Toronto First Duty (TFD) model of integrated services. Within this model a professional team of kindergarten teachers, early childhood educators, family support staff and teaching assistants work together to



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plan and deliver core early childhood programs (kindergarten, child care, and family support) and other programs such as health and nutrition. Space and resources are combined, and there is a single intake procedure and flexible enrolment options for parents. At the time of data collection, the two school sites had implemented the integrated service delivery model over a 5 year period.

We also selected two *comparison school sites* that did not offer integrated early childhood services. Although these sites were similar to TFD sites with respect to levels of demographic risk, they did not have an onsite child care program at the school and there were no formal partnerships established between kindergarten,

child care and family support programs. It was anticipated that children and parents would experience more daily stressors due to the need to relate and adapt to two different environments on a regular basis.

## Methods

Thirty-eight parents completed questionnaires and semi-structured interviews about their daily routines, parenting daily hassles, social support networks, and views about early childhood services. Twelve parents were from the TFD school sites and 16 parents were from the comparison school sites. Because we were interested in understanding the impact of integrated delivery of early childhood services on parents' levels of daily stress, we constructed

a new questionnaire called, "*Early Childhood - Parenting Daily Hassles*." The design of this measure was based on Crnic and Greenberg's (1990) Parenting Daily Hassles questionnaire, but the items address a variety of issues that specifically arise from interactions within the context of early childhood services (e.g., "I have a hard time understanding how things work at my child's school" and "I have a hard time approaching the teacher or people at the school to talk about what's going on with my child").

Sixteen children were asked to *describe their day* ('I want to know more about your day here. Tell me about your day from the time you leave your home until you go home'). Children were

also asked several questions about their day (e.g., 'What things do you like best?' 'What things don't you like?').

## Results

When we compared the results across two types of school sites, we found:

- Parents from the integrated TFD sites routinely spent some time at the school on most days either to play with their child, to speak to staff, or socialize with other parents. In contrast, none of the parents from the comparison group reported having had regular contact with staff and parents at their child's school.
- Parents from TFD sites reported significantly fewer hassles and lower levels of stress compared to parents from non-TFD sites. For example, TFD parents reported fewer hassles and lower levels of stress relating to:
  - ...*having a hard time picking up my child at the end of the day*
  - ...*having a hard time dealing with my child's behavioural difficulties at school*
  - ...*having a hard time finding information on how to deal with my child's behaviour*
  - ...*having a hard time finding the opportunity to talk to other parents at my child's school*
  - ...*having a hard time approaching the teacher or people at the school to talk about what's going on with my child*
- There was no significant group difference in the number of people identified as being part of the parents' social networks.
- Some differences in terms of *who* parents identified as being part of their support system. Parents from the TFD school sites commonly identified the *kindergarten teacher and early childhood educators (ECE)*, whereas parents from the comparison school sites commonly identified *early childhood educators (but not school staff)* as important

source of support. This was not surprising given that parents from non-integrated sites did not have regular contact with school staff including the kindergarten teacher.

When children were asked to describe their day, children from TFD school sites did not use words like 'kindergarten' and 'daycare' to describe their day. Instead, they referred to activities that they engaged in (e.g., "After circle time we get to play with blocks and read books"). For these children, their morning and afternoon activities merged together into a single, seamless day ("I spend my whole day here with Mrs. A and H until my mom comes to get me").

In contrast, children from the non-integrated school sites distinguished their time spent in kindergarten and child care. Interestingly, these children distinguished the types of activities they engaged in at kindergarten and daycare ("I learn things at kindergarten and we get to play at daycare")

## Discussion

This study explored the role of early childhood services in supporting the daily lives of parents and children who accessed integrated and non-integrated forms of kindergarten and child care programs. By employing a new measure to assess parenting stress, the study demonstrated how an integrated service delivery system, consisting of kindergarten, child care, and family support programs, can improve the daily lives of parents and children.

### Parenting Stress

Although previous research on service integration has yielded inconsistent results about the impact of integrated early childhood services on levels of parenting stress (Desimone et al., 2000; Finn-Stevenson et al., 1998), this study found evidence for the association

between integration and lower levels of hassles and parenting stress. We found that parents experienced distress in aspects of their daily life when important parenting needs were not met by the early childhood service community. Both groups of parents indicated that they expected regular and open forms of communication and access to pertinent information relevant to parenting a young child. When these processes were disrupted (i.e., parents experienced difficulty maintaining contact with the kindergarten teacher or obtaining information about how to manage child behaviours or help the child learn), higher levels of stress were reported.

The challenges experienced by parents accessing non-integrated services were thought to be associated with several barriers inherent in the delivery of early childhood services. First, the provision of kindergarten and child care programs in separate locations was an obvious barrier for parent-teacher communication. Because the majority of parents dropped-off and picked-up their children from the child care site, many parents had not been present at the child's school for extended periods of time. Although several parents reported having arranged special meetings with the kindergarten teacher, the majority of parents had limited face-to-face contact with the teacher. In contrast, parents who accessed integrated services had regular opportunities to interact with the school staff and rely on them for social support.

Second, the lack of regular dialogue between the school and child care centres may have further contributed to parents' struggle to obtain up-to-date information about their child's day to day experiences and progress at school. At non-integrated

sites, there was minimal communication between the school and child care centres. Conversely, at the integrated TFD sites, daily communication took place by members of the integrated staff team. In this context, parents were able to approach any members of the staff team to discuss concerns relating to their child without having to make special arrangements to meet with the teacher.

Third, the lack of opportunity to visit the classroom may have been associated with parents' perceived difficulty in maintaining contact with the school. A 'closed door' policy enforced at the non-integrated school sites required parents to make prior arrangements to visit the child's classroom. In contrast, parents at the integrated TFD sites were encouraged to informally visit the classrooms at any point during the day. Parents were able to participate in activities, observe their children play, and/or discuss pertinent issues with the integrated staff team. Many parents reported that they took advantage of these opportunities to gain familiarity with the school curriculum and discuss any developmental concerns that they had about their child.

Overall, these findings suggest that elements of integration such as the proximity of programs, working relationships between teachers and early childhood educators, and school policies relating to parent involvement impact the ways in which parents engage with the school, and these experiences in turn influence the levels of hassles and stress experienced by parents.



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### **Social Support**

Parental social network supports have been identified as important determinants of parenting (Crnic et al., 1983; Crnic & Booth, 1991). Within the context of the child's school, the ties that parents develop with teachers and other parents can help the parent gain regular access to information about the school and enhance the parent's sense of belonging to the school community. A common goal of integration is to enhance parent involvement through the removal of systemic barriers to accessing and participating in programs. Our study found that there were qualitative differences in *who* parents selected as important sources of daily support. For TFD parents, teachers, ECEs and program coordinators were equally mentioned as important to parents' social network. In comparison, parents from the non-integrated sites selected staff and parents from the child care centre. This is likely a result of the regular contact that these parents had with the child care setting. Unlike TFD parents who were in contact with both the kindergarten teacher

and ECE staff on a daily basis, parents from the non-integrated sites typically bypassed the daily interaction with school staff as they primarily dropped off *and* picked up their child from the child care centre. Consequently, for these parents, ties with child care staff may have been much stronger than ties with the child's school. These findings are consistent with the higher levels of stress reported by parents from the non-integrated sites on several items on the Early Childhood – Parenting Daily Hassles questionnaire

that pertained more specifically to maintaining communication and obtaining information from the school setting.

### **Children's Views**

The assessment of how children themselves experience their day, independent of the views of parents, is an important area of investigation that has been rarely explored in service integration studies. In the current study, qualitative analyses of children's narratives about their daily routines provided some insight as to how children perceive their extended day spent in kindergarten and child care. In particular, there were several indications to suggest that children enrolled in integrated settings experienced greater continuity in their day. For example, whereas children in non-integrated settings used vocabulary such as "kindergarten" and "daycare" to describe parts of their day, children attending integrated early childhood programs did not even acknowledge that they spent parts of their day in different programs. For



these groups of children, their day was organized around activities and people with whom (i.e., staff member) they spent time with in the morning or afternoon. Interestingly, several children from the non-integrated sites had clear ideas of how kindergarten was different from the child care program, such as the availability of play opportunities in child care. Their view that learning occurs at school exemplifies the misunderstanding that many people have about the way young children learn. Overall, these qualitative differences in children's narratives suggest that children in the integrated early childhood service setting perceived their day in a more integrated whole compared to children who attended separate kindergarten and child care programs.

## Conclusion

The current study has the potential to influence existing practice and policy in the delivery of early childhood services. Desimone, Finn-Stevenson, and Henrich (2000) argued that "[the power of evaluation] is in its ability to help program implementers identify the direction that they are going, how to improve their journey, and whether they have arrived" (pp.316). The findings of this study suggest that co-location of kindergarten and child care programs, regular communication by staff at schools and child care centres, and 'family friendly' policies for parent involvement influence parents' perception of their daily stress and enhances the opportunity for families to develop a relationship with individuals from the early childhood service community. These benefits clearly support the well being of children and families. As the province begins to implement full day learning for 4- and 5-year-olds, we are reminded of the challenges we faced, together with our partners, in implementing the TFD model at school

sites. But our research suggests that an integrated delivery of early childhood services improves the daily lives of children and parents. So, we feel that it will be a worthwhile journey in the end, despite the road bumps and detours that we may face along the way.

Tomoko Arimura, M.A., is a Ph.D. student in the School and Clinical Child Psychology program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) of the University of Toronto. Under the supervision of Dr. Carl Corter, Tomoko's research examines the impact of integrated early childhood services on the day-to-day well-being of children and parents. This article is based on her Masters thesis entitled, *Daily routines, parenting hassles, and social support: The role that early childhood services play in parents' and children's daily life*.

Carl Corter, Ph.D., is the Atkinson Charitable Foundation Chair in Early Child Development and Education at the Institute of Child Study and a Professor in the Department of Human Development and Applied Psychology at the University of Toronto. His research on parenting and early childhood programs is designed to inform policy and practice in schools and other community services. He is the principal investigator of the Toronto First Duty project.

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# Full-Day Learning for 4 and 5-Year Olds: A Day in an Integrated Early Childhood Program

*Lori Gray*

## Who We Are...

Bruce/WoodGreen Early Learning Centre (BWELC) is a *Toronto First Duty (TFD)* site demonstrating integrated, accessible child care/kindergarten/family service delivery. BWELC serves a mixed income community with a large new immigrant population in Toronto. The program operates from 7:30 am to 6:00 pm, Monday to Friday, year round. The author is the Early Years Coordinator of the program.

Bruce Public School houses several programs that make up the Early Learning Centre. We have a *Parenting and Family Literacy Centre* that employs a parenting worker under the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) and serves families in the community with children aged 0 to 6 years. The *Preschool Program* that employs Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) from WoodGreen Community Services serves children aged 2 years 6 months to 3 years 8 months. The *Integrated 4 and 5-year-old Program* that employs staff from both WoodGreen Community Services and TDSB serves families in the community with kindergarten-aged children. There is also a *School-Age Program* that offers before- and after-school care for older children in the school; this program is run by ECEs from Woodgreen Community Services. All of these programs are offered through the Early Learning Centre and staff work together for centre as a whole.



## Why Integrate Early Childhood Services?

The rationale behind an integrated delivery of early childhood services is that families benefit when practitioners work together to provide a range of essential programs (i.e., kindergarten, child care, and family support programs) that families can rely on to meet their family and work responsibilities. BWELC is founded on this rationale and brings together partnerships from the community to provide services to families all under one roof. BWELC's vision is to help children and their families reach their fullest potential by providing education, care and family support in a seamless, integrated model. This vision incorporates the principals of

universal access with flexible options and fees, high quality services being delivered by trained professionals, and engaging parents in all aspects of the program and its delivery.

## How Does Integration Work?

There are many elements of integration. The integrated early childhood program offered at BWELC features 5 core elements of integration (Toronto First Duty, 2007):

**Integrated Governance:** The partners pool their resources to plan and deliver the program. At BWELC, Bruce School supplies the physical space and staffing including the principal, kindergarten teachers, parenting

workers, teaching assistants and administrative staff. Woodgreen Community Services supports the centre manager, ECE staff and resource teacher, in addition to providing administrative assistance, professional development and family support referrals. The Toronto District School Board contributes professional development and meeting release time for the principal and kindergarten teachers and the support of its superintendents and early years department. The Foundation for Student Success, Toronto Public Health and the Child Development Institute offer nutrition and parenting programs. Toronto Children's Services provides quality monitoring and operating and capital funding. Research and development is provided by the Atkinson Centre for Child and Social Development and the Institute for Child Studies, at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. Operations and communications are supported by the Atkinson Charitable Foundation.

Furthermore, an integrated setting also requires an integrated form of leadership. BWELC is co-managed by the school principal and the Early Years Coordinator. This joint leadership model demonstrates the importance of working together. We make decisions together. We meet with staff and families regularly to make sure that their needs are being met and if not, we work together on how to access additional support to meet those needs. The staff team and the families in the program see us as a united front and feel supported by us both.

***Integrated Staff Team:*** The program is delivered by an integrated staff team of ECEs, kindergarten teachers, parenting workers and assistants using a common curriculum, resources and space. Integrated staffing allows

a child/adult (teacher or ECE) ratio approximating the requirements of the Day Nurseries Act and is well below the 20-children/teacher cap proposed by the province for kindergarten-aged children. The staff team follows the same policies and procedures and delivers the program together. The whole team participates in all professional development and training. Schedules are developed so the staff team has time together to meet and plan. This is very important for the integrated model to succeed.

#### ***Integrated Early Learning***

***Environment:*** The school's classrooms are licensed under the Day Nurseries Act allowing multi-use of space, support for child development and enhanced health and safety standards. All programs have access to school resources such as computers, library and gym.

***Seamless Access:*** Through a single enrolment process families access the full range of activities the program offers. Participation is flexible and there is no fee if parents attend with their children. Families who need or would like additional care for their children beyond the kindergarten program can choose a full or extended day option for their children. For the full day option, children attend the program from 9:00 am to 3:30 pm. Alternatively, for the extended day option, children attend the program from 7:30 am to 6:00 pm. The fees are assessed by these options. Parents can also choose part-time or full-time care (i.e., one, two or five days a week.) Eligible families may apply for financial assistance through the City of Toronto's subsidy program. Emergency care is also available. One-third of the children currently attending the program have a parent at-home. This indicates that parents who are not in the workforce also require child care.

***Parent Participation:*** The door is always open at BWELC. Parents are welcomed and encouraged to spend as much time as they can in the program. Parent participation is an important part of our service delivery. We believe that all parents have a role to play at BWELC. We believe that partnerships with our families and the community can only strengthen our ability to meet the needs of the children we serve. Parental input is highly respected and valued. We believe that parental involvement in their child's education can only lead towards a successful outcome. Parents spend time in all parts of the program from the parenting centre to the preschool room to the kindergarten classroom. Participation in school activities has given parents an increased knowledge of the workings of the school and has allowed them to feel more comfortable asserting themselves and being part of the program. Many children are exposed to the school environment at a very young age, as younger siblings, or through the child care or the family support programs. By the time school comes along, they already know their routines and are familiar with the school environment. It's a smooth transition for parents too, because they have already established relationships with the staff team and other parents and they have a good understanding of how the program works and how the school works.

### **A Day in an Integrated Early Childhood Program...**

Children are dropped off at anytime between 7:30 to 9:00 am and they are greeted by staff in one of our program rooms. All children, regardless of their age group start their day in one room. In this space, you will find preschool, kindergarten and school-aged children playing together. These children are then escorted outside to the playground where they participate in a variety of



gross motor activities while other children continue to arrive. Parents and children are greeted by staff – parents often use this time to touch base with staff about any issues concerning their child.

At 9:15 am, children in the kindergarten program come inside for indoor classroom time. From 9:15 to 11:30 am children and staff engage in a variety of learning activities. Children receive a group lesson from both the TDSB staff and the ECE either as one large group or two smaller groups. These lessons are pre-planned by the team during planning sessions, which ensures that they are meeting curriculum expectations. Observations are made of the children so their own individual interests can be incorporated into the learning activities. The children are then given options in the classroom to continue learning through play. There are various ‘centers’ in the room to encourage children’s engagement with various types of play. Research has shown that children learn best through play and the level of playful learning is readily observable here.

Because our program is situated in a school, children are able to participate in all aspects of school life. They spend time in the computer lab and the yoga room. They have gym class and music lessons. They also participate in joint activities with students from other classes (e.g., reading buddies). They go to the library, participate in writing workshops, go to the parenting centre, and attend all school assemblies. It is a very busy, yet enriching time for everyone.

At 11:30 am, children who are in the kindergarten program only go home and children who are in the full-day program get ready to have a catered lunch right in their classroom. After lunch children play outside

while a new group of children who are attending the afternoon half-day program are greeted by staff. This gives children a good opportunity to release some energy as they play and also fosters a smooth transition for the new children joining the group. Once they enter the classroom, children in the afternoon half-day program engage in the daily lesson as one of the activities set up in the room. The children who already received the lesson, in the morning, will continue to extend their learning through the activity centers with modifications. The staff may change or add to the existing centers to enrich or extend the learning. At 3:30 pm some children get ready to go home and others who are in the extended program engage in new activities. These children are picked up anytime between 3:30 and 6:00 pm.

#### **Benefits Observed by Staff**

The team work needed to implement an integrated program has enhanced the sense of professionalism and pride staff feel in their unique roles. Because the responsibility for delivering the program is shared by all members of the integrated staff team, staff are constantly learning from each other and feel that they are valued for what each member brings to the table.

Barbara Lambrou, an ECE staff was quoted as saying

*“I have been able to grow and develop as an educator because of working closely in a collaborative setting such as the one at Bruce.”*

Caitlin Paterson, another ECE in the integrated setting states:

*“I am proud of the work I do everyday. I feel that I am supported by a strong, capable, well rounded team. I feel as an ECE that our work is valued and*

*that here we are all seen as equals who bring individual strengths to the program.”*

Dora Bilic, the elementary kindergarten teacher in the classroom made the following comment when talking about the program at Bruce

*“I am loving the fact that I work in a team setting. I couldn’t imagine not being in an integrated setting. I have learned so much and am still learning everyday.”*

All staff understand that everyone plays an important role in delivering the program and working with children and their families. Inga Filippova, an ECE staff who works with the youngest of the preschool children says:

*“I feel like an important piece in a thick chain that connects to all areas of child development, well-being, and successful growth”.*

Jonathan Root, Principal of Bruce Public School is often quoted using the phrase

*“We are all spokes on a wheel and in order for that wheel to keep moving forward, we need to work together and feel empowered about the work we do.”*

Staff have indicated that another benefit of being an integrated team is the higher staff/child ratios. Staff can divide the children into smaller working groups and focus on their individual needs. Staff have the opportunity to work one-on-one if a child requires that type of assistance because the rest of the class is being supervised by another teacher. The workload is divided and is therefore less demanding on each staff member.

Moreover, communication with families is more consistent and information can be relayed in a timely fashion. Because

observations of the child are made throughout the child's entire day, staff are able to share with parents and caregivers a more complete picture of the child's day. It's not bits and pieces as it may be in two separate settings. Parents have told me that there is a balance of feedback about what their children are learning academically and their children's general well being and development.

### **Benefits for Children and Families**

The benefits for children and their families are abundant. Children do not need to make as many transitions to and from childcare and school. Children look at their entire day as being in school and just a place where they learn, play and build relationships all day long. Families see the benefits as well. The seamless day model allows parents to feel secure that they are leaving their children with trained professionals, receiving high quality care and education, and are not moving from place to place throughout the day. All parents in the program have voiced that their children talk about their day as being at school and do not differentiate between child care and school. Parents talk about each member of the staff team as teachers who care for and educate their children at the same time. There is no differentiation between the TDSB staff and the ECEs. All staff are addressed on a first name basis and all parents are addressed by first name. The relationships between families and educators are extremely positive. The flexibility of program options is also a benefit to parents. Parents can choose between full-time or part-time, as well as, full-day or extended-day programs. This allows parents to work around their own work schedules and do what is best for their child and meet their family's needs. Fees also reflect the program

choices. Subsidies are available to families who qualify for them.

The following quote from a parent in the program clearly demonstrates how many parents feel about full day learning.

*"I can't say enough about how great I think the full day program is. I have a four year old who loves school, loves his teachers/caregivers, loves his classmates, and loves the interaction he has with the older children in the after school program. He seems to get a balance of both play and learning and impresses me constantly with his knowledge, insight and sense of humor. I definitely think that his school experience enriches his life. In addition, I am a single parent who attends school full time myself. The program at Bruce Woodgreen lets me know that my child is in a positive situation that not only offers him competent care, but benefits him and offers him a foundation for long term success. I feel very good about having my child in this program and I travel*

*30-45 minutes a day two ways just to get him there."*

Clearly this program has had a positive impact on the well-being of staff, children and families enrolled at BWELC. I too, as the first ECE to work in this integrated model at Bruce Woodgreen and now as the coordinator of BWELC, appreciate the benefits this type of program offers. I have watched it grow and evolve over the years and am very excited to see it rolled-out as outlined in *With our Best Future in Mind*, the proposal for full day learning envisioned by Charles Pascal, the Early Learning Advisor.

Lori Gray is the Early Years Coordinator for the Bruce Woodgreen Early Learning Centre. She has been working with Woodgreen Community Services in their child care unit for the last 23 years. Her experience ranges from front-line early childhood educator, to resource teacher, to child care manager and now as the coordinator of the full day learning model at Bruce Woodgreen.

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The Canadian Child Care Federation publishes IDEAS twice a year in partnership with George Brown College's School of Early Childhood and the Child Development Institute. For submission to IDEAS please contact Connie Winder. Phone (416) 415-5000 extension 3018, fax (416) 415-2565, email [cwinder@georgebrown.ca](mailto:cwinder@georgebrown.ca)

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# Global Perspectives in ECE

There is no shortage of international organizations, practices and approaches in ECE and child care around the world. While you read about them in our focus section – be inspired! Like you, they all share a passion for children and their well-being.

“

*My involvement with the [Indonesian] project has been among the most transformative of my long career in ECE. The collaborative process of curriculum development promoting cultural and community relevance, collaborative teaching across disciplines, immersion in the Indonesian culture and academic community, observing Indonesian ECE practice and the practice of Canadian students in this thriving South-East Asian community has broadened and deepened my understanding of the influence of culture. This understanding includes ways that: children develop, families raise their children, early childhood educators practice, and university teachers teach. The work has opened my eyes to my own assumptions and biases in a very real and tangible way. I have been challenged to continually advance my self development and to practice in ever more open and inclusive ways.”*

— Linda McDonell, Team Leader, Vancouver Island University on her experience in Surabaya, Indonesia for the Indonesia Early Childhood Development (IECD) cross-cultural and inter-professional initiative





## GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES IN ECE

# The Importance of Arts in ECE Around the Globe – A Universal Right

*From UNESCO to the Global Arts Foundation – children unite through painting and drawing to bring world peace in Afghanistan, Iraq, Japan and dozens of other countries.*

by Lyra Howell

*"I can do very little about the chaos around me, but at least I can reduce to perfect order this square of canvas, this piece of paper, this chunk of stone."*

—Kurt Vonnegut, *Palm Sunday*, 1981

I have a pivotal memory of a March Break camp I taught a few years ago.

It was an art camp at a small children's studio, and one of the days happened to fall on Earth Day. My co-worker and I decided on the fly that we would tell the children (all aged between 4 and 7) a little bit about what this day meant, talk about some of the environmental issues we face today and discuss ways in which we could reduce our impact on the earth. We expected it would be a short interlude between art projects, lasting ten minutes at most.

Instead, we lit a spark in every one of the children.

By the end of our discussion, they were positively bouncing with enthusiasm, yelling out ideas for everything from a recycling machine to a robot that admonishes people who litter.



Earth Day march, 2007

One child, in the midst of the excitement, declared, "We should have an Earth Day march!" We all agreed that this was a great idea. I explained that in order to have a really effective march we would need beautiful signs to convey our messages.

The children took their sign-making very seriously. One girl, who had insisted until then that she "couldn't draw", painstakingly outlined and colored a drawing of the earth with a heart around it and proudly showed it to everyone. "I really, really love this earth," she confided in me, "That's why I drew it so careful."

When everyone had finished we got our coats on and headed out the door for a march around the block. The kids were jubilant, each chanting their own Earth-friendly slogan, their carefully drawn signs held high. Passing cars honked and everyone who saw us smiled. The children were beaming with pride the whole time, and my heart was just about bursting.

It hit me full-force that day what a powerful tool art is, especially for children. So vital is art education for young



children, in fact, that at the 2006 World Conference for Art Education, Links to Education and Art, or LEA, (a UNESCO contingent) created a Road Map for Arts Education. The document draws elements from the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990), stating that

*Culture and the arts are essential components of a comprehensive education leading to the full development of the individual. Therefore, Arts Education is a universal human right, for all learners, including those who are often excluded from education, such as immigrants, cultural minority groups, and people with disabilities.*

—(LEA, 2006)

This “universal human right” is also a universal human language. Art can convey messages with equal, or even greater, impact than written language. S. Rebecca Leigh and Karen A. Heid, in their 2008 study of first-graders, discuss the importance of drawing as a child’s “first written language”. It is a language that the educational system increasingly places at the bottom of the “hierarchy” of language, in the push for early literacy. The symbolic drawings of pre-readers and writers tend to be considered of lesser importance than that first “real” written letter, although they often hold much more significance for the child.

What is also too often forgotten or ignored is that there is more than one kind of literacy. Beyond learning the ABCs and sentence structure, there is global literacy. Democratic literacy. Social literacy. (Sanford & Hopper, 2006) These are skills that, just like reading and writing, must be taught and incorporated in to every aspect of the curriculum.

Because learning takes on the most meaning for children when they are allowed to construct it for themselves through play, as Piaget and many others have proven so many times, the arts are one of the most powerful tools an educator has for teaching the many forms of literacy. A child who is engaged in art, whatever form of art it happens to be, is a child who is empowered, a child that is in charge of their world, and a child who is constructing their own relevant meaning from the information they are given.

In the instance of the Earth Day march, the children were empowered by the knowledge that, through their own art, their messages could reach someone, a stranger even, and cause them to reconsider their actions. They experienced what it means to be a conscientious member of society. That day marked my first exposure to the idea that art can be used to teach not just representation, but a sense of global community through its universal language.

It also marked my first exposure to the idea that learning takes on a whole new level of meaning when a child’s emotions are engaged, a concept that seems obvious but is all too easy to forget. New research from Oxford University explores the neuroscience of learning, and the importance of engaging multiple senses in education. Not only does using the arts engage more than one sense, it also gives children the ability to visualize and to make connections across the curriculum. These are all elements that engage emotion and, according to the research, build stronger connections among neurons, increasing the child’s ability to remember. (Mitchell, 2009)

Two years after our Earth Day march, I ran in to one of my former students on the street. The first thing she said was “Remember when we had the march?” I was amazed that she could recall that day, as she had been only four at the time. I have since learned that she was a case in point of the effectiveness of the arts in education. Based on what we know about play-based learning, neuroscience and engaging emotions, the arts become an ideal medium for teaching social justice and global community to our youngest citizens.

One initiative that has taken the lead in this area is the University of Victoria’s Global Arts Foundation. Started in 2003 by the University of Victoria’s Faculty of Education in the wake of the “War on Terror”, its initial purpose was to connect local children with the children of Iraq and Afghanistan through art.

Four local schools, along with schools in Suleimaniyah, Iraq and Kabul, Afghanistan, participated in the Foundation’s first endeavor. Using the theme “The World We Want”, children contributed drawings to be displayed in an art show at the 2003 *Learning and the World We Want* conference in Victoria, BC. There were some difficulties--the postal service having been cut off by Saddam Hussein, the drawings from Iraq had to be smuggled out via Iran. Art supplies were in short supply in Kabul. But, embodying the spirit of the foundation itself, many people from the three countries volunteered their time and efforts to make the dream a reality.

In the end, 120 pieces of artwork were displayed at the conference in Victoria, garnering attention from media and community alike. Many of the children with art in the show gave short presentations, discussing their drawings and ideas for bringing greater peace and compassion to the world.

While there was no corresponding art show in Iraq at the time, the project has continued and expanded, with exchanges in over 13 countries worldwide and schools across Canada.



In the same vein as the Global Arts Foundation, Kids' Guernica is an international art project for peace. Art Japan Network founded the project in 1995, on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of World War II. Picasso painted *Guernica* in 1937 in protest of the Spanish government's bombings of the Basque Country. Through the painting's raw depiction of war's horror, it has become a symbol of peace across the globe.

All that is required for participation in the project is the preparation of a canvas of the same enormous dimensions as Picasso's original painting (3.5m x 7.8m), a discussion of what "peace" is, and a representation of peace on the canvas by the children. Once completed, digital images can be sent to the website.

Kids' Guernica has held workshops in 40 countries, encouraging children to work collaboratively in depicting the peace they want for the world. In doing so, they are developing their social literacy, and becoming aware of their own responsibilities and creative potential in creating the world they want to see.

Talk about empowerment.

If there is a lesson to be taken from these examples, I believe it is this: children are naturally sensitive to injustice in even its subtlest

forms. Armed with information, they are our society's most passionate advocates. Just ask my student who insisted that people who litter should be thrown in jail. Why, then, should social justice, or "literacy", not be included in the curriculum with equal importance as numeracy and text? And what better way to give children a sense that they truly can change the world than by giving them total control over a piece of paper, a square of canvas, or a chunk of stone?

Lyra Howell is currently in her final year at George Brown for Early Childhood Education. She has a diploma in fine art from the Toronto School of Art and prior to attending George Brown taught art to young children for two years at a private studio. Lyra's plan after graduation is to work for an arts outreach program and eventually open an arts retreat for low income families.

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Children's Global Arts: <http://www.educ.uvic.ca/GlobalArts/>

Kids' Guernica: [www.kids-guernica.org/](http://www.kids-guernica.org/)









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## GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES IN ECE

# A Model for Canada

## A Look at European Union Policy on Early Childhood Education and Care

by **Helen Penn**

Professor of Early Childhood Education, Cass School of Education, University of East London, UK

The European Union (EU) is an economic union between 27 European countries. Each country is concerned about its political status as an independent self-governing nation. But the EU also wants to be the most competitive market force in the global economy, and member states are more likely to achieve that by acting together and not separately. The EU is a complex organization, and all of its policies have to be consensual. The presidency of the EU for example is taken in turn by member states for a 6 month period, and each member state can promote the issues which it considers particularly urgent or necessary. Jurisdiction is a far more complicated issue than in Canada, difficult as federal government may seem.

One agreed route to competitiveness in the European Union is by making sure *all* citizens can contribute to the workforce. As a result, and despite considerable political differences, there are now European wide policies on inclusive citizenship, anti-poverty, life-long education, and on maximizing the participation of women in the workforce.

In 2002 the EU agreed on targets on child care – the Barcelona targets – as an essential underpinning of workforce participation.

**“Each member state has to work towards the target of places for at least 33 percent of children 0-3, and for 90 percent of children aged 3-5 by this year, 2010. All the member states have signed up to the targets. No EU country any more would wish to argue that a mother’s place is in the home, or that poor children be somehow sidelined into special programmes. Those were 20th century ideas, and this is the 21st century.”**

“Each member state has to work towards the target of places for at least 33 percent of children 0-3, and for 90 percent of children aged 3-5 by this year, 2010. All the member states have signed up to the targets. No EU country any more would wish to argue that a mother’s place is in the home, or that poor children be somehow sidelined into special programmes. Those were 20th century ideas, and this is the 21st century”.

In order to manage and enhance economic competitiveness, the challenge is how to manage life-work balance, for men as well as women so that both can earn and contribute; and how to make sure all young children benefit equally and participate equally in the services available.

The specific details of the policies have to be left up to member states but the EU aims to ensure that they are as well-informed as possible about the decisions that they make.

“The aim is to achieve harmonization – locally determined policies that end up reaching the same targets.”

The EU works through its directorates (or ministries). The two most concerned with ECEC are the Directorate of Education and Culture and the Directorate of Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. These



**“The aim is to achieve harmonization – locally determined policies that end up reaching the same targets.”**

### **The EU issues for ECEC now are:**

Do all children receive similar opportunities to participate or is it necessary to set up targeted services for children who need special help? What does social inclusion and citizenship mean in this context? Levels of child poverty are low in most of the EU countries, but migration is very high. So much of the concern has been about supporting migrant children and helping them to integrate into their new societies. In general the consensus is that targeting is stigmatizing and ineffective. “A service for the poor is a poor service”, so the challenge is to develop **universal** services that are sensitive to the many and various needs of young children from a variety of backgrounds.

What does high quality mean? The research is clear that poor quality services can harm children but that high quality services enhance the chances of all children. On one level high quality services are achieved through well-trained staff, good ratios and a good curriculum. But on another level, quality has to be assured at a government level through making sure that services are coherent, and not ad hoc. There should be clearly defined targets, and regular review cycles of provision, and accountability within the system. Quality too is taken to mean that there is adequate user and worker involvement in services, and that those who work in the services are adequately trained, properly remunerated and not exploited.

Are services adequately financed? One percent (1%) of GDP is usually taken as an indication of proper financing but some European countries still fall short of this. Who pays for services, and what proportion of the fees should be met by parents, and what proportion by the state? In some countries, services for children over three years are free, or parents may pay as little as 4 percent towards costs. In others, especially the UK and Ireland, parents may pay over 80 percent of costs.

directorates work with EU wide networks of experts to try to flesh out policy. Both directorates have issued a series of reviews of early childhood policies and practices.

One major concern is the “modernization” or “privatization” of services. Some countries like France and Belgium, and Eastern European countries like Hungary and the Czech Republic have had state services for many years. Other countries like the UK and Ireland again have always relied on the private and voluntary sector. Some countries have chosen to use parent choice and market competition as a means of creating new places, by offering tax credits to parents so that they can choose and buy their own child care. This is supposed to be an efficient way of developing services. But the evidence of effectiveness is contradictory. Tax credits have almost always benefited the better off, and led to social divisiveness – the rich buy the best care and the poorest make do with the cheapest care. And the evidence suggests that the cheapest care, without tight regulation, can be very bad indeed.

“Can quality be truly assured in a system where there are many private for-profit providers? What kind of regulation is necessary to cope with the expansion of the for-profit sector, especially the corporate for-profit sector, whose headquarters and shareholders may be outside the country altogether?”

**As an outsider, I question why Canada, which in so many ways has a good record, is still living in the dark ages as regards to early childhood.**

There are no easy answers to these questions, but the European Union is concerned to address them, and through its directorates, its commissions research to inform its policies. The UNICEF Innocenti Research

Centre recently issued a report card on ECEC provision in developed countries. Most of the European countries that were scrutinized came at or near the top. Canada came at the bottom. The dominant view across so many very diverse European countries is that child care and early education are not minor issues but play an important role in contributing to economic productivity, in reducing poverty and in supporting inclusive citizenship.

As an outsider, I question why Canada, which in so many ways has a good record, is still living in the dark ages as regards to early childhood.

Professor Helen Penn has worked for the EU on a number of ECEC projects, and is currently undertaking research for the EU Employment directorate documenting quality and regulation of ECEC services across the EU. She was the Rapporteur for Canada for the OECD Early Childhood Education and Care Review Team in 2004 and is an authority on Canadian policy on ECEC. She has visited Canada many times, most recently this year in Montreal.



## GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES IN ECE

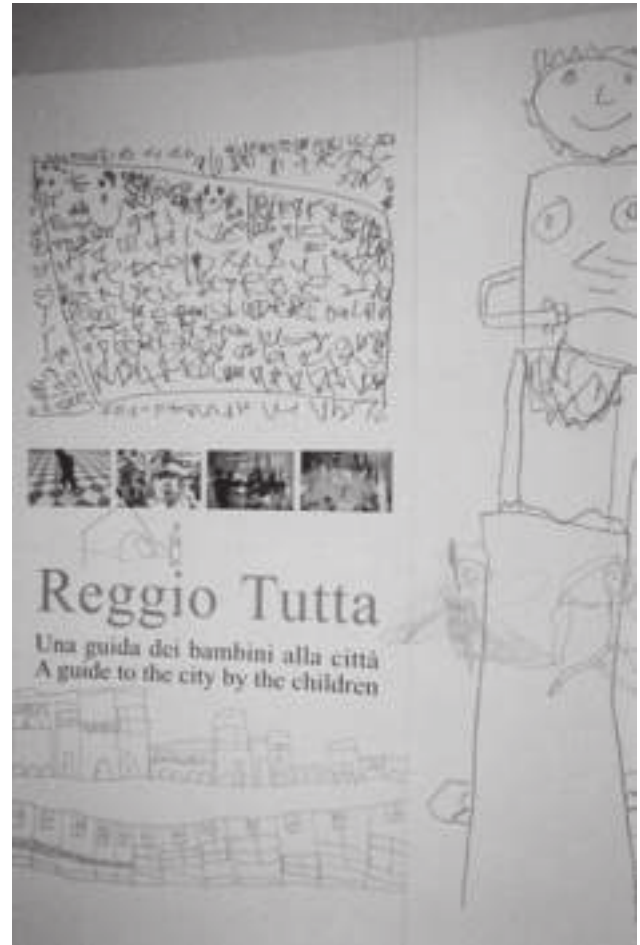
# Exploring Reggio Emilia

by Antoinette Colasurdo

On several occasions I have encountered enthusiastic and animated early learning and child care people who spoke about the Reggio Emilia infant-toddler centers and preschools in awe-struck voices. Although they were describing a rich, child-centered philosophy filled with learning and wonder, I could not fully understand their experiences. In June 2009 the World Forum on Early Care and Education, which was held in Belfast, Northern Ireland, offered 100 delegates the chance to participate in an International Study Group entitled *Dialogues on Education* in Reggio Emilia, Italy. Our own CCCF is a World Forum Alliance Member, and we participate in 'global exchanges of ideas on the delivery of quality services for young children in diverse settings' with them. I prepared for a close and personal exploration of this philosophy in three intensive days of study.

Unfortunately, my fluency in Italian did not help the train arrive on time for a tour of the city of Reggio. So I spent a few hours reading about how the Municipality established its first preschools in 1963 for 3 to 6 year old children, and then expanded the network in 1971 to include infants and toddlers. The belief that children have great potential and guaranteed rights as citizens of the world has been the foundation of this educational project, and the women's movement, the municipality, families, and the vision of the late Loris Malaguzzi, elementary school teacher and psychologist, were passionate supporters of this belief. The Reggio Emilia Approach developed into what it is today through research, exchanges of ideas, and the influence of educational philosophies such as the Maria Montessori model.

In response to the vivid interest from the rest of the world, the Municipality created a public company called Reggio



Children – International Center for the Defense and Promotion of the Rights and Potential of All Children of which they are majority owners, but which also has shareholders such as a bank, social service cooperatives, and private citizens. Reggio Children's activities are in research, professional development, exhibits, collaborations, publishing, and international projects of all kinds. In the 1990s an agreement with Italy's Ministry of Education resulted in the Municipality developing a state preschool system for the country. Later on, the Ministry supported *The Hundred Languages of Children*, a Reggio exhibit which is still traveling the globe. The Municipality's Istituzione was set up in 2003 to manage the infant-toddler centres and preschools, with a budget of approximately 25 million Euro. The recent construction of the Loris Malaguzzi International Center in an industrial area brings together children, youth, families, trainers, educators, researchers, and students, and events such as International Study Groups. The value of the child as 'rich in potential, strong, powerful and competent' was recognized not only by families, but also by governments, industry, education, and the research community.





Early the next morning, Reggio Children's, Paola Ricco and Emanuela Vercalli welcomed us, and I and the other 99 delegates from 14 countries listened in rapt attention to the rich history of the Reggio Emilia Approach. The morning passed quickly as Amelia Gambetti and Sara Annigoni of the Reggio Children International Network described the Loris Malaguzzi Center as a place of dialogues, exchanges, and research in the education of the young child. Looking to the future, the Center secured funding totaling 1 million Euros from Max Marra Fashion Group and Benetton, who will be installing stores and restaurants in the facility. Today, there are 6,509 children attending the 56 Reggio pre-schools and the infant-toddler centres. The town's population is rapidly increasing due in large part to immigration, and spaces are in high demand. Reggio believes that all children have a right to quality services and insists on collaborative participation between families, teachers, and children in order to best respond to their needs. One example is that during the design and construction phases of the Malaguzzi Center, the entire town was involved and some helped to actually build this amazing centre.

Later that afternoon, we visited a new atelier called "Ray of Light", which explores light in its various forms. It is a hands-on workshop where people of all ages are captivated by many discoveries, so much so that the participants of our study group were reluctant to leave it. Maddalena Tedeschi, an Istituto pedagogico, took us away on a tour of the Centre's newest preschool. She explained that the pre-school was the result of a two year research project which focused on the



Delegates on Italian tour

idea that children required continuity and so should have their primary school within the walls of the preschool. With the Mayor's approval, they plan to offer grades three to six. Although we were forbidden to take photos of any Reggio schools, this school is memorable because of its spaciousness, light, and beautifully crafted spaces for children. Children's work is displayed everywhere, such as one on friendship where a child wrote "friendship is one heart giving to another heart".

On the second day, Claudia Giudici, Research & Professional Development for Reggio Children presented a video entitled *A day in an infant-toddler centre and in a preschool*, and the resulting discussions with the delegates were energizing and informative. I saw that the Reggio approach favors learning by making errors, by reflecting, listening, observing, and documenting. The third educator, the environment, is extremely valued, and so is the development of creativity and imagination, which is supported by the in-house atelierista. It was inspiring to see how children can thrive when their concerns are given their due importance. In fact, children's artwork and projects are displayed in the streets and the town centres! We proceeded to visit the Remida Creative Recycling Center, one of a network of many in Italy and in other countries. Donations of clean discarded materials, unsold stock, and industrial parts of all kinds are distributed to schools and other institutions, to be transformed into something beautiful. These projects are proudly displayed throughout the town.

Last on the agenda was a visit to Faber, a co-operative infant-toddler centre and preschool, which demonstrated that a quality environment is possible even in buildings not originally designed as centres. On the final day of the study





group, we were treated to lectures and video examples of the observation, interpretation, and documentation processes. To be successful, every teacher must be given time to observe, document, and discuss with her colleague; and be given the necessary tools and training. The importance of parent involvement was stressed, and documentation of the children's progress and work is displayed daily to inform them of their child's current interests.



child is intelligent means that every child is making sense of their world in their own way and in their own time. It means that every child must be valued for just being, and the child's potential cannot be measured at any one time. It was the perfect ending to an extraordinary experience that I too will talk about to others yet not be able to fully describe. The incredible Reggio Emilia Approach must be experienced personally,

just like the child who in playing discovers what life is. I left to throw my coin into the Trevi Fountain - so that I would be assured a return visit to Reggio Emilia.

The last lecture was really a parting gift for the delegates. Carla Rinaldi, President of Reggio Children, gave an emotional and thought-provoking lecture entitled *All children are intelligent*. In her talk, she emphasized that the Reggio approach is not a clear-cut or step by step formula to learning. Instead, it is a "pedagogy of listening" so that each child is respected and recognized as a valued citizen of today. The assumption that each

Antoinette Colasurdo has been on the board of the CCCF since 2007 and is also a board member of the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Quebec. She is Executive Director of the Funville Early Childhood Centre, the workplace centre for the Douglas Mental Health University Institute. For the past 20 years she has been a preschool teacher, program co-ordinator, home daycare provider, and a centre director. Antoinette resides in Montreal with her two sons, whom she considers to be her greatest and best contribution to the world.

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## GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES IN ECE

# Indonesia Early Childhood Development (IECD) A Cross-Cultural and Inter-Professional Initiative

by Linda McDonell, Lorna McCrae  
and Eli Prasetyo

## A Cross-Cultural Partnership Flourishes

Linda McDonell, Team Leader, Vancouver Island University

Our experience in Surabaya, Indonesia began in 1999 as a partnership with the generous and forward thinking Principal of Maple Leaf School for English Language. In 2001, the project partner in Indonesia changed to the Widya Mandala Catholic University in Surabaya, Indonesia (WMCUS). From the start, our involvement included Study Abroad activities and course development and delivery. Seven courses and professional development seminars were jointly developed and delivered by the Vancouver Island University (VIU)<sup>1</sup> and WMCUS teams from April, 2000 - March, 2010. VIU Study Abroad participants (both students and instructors) have represented various professional programs including Early Childhood

Education (ECE), Child and Youth Care (CYC), Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN). In 2007 Indonesian students from both Faculty of Psychology and English/Teacher Training at WMCUS participated in the Study Abroad activities also undertaking practica and assisting with translation for the Canadian students.

When the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) approved funding of the IECD project in 2005, International Education at VIU also became more closely involved with the project work. This broader partnership has flourished over the past five years. The jointly developed curricula has provided a strong bi-cultural approach that includes courses in: Guiding and Health; Planning and Implementing Programs for Young Children; Inclusion; Working with Families; and Practicum. The final course delivered in February, 2010 incorporated a more 'advanced' focus on Guiding Young Children and Planning and Implementing Programs for Young Children (topics repeatedly requested by participants). Initial courses were lead by the Canadian faculty and supported by WMCUS. The final course will be lead by the Indonesian faculty, minimally supported by the Canadians. WMCUS have also gone on to revise the ECD courses to fit with their own curricula and are presently planning to build them into an undergraduate degree to strengthen access to ECD education in Surabaya.

One of the most remarkable aspects of our ten year partnership is the stability and continuity of the team







members – both Canadian and Indonesian. Both WMCUS and VIU have formed core working groups that have responsibility for the direct project work. The ongoing nature of the work and the consistency of the team members has encouraged the development of strong and open working relationships as well as close and enduring friendships. While in the beginning our disagreements were few and tentative, now we are much more comfortable discussing differing perspectives and approaches. As a result, our work together is enriched and our personal bonds are strengthened.

Over the life of the project there have been bi-annual opportunities for visits across the two hemispheres. This has resulted in an interesting reversal of ‘physical’ experience. We tease each other about how the Indonesians have learned to wear toques and bundle up to brave the outdoors and how the Canadians have learned to find creative ways to cool their overheated bodies and slather on bug repellent to deter the hungry tropical mosquitoes.

The interest in and support of the courses by the ECD community in Surabaya has been overwhelming. In recent years, student registration in courses has been between 40-55 and seminars between 50-75.

Each year the student group includes people working in: preschool and child care settings; Non-Government Organizations; orphanages; state and private elementary school; and other agencies and organizations. The English speaking students (making up a small percentage of our student group) take full opportunity to borrow and use the variety of course materials and resources we take to Indonesia. All course outlines, class plans and key readings are translated and distributed to all participants and all classes and seminars are fully translated.

My involvement with the project has been among the most transformative of my long career in ECE. The collaborative process of curriculum development promoting cultural and community relevance, collaborative teaching across disciplines, immersion in the Indonesian culture and academic community, observing Indonesian ECE practice and the practice of Canadian students in this thriving South-East Asian community has broadened and deepened my understanding of the influence of culture. This understanding includes ways that: children develop, families raise their children, Early Childhood Educators practice, and university teachers teach. The work has opened my eyes to my own assumptions and biases in a very real and tangible way. I have been challenged to continually advance my self development and to practice in ever more open and inclusive ways.

## Shared Canadian Perspectives: Development and Delivery

### Reflections

#### Lorna McCrae, Instructor Planning and Implementing Programs for Young Children

I was asked to take the lead on the development of the IECD course, Planning and Implementing Curriculum of Early Childhood Education. Initially I felt overwhelmed and uncomfortable about imposing my western educational values on a culture that holds their own set of values regarding early learning, young children, and the role of the educator. This was complicated by the fact that in Indonesia I was to deliver a sixty hour course in only thirty six hours over a four week period. I looked forward to hear student reaction to the outlined course content and planned to use those responses to shape the direction of the course. I was concerned though that my understanding of the students’ individual professional situations was limited and that it would be challenging to make the course as emergent and responsive as I wished it to be. It was a relief to put these concerns to the Canadian and Indonesian teams and have their immediate reassurances to “trust the process” and ask for assistance as needed. This experience underscored my belief in the importance of clear and honest communication as key to positive and meaningful processes.

We wished to establish a “bridge” between the first and second course by starting with the key learnings of Guiding and Health and then identifying what seemed essential to support an understanding of planning and implementing curriculum in early childhood settings in Indonesia. We created three modules: The Importance of Play, Supporting Holistic Learning Through Play, and Implementation of a Play-based Curriculum. We then proceeded to loosely create a focus for four to five classes within each module and to identify readings, activities and assignments. Well before the first class, I was asked to send handouts and key readings so course translation could begin. This process gave me some direction and supported a sense of excitement rather than one of trepidation. At the same time I wanted to ensure flexibility to meet student needs as they emerged. Throughout my experience teaching in Indonesia I felt the ever present tension of these two processes - prepared, structured planning to expedite translation and delivery and emergent, spontaneous planning. I realize the same tension exists in my planning and teaching at VIU and indeed *should* exist if I am to be truly responsive to the individual needs, interests and abilities of learners, no matter their age, cultural roots or stage in the learning process.



and observed other child care programs in Surabaya in advance of the course delivery and had taken many photographs of children using the equipment and materials. Photographs of Canadian and Indonesian early childhood programs brought life to the theoretical content and allowed us to exemplify the theory

Many lively discussions and brainstorming sessions ensued. One of my favorite brainstorming sessions took place on the first night of class. We engaged the students in a values exercise. Students were asked to respond to a word picture of the “ideal” Indonesian created by participants in previous courses. The Indonesian students considered the list and modified it to ensure an increasingly inclusive collection of ‘ideal’ characteristics. The list was posted for the duration of the course and used it as a ‘compass’ to help us create curriculum that would support healthy development of these characteristics in young children.

Another classroom experience influenced the bringing together of a widely diverse group of students (age, work experience, cultural and religious background) creating a close and cooperative community of learners. In the first session, we asked students to suggest ideas about how we could increase comfort with actively participating in the class. One of the student participants suggested having a warm-up/ice-breaker activity at the beginning of each class. Students rose to the challenge by creating and sharing a wide variety of warm-up exercises including songs, finger plays, and action oriented activities. This encouraged camaraderie within the group at the same time as it provided opportunities to share resources and activity ideas.

We also knew from earlier evaluations that participants wanted lots of opportunities to engage in hands-on experiences. With a group of fifty five students, it was a challenge to do this in a relatively small physical space. For these experiences, we used materials and resources from both Canada and Indonesia. On one very special occasion, we were able to cycle all students through the campus child care program. This was a very rich experience. We had also visited

in the two different cultural contexts. I have since made wide use of these photos in courses I teach creating a rich opportunity for discussions about diversity and inclusion.

Students completed a number of practical assignments including observing and recording play episodes. In this way they showed their understanding of developmental terms and used their observations to develop materials and implement plans that supported the interests, needs and abilities of children in their programs. They documented their planning processes and created displays to share with others at a resource fair that became a well attended celebration of achievements. The positive energy, spirit of cooperation and pure joy demonstrated at the fair surpassed our wildest expectations and brought a sense of deep satisfaction to all who had participated in the month long learning journey. Community partners were also invited to the event. I understand that this sharing of ideas and resources between the students and the community has become an important part of each of the courses and seminars and has provided some crucial opportunities to build community networks in Surabaya and surrounding region.

One of my greatest challenges was trying to ‘read’ non verbal communication in the Indonesian students. The cues I depended at home on were often absent. For example, one of the older female students came to class every night looking so very serious – from my Canadian perspective she looked ‘cranky’! I was sure she was unhappy with the course. In the second week she took a turn to lead the group in the ice-breaker doing a hilarious rendition of “One elephant went out to play”. In subsequent classes, we realized she wasn’t cranky or unhappy – only very serious about her studies!



I cannot complete a story of our work in Indonesia without mentioning my admiration of the incredible dedication, warmth and generosity of the Indonesia faculty. Their strong work ethic and commitment to supporting children and families in their culture was inspiring.

## Reflections of My Learning

**Eli Prasetyo, Manager of WMCUS daycare and teacher with Faculty of Psychology, WMCUS**

My connection to the IECD project started in May of 2006. At that time, I had no idea how my involvement with both WMCUS and VIU would change and how I would spend more than three months in Canada taking courses, gaining work experience, and visiting a variety of programs and agencies.

In the beginning, I found it hard to imagine how I could use some of the techniques and theories taught in the courses but gradually as we applied the ideas in the classroom and as I found opportunities to use them where I worked as a manager of a day care at WMCUS. I realized that lots of the knowledge and skills I was exposed to could be used but that I would have to adjust some of it to fit better with the expectations of other workers in the centre and of course, the parents.

For example, I was able to use many of the curriculum ideas that we tried out and talked about in class. The importance of play worked well in the environment that we had created and the children responded well to the activities we provided. They seemed happy and eager to do play-dough, to paint, and to play in the activity centres such as the dress up and block areas. We had collected many story books through our work with VIU to review and use in the classroom exercises. The children liked the story time and other activities we used such as fingerplays and rhymes - some of which we had learned from others in our ECD classroom. While these activities are done in some ECE environments in Indonesia we were able to explain how important they are to a child's growth and development because of our class discussions. In this way, both other teachers and the parents were able to understand the reasons we provided a play environment for the children.

As a child care manager and ECE practitioner I was also able to use new knowledge and have my knowledge refreshed about both practical ways to handle children in the child care and help to increase the skills of the people with whom I worked in the child care.

It was not all easy to use though. We learned about family-centred care and while it was helpful to think about the

importance of family in a child's life some aspects of it were difficult to incorporate into our program. Parents in Indonesia don't expect to be involved with programs as parents are in Canada. Also, some rules that I saw used in Canada such as keeping sick children at home could not be used in my home country. Parents expect caregivers to look after their children even when they are sick because what else can they do? Their employers would not understand if they had to leave their work to pick up their child. Some parents might also disagree with some of the different ways of handling children that we were learning about. Parents have expectations of good behavior and want us to use techniques that will insist on certain good behaviours and avoid some of the naughtier behaviours that children might display. All these differences require me to think carefully about the techniques I use in the child care and the knowledge I have gained to be sure I use them in ways that will be comfortable for the parents. If I change the way we do things in our centre, I have to be able to explain why we are changing and be sure everyone is comfortable.

In my time in Canada, I learned more about how to be an administrator how to work with families and also many ideas to set up a day care. I experienced many opportunities to apply the theories I learned about. I had a great experience working at the Child Development Centre (CDC) in Nanaimo during my three month stay in Canada. At the CDC I learned a lot about how to work with children with different kinds of special needs in different kinds of programs such as Infant Development and Supported Early Childhood Development programs. I also learned about many different kinds of therapies for children that help them play and learn more easily. In Victoria, I attended Mother Goose Training and learned a lot about ways to sing and play with very young children – and even to make up my own songs in Bahasa Indonesian to use in my work at home. I learned about many different kinds of policies and programs in Canada and even learned more about Canadian society.

In closing, I enjoyed my time in Canada very much and made many new friends. It was great to see the Canadian instructors that I had met in Indonesia work in their Canadian classrooms with both Canadian and International students. I hope to come back to Canada again in the future. In the meantime, I hope to use all my experiences and new knowledge and skills to become an even better manager of the WMCUS day care and teacher at the university!

### Endnote

1. Malaspina University College became Vancouver Island University in 2009. This change was legislated by the BC Government in 2008.





## RESEARCH UPDATES

## Culture and Social Development

What defines social competence in Western, Eastern, Northern and Southern cultures? How do peers react to children and adolescents who fail to conform to cultural norms of social competence? How do individual characteristics, social interactions and relationships, groups and culture interact to influence social development?

These are some of the research questions explored in a newly published paper by Kenneth H. Rubin, PhD and Melissa Menzer, BA from the University of Maryland, USA. Given that the majority of the world's children do not reside in Westernized countries, and that culture influences development, cross-cultural research on child development requires special attention. The focus of this essay is on the role of culture on children's social development. This and other new research papers on the role of culture in early childhood learning can be found on the According to Experts series on the Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development web site at [www.child-encyclopedia.com/en-ca/culture/according-to-experts.html](http://www.child-encyclopedia.com/en-ca/culture/according-to-experts.html).

## Exploring the Power, and the Pitfalls, of Internet-based Health Information

The internet is increasingly being used as a primary source of health information for many Canadians. A CCL-funded study examines the effectiveness of an innovative health website for a broad range of users.

The study, *E-learning to support health literacy, health promotion and disease management in community settings*, concludes that while there is immense potential in the internet for patients and for the management of precious health-care resources, there are also significant pitfalls that should be avoided if such websites are to be effective. Read this report on the Canadian Council on Learning's web site at [www.ccl-cca.ca](http://www.ccl-cca.ca).

## A Portrait of Canada's Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Workforce 2009

Report from the Child Care Human Resource Sector Council provides a statistical overview of the labour market situation in the ECEC sector. Consistent and accurate information on the ECEC sector is relatively scarce because there is no regularly collected pan-Canadian survey and the Census data are collected once every five years. The data for this report were obtained from standard Census tables and a custom tabulation of the 2006 Census data. The Census provides information that is collected from 20 percent of all households and is the most detailed and consistent data on people by their occupation, industry, education and earnings. These data provide an in-depth look at the ECEC sector.

## ACROSS CANADA AND BEYOND

### INTERNATIONAL

The Council of Australian Governments COAG (federal and state governments) has agreed on new compulsory national standards for child care and early childhood education services. The Australian Federal Government is providing approximately \$61 million between 2010-11 and 2013-14 to the States and Territories to support the new framework.

### CANADA

Big-box child care is growing in Canada and critics question the quality and fear it will intercept any probability of a national child care program or provincial plans for all-day kindergarten. The new company, Edleun Inc., is looking to acquire and develop child care and early education centres across Canada, according to documents filed with the TSX. Edleun currently owns a chain of Alberta child cares with links to the failed Australian-based ABC Learning Centres. It has merged with a Montreal capital company and plans to begin trading on the TSX Venture Exchange.

### ALBERTA

Alberta's Children and Youth Services is investing \$1.1 billion in its 2010-11 budget to support children, youth, families and communities. The budget allocated \$198 million for child care, including \$15 million in capital grants to support the continued creation of new child care spaces surpassing the ministry's mandated child care space creation goal of 14,000 spaces. Child care subsidies for low- and middle-income families to assist with the cost of child care and wage enhancements for child care staff will be maintained at current levels.

### BRITISH COLUMBIA

British Columbia's child poverty rate has remained the highest in Canada for six years in a row says a report released November 2009 by First Call. British Columbia had 156,000 poor kids in 2007 - during a good year for the economy - said the group's 2009 Child Poverty Report Card. The proportion of poor children in B.C. was 18.8 per cent while the national child poverty rate was 15 per cent, according to Statistics Canada data cited in the report. First Call wants the B.C. government to come up with a legislated poverty reduction plan that includes the appointment of a cabinet minister committed to the cause. The report calls on the government to raise welfare rates and the minimum wage - the lowest of all provinces at \$8 - and increase child benefits and access to high quality child care.

### MANITOBA

Manitoba continues to expand, renovate and create new child care spaces through the Government of Manitoba's Family Choices Plan with an approved



16 centres in Winnipeg for \$2.35 million in funding last fall. This year the province is focusing on specific policy development for all programs such as Enhanced Safety Plans, Codes of Conduct, Inclusion Policy statements and Curriculum Framework Statements for licensed facilities. Child care providers continue to struggle with recruitment and retention issues to keep up with the demand. The Manitoba Child Care Association has asked the Province for an immediate recruitment and retention strategy that includes competitive wages, benefits, and a pension plan for all employees in all positions.

#### NEW BRUNSWICK

The provincial government recently announced a new law and groundbreaking legislation, the *Early Learning and Child Care Act*, as part of the province's poverty reduction plan. It could contribute more to the province's goal of self-sufficiency than any other commitment made by the government. Along with the legislation, the government has committed to a significant expansion of early childhood services by 2015 to ensure 20 percent of infants and 50 percent of children aged two to five have access to regulated programs.

#### NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

The Province of Newfoundland is undertaking a comprehensive review of the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act*. The consultations closed in January 2010 and involved representatives from advocacy, client, aboriginal, education, health, judicial and community groups. The current *Child, Youth and Family Services Act*, proclaimed on January 5, 2000, is the legislation which governs the protection of children in Newfoundland and Labrador. The review of the act will focus on limitations or gaps in the current legislation with an examination of the legislative principles and authority for providing services to children, youth and their families.

#### NOVA SCOTIA

The Province of Nova Scotia's 10-year Early Learning and Child Care Plan delivered another \$6.3 million in loans to help create more child care spaces this fall. The funding is expected to create 300 additional child care spaces across Nova Scotia. Loans are available to full and part day licensed commercial or non-profit child care centres and family home child care agencies. Undermining this expansion program however are the shortage of trained staff and long waiting lists in the metro area (Halifax & Dartmouth).

#### ONTARIO

As part of Ontario's plan to roll out full-day kindergarten in September 2010, the province is introducing legislation that if passed, would mandate that all school boards offer full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds, including the integrated extended-day programs. The *Full-Day Early Learning Statute Law Amendment Act*, 2010, would also give boards the authority and responsibility to set, charge and collect fees for the before- and after-school programs. The full-day learning program will be rolled out to all elementary schools over the next five years.

#### Prince Edward Island

A public engagement process is underway to develop a vision and plan for early learning and child care in Prince Edward Island. The province's Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is facilitating the development of a vision for the early childhood sector and a five-year plan to renew the sector after kindergarten is transferred to the school system. Announced in February 2010 the P.E.I. government is researching initiatives in other jurisdictions, conducting key informant interviews with early childhood educators and holding focus groups with parents across

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the Island. An online survey has been established to gather input from caregivers of pre-school children; parents expecting their first child; grandparents, aunts, uncles and others who are involved in the lives of pre-school children.

## QUEBEC

The Parti Quebecois wants to amend Quebec's language law and restrict access to English daycares. PQ Leader Pauline Marois has called for amendments to Quebec's contentious Bill 101 language law, in order to limit access to English daycares to children of parents educated in English in Canada. The changes would funnel more immigrant children into French-language institutions. But early childhood educators and child care providers dismiss the motion, citing that children's social well being and care is more important. Marois and her sovereigntist party says the province's Liberal government is not doing enough to stem the spread of English in Quebec, especially in Montreal, among its youngest residents – babies and toddlers.

## YUKON

The new *Child and Family Services Act* will come into effect on April 30, 2010 and will include significant changes in how the Department of Health and Social Services deals with adoption disclosures. This new, progressive legislation will mean significant changes to the way the department delivers its programs for families and children," Health and Social Services Minister Glenn Hart said. It reflects feedback and comments received from a variety of stakeholders over the past six years. The new legislation allows for more openness around adoption-related records, making it easier for birth parents and people who were adopted to find each other.

## CALENDAR

### APRIL

**30 – May 01**  
**Calgary, Alberta**

**2010 CAYC Annual Conference**

**New Frontiers for Children: Our Journey Together**

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[www.beststart.org](http://www.beststart.org)

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**Montreal, Quebec**

**AECEQ Conference 2010 — Our Time to Shine**

The Association of Early Childhood Educators of Quebec and its co-host, the Canadian Child Care Federation, invite you to the upcoming 31st Annual AECEQ Conference 'Our Time to Shine' at the Holiday Inn Midtown, Montreal.  
Visit: [www.aecec.ca](http://www.aecec.ca) for more information.

**27 – 29**  
**Richmond BC**

**ECEBC Conference 2010: Building On Our Roots**

**Celebrating Our Success and Expanding our Possibilities**

For more info visit [www.ecebc.ca](http://www.ecebc.ca)

**27 – 29**  
**Hamilton, Ontario**

**Association Of Early Childhood Educators Ontario (AECEO) 60th Annual Provincial Conference**

[www.aecec.ca](http://www.aecec.ca)

### JULY

**16 – 20**  
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## RESOURCES

**Building Character from the Start**

Authors Susan Ragsdale and Ann Saylor have are recognized trainers and program consultants in the youth and community development field. Their new book, *Building*

*Character from the Start: 201 Activities to foster creativity, literacy, and play in K-3* will inspire educators and children alike with hands-on projects and discussion guidelines in and out of the classroom. It is ideal for anyone working with children in Kindergarten to grade 3 including teachers, child care providers, and after-school program providers. Each page is meant to build a specific asset with suggested discussion questions, word games, community building games, team-building games and more. The 144 page book can be ordered from Independent Publishers Group at [www.ipgbook.com](http://www.ipgbook.com). \$29.95

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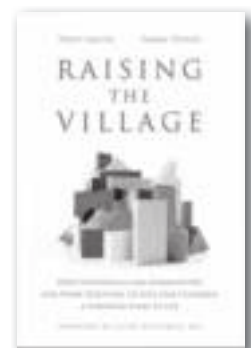
This video from Teachers.tv shows how an English primary school transformed what was once a barren, concrete play area, into a living, breathing space. Helen Bromley, an early years adviser works alongside a landscape gardener to create an outdoor classroom for children who have little or no access to green areas. Their new stimulating environment encourages learning, exploratory exercises and messy play. The kids now plant their own potatoes, grow aromatic lavender and play with dinosaurs in the prehistoric garden. Available for viewing, free download or CD purchase go to [www.teachers.tv/video/2920](http://www.teachers.tv/video/2920).

**Raising the Village**  
**– How Individuals and Communities Can Work Together to Give Our Children a Stronger Start in Life**

It takes a village to raise a child... but what does it take to raise a village? Authors Tracy Smyth and Tammy Dewar

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develop their communities by developing their children. *Raising the Village* is filled with the authors' wisdom from working in communities with early childhood collaboratives. It is an invaluable resource for all those who serve children and families. \$24.95 Buy the book online at [www.raisingthevillage.ca](http://www.raisingthevillage.ca)





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- maintain complete child records
- bill childcare fees
- calculate subsidies
- manage home childcare services
- process the payroll
- produce financial statements and budgets
- and much more...



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