

# Interaction

VOLUME 25, NUMBER 1, SPRING 2011



## Nurturing Creativity in Children

Igniting the Fire of Teacher Creativity: Mothercraft College Students Talk About Their Training in the Arts

Taking All Risk Out of Children's Play: Is This Risky Business?

If this is our  
most important  
national treasure...

Shouldn't child  
care be considered  
a national asset?

We're the Canadian Child Care Federation, and frankly, we'd like everyone to take a whole new look at the importance of early learning and child care. Across Canada this crucial system is driven by excellence in research and education, and expressed by professional practitioners and educators.

Early learning and child care prepare our youngest citizens to be all that they can be. We believe they are essential services, given – from the heart – by Canadian professionals who place enormous importance on the value of our children.



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**Attitudes and self-confidence, more than artistic skill, motivate teachers “to create a learning environment where artistic attitudes, behaviors and expression can flourish.” (see page 13)**

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One new resource sheet accompanies this issue:

**#98 – Learning to use “Words”!**



The photo for the front cover was photographed by Sara McConnell of Ottawa, Ontario.

# Behind the Scenes

In 1998, Sir Ken Robinson led the British government's advisory committee on creative and cultural education, a massive inquiry into the significance of creativity in the educational system and the economy, and was knighted in 2003 for his achievements. His humorous and provocative presentation, in which he asked whether schools kill creativity, can be viewed at TED.com.

*Here is a highlight from his presentation:*

*"... kids will take a chance. If they don't know, they'll have a go. Am I right? They're not frightened of being wrong. Now, I don't mean to say that being wrong is the same thing as being creative. What we do know is, if you're not prepared to be wrong, you'll never come up with anything original – if you're not prepared to be wrong. And by the time they get to be adults, most kids have lost that capacity. They have become frightened of being wrong. And we run our companies like this, by the way. We stigmatize mistakes. And we're now running national education systems where mistakes are the worst thing you can make. And the result is that we are educating people out of their creative capacities. Picasso once said this: all children are born artists. The problem is to remain an artist as we grow up. I believe this passionately: that we don't grow into creativity, we grow out of it. Or rather, we get educated out of it. . . ."*

In this Spring issue of *Interaction* we look at topics that ask the question, "Are we preparing children to use creative thinking to eventually address serious challenges?" We also look at practical approaches to 'teaching' arts and opening up artistic and creative channels in both children and practitioners in early learning. In the Practice section, we examine the value of exposing children to guided risk in play and development and ask whether **"in our attempts to keep our children safe, are we exposing our children to risk that has more severe implications?"** Also, explore all the advantages to choosing family child care as we read the story of two family generations of home child care providers.

**Claire McLaughlin**, editor  
cmclaughlin@cccfcscge.ca

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CCCCF is about the value of children. We value children.

In order to protect and enhance our children, to promote 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.

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# Inside the Federation

## Leading the Way in Early Learning - Early Learning Leader Caucuses Begin Training

With funding provided by the Muttart Foundation and support from the Alberta Child Care Association and the Saskatchewan Early Childhood Association, CCCF has continued in the development of two leader caucuses in Alberta and Saskatchewan. There are 25 leaders involved in the initiative, building the capacity of early learning leaders in each province through a series of in-person training events and online sessions. To date the leaders have completed three training sessions which include

Strategic Planning; Leadership and Performance Management; and Program Evaluation. Future session topics include team building, working with boards, interpersonal communication and leading for change.

At the end of the three year initiative, there will be a downloadable leadership resource developed. It will be available to all members of the Canadian Child Care Federation.

### We Want Your Feedback on *Interaction* Magazine

What topics would you like to see in future issues?

Would you prefer to get *Interaction* online or in hard copy by mail?

Send your comments to [info@cccfc-fcsge.ca](mailto:info@cccfc-fcsge.ca), leaving us your e-mail address for a draw to win CCCF resources.

## Please Join Us At the National Conference: Valuing Children... A Canadian Conversation

Hosted by Early Childhood Care and Education New Brunswick and the Canadian Child Care Federation  
May 26 – 28, 2011 – Saint John, New Brunswick  
Delta Brunswick & Hilton / Saint John Trade & Convention Centre

- Pre-Conference – May 26th – *The Changing Landscapes of Early Childhood Education*. Keynote: Dr. Pam Whitty, University of New Brunswick
- Over 50 concurrent sessions, and Keynote Presentations by Martin Liberia, Christine MacLean and Deb Curtis
- 2 Day Reflective Institute: *Learning Together with Infants and Toddlers*, Facilitated by Deb Curtis and Associates – Harvest Resources
- Learning Village featuring displays and information from NB Educators and a wide variety of suppliers, agencies and organizations in early learning and childcare.

Visit [www.valuingchildren.ca](http://www.valuingchildren.ca) for more information and to register.  
Early Bird Registration Discount available until March 18th

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## FROM WHERE I SIT

## CCCF President's Message

by Don Giesbrecht, President CCCF

If there was ever a doubt in anyone's mind as to the need for political leadership for Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) in Canada, it should have been solidified after our federal Minister, the Minister for Human Resources and Skills Development, Diane Finley, rose in Parliament and said these infamous words: "Mr. Speaker, it's the Liberals who wanted to ensure that parents are forced to have other people raise their children."

These words solidified the understood, but not always articulated beliefs of our current federal government, that ELCC infringes on the sanctity of the family and that early childhood practitioners across the country are raising Canada's children. This is offensive and untrue in so many ways and flies in the face of reality and in the science of early childhood knowledge. It is offensive as it insults the working families in Canada where Statistics Canada has told us that 69% of mothers with children under two are in the workforce, along with 84% of mothers with children between six and fifteen years old. It is offensive because we know that three million Canadian children each and every day are in some form of care. It is offensive because there are only regulated and licensed spaces for about 18% of those three million. It is offensive because those working families contribute to Canada's economy through taxation and spending. It is wrong in that the science of early

childhood learning speaks volumes about the need for quality and stable relationships at home as well as quality and stimulating experiences outside of the home where young brains have the chance to grow and develop to their full potential—even if a family makes the choice to have one parent stay at home.

Minister Finley's comments also solidify the environment in which the Canadian Child Care Federation has been operating since 2006. As Canada's only national organization dedicated to the professional ELCC sector, the CCCF has felt the sting of operating in an environment where the government of the day does not consider ELCC a priority. The ramifications of this disinterest are felt across the country as the ability to lead, provide resources, to provide a voice and united effort across the country are minimized and marginalized. To be clear, this is not about an effort to take children from their parents and to raise them, as Minister Finley so insultingly suggests. It is about supporting children and families to the best of our collective abilities and to help nurture young minds to their potential—along with the support and help of parents and families.

**My firm and passionate belief is that our united voice, the pursuit of quality ELCC and the strength of provincial and territorial child care organizations are all inextricably linked to a strong national organization.**

This all links into why there is a need to support the CCCF. Across the country, we have sent out a call for support—financial support—so that what we have all worked for and supported for so long can continue on past the political shortcomings of the day. My firm and passionate belief is that our united voice, the pursuit of quality ELCC and the strength of provincial and territorial child care organizations are all inextricably

linked to a strong national organization. Without it, our sector loses a significant piece of its' evolution and growth and we have lost to the mean-spirited and inaccurate political views of the day. We cannot let this defeat happen, for this I will guarantee: If we do, we will all, at some point in the very near future, collectively ask why there is no national voice for the ELCC sector and why there is no national leadership for ELCC. Let's make sure that this does not happen on our watch.



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# Child Rights Award Winners

## Announced by the Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children

*The number and range of nominations this year reflect the goal of the award program: to recognize good practices in children's rights throughout Canadian society. Below are brief descriptions of the 2010 award recipients.*

### Shannen Koostachin, Shannen's Dream

#### **Article 12 Award, for exercising voice and participation**

Shannen Koostachin was 13 years old when she led a group of students from the isolated Attawapiskat reserve to Ottawa to ask for a school, and then she invited thousands of children, aboriginal and non-aboriginal, to join in advocating for the right of all children to have an education in Canada. Unfortunately, Shannen was killed in a car accident at age 15, before the school was built on her reserve. By speaking up and reaching out to other children, Shannen inspired many young people to actively participate in community life. By honouring Shannen's memory, the CCRC recognizes the importance of the right to be heard and the right to education for all children in Canada. For more information on Shannen's story and Shannen's Dream, the continuing campaign for equitable education for aboriginal children, see [www.shannensdream.ca](http://www.shannensdream.ca).

### Kathy Berggren-Clive and Jocelyn Helland, Rights 2 Success

#### **Children's Rights Champion Award, for work that makes a significant difference in the lives of children**

Kathy and Jocelyn involved young people in creating the Rights 2 Success program, which spreads knowledge about children's rights in British Columbia. Using train-the-trainer and other approaches, many children are involved in a variety of contexts.

Kathy Berggren-Clive, Director of Advocacy for the B.C. Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD), and Jocelyn Helland, Executive Director of the Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks (FBCYICN) show a strong commitment to children's rights in their careers and continuing work for children in British Columbia.

### Child and Youth Services Committee, Ontario Public Library Association

#### **Child Rights Trailblazer Award, for original approaches that model rights-consistent activities**

Committee members raise awareness and promote the rights of children in library systems. Two statements, "Children's Rights in the Public Library" and "Teen Rights in the Public Library" were developed to apply the Convention to the world of libraries. Adopted by the Ontario Public Library Association in February 2010, the focus is now implementation. In honouring this work, the CCRC promotes application of the Convention in a wide variety of fields.

### Dr. Kim Snow, the Voyager Project

#### **Children's Rights Supporter Award, for supporting efforts to promote children's rights**

The Voyager Project engages crown wards in the Toronto area and supports them to pursue their education by linking them with resources and helping them address a wide variety of challenges. Dr. Kim Snow uses a strength-based model, adding research, advocacy, support, and engagement to enable young people to pursue their own goals. Project results also contribute to research on transition strategies for youth in care.

## Donate Online

Support CCCF through an online donation. With a click of a mouse you can contribute monthly or lump-sum donations. Tax receipts will be issued for amounts of \$10.00 and more.

Visit the CCCF website ([www.qualitychildcarecanada.ca](http://www.qualitychildcarecanada.ca)) and click on "Donate Now!"



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# ECE is Leadership

by Marc (Tatanasci) Lalonde

Have you ever heard of Robert Fulghum's phrase: "All I really needed to know I learned in Kindergarten"? Although sage advice, obviously he didn't have a quality child care experience, otherwise he would have learned these lessons *before* he entered school. This helped me realise most of what I know about leadership, I learned as an ECE.

Management requires a person to pay attention to details and relies on control and outputs (products), where leadership is focused on the process of empowerment and innovation. Management certainly has its uses especially when dealing with budgets, safety and paperwork, but has its limitations when inspiring others to greater heights. Leadership, however, is about creating environments to stimulate peoples learning by building on their strengths and interest. Does any of this sound familiar?

When researching leadership, one must prowl the business section of bookstores; some may even have specific shelves dedicated to leadership. Giants in the field like Warren Bennis, Peter Drucker, Stephen Covey and John Maxwell all agree on the central tenets for effective leadership. Leaders have vision, they develop people and they lead by example.

Leaders focus on the vision, mission statement or values of organisations. Successful visions are those everyone buys into and believes. ECEs believe in providing rich, stimulating environments that support and enhance children's overall development. A centre's mission statement will be in harmony with the core values shared by ECE. By using the vision as a context, leaders focus on the process of "creating the how" for followers to achieve personal and organisational goals. Think of it like emerging curriculum.

Emerging curriculum and leadership share three important concepts: 1) recognising, 2) acknowledging and 3) building on interests and strengths. To recognise staff interests and



strengths leaders need to pay attention. This means observing people in a non-judgemental manner and ECEs know how to do this with children. Let go of an agenda and be open to a sense of wonderment and curiosity. All too often we can be critical of our charges and focus on where individuals need to improve. Just like children – for every challenging behaviour, each staff will also display several positive behaviours and strengths.

Children need reassurance and praise, and adults are no different. Adrian Gostick and Chester Elton are authors of a series of books dedicated to *The Carrot Principle*, which provides practical advice on how to recognise and reward employees. They have documented how this can engage people and move them from completing ordinary duties to achieving magnificent performance.

As an elder ECE, I remember a time when we would plan out the curriculum and develop activities around the themes we decided on. Although Developmentally Appropriate Practices taught us to incorporate children's interests in





themes, Emerging Curriculum has refocused our efforts on building topics based on children's interests and inspiring them to greater learning opportunities. The same applies to adults. By supporting people in their area of interest, leaders create environments where people are motivated to achieve more than required in job descriptions.

We know children need to experiment with materials and work through trial and error experiences to gain new knowledge. Leaders understand how essential this is in supporting adult learning as well. When staff have the responsibility to fulfill a task, they must also have the rights to make decisions. When errors or miscalculations are made, they need to be supported through the process as learning opportunities. Reflective supervision, which focuses on learning, is an enriching opportunity to gain more knowledge and improve practice. This will also create a sense of trust, and trust is an important investment when leading others.

Actions speak louder than words and supervisors must lead by example. ECEs are educated to provide an example for children to follow, and the same applies for adults. If staff are expected to treat one another in proactive ways, leaders must make sure their behaviours are models to follow. No one is perfect and leaders will stumble, but great leaders display integrity and humility by openly admitting mistakes and actively work on correcting their actions. Of course this also means leaders need to be emotionally self-regulating and socially competent.

In preparing children for elementary school, ECEs know emotional and social skills have a great impact on children's future success. Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, identified emotional and social competence for leaders in their book *Primal Leadership*. ECEs know how to support children's self-awareness and help them manage difficult emotions. Leaders must practice this knowledge on a personal level. Remember, the staff are always watching.

When leaders are able to manage their own emotions effectively, they are more likely to lead others in proactive social interactions. Through open, honest communication leaders can



facilitate staff in moving towards greater performance. This requires leaders to serve the people who choose to follow them. Leaders need to be empathetic and build bonds with colleagues to facilitate collaborative efforts. As ECEs, we already know how to do this with children; after all everything we needed to know about leadership, we learned as Early Childhood Educators.

Marc (Tatanasci) Lalonde has 30 years experience in the ECE field and manages the Tsleil-Waututh Child and Family Development Centre. He has presented leadership workshops at local and provincial conferences.

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# Taking All Risk Out of Children's Play

## Is This Risky Business?

by Tina Bonnett

*Gone are the days of children heading outside to explore and being told by their parents to "come in when it gets dark". Gone are the days when children created a day of play with sticks, rocks and mud. Also gone are the days of children climbing trees, jumping off porches and driving their bikes through puddles*

The world is now a different place and as adults we feel compelled to keep our children in close proximity in order to protect them from the dangers of modern society. We worry about our children getting physically hurt or coming into contact with viruses that could potentially impact their growth and development. We worry about our children getting bumped and bruised, and about their emotional well being should they fall or get a scrape on their knee. As parents and caregivers we intrinsically want to shelter our little ones from all harm, and feel that it is our primary role to guide and protect. Our children rely on us to provide a safe environment, both emotionally and physically, in which they can play and develop to their potential. An integral component of acquiring new skills and growing in all domains of development, however, is the child's ability to step outside of their comfort zone and take risks. While the purpose of this article is to examine the value of guided risk in play and development, it does *not* seek to undermine the established health and safety guidelines that protect our children. Contrary to popular belief, risk, under the guidance of a sensitive and nurturing adult, can be one of the most effective preventative strategies in keeping our children safe.



### Lost Adventures of Childhood

In a recently released documentary, "Lost Adventures of Childhood", the concept that "*childhood lock down is stunting the way children grow and learn*" is examined. David Yearly, a specialist in the area of play safety, suggests that activities that prompt "managed risk" motivate the child to challenge themselves and regulate their body and behavior. In his research of playground play, children who engaged in risky challenging tasks, such as climbing and balancing, had a more solidified sense of self and were far more autonomous. Findings also reveal that children who are not permitted to take risks in a safe and supportive setting often seek other venues, which are less safe and unsupervised, to meet their need to risk take. The question then has to be posed: *In our attempts to keep our children safe, are we exposing our children to risk that has more severe implications?*

### The Young Child's Intrinsic Need to Move and Explore

Within the first few months of life an expressed need to pull, push, lift, throw, roll, climb, jump and balance typically begins



to emerge for the young child. Through repeated experiences with movement the child begins to learn about their body, object permanence, cause and effect, space, and the different purposes and properties of materials in their environment. When a child jumps off the bottom step of the stairs, balances on the edge of a sidewalk or climbs a hill or large rock, they are beginning to master the use of their small and large muscles and are developing a sense of who they are, and what impact that they have on the world.

Supporting the young child to actively move and to explore the relationship between their body and the environment fosters motor skills and gives the child a clear message that they are capable and competent. This in turn encourages the child to meet the next challenge, whether it may be physical, emotional or cognitive, with a sense of confidence and certainty in their abilities. As the child begins to stretch their confidence and skill level, she or he can be guided by the adult using the following strategies:

- View the child's need to run, jump, climb, balance etc... as typical and embrace this stage of development! When considering the continuum of development, the domain with the most emerging skills in the first few years of life is the physical domain.
- Observe and reflect on what the child's behavior is indicating. Chances are that a child that is repeatedly getting up on the table and then jumping off is expressing a need to jump.
- Provide safe alternatives for expressed needs. If a child is expressing the need to climb by repeatedly climbing on the bookshelf then offer alternatives such as jumping off a small stool, the edge of the sandbox or from one foam block to another.
- Consider the physical setup of both the indoor and outdoor environments to ensure that there is adequate space for active movement and exploration.
- Save limit setting for times when safety is truly of concern. Too often the adult prohibits risk taking and physical exploration simply because they do not want to provide active supervision, and not because the child is most likely at risk.
- When developmentally appropriate, engage in an open discussion with the child regarding the risk that they want to take (ex: riding a bike down a hill or climbing a tree). Discuss potential outcomes and encourage the child for thinking reflectively and challenging themselves to be the best that they can be.
- Be cautious not to impart your own personal fears and insecurities to the child. Children learn to be confident by observing and interacting with confident adults in their lives.
- Reconnect with nature. Unstructured and uninterrupted play in the outdoor environment supports the development of many life skills such as cooperation, communication, creativity, problem solving and emotional intelligence.



## Using a “Guided Risk” Approach to Prevent Unsafe Risk

Guided Risk, a responsive approach in which the adult supports and actively supervises the child and sets up the environment to allow for risk taking within a safe emotional and physical climate, undoubtedly is a more effective model than simply prohibiting the child from engaging in any risk taking behaviors. If research tells us that the child will risk take with or without the guidance of an adult, then it only appears logical that we are present and supportive when the child makes the decision to challenge their skills to grow and develop to their potential.

In our attempt to eradicate all risk for children it has to be questioned if we are in fact creating more risk by minimizing physical activity thus compounding the prevalence of obesity, diabetes and other illnesses, which are conclusively linked to morbidity and mortality in adulthood (*In Motion, 2010*). It is furthermore to be considered if the swelling rates of stress, anxiety and depression in young children (*Lost Adventures of Childhood, 2010*) are a direct reflection of current parenting and teaching styles which often limit the child's natural desire to challenge themselves through taking mild to moderate risks. In an effort to minimize all risk for children it appears as though, ironically, we are creating risks that could potentially have much more severe and lifelong repercussions. Taking all risk out of children's play stifles development in all domains, interferes with the child's emerging sense of autonomy, and is likely risky business.

Tina Bonnett is a faculty member of the Early Childhood Education Program at Fanshawe College. She is a graduate of York's Infant Mental Health Program and has completed a Master's Degree with a focus on the correlation between attachment status and the primary care-giving approach.

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[www.in-motion.ca/youth/facts](http://www.in-motion.ca/youth/facts)

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## FAMILY CHILD CARE

# Licensed Home Child Care Provides a Quality Option for Parents

## A quality home child care environment: Buffy's story

by Marni Flaherty and  
Brenda Ferguson

Home child care has always been a part of Buffy Martinez-Zaldivar's life. Her mother was a home child care provider in the Mississauga area with a licensed agency since Buffy was 4 years old. Now, 30 years later, living in Hamilton with children of her own, Buffy carries on the tradition of home child care. Growing up in a home child care environment has provided Buffy, with the perspective of the child whose parent provided care for other children in her neighbourhood and the first hand understanding of the need and importance of home child care.

When Buffy first became a parent, she was working in the retail and business sector, but longed to spend time with her child. She recognized the importance of spending time with her child in the early years. At that time, she decided that she would become a home child care provider, with the support of an agency.

Buffy believes the agency model of licensed home child care is best for her as a provider and for families and children in her home child care environment. "Because the environment is regulated and supported by an agency it supports quality and safety for children. We have standards we need to meet," she said. "The home environment gives me an opportunity to support the needs of the children in my home on an individualized basis. I can adapt and change my environment based on the children in my care."



**Buffy still maintains a relationship (as does her mother) with the children that were in her mother's home child care from thirty years ago.**

Buffy also recognized the licensed home child care model helped her be a better caregiver. "When I'm in need of support for my environment, my home child care consultant supports me with resources and information. The supports, training (such as emergent curriculum sessions), and networking opportunities with other caregivers are the reasons I chose to provide care in my home with a licensed agency."

She has used the professional development opportunities available to her advantage and to the advantage of the families and children in her care. "My chance to participate in the emergent curriculum sessions has made me take a thoughtful look at my environment. One of the key things that I recognized from these professional development sessions was that the parents were not always involved in the children's environment. Now, when parents come to pick up their child, I do not bring the children to the door. The parent comes into my home and has a chance to see what the children are doing; it is making the



learning visible for the parents. I am now documenting what the children are learning every day. I am most interested in the way children perceive their own work. This is making for a more stimulating environment.” As a home child care provider in a licensed agency, Buffy is able to create a meaningful and engaging environment for the children and families in her care. The resources and support provided to her in a licensed agency model of home child care, is a benefit to all involved.

Buffy lives in Hamilton, Ontario and the licensed agency that Buffy is with is called Today’s Family, Early Learning and Child Care. Today’s Family supports 160 home child care programs like Buffy’s. The staff at Today’s Family believes licensed home child care is a flexible, neighbourhood-based model supporting children and families in the community. Among the many advantages to this type of care are the small child-to-caregiver/provider ratios, the informal group settings and easy access to the service near, or within the neighbourhood. The small group and family-like setting in licensed home child care allows parents to have a choice of many cultural backgrounds that meet their values and traditions. Caregivers with Today’s Family in Hamilton speak 22 different languages. Families have many options with licensed home child care.

Licensed home child care provides supports to families to promote and ensure a quality environment. Licensed home child care is coordinated and monitored by an agency such as Today’s Family in Hamilton. In Ontario, the agency holds

**Providers such as Buffy are not an exception in licensed home child care, they are the rule. The multi-age family-like settings create a positive learning environment for children and families in their own neighbourhood. Quality environments, professional development opportunities and the support of home child care consultants in a licensed agency model of home child care is a great fit and solution for the needs of today’s families.**

the license for the homes under their charge; ensuring that the requirements of the Day Nurseries Act are met. Such requirements as standards of health, safety, nutrition, and child development are among the requirements.

Today’s Family staff believe that the atmosphere of the home environment creates the ideal environment for relationships to flourish. Such an intimate environment strengthens the relationship between the parent and provider, the provider and the child, and the parent engagement in their child’s learning environment. Relationships are one of the main components of quality.

To support quality home child care, agencies offering licensed home child care provide many professional development opportunities for the home child care providers. Educational opportunities, such as emergent curriculum sessions, recognize the importance of a quality environment to support learning in a meaningful and engaging way. In licensed home child care, the warm and welcoming home environment is an ideal space to engage in the emergent curriculum philosophy.

Marni Flaherty is CEO of Today’s Family, President of the Home Child Care Association of Ontario and a member council representative of CCCF.

Brenda Ferguson is Associate Director of Today’s Family Early Learning and Child Care.





## HEALTH WATCH

# New Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines

In January 2011, the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology (CSEP) announced new Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines. The new guidelines state children (5-11 years) and youth (12-17 years) require at least 60 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity activity per day while adults (18-64 years) and older adults (65 years and older) must get at least 150 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity per week. Importantly, Canadians should try and exceed the minimum activity thresholds as the greater the variety, intensity and duration of the physical activity, the greater the health benefit.

The new Physical Activity Guidelines provide a minimum target to gain substantial health benefits and recommend:

## For Children - 5 – 11 Years

For health benefits, children aged 5-11 years should accumulate at least 60 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity daily. This should include:

- Vigorous-intensity activities at least 3 days per week.
- Activities that strengthen muscle and bone at least 3 days per week.

More daily physical activity provides greater health benefits.

## Let's Talk Intensity!

Moderate-intensity physical activities will cause children to sweat a little and to breathe harder. Activities like:

- Bike riding
- Playground activities

Vigorous-intensity physical activities will cause children to sweat and be 'out of breath.' Activities like:

- Running
- Swimming



**Children need at least 60 minutes of physical activity per day and adults 150 minutes per week**

## Being active for at least 60 minutes daily can help children:

- Improve their health
- Do better in school
- Improve their fitness
- Grow stronger
- Have fun playing with friends
- Feel happier
- Maintain a healthy body weight
- Improve their self-confidence
- Learn new skills

Parents and caregivers can help to plan their child's daily activity. Kids can:

- Play tag – or freeze-tag!
- Go to the playground after school.
- Walk, bike, rollerblade or skateboard to school.
- Play an active game at recess.
- Go sledding in the park on the weekend.
- Go "puddle hopping" on a rainy day.

For more information about the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology or to download the guidelines, visit [www.csep.ca](http://www.csep.ca).





# Nurturing Creativity in Children

A theme that has emerged [from teacher training in creativity] is the empowerment that teachers feel when transforming new ideas into practice and seeing the benefits for children. . . Barry Oreck (2004: 67) found that attitudes and self-confidence, more than artistic skill, motivate teachers “to create a learning environment where artistic attitudes, behaviors and expression can flourish.” But the creativity of educators, like that of the children they teach, must be nurtured through their professional development. Carol C. now looks forward “to every day as an adventure - what I can teach [children] and what I can learn from them... I feel like a fire has been lit and I feel like roaring.”

— From the article: *Igniting the Fire of Teacher Creativity: Mothercraft College Students Talk about their Training in the Arts* by Angelique Davies, RECE, ACECME, M.Ed

NURTURING CREATIVITY  
IN CHILDREN

# Painting as a Colour Experience

by Anna Gruda

Some children's initial art experience will involve using blue lined paper and a pen or marker. Waldorf education is still considered radical even after 90 years, because we commit ourselves as Waldorf Educators to do exactly the opposite to most mainstream practices.

While children in Waldorf kindergartens draw using colourful beeswax crayons, it is the approach to painting that is entirely unique. Having taught for 20 years in Waldorf environments, I am more convinced than ever of the value of having the children paint colours rather than pictures.

Waldorf education is based on teaching the child as a threefold being. Every lesson should speak to the thinking, feeling and willing – or the head, heart and hands. Imagine if we equate thinking to the 'light' of intelligence and 'black' to the willing work in the material world, then colour represents the realm of what falls between. Colour is in the feeling realm of the human being. When we are painting with colours we are painting with feelings.

How do we paint with just colours without form? The painting table is set up and the teacher says a verse to begin the special experience the children will have. The paint is high quality watercolour paint, and the paper is real watercolour paper – the finer the materials, the more beautiful the results. The paint itself is premixed with water and is presented in little glass jars; there is a bristle type brush, rinse water and a sponge or cloth. The paper is soaked in water and then placed on a masonite board. The film of water is left on so when the colour is applied



**The technique is to apply the paint in daubs rather than strokes. A brush stroke in the form of a line is from the intellect and keeps the painter in a 'head' experience. By avoiding painting shapes and forms we can create a situation where the qualities and gestures of the colours themselves can have a formative effect on the being of the painter. The character or mood of the colour gets 'soaked up' by the painter.**

it flows and mingles with the water that is on the paper. *This is a crucial point: we want the colour to flow and not be static as it would be on dry paper.* This approach has to be tried, to be experienced, because I can't describe how beautiful it is and how alive the colour is when worked with in this way.

According to Waldorf pedagogy, the young child is experiencing the world as if it is one entire sense organ. The child does not feel separate from its environment; it has no sensors to block out unpleasant sounds or the barrage of images on our streets. For instance they have no explanation for that loud screeching sound when they are on the subway; they just hear it and absorb it.



This is why Waldorf schools pay great attention to creating a beautiful environment for the children – by feeding all the senses using natural materials for play things and silks for touching. The smell of fresh baked bread or hearty soups to taste, the teachers' soft voices and the sound of a pentatonic harp are all being absorbed to create a world that is essentially healing for the child.

The painting experience also needs this attention. I understood this better when I encountered a book called *Thought Forms*, written by Annie Besant and Charles Leadbeater in 1908. These individuals were dedicated to exploring the 'unseen' world through developing their clairvoyant abilities. They used these capabilities to 'see' what the mind created around a person. Now we would call this phenomenon 'seeing an individual's aura'. *Thought Forms* is a catalogue of the meaning of colours and shapes that were created when various thoughts were clairvoyantly seen and described.

There have been many such catalogues of the meaning of colours, most notably Goethe's theory, and they all share similar definitions of the meaning of colours. For example, blue is often the colour associated with inner devotion, red with passion, and yellow with intellect. What *Thought Forms* revealed to me was that dingy or impure colours often represent negative thought. If a child who has been accustomed to being immersed in the colours while painting is given colours that produce dingy shades, in effect that child is living a bad thought for which they have no defense. Pure red, blue and yellow given alone or two together will always produce pleasing results. They will mix these primary colours two at a time to produce the secondary colours, orange, green and violet. But if you



FIGURE 1

**I have worked with hundreds of children and adults and this phenomenon has occurred so often I decided to give it a name: I call it 'Inscape' painting. When painting purely with colour with no intention to create a picture, an inner world can be revealed that is sometimes surprising and healing. These images that appear are gifts, but even if there are no images that are recognizable, when we use colours that are harmonious, the results will always be beautiful. In class, I once held up a painting, which was simply colours, and one little boy exclaimed, "I want to live there."**

give the child all three colours together then you get browns, grays and indigo. These are fine for older children when they start to paint animals in grade two, when mixing browns is introduced. But sweet colours, and a dark mood created by a deep blue is too mature for little ones.

Colours can create moods that affect us and also have healing qualities. The teacher will often tell a story giving the colour a character. For instance, 'sunny yellow was shining, she was so happy to be clean and all ready for a garden party that her happiness filled the whole space. Blue arrived and danced with yellow and together they admired the lovely green grass in the garden'. This type of story affirms the true natures of the colours. Yellow is the colour that looks best clean, and is the easiest to pollute. It is at its best when concentrated in the centre and getting lighter around the edges. It looks much shinier in this gesture. Blue has a surrounding gesture, it has the greatest depth and can be very light or very deep, and so it has the greatest contrast – consequently making yellow look rather shallow!



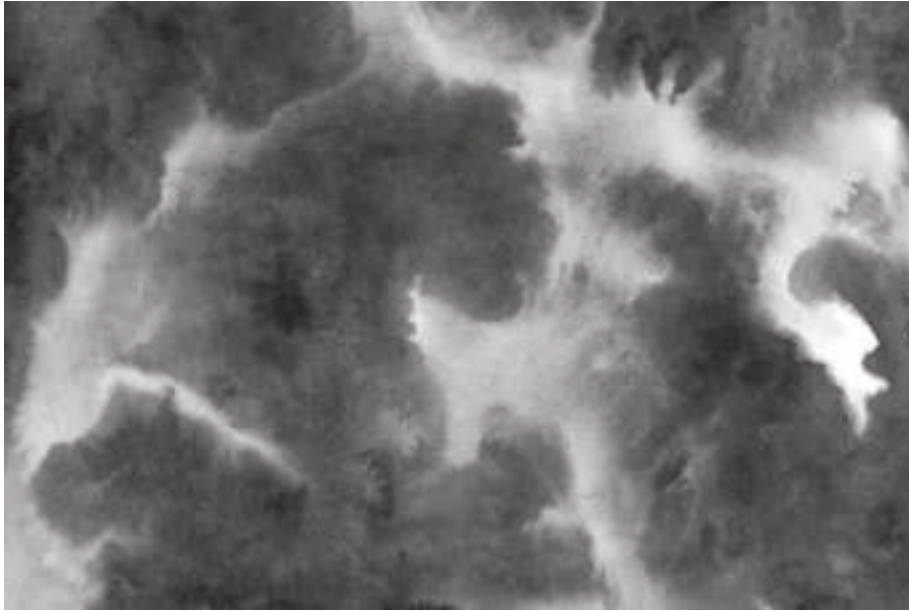


FIGURE 2

When I do these paintings that have no intentional picture, sometimes something magical happens. When the painting is dry and I look at it I see forms and figures that have just appeared from out of the colour. Each colour has an archetypal form. For example angels often appear out of the yellow, dragons in red. I often ask the child what they see and they always have interesting observations. This is a way to develop imagination and perceptions.

Once a child in my class had a family friend pass away and I showed her the painting she did the same week. In the yellow there was a figure looking as if it was bending down looking below. I said to her, "See it is your friend looking to see if you are OK" This had a tremendous healing effect on her.

Let's look at Fig 3, it is a painting a little girl did in grade one. It was her birthday week and her teacher told the story of 'The Frog Prince.' Waldorf teachers choose a special story that either reflects the personality of the birthday child or has a healing effect on them. If you look closely at the painting you will see a figure to the left, a little higher there is a ball and then almost in the

corner a little shape that looks like a frog. The child did the painting with no intention of illustrating the story but the story affected her so deeply that somehow these images manifested in the colour.

When I see a young child drawing with a ball point pen on a piece of lined paper, I can only feel how much that child is missing out on a wonderful opportunity to experience colour when they are at the stage of life when colour could have such an enriching effect on them. Black and white is only working with the head and hands and the images can only be line contours. Is that the world we live in? Our world has a beautiful blue sky and green trees that help us breathe. There are fields of yellow daffodils, shy violets, juicy oranges

and red dragons. Early childhood experiences with pure colour awaken the heart, the imagination, and love for the natural world.

Anna Gruda is an art teacher at the Toronto Waldorf School

#### Reference

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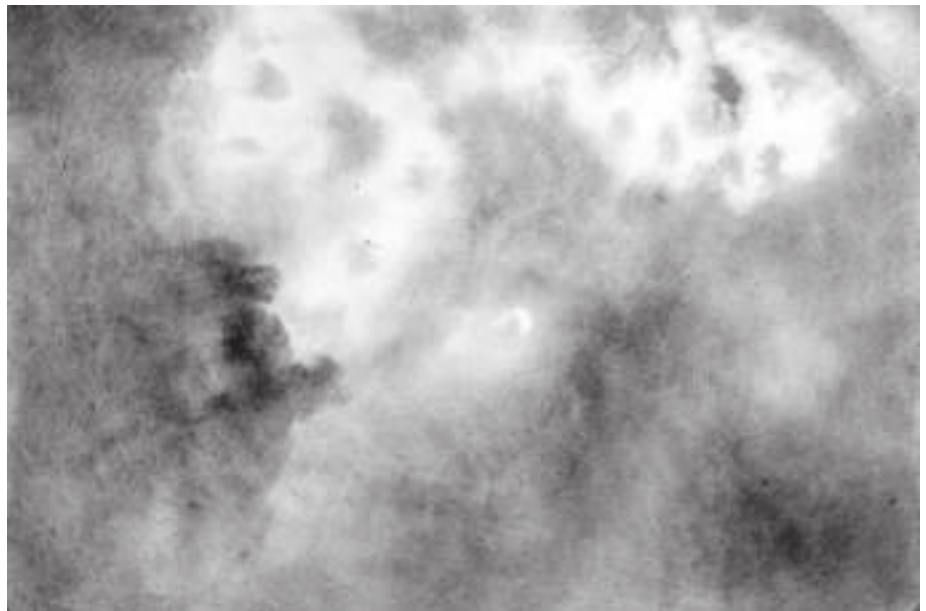


FIGURE 3



## NURTURING CREATIVITY IN CHILDREN

# Identical Ladybugs

by Christine McLean

What are your first thoughts when you enter an early childhood program and you are confronted with a display of identical home made paper plate ladybugs...each with their own little red and black wings, their own little red mouth and their own little black, glued-on eyes? At first glance you might think... "Oh, how cute" and you would probably think about the work that went into teaching the children exactly what to do to make this little craft. But let's think about this a little bit more. Let's think about what goals the adults had in mind when doing this craft activity with the children and let's also think about how the activity actually unfolded. In my experience, it would have gone something like this:

Adult (to a group of 3-5 year olds): *"OK children, today we are going to make little Lucy Ladybug. She's going to look just like this. (She holds up the model ladybug to show the children). OK – let's begin."*

At this point, the children would have each been given a paper plate, two pre-cut red wings, two tiny black pom-poms to glue on as eyes, two black pipe cleaner antennae, a red paper mouth and some black dots to stick on the red wings of the ladybug. So let's take a peek at what happens next...

Child #1: *"I don't know how..."*

Adult: *"Here let me show you....you glue the wings on right here."*

Child #2: *"Look teacher, I put the wings on like this...(wings are glued together and are on the back of the paper plate)*



Adult: *"Oh, no, not like that....here – let's start over....let's glue them on like this (she gives child #2 new wings and a new paper plate and then shows her where the wings are supposed to be).*

Child #1: *"I don't know what to do with these (holds up the pom-poms)*

Adult: *"Just a second...here, let me show you."* (In the meantime, child #3, child #4, and child #5 have spread the glue over their hands and are taking delight in peeling the drying glue off their hands.)

Child #2: *"Look teacher, my ladybug is going to have lots of eyes!"* (Child has taken the remainder of the black pom-poms and has spread them all over the paper plate)

Adult (to children #3-#5): *"Children – you have to go and wash the glue off your hands now and then come back and make your ladybugs"*, and then to Child #2, *"Oh dear, that's too many eyes, let's try to take them off and start again with two..."* (She tries to salvage the pom-poms).

Child #1 (close to tears): *"I don't know how..."*.

And so on and so on. And eventually, some children lose interest and drift off, leaving their craft for the adult to finish; some children get frustrated at their inability to duplicate the



ladybug so that it looks as good as the adult's ladybug; some children sit back and let the adult totally do it for them; some children do it quickly just to get it over with so that they can go and play; some children try to put their own creative spin on the craft and end up having to do it over and over again until they finally conform to what the adult wants and some children (and this is possibly the most distressing) simply watch what the adult does and then replicates it exactly, seeking approval from the adult for doing it "right" (*"Look teacher, look at mine...mine's right, eh?"*).

So, what have each of these children learned? Well, some children have learned that it is not good to come up with your own ideas...it is better to do what other people tell you to do. Some children have learned that they are not good at "art" and that art is not very much fun. Some children have learned that they shouldn't try out different ways of doing things and that there is only one way to complete a task. Some children have learned that "art" is "work" and it is better to get it over with quickly so that they can go on to other more enjoyable activities. Some children have learned to rely on adult praise, rather than self satisfaction when getting a task done. Were these the intentional goals of the adult when she presented this activity? Probably not, but these are the goals that were realized.

Without intending to, this adult has undermined the creative potential of the children because she did not see them as the competent, creative, intelligent beings that they truly are. What would happen if the adult, instead, trusted and respected the children's ability to explore, problem-solve, dream, experiment, think and create?

What if she did away with her pre-cut crafts that, let's face it, were a lot of work for her to begin with, and instead spent her time collecting and presenting interesting materials for the children to explore? Let's take a look...

Adult (to a group of 3-5 year olds): *"Have a look at the art area today – I put out some new materials that you might like to explore. I found some pom-poms of all different sizes, some pipe cleaners, some paper plates, some sticky dots and all*

*different shapes of construction paper. I added some more glue there as well."*

Child #1: *"Look at all these sticky dots! There are lots of colours."* (Child then arranges a pattern of dots on the edge of a paper plate, carefully repeating a pattern of green, red, blue...green, red, blue.)

Adult: *"You are making a pattern...you're repeating the same colours over and over again."* (She makes a note to herself that this is an important mathematical skill which is an essential prerequisite to such things as understanding addition and multiplication. She thinks of possible ways to extend this interest in patterning exhibited by Child #1. Later in the day she will draw his attention to patterns that she notices on their neighbourhood walk.)

**We forget how smart children really are. We forget that when we provide children with the materials, the time, the space, and the freedom, they will construct activities and ideas that are much more sophisticated and more elaborate than anything that we could have pre-planned for them.**

Child #2: (spends 15-20 minutes twisting the light green pipe cleaners together to make a 3-D structure, gluing pom-poms as "eyes" to the top of what looks like an elaborate insect). *"I saw a picture of a praying mantis in our insect book – this looks like a praying mantis."* Adult goes to the book area, gets the insect book and brings it back to the table. *"Here's the praying mantis ... you're right – you put little arms on it, just like in the book. What do you think it uses these little arms for?"* (Adult and child talk about the praying

mantis, hypothesizing on why a praying mantis is built the way it is...this leads to a larger discussion on insects. Adult makes a note to follow up on this later in the day by looking for various insects outside.)

Meanwhile, children #3, #4, #5 spread glue on their hands and take delight in peeling the drying glue off their hands. Adult: *"Look at your hands...that glue dries really quickly, doesn't it? That reminds me...we haven't played with goop for awhile. Should we go and mix some up now?"* (Adult leaves with children #3- #5 to mix up goop). Children #1 and #2 stay at the art table and continue to experiment with the materials.

So – how does this second scenario contrast with the first? The most obvious contrast is the tone set by the activity. The second scenario is much more relaxed, more respectful and





more constructive. In the second scenario, the adult is able to take her lead from the children. She can build on their ideas, take note of the learning that is happening and use this understanding to expand on the individual needs, skills and interests of the children.

By providing materials and responding to how the children interact with the materials, she can develop a dynamic, responsive program that maximizes the potential of the children within it. And what are the children learning? Besides the obvious skill development (e.g., patterning, creating a representation of an object, problem solving, hypothesizing), the children are learning to trust their own ability to try new things, explore and experiment, construct and create. They are also learning how it feels to be encouraged and nurtured by an adult that trusts them, who feels they are competent and who respects their ideas. They will internalize this in a way that will promote their self confidence and self esteem.

All of this begs the question...what are our goals for children? Is our goal to create children who conform, who wait to be told what to do, who feel that they need an adult (or someone

else) to show them how to do things; who are not confident in their own innate abilities? Or is it to promote in children a sense of competence, confidence, curiosity and critical thinking skills?

We, as early childhood educators can get too caught up with the feeling that we must provide children with pre-determined, pre-planned, pre-cut and pre-drawn activities that will "teach" the children such skills as counting, number and letter recognition, matching, hand-eye coordination, etc.

What we must remember is that our role is to create a wonder-filled, intriguing environment that encourages exploration and discovery and then we must remember to be ready to respond to the ideas and concepts being presented by the children in a thoughtful way that provokes further discovery and promotes learning.

So, the next time you are confronted with a horde of identical ladybugs, ask yourself...what was gained by this activity...and what was lost?

Christine McLean is a Program consultant at Child Care Services Department of Health and Community Services.

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## NURTURING CREATIVITY IN CHILDREN

# To Evaluate or Not to Evaluate Preschool Development, That is the Question?

by **Suzanne Major**

B.A., C.E., M.A. ECE PhD candidate in Anthropology of  
Health and Education

For years I have questioned whether evaluating children aged between 0 and 5 years old is beneficial – torn between my answer as a mother and my answer as a researcher. Finally, all in all, I think mothers and fathers have a special knowledge that educators, early childhood teachers, social workers and psychologists do not have. Not only do they have this unique knowledge but they have a definite role to play in insuring their children's well being.

There are many problems with evaluating development and school readiness in babies and preschool children. Using check lists and norms is the first problem. Levels of training of early childhood educators and teachers, their position in relation with parents and specialists and their work's organization are other problems. Having children meet the expectation of their educational institution instead of having the institution sustain the definition and development of the children's budding expectations is another problem.

Consider check lists and norms. Our generation has seen science produce research in every field possible and offer knowledge that has literally changed the surface of the earth, the way we live and die and the priorities in our lives. In the modern world we went from just surviving to virtually creating life. Scientists and researchers have been able to solve medical, psychological and developmental problems and their work holds endless promises. But it does not change the fact that check lists are designed with norms.

Norms are defined with averages of what children usually do at one point in time, in a specific context and culture. Norms represent what is usual and ordinary and not what is exceptional or remarkable.

When we use check lists to monitor children and define educational objectives for them, we educate and guide them towards what is usual and ordinary. Gilles Brougère et Michel Vandebroek (2008, p.11) point out what Erica Bruman (1994) suggested, that "developmental psychology has always been a science of the average rather than the diversity". Scientific norms were designed for research, not for psychosocial intervention or education and as Jerome Kagan (2001, p.78) demonstrates, some social scientists tend to generalize their findings by presenting them out of their contexts and their parameters. If laws are clear in physics, it is hardly so in social sciences. Many norms and concepts have integrated popular psyche after being used for psychosocial intervention and have created yokes like the one pertaining to lower social and economic status.

The second problem in regards to evaluating or not evaluating preschool development has to do with early childhood educators or teachers. The profession is quite new. Training is heterogeneous. Some educators and teachers have a high school diploma, some have one year and some have a three-year college diploma in early childhood education (in Quebec). Others have bachelor's degrees in early childhood education, in psychology, in social services, in teaching or in specialized education, but may lack the training in observation and recording. Few early childhood education centres allow pedagogical preparation time for their educators and teachers. When are they supposed to proceed with analysis, discussion and report writing? Yet that work is very much part of their job definition because of the number of hours per day they spend with children. They work with them but they also live with them. The nature of the relation between a child and his educator or teacher before the age of five implies that they play, eat, rest, socialize and work together all day long. Social workers or psychologists for example, only work with the children a few minutes when they meet. They don't live with them.

Parents, family and friends have knowledge about the children that professionals and specialists do not consider because their perspectives are bound by norms and check lists, beliefs and data. Berry Mayall (2007, p.85) made the important point that the informal family environment cultivates a relation with the children and entertains goals for them that are very different from those of professionals and specialists. They know the whole child, her genetic and biological inheritance, her personal biological and social history, her family life, her temperament, her attitudes, abilities and talents.

The difference between the formal perspective of professionals and specialists and the informal perspective of family and friends is that the first offers linear and causal information with integration to society in mind as the latter offers complex contextual information



with interacting with life in mind. I have often noticed parents resisting evaluation of their children by specialists and even by early childhood educators and teachers because parents know that they simply don't have the whole picture. They resist labelling and diagnostics because they fear they will limit their child's chances in life. Professionals and specialists don't necessarily hear what parents have to say partly because they see themselves as competent and parents as incompetent and partly because they are limited by their task assignment and time constraints and partly because of the goals they have defined for child development pertaining to integration. Parents have the responsibility to fight for their child and to maintain a balance between integration to society and integration to life.

It is interesting that early childhood educators and teachers also resist evaluating child development and education for kindergarten teachers even if this would consecrate their professionalism. Of course their place of work does not allow much time, if any, for that. They don't have the knowledge the parents have but they have knowledge the specialists don't have. They also know empirically that child development between 0 and 5 years old is erratic and is often not causal and linear. It just happens in different ways for different children until they reach 5 years old and then, they all seem

to have found their way through the maze of early childhood development and have reached, pretty much all at the same time, the finish line that will take them to school. So early childhood educators and teachers seem to prefer focusing on special needs children but then again, recording observations, analysis, discussion and report writing is limited. They are more educators than teachers unless they work with alphabetisation rather than literacy development.

Evaluating preschool development and education is even more complex than what meets the eye. We have to ask ourselves why we want to evaluate. Who does it serve? Why is school readiness so important? Why can't children be ready for school at age 7 for example? Can evaluation actually limit a child's potential? Can evaluation push a child in one direction when he would have chosen another? Why have auto regulation and autonomy become such important values in early childhood education? Why do small children have to follow a schedule? Does evaluation support integration or assimilation? Are we participating in moulding the children to serve a system? Are we really providing equal opportunity for all children? Equal opportunity for self fulfilment or making it in society?

Suzanne Major, B.A., C.É., M.A. Éce PhD candidate in anthropology of health and education with a specialisation in children 0 to 5 years old.

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## NURTURING CREATIVITY IN CHILDREN

# Igniting the Fire of Teacher Creativity

## Mothercraft College Students Talk About their Training in the Arts

by **Angelique Davies, RECE, ACECME,  
M.Ed**

*"I saw as a teacher how, if you take that spark of learning that those children have, and you ignite it, you can take a child from any background to a lifetime of creativity and accomplishment." – Paul Wellstone*

Teachers, like children, need to explore and express their creativity. Arts courses for educators should provide ideas and skills needed to plan and implement enjoyable arts experiences for young children, both with confidence and conviction about their importance. Reflecting on my own musical development, studying music in early childhood, teaching music to preschoolers and delivering a workshop on these topics, helped me realize the creative potential of ECEs and the unique position they are in to enrich children's learning and lives through the arts. My graduate studies focused on the deeper issues and challenges surrounding arts education for young children and their teachers (Davies, 2006; Davies, 2007).

All I have learned – theories, resources, teaching strategies – has impacted the Music and Drama course that I have taught three times at Mothercraft College in Toronto since 2009. Key



questions I have considered include: *What would educators find most useful in an arts course? How can training foster teachers' creative development? What are teachers' beliefs and concerns about arts education for the very young? What motivates educators to transform new understandings about the arts into professional practice?* Teaching the course - which has included lectures, demonstrations, group work, research projects, presentations, guest speakers and time to practice new skills – prompted an exploration of these questions.

Barry Oreck's study (2004), examined the attitudes toward and use of the arts by educators in their teaching. His findings on teachers' perceptions about their own artistic abilities, the value of the arts for children and the enhancement of the curriculum through the arts influenced my thinking about teacher training. I aimed to provide "non-musical" educators with practical strategies for introducing music to children with confidence, stressing the value of arts education to a child's total development. Examining my course delivery and students'



feedback helped to make modifications that reflected students' needs. In the fall of 2010, my class conducted a timely informal inquiry to better understand how an arts course might provide foundational information, inspire teacher creativity and transform professional practice.

***Briefly describe your reasons for enrolling in the Music and Drama course.***

Essentially this was a required course. For Elizabeth N., whose "background is accounting, auditing, training and retail computer programming and testing," enrollment at Mothercraft College represented a career change. Edith A. wanted "the opportunity to learn more about music and drama to impart more knowledge to the children". Indira T. felt that "a Music and Drama course would be some fun." Khirstiane F. hoped "to enhance [her] circle time skills. [She] really enjoys singing and playing guitar and [has] observed that music and drama have affected children in a positive way."

***What were your expectations about the course content when you enrolled in the Music and Drama class? Why did you think this?***

Margaret S. wanted to "understand why it is important to have a Music and Drama course and the benefits it brings for children." Indira T. felt that the "course should teach educators how to be creative." Khirstiane F. hoped "to learn new ideas and to have fun." Carol C. candidly stated, "I really did not have much expectation for this class. It was just another class to complete, bringing me closer to my goal to finish school, and if I learn a new song in the process it would just be a bonus. I thought this because I have been doing this and thought I knew my job very well. To my surprise I was pleasantly wrong, and very happy to be so."

**Currently, there is real concern around the decline in creative thinking (Bronson and Merryman, 2010), a problem which Ken Robinson (2001) suggests has its roots in schools and universities. Are schools preparing children to use creative thinking to eventually address serious challenges? Do pre-service teachers feel adequately prepared to foster children's creative capabilities? Arts education for teachers should encourage reflection on such questions, and lead to the broader contribution of their ideas to the child care field (Callaghan, 2002). Unfortunately, educators are seldom asked to consider the role of creativity and imagination in each of their roles as people, educators and scholars (Beattie, 2009). In eleven weeks, Mothercraft College students took their learning and teaching in unexpected directions. Here, eight students share what the experience taught them through their responses to questions for the inquiry – a snapshot of their creative journey.**

***Describe how you usually find new ideas for providing music and drama experiences in your work place (e.g., books, workshops, co-workers, Internet).***

Edith A. stated, "My co-worker and I bounce ideas off each other and we do research on the internet, go to the library for books, attend workshops and ask parents for ideas as well. [The children] are able to take part in the planning." Tetyana M. added, "I might use the idea that my co-worker used, but it will be changed a little, because every experience is different, special, unique."

***What should a Music and Drama class provide in order to be both engaging and practical for early childhood educators? What are your creative needs as a teacher?***

Elizabeth N. wanted "to improve [her] skills in music and dramatic play in a nurturing environment..."

Having opportunities to practice and be creative has given [her] a chance to learn new skills and get out of [her] comfort zone. The course should give me confidence in my abilities." Carol C. stated, "My creative need is to remember and keep applying all the tools I have been given, and remember what I have learnt about myself. I always thought I was not creative - I found out this is no longer the case."

***How has this course affected your ideas about:***  
***A) the value of music and drama experiences for young children***  
***B) your own creativity and***  
***C) the way you are teaching in your own classroom?***

Margaret S. believes that the arts offer "opportunities for physical development, intellectual stimulation and social learning" and would "encourage children to take music and drama in future education." Darina G. adds "that music and drama experiences greatly enhance children's language



development, imagination and creativity.” Elizabeth N. discovered, “you don’t have to be a professional musician or singer to do circle time. The course allowed me to be creative without fear of failure or not being *good enough* or *talented*”. Carol C. observed, “The way in which I was teaching my children after taking this class has sadden[ed] me. They were not being fully stimulated. I was stifling their creativity... and now they are exploding and it gives me great joy to see.”

### ***Please describe how you have applied any new ideas learned in the class.***

Edith A. shared, “Every Tuesday, the children always ask me how was last night and what did you learn? Their interest makes it easier for me to tell them about what I learned from the lesson. They are interested enough to want try the idea I bring to them and it is fun to see them learn new things.” Now Darina G. will “always include musical instruments in circle time. (e.g., egg shakers, maracas, castanets, drums). It seems that they love these experiences. Also, I have tried some action rhymes that I have learned at class. The children really enjoyed them and asked me to repeat them over and over again.”

### ***What has been the most valuable learning experience for you in this course?***

For Indira T., group work “exposed [her] to new ideas and have enabled [her] to look at similar issues through different viewpoints.” Edith A. found that “acting as children and adults at the same time was really fun.” Carol C. valued the “demonstrations and the hands-on experiences. This has

supported my teaching practices because now I can implement all the things I have learnt, and I am more confident in my capabilities, and my children are responding in a positive way.” Khrystiane F. enjoyed the guest speaker. “A storyteller telling stories just with words and gestures proves that WE are our best tool.”

### ***How should this course inspire you to use ideas you have learned?***

A theme that has emerged is the empowerment that teachers feel when transforming new ideas into practice and seeing the benefits for children. Oreck (2004: 67) found that attitudes and self-confidence, more than artistic skill, motivate teachers “to create a learning environment where artistic attitudes, behaviors and expression can flourish.” But the creativity of educators, like that of the

children they teach, must be nurtured through their professional development. Carol C. now looks forward “to every day as an adventure - what I can teach [children] and what I can learn from them... *I feel like a fire has been lit and I feel like roaring.*”

May the fire of creativity that has been ignited at Mothercraft inspire educators, everywhere.

Angelique Davies is a graduate of Mothercraft College and a registered early childhood educator who has worked in various learning environments since 1992. She has an Advanced Certificate in Early Childhood Music Education from the Royal Conservatory of Music and a Master of Education in Curriculum, Teaching and Learning from the University of Toronto. Teaching Music and Drama at Mothercraft College has been a privilege, and a huge source of creative inspiration.

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## RESEARCH UPDATE

## Ipsos Reid Research shows that 50% of Canadian parents lack confidence in helping their children with reading, writing and math homework

### *New year perfect time to refocus priorities on family and lifelong learning*

ABC Life Literacy Canada released research findings in August 2010 concerning literacy in Canada. The Ipsos Reid survey found that 50 per cent of Canadian parents surveyed admitted to not feeling confident in helping their children with their reading, writing and math homework.

When asked about hours spent per week engaged in family leisure activities such as playing cards, board games or cooking with a recipe, 15 per cent of Canadians admitted to spending no time engaged in these activities. According to the survey, despite the approximately seven out of 10 Canadians who spend between one and 10 hours per week engaged in leisure reading, whether alone or with someone else in the household, 11 per cent of Canadians aged 18 – 34 spend no time reading.

The numbers show that Canadians believe in the importance of literacy but despite this importance, the data reveals that many Canadians either don't possess the literacy skills or don't feel comfortable enough to use those skills to their fullest extent.

For full tabular results, visit [www.ipsos.ca](http://www.ipsos.ca).

## ACROSS CANADA AND BEYOND

### National

MP Olivia Chow, the New Democrats Child Care Critic, called on Stephen Harper's Conservatives to establish and fund a national child care program, in the wake of the recent tragic death of a child while in unregulated care. Chow proposed legislation in 2006 to create a national child care program, the National Early Learning and Child Care Act. The bill passed second reading and was at report stage when it died after the 2008 election was called. Chow reintroduced the Bill in this Parliament's current session.

On Feb 1, 2011 Liberal Party Leader Michael Ignatieff announced a re-statement of committing to national subsidized child care system, saying that Canada will get a national child-care program under a future Liberal government, no matter how big the federal deficit has grown. "This is the number one social priority of an incoming Liberal government," Ignatieff said, during a break in an all-day discussion on poverty and homelessness in Canada. "Child care is a key part of that discussion."

### Alberta

The province of Alberta's funding for Alberta Child and Youth Services for professional development for child care staff, currently delivered by the Alberta Child Care Association, will end on March 31, 2011. The Association is advocating for the continuation of these funds.

### British Columbia

The Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC (CCCABC) and the Early Childhood Educators of BC (ECEBC) are moving into the final stage of the Community Plan for an Integrated System of Early Care and Learning in BC. This work is motivated by BC's implementation of full school day Kindergarten for 5 year olds and the consideration of 'pre-kindergarten' for 3 and 4 year olds to follow. In September 2011, kindergarten will be full day for all.

### Quebec

Quebec's Liberal government introduced a new bill of law this year to crack down on illegal daycares opening up across the province. The proposed law imposes limits on ownership to prevent "chains" of daycares. Bill 126 was also designed to address problems with how daycare permits are handed out in the province. It proposes new rules for distributing highly-sought after daycare spots, to democratize the process through regional consulting committees. And new rules will make it virtually impossible for daycare operators to resell or transfer their permits.

### Manitoba

The Simplified Money Purchase Pension Plan is being rolled out by the province this year. It is the second pension plan in Canada for ECEs, and is accessible to all – including family child care providers and part time employees, and includes recognition for past years of service. The Manitoba government announced they have committed an additional \$19 million in funding this year to support new child care sites, revitalize centres, create more spaces, introduce a new online centralized registry and launch the child care pension plan. But very little funding will go to existing child care centres or to family child care homes.

### New Brunswick

On January 25, 2011 Early Childhood Care and Education New Brunswick and the New Brunswick Association for Community Living launched a 3 year project titled *Growing Together: Building the Capacity of the NB Early Learning and Child Care Sector*. The project is funded by the NB Early Learning and Child Care Trust Fund.

### Newfoundland and Labrador

The Department of Child, Youth and Family Services, which includes Child Care Services Division, has welcomed their new Minister, Honourable Charlene Johnson.

The ECE Human Resource Council of Newfoundland are in the final phase in developing an HR manual for child care owners and operators.

### Nova Scotia

The province's long awaited Revised Day Care Act Regulations will become effective April 1, 2011. Changes include a new classification Level 1, Level 2, Level 3, for staff training effective May 1, 2012; changes in outdoor space requirements; defining who will have criminal records checks required creation of Parent Advisory Committees. Standards will be developed in food and nutrition, extended hour care, Level 1 Classification for Staff Qualifications.

### Ontario

Premier Dalton McGuinty announced plans to tailor the new full-day kindergarten to suit the needs of parents by giving school boards the option of running before- and after-school programs themselves or using third-party daycare providers. This announcement negates the advice set out in Dr. Charles Pascal's early learning report which specified that a cornerstone of the government's full-day kindergarten program was that schools were to become one-stop centres for child care and



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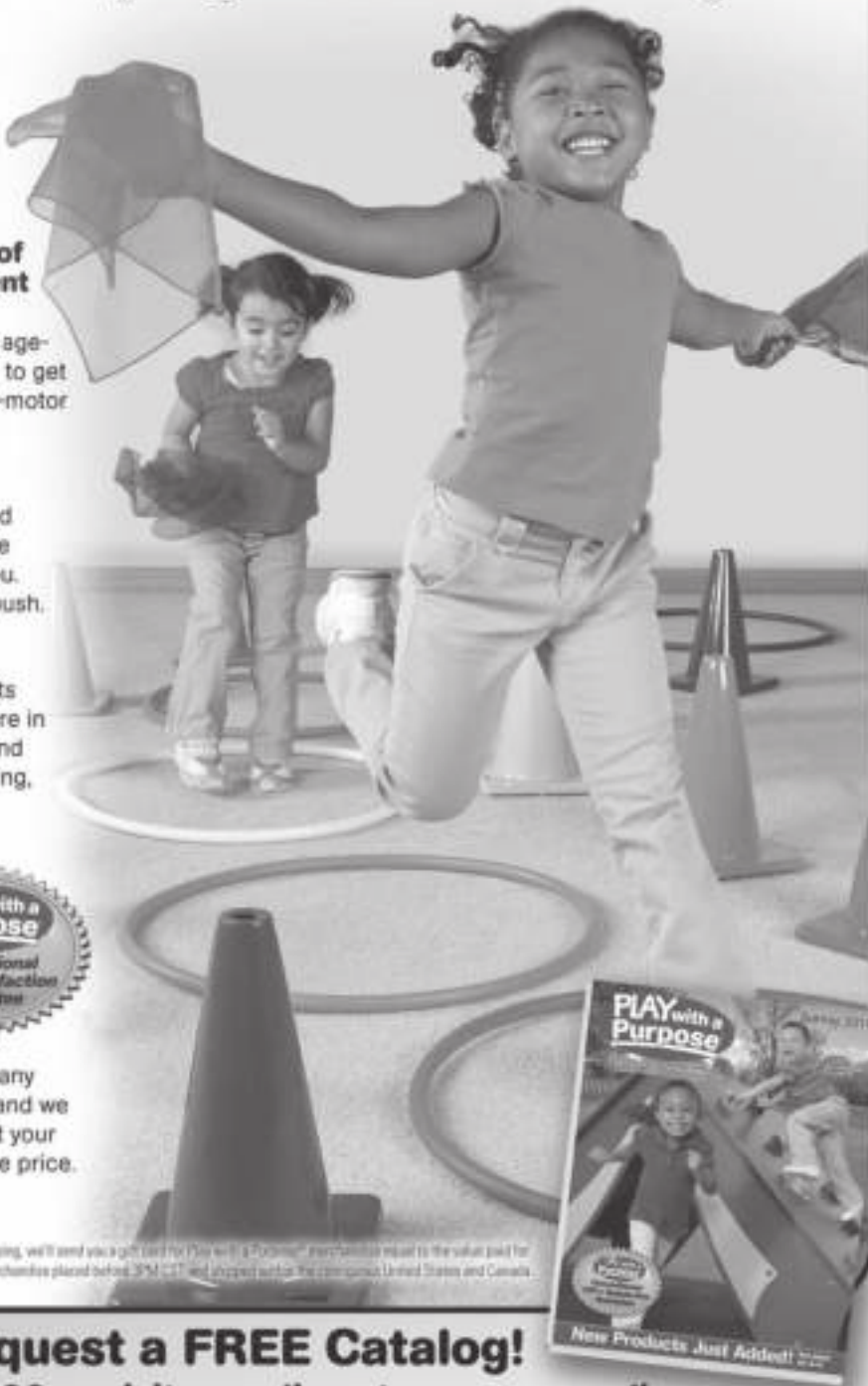
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education. Boards were to be solely responsible for all aspects of educating the child, including providing before- and after-school care.

In an effort to support a better understanding of the role of early childhood educators among parents and the general public the Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario developed a primer entitled *Early Childhood Educators & Your Child*.

The primer is meant to give a general understanding of what an ECE professional is and the important role they play in full day kindergarten. The primer was prompted by the fact that the majority of parents in the province have had little to no exposure to licensed child care or ECE professionals. The primer therefore serves as an introduction to the profession and the valuable contribution made to the kindergarten classroom.

## RESOURCES



### **Art with Anything – 52 Weeks of Fun Using Everyday Stuff**

By Mary Ann F. Kohl  
Gryphon House, Inc  
ISBN: 978-0-87659-  
085-0

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to coffee grounds,

children can turn everyday items into works of art with this colourful 128 page book. Each week features five days of great activities, increasing in complexity each day. It's a perfect resource for parents and teachers who want to reuse items they have on hand. Packed with photos and step by step instructions, this book will keep the children in your care learning creatively all year long. \$19.95 US. Buy it online at [www.gryphonhouse.com](http://www.gryphonhouse.com).



### **Quality in early childhood services - An international perspective**

By Helen Penn  
Open University Press /  
McGraw-Hill Education  
ISBN: 9780335228782

This book, published in January 2011, examines how quality and good practice in early childhood education and care (ECEC) is interpreted and implemented in a variety

of settings and circumstances. Drawing on her experience of research and policy making in a wide variety of countries, the author considers the variety of rationales that inform services for early childhood education and care. The book charts the many different approaches to understanding and measuring quality and gives an exceptionally well-informed overview. Order it online at [www.mcgraw-hill.co.uk](http://www.mcgraw-hill.co.uk). Price: £22.99

## CALENDAR

### APRIL

9

#### **Calgary, Alberta**

#### ***Celebrating Child Care Conference***

The Department of Child & Youth Studies at Mount Royal University in partnership with the Alberta Child Care Association's *Celebrating Child Care Conference*. [www.albertachildcare.org](http://www.albertachildcare.org)

26 - 29

#### **Montreal, Quebec**

#### ***Early Learning, and a Whole Lot More!***

Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs National Conference  
Information: [www.frp.ca](http://www.frp.ca)

29

#### **Winnipeg, Manitoba**

#### **2011 CAYC Conference - *Believing in Children's Intelligence***

Canadian Association for Young Children - L'Association Canadienne pour les Jeunes Enfants 2011 Conference. For registration information visit [www.cayc.ca](http://www.cayc.ca) or call Elizabeth Gould at 902-284-4444 or [ejgould@shaw.ca](mailto:ejgould@shaw.ca)

### MAY

12 - 14

#### **Richmond, British Columbia**

#### **Early Childhood Educators of BC's 40<sup>th</sup> Conference: *Dedicated to Leading and Creating Change***

Information: [www.ecebc.ca](http://www.ecebc.ca)

26 - 28

#### **Saint John, New Brunswick**

#### ***Valuing Children – A Canadian Conversation/Valoriser les enfants – une conversation pancanadienne***

National Early Learning and Child Care Conference – Early Childhood Care and Education New Brunswick  
Information: [www.eccenb-sepenb.com](http://www.eccenb-sepenb.com)

26 - 28

#### **Winnipeg, Manitoba**

#### **MCCA's 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Provincial Conference: *Early Learning & Care: Make the Connection***

Manitoba Child Care Association will host its 34th Annual Provincial Conference; *Early Learning & Care: Make the Connection*.  
Information: [www.mccahouse.org](http://www.mccahouse.org)

### JUNE

9 - 11

#### **Peterborough, Ontario**

#### ***Leadership & team building camp***

Association of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario's 61<sup>st</sup> Annual provincial conference. Visit [www.aecce.ca](http://www.aecce.ca) for more information or to register.

10 - 11

#### **Dartmouth (Halifax), Nova Scotia**

#### ***Reflecting In Practice / La réflexion professionnelle***

Jointly sponsored by Certification Council of Early Childhood Educators of Nova Scotia, Child Care Connection Nova Scotia, Centre Provincial de Ressources Préscolaire and Nova Scotia Child Care Association. Information: [www.ccns.org](http://www.ccns.org)

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