

**BUILDING BRIDGES WITH PARENTS: PARTNERS IN EARLY LANGUAGE AND
LITERACY DEVELOPMENT**

By

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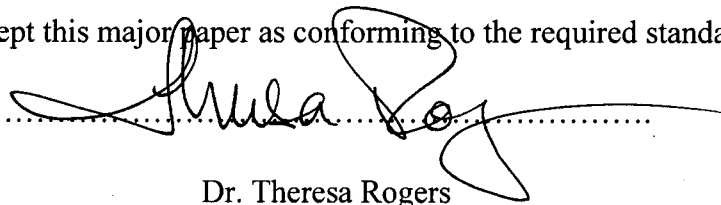
B.Ed. (Elem.) The University of British Columbia, 1987

A GRADUATING PAPER SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF EDUCATION

in

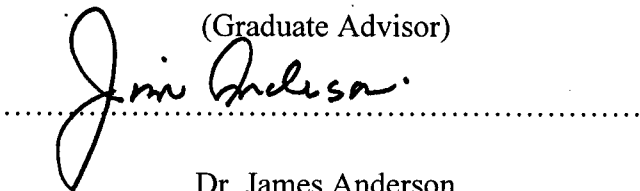
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November 2010

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Abstract

Families have such an important role to play in supporting and influencing their children's learning. The activities in which families are involved, and the environments that families create together are very meaningful and significant. For parents of children enrolled in Early French Immersion who have limited or no experience with the language of instruction, previously assumed roles may help to create a sense of anxiety and concern as to how they will be able to help their child be successful. The focus of this paper is to explore how the classroom teacher can help support the role of parents of young children with their second language and literacy learning. One very important way to do this is to invite families into the "community of learners" (Rogoff, 1994, p. 209) that is the Kindergarten classroom. A review of the literature defines Family Literacy, and explores features of effective Family Literacy programs, focusing on three models of family involvement from around the world: Parents as Literacy Supporters, an Urban First-Grade Literacy Program, and Reggio Emilia. Themes that are discussed include building trusting, collaborative and reciprocal relations, developing awareness of the multiple pathways to literacy, respecting families as "funds of knowledge" (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992, p. 133), using a child's first language as a purposeful resource in learning an additional language, and encouraging investment in the "Imagined Community" (Norton, 2010). The story of a family literacy program developed in a French Immersion Kindergarten context – "Jouons" – is shared, and practical suggestions and recommendations are made.

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Acknowledgements

I have been very fortunate to have met and been guided by a group of outstanding Faculty and Teaching Associates at the University of British Columbia, and I owe much gratitude to them for making my Master's program such a valuable and rich learning experience. In particular, I wish to acknowledge Dr. Marilyn Chapman, who has been an ongoing source of understanding, inspiration, and energy! Thank you for sharing your life experience, and your incredible knowledge and expertise in the area of Early Childhood literacy with me. To Dr. Jim Anderson, who helped me to form a new vision of Family Literacy for my students, and encouraged me to carefully consider what it looks like in my own family; thank you sincerely for an experience I will always treasure. I would also like to thank Dr. Rebecca New, for giving voice to my thoughts early in my studies, and helping to inspire me to make my own learning visible, by sharing some of her fascinating experiences with the families and young children of Reggio Emilia.

My gratitude also goes to my friends and colleagues in the Delta Language and Literacy Master's Cohort, including my supervisor, Dr. Theresa Rogers, for the many insightful and thought-provoking discussions and collaborations we have been involved in during the past two and a half years.

Finally and most importantly, I wish to acknowledge, thank, and dedicate this paper to my family who have without a doubt, sacrificed the most to enable me to return to school at this time in our lives. "Time and the tides wait for no man," or woman either, and while I've been attending classes, researching, highlighting, writing papers and "playing" . . . my family has continued to grow up and move forward. In many ways, what began as a professional journey for me, has evolved into a very personal family journey as well.

Thank you to my parents for their unwavering belief in me, and for the countless times they offered their support by babysitting, or picking up and dropping off the boys at school, or to their football, soccer, and lacrosse practices and games.

To my two beautiful daughters, Jennafer, whose work ethic, focus, and determination to succeed are constant sources of amazement, and Meaghan, whose perseverance in finding her own pathway to follow is enabling her to discover all of the many extraordinary things about herself that I already knew. Thank you both for taking the time to proofread my assignments, and for sharing your suggestions and feedback. Thank you also to my sons who kept me focused on the finish line by continually asking, “When will you be done?” Kevin Junior, your sense of humour and easy-going nature are truly wondrous, and my lovable little Joshua, I will forever remember the words you uttered that have put this whole “trip” in perspective for me, “You mean it, Mommy? No more classes? Now we can go camping together as a family again! Finally!!!”

Most of all, to my husband and best friend, Kevin ~ thank you for your support, patience, love, and enduring commitment, and for never giving up hope that I would indeed complete this Master’s Degree. The journey was, after all . . . for us.

And just one more question to ponder . . . “Joshua, where would you like to go camping?”

Building Bridges with Parents: Partners in Early Language and Literacy Development**Section 1: Introduction****The Journey Begins . . .**

Having taught at the Kindergarten French Immersion level for many years, one of the main concerns I often hear from parents involves the question of how they will be able to help their child be successful when confronted with a language about which they generally know little. When my own children entered into the Immersion Program, I was able to observe firsthand my husband's struggles to try to help with some of their homework. These experiences added a new dimension and insight into my teaching. Although it is true that French Immersion was originally conceived for families whose first or only language is not the primary language of instruction, the fact that other families in their child's classroom may be going through a similar experience offers little comfort, particularly to parents of a struggling learner or to parents who were not entirely sure of their original decision to register their child in the program.

Part of Bonny Norton's research centres around the idea of "Imagined Communities." She suggests that "Imagination [added to] Community equals Imagined Community and Imagined Identity." An imagined community "assumes" an imagined identity. This imagined identity reflects a person's hope and desire for another community, the community where he or she wants to belong in the future, for example, the community of readers and writers (Norton, 2010).

With regard to language and literacy learning, a learner's investment in the target language can be understood within this context. If a person is truly "invested" in what they are learning, they are very motivated to succeed. They are also very invested in those relationships that are part of the imagined community of which they wish to be a member. This idea of

investment may be extended to other learning situations as well (e.g., various sports, learning a musical instrument, and other activities). Teachers should also be aware that when the classroom language practices are not consistent with the student's image of his imagined community, there may be some form of resistance. For example, this may happen in adult education courses when students feel they are being treated more like an adolescent because of the language practices occurring in the classroom, or the teaching materials being used (e.g., texts with subject matter that is more appropriate for a much younger beginning reader). As a result, some adult students may lose their desire to continue with their studies, and drop out of class because this is not the future community they envision for themselves.

This may also happen in a classroom setting where parent volunteers are being asked to spend their time in the classroom photocopying and preparing materials for the teacher when what they had really envisioned themselves doing was sharing learning activities and interacting with the students in the class. By having such limited volunteer expectations of parents, a teacher may unknowingly be giving an implied message that is negative, reinforcing a possible lack of confidence or understanding on the part of the parent. In a second language classroom, the message that may be received by a volunteer is that the teacher doesn't recognize or value what they have to offer in this particular learning environment, rather than a more appropriate, respectful, and explicit message that strives to reverse any parental insecurities and misconceptions.

A very important goal for me as a teacher has always been the "purposeful nurturing . . . of respectful and collaborative adult relations" (New, 2001, p. 212). I have created "Jouons" – a Family Literacy Program - with this goal in mind. By inviting caregivers to spend some time volunteering in their child's French Immersion Kindergarten classroom, it is hoped that they will

gain insights into what their child is able to do and what is expected of them at school, as well as continue to develop their understandings of emerging literacy. Furthermore, through their active participation and the opportunities they are given to share and receive some practical and easy to implement ideas regarding the multiple pathways to literacy, caregivers will be able to gain confidence as partners in encouraging early language and literacy development at home, and increase their awareness of the activities they are already doing to foster literacy in their own children. Finally, involvement in “Jouons” will enable parents to develop a sense of belonging and investment in their child’s classroom community, thereby influencing the perception of their role in supporting their Kindergarten child’s second language and literacy learning in a positive manner.

Both children and adults need to feel active and important – to be rewarded by their own efforts, their own intelligences, their own activity and energy. When a child [or adult] feels these things are valued, they become a fountain of strength for him. (Malaguzzi, 1993, p. 53)

Section 2: Literature Review

Families . . . and Early Literacy

Teachers know that the role families play in supporting and influencing children's learning is very important. Research in family literacy highlights "the need for educators to look carefully at what individual families do, either intentionally or unintentionally, to promote literacy in their children" (McTavish, 2007, p. 483). The activities in which families are involved, and the environments that families create together are very meaningful and significant for children. Some of the roles families may play include being "'cultural mediators' . . . and 'guiding lights' [who socialize] young learners into different cultural literacy practices through 'guided participation' (Rogoff & Gauvin, 1986) or 'scaffolding' (Bruner, 1986)" (Taylor, Bernhard, Garg & Cummins, 2008, p. 273). For parents of children enrolled in Early French Immersion who have limited or no experience with the language of instruction, these previously assumed roles may help to create a sense of anxiety and concern as to how they will be able to help their child be successful. The focus of this paper is to explore how the classroom teacher can help support the role of parents of young children with their second language and literacy learning. One very important way to do this is to invite families into the "community of learners" (Rogoff, 1994, p. 209) that is the Kindergarten classroom.

When the bell rings at the end of the school day, where do students go? What do they do, and with whom do they do it? Developing an awareness of the lives of students outside of school enables teachers to make valuable connections to the families of their students, and to build upon the "funds of knowledge" (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992, p. 133) that families and other community members have to share. This greater awareness includes the wide variety of background experiences of the children, as well as the kinds of literacy practices in

which they are engaging. Hopefully, this knowledge will help teachers in understanding “the differential school “success” of particular . . . children, and [will also be] helpful in designing appropriate learning activities” (Smythe & Toohey, 2009, p. 38) for them. But how should teachers invite these special resources into the classroom, so that they may begin creating their “imagined community” (Norton, 2009) with the families of their students? What might a potential model of literacy and language learning look like in an everyday classroom setting?

Defining Family Literacy

Family literacy can be defined in many ways, and includes the ways that families use language and literacy in their everyday lives.

Sometimes, family literacy occurs naturally during routines of daily living and helps adults and children get things done. These events might include using drawings or writings to share ideas; composing notes or letters to communicate messages; making lists; reading or following directions; or sharing stories and ideas through conversation, reading, and writing. Family literacy may be initiated purposefully by a parent or may occur spontaneously as parents and children go about the business of their daily lives.

Family literacy activities may also reflect ethnic, racial, or cultural heritage of the families involved. (Morrow, Tracey, & Maxwell, 1995, p. 8, as cited in Nistler & Maiers, 1999)

Each type of literacy event or practice “contributes to the children's emergent literacy development in different and particular ways” (Purcell-Gates, 1996, p. 427).

Family literacy also includes programs that schools or communities have created to help support and develop children and adult literacy learning (Nesbitt-Munroe, 2006). Pianta argues that the “relationships that children have with adults and other children . . . in school programs

provide the foundation for their success in school” (Pianta, 2003, p. 24). In *Family Literacy: What is it anyway?* Debbie Nesbitt-Munroe describes four main types of family literacy program models that are found in North America, and gives specific examples of each model. She refers to programs that develop children’s early literacy and educate parents about literacy by giving them ideas and opportunities to practice the new skills and strategies they have learned. Other programs take the form of mini-workshops, and focus more on helping parents to be able to improve their abilities to work with their own children on literacy development at home. A third program model that is described involves organized sessions where parents and children play various language- and literacy-related activities. Finally, there are community organizations that work to develop and share literacy materials and information with families.

Features of Effective Family Literacy Programs

In British Columbia, programs that have been created through the government’s *Early Learning Initiatives*, such as StrongStart BC and Ready, Set, Learn, are meant to foster parental involvement, and to help caregivers make “positive connections with the school system and community agencies” (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2006, para. 2). A primary goal is to give parents “new ways to support their child’s learning” (B.C. Ministry of Education, 2006, para. 4). Although the Early Childhood programs being funded in B.C. offer many potential benefits for our young learners, what model of family literacy do they reflect? Do the programs suggest that children in this province are not ready for Kindergarten, or that parents are perhaps unsure of how to help their own children effectively? Do they provide more of a “deficit model” of family literacy as described by Auerbach in her article, *Toward a Social Contextual Approach to Family Literacy?*

According to Auerbach (1989), a deficit model assumes that

... language-minority students come from literacy-impooverished homes where education is not valued or supported . . . that family literacy involves a one-way transfer of skills *from* parents *to* children . . . that success is determined by the parents' ability to support and extend school-like activities in the home . . . that school practices are adequate and that it is home factors that will determine who succeeds . . . [and] that parents' own problems get in the way of creating positive family literacy contexts. (p. 169)

The author argues that these assumptions do not in fact reflect the reality of many home literacy environments. Moreover, if a family literacy program is based upon assumptions of deficit, how will it facilitate the idea of building a "community of learners" (Rogoff, 1994, p. 209) consisting of educators, children and parents working together as a three-way reciprocal support system?

Although research about the connection between early literacy development and supportive parental involvement is fairly new, it has been established that there are certain attitudes and characteristics that are common in families that support literacy development. It is "not social status, race, or economics that make a home rich in literacy, but the value placed on education and literacy in that home that is significant" (Nistler & Maiers, 1999, p. 7). In the article, *Parents' Beliefs about Young Children's Literacy Development and Parents' Literacy Behaviors*, the authors also confirm that there is "a relationship between parents' literacy beliefs and the behaviors they engage in to help their children learn to read and write" (Lynch, Anderson, Anderson, & Shapiro, 2006, p. 13). They recommend specifically asking parents about their beliefs regarding how children learn to read and write, and exploring those beliefs together at the beginning of a family literacy program.

Overall, more research is needed to help understand which type of program model is most appropriate and effective for a particular population (Strickland, 2004), as well as for a

particular context. However, according to Strickland there are some fundamental ideas to consider when creating a successful partnership with parents and working with them to promote early literacy.

The process of learning to read and write is ongoing throughout life, and the development of literacy begins very early as children learn to listen and to talk.

Listening and speaking provide children with a sense of words and sentences, build sensitivity to the sound system so that children can acquire phonological awareness and phonics, and are the means by which children demonstrate their understandings of words and written materials. (Strickland, 2004, p. 87)

The background knowledge that a child brings to a text about the world, and about print and how books work all influence the child's understanding of the written words. In her article, *Working with families as partners in early literacy*, Dorothy S. Strickland recommends practical and easy-to-implement suggestions for parents in each of these important areas. She concludes by stating that for a parent involvement program to be successful, the program should be very "accessible," flexible, and connected to other social and health services where possible, in order to continue to build the home-school relationship. Many practical ideas and learning activities should be shared with parents, and teachers should encourage and value the sharing of parent's knowledge and experience with them as well.

Additional features of effective family literacy programs have been identified by researchers and include ongoing recruitment of participants, engagement of all parents and caregivers in a wide variety of literacy activities, showing respect for the "reciprocal learning relationship between parents, students, and teacher" (Nistler & Maiers, 1999, p. 121), and an understanding that the types of literacy activities chosen by families, and whether or not they

occur in the home, may be affected by outside circumstances and other family issues. It is also vitally important to have on-going and varied communication between teachers and families.

In *The Value of Hard Work: Lessons on Parent Involvement from an (IM)migrant Household*, the author reminds us that parents may also understand and act on the concept of parental involvement in a very different manner than has been the historical definition. In our ever-changing multicultural and social context, “schools need to recognize and validate the culture of the home - including the “funds of knowledge” and belief systems of diverse families - in order to build better collaborative relationships with parents” (Lopez, 2001, p. 434). The recommendation is to develop programs that are reflective and responsive to a more expanded, less limiting definition of involvement.

Cross-Language Transfer

Parents of second language learners also need to be reassured that literacy developed at home serves “as a foundation for . . . acquisition of L2 literacy” (Kubota, 2001, p. 97), and that it is highly valued by teachers. In *Teaching for transfer: Challenging the two solitudes assumption in bilingual education*, Jim Cummins discusses the research that supports “the role of prior knowledge [as] particularly relevant to the issues of teaching for transfer in the education of bilingual students” (2008, p. 67), and states that there is “extensive empirical research that supports the interdependence of literacy-related skills and knowledge across languages” (2008, p. 68). He calls this process “cross-language transfer.” One example of this idea of positive transfer from one language to the other is the purposeful use of children’s first language as a resource for the teaching of the second language. Rubinstein-Avila and Johnson also agree with the idea that “it is helpful to make such associations” (2008, p. 30), and they argue that “Linking

a new language – one with which we are less familiar to one with which we are familiar – is essential to the learning process” (Rubinstein-Avila & Johnson, 2008, p. 28).

In their case study of the Johar siblings, Mui and Anderson discuss the notion of “additive bilingualism” which occurs when a child is learning another language while trying to maintain his or her first language. Their finding that “the first language is not interfering with learning [the additional] English language and literacy at school” (Mui & Anderson, 2008, p. 237) also has important potential implications for French Immersion teaching and practice, including encouraging parents to continue using their first language to help develop their children’s literacy learning at home. It should be reinforced that a strong foundation in the first language will help with development of the second or additional language.

Each language community, each culture, needs to see the benefit and necessity of their language so that the value it places on its own language is significant . . . Language strategies . . . must provide opportunities for the family, school, and community to work together. (Hare, 2005, pp. 259-260)

It is also important that the need to communicate meaning is reinforced by allowing those who are learning a new language to use all of their languages to internalize and communicate their ideas, and to demonstrate what they know. An example of reinforcing an Immersion student’s attempts at meaningful communication in the classroom would be through encouragement to use his or her maternal language, generally English, when that child lacks the word in French. The student’s need to make meaning is reinforced by encouraging the use of both languages. This form of “code-switching” often happens naturally in oral speech when children don’t know the word to use in the new language, and helps them to communicate their ideas better or more easily. Indeed, teachers in French Immersion often encourage their students

to use this strategy of mixing languages as a keep-going strategy when they are in the process of writing drafts in order to keep their ideas flowing.

Respectful and Supportive Family Literacy Programs Around the World

Programs that promote effective transitions between home and school establish positive relationships among the children, parents, and educators . . . involve a range of stakeholders . . . are well planned and evaluated . . . are flexible and responsive . . . are based on mutual trust and respect . . . rely on the reciprocal communication . . . [and] take into account the context of the community and its individual families and children. (Dockett & Perry, 2003, p. 32)

Parents As Literacy Supporters.

Parents As Literacy Supporters (or PALS) is an example of a family literacy program that was created in a B.C. context to support parents as they work with their four and five year old children at home (Anderson & Morrison, 2005). The program was piloted in January, 2000, in two inner city schools in Langley City. Anderson describes several guiding principles for the PALS program, including the voluntary nature of participation in the program, as well as the program's flexibility. Care is always taken to honour and build on what parents are already doing with their children as "The program takes the perspective that there are multiple ways into literacy" (Anderson & Morrison, 2005, p. 5).

The PALS program usually consists of between 10 and 12 bi-weekly two-hour sessions. Each session has a particular topic, some of which are pre-determined, such as learning the alphabet or reading with children, and others are kept "open" so that parents are able to identify their own needs. The session begins with all participants sharing food together, followed by a 30-minute discussion of the theme while the children are in their classroom. Afterwards, parents

go to the classroom to work with their children at different literacy centres for one hour. An opportunity for parents to discuss and share what they have observed and learned occurs at the end of the session, and the parents are then given a children's book or other material and resources to take home.

It is interesting to note the survey responses given by parents and caregivers who had participated in PALS. Parents stated that they were able to better understand what was expected of their children at school, and to gain "insights into what their children were able to do and how they learned" (Anderson & Morrison, 2005, p. 7). Being involved in the program also helped them to gain self-confidence and to feel more a part of the school community.

An Urban First-Grade Family Literacy Program.

Similar conclusions were found by Robert J. Nistler and Angela Maiers (1999) as a result of a two-year school-based study in a grade one classroom in Des Moines, Iowa. These researchers examined how parental thoughts, attitudes, and feelings regarding literacy learning could be affected by directly involving parents in literacy activities in their child's classroom. The intention was "not to adopt a school-model of literacy, but rather to provide an exchange between home and school to support students' literacy growth" (Nistler & Maiers, 1999, p. 110). The emphasis was on combining the strengths of home literacy with school, and creating shared ownership between the parents and teacher.

During each year of the study, parents or other representatives for the children (e.g., caregivers such as siblings, grandparents, neighbours and family friends) were invited to visit the classroom on designated Friday mornings for approximately fourteen three-hour sessions. Throughout each session adult-student pairs and small parent-child groups were guided through early literacy instructional activities. The teacher modeled literacy behaviors that could be

repeated and extended at home, and also had informal discussions with individual adults. During the first year of the program, there were also one-hour seminars held after the parents and children had worked together in order to share comments regarding students' literacy development and how to promote it, as well as to discuss concerns about various family issues.

Throughout all interactions, parents were encouraged to use literacy in multiple ways with their children, and were also encouraged to help promote these literacy behaviors at home. The authors state that understanding that there are many kinds of literacy was important in developing the program activities with families. When parents understood the value of multiple paths to literacy, they became more confident and involved. Through their participation in the program, they learned what was expected of their children at school, and also became more aware of what their children were capable of doing with support.

Reggio Emilia.

A most "compelling cultural interpretation of child care" (New, 2009) that has inspired and influenced many professionals is the "optimistic and respectful" (New, 2009) image of childhood that is honored in the city of Reggio Emilia, Italy. Underlying principles that are foundational to the success of this municipally funded early childhood program include the role of the environment as "a space that conveys messages of respect and possibilities for children and their families" (New, 2000, p. 344), the nature of the curriculum as "Imagined Potential" (New, 2000, p. 347), and the concept of *partecipazione* or participation.

In a *Scuole dell'Infanzia* or Preprimary School in Reggio Emilia, the context of the environment is considered to be an additional teacher. It is a place for connecting, a site for collaboration and imagination, as well as a "provocateur" for thought and conversation.

Imagined potential refers to the possibilities created by involving children in "free and structured

play activities, short- and long-term *progettazione* [collaborative] projects [that explore a problem or promote inquiry], and the social routines and rituals that characterize children's early school experiences" (New, 2000, p. 348). Participation may be an element that is less visible, but it is "most central to their philosophy, [and] their practices" (New, 2000, p. 353), and is "grounded in cultural values regarding the importance of adult collaboration" (New, 2000, p. 353).

Other important features include respect for, and encouragement of, the "100 languages of children" (Malaguzzi, 1994, p. 55), which include the many and varied ways children have of self-expression and showing understanding (symbolic representation). A very important tool that teachers use to "make learning visible" (New, 2003, p. 37) is pedagogical documentation, for example, photographs, tape recordings and samples of students' work. These demonstrations of learning and understanding are not only used to help families get a picture or image of their child at school, but are also used by teachers and other adults for sharing, studying and planning educational experiences, as well as for research, assessment and reflection. Teachers use documentation in very strategic ways as a catalyst to engage parents and the community in dialogue. When a photograph and narration are introduced or posted on a wall, the hope is that they will spark the imagination, lead to discussion . . . sharing . . . questioning . . . and more conversation.

Teachers, parents and other citizens of Reggio Emilia have many opportunities to be collaboratively engaged in the educational experiences of their young children. As a result of the emphasis that is placed on "developing trusting and reciprocal relations" (New, 2000, p. 354), all stakeholders work "together to make schools dynamic and democratic learning environments" (New, 2003, p. 34). Each school has a formal Advisory Council that includes parents, teachers and citizens. There are individual, small group and full-class meetings throughout the year

regarding different events or discussions of particular topics of interest or concern. School-wide meetings may involve discussions of child development topics, or other school issues. Groups of parents may gather to work together to build equipment for the school. More informal meetings may also be arranged to ensure that all family members and relatives, for example, grandparents, feel included, and there are many invitations extended to families and community members to simply come and celebrate the children's work.

Section 3: Connections to Practice

Teacher Inquiry in the Pursuit of Knowledge

In *The Art of Classroom Inquiry*, the authors argue that teacher inquiry “gives teachers a touchstone for their beliefs, a firm foundation for practices, and a haven to return to whenever they wonder if their questions matter” (Hubbard & Power, 2003, p. x). As professional development, self-directed inquiry is a deeply meaningful, “transformative” (Rust, 2009, p. 1888), and empowering learning experience in which teaching practice and research come together. As educators engage in the process of researching their own “wonderings,” they gain the possibility of being led to “a new vision of themselves as teachers and of their students as learners” (Hubbard et al., 2003, p. 4).

Throughout the years of my teaching career, one of the questions that I have often revisited is whether my sincere belief that the parents of my students should be welcomed as a valuable resource and an integral part of the classroom community was indeed being reflected in the daily routines and structure of my Kindergarten classroom. Did the parents of my students feel the sense of belonging and connection with their children’s learning and classroom environment that I was trying to create? Did they truly feel invited to be partners with me in the education of their children? Furthermore, were there other ways in which I may have facilitated this relationship? As I pondered these questions, my reflections became influenced by the experiences my own family was having in the Early Immersion program, and it was these interwoven thoughts that led me to a new vision of my relationship with my students and their families, and ultimately, to the development of the “Jouons” program that I am sharing in this paper.

The Story of a Family Literacy Program: “Jouons” or Let’s Play!

As previously discussed, parents have such an important role to play in supporting their children's learning, and there is much literature available that suggests that students are more engaged and perform better in school when their parents are involved in their education.

Celebrating successes, sharing and talking about everyday things, reading the traditional bedtime story, offering support when it is needed, and being good role models are just some of the ways that parents can help their children to become lifelong readers and writers. “Jouons” provides yet another opportunity for parents to be involved with their children, and to honour this special relationship.

Program Goals.

Nurturing respectful, meaningful and collaborative relationships is a primary goal of the “Jouons” Family Literacy Program. Additional goals for the teacher, beyond engaging families and helping them feel more connected to their child’s school community, include the creation of opportunities to connect to parental views as a form of enrichment, and to give support for early language and literacy development while respecting the Kindergarten classroom’s play-based environment. “Jouons” involves children in meaningful, interactive games and activities, and in situations in which they have fun working together and are able to experience success. These interactions are motivating for the children, and help them continue to grow in enthusiasm *about* their learning, as well as, encourage them to become excited about their families’ involvement *in* their learning.

Program Development Context.

“Jouons” was created at “Peck Road” Elementary School, a dual track K-7 school that provides a choice of instructional language education to its families of either French Immersion

or English. The school is situated in a small suburb, approximately 30 kilometers outside of a large metropolitan city in Western Canada. The feeder high school is located within walking distance of the school, and students may choose to attend this secondary school upon completion of grade 7, along with students from three other elementary schools that are located a little further away. Students choosing to pursue their French studies also have the option of registering in a dual track high school, approximately four kilometers away. Peck Road's surrounding school neighbourhood is a combination of middle to high socio-economic status households, and includes several Community Parks and a Tennis Club. A Parent Participation Preschool is also located through the small forest that borders the school's large playing fields.

The total school population is just over 560 students, and there are 50 staff members employed at the school. Approximately one-third of the students are enrolled in the Regular (English) program, and two-thirds are attending school in the Immersion track. Several special learning programs are offered at the school including Learning Assistance programs available in both languages of instruction, an English as a Second Language (ESL) program, as well as a program developed by a visiting multicultural worker for a small number of children of Aboriginal descent. There are also Speech/Language Therapy and Counseling services available for those children and families who may be in need of them. In addition, "Peck Road Elementary" offers to students a variety of extracurricular activities in which they may choose to participate including Band, Choir, and a variety of school sports, although it is probably best well known for its Track program.

Central Participants.

The "Jouons" program was developed in a French Immersion Kindergarten classroom or "Maternelle," and involved five and six year old students, along with their caregivers and their

teacher. However, it could easily be adapted for use in a regular Kindergarten classroom, and would be especially helpful for implementation in classrooms where ESL or English as an Additional Language students are enrolled.

During the Kindergarten year, learning through play is highly valued and supported by the teacher, along with the social and emotional development of his or her students. This recognition should be evident throughout the daily routines and activities that are planned, as well as in the physical arrangement of the classroom furniture, and the organization of the learning tools and equipment. Instruction in the early childhood setting may be given to the whole class at Circle Time, or to individuals or small groups while the children play and work at Centre activities during a specific block of time each school day.

The main language of instruction in the Maternelle is French; however, some English may also be used to ensure understanding, as well as to confirm and extend children's thinking. There is explicit teaching of French language skills, in addition to early literacy and math skills. Developing their listening vocabulary is a major focus, but children are encouraged to try and use words and functional French language phrases as soon as they are able. Examples may include phrases such as, "Est-ce que je peux aller aux toilettes, s'il vous plaît?" (May I go to the washroom, please?), or "Est-ce que je peux aller boire de l'eau, s'il vous plaît?" (May I have a drink of water, please?). Acceptance of mistakes as part of the learning process, and encouragement of risk-taking is greatly emphasized and supported. In addition to the classroom environment, students at Peck Road Elementary are also given the opportunity to explore equipment and play various games in the gym each week, to spend some time playing on the computers in the lab, and to visit the school library for story time and book exchange. The primary language of instruction used throughout these learning sessions is also French.

Implementing the “Jouons” Program**The Initial Year.**

In the first year of the development of “Jouons” or “Let’s play,” parents were given an open invitation to come into the classroom each week for a 45-minute session over a two-month time period beginning in the month of January. The time of the year was purposefully chosen as the preceding four months gave children the opportunity to begin to develop an understanding of some French vocabulary, and to feel comfortable sharing the classroom setting with their parents. It was also hoped that this would enable more of an exchange between caregivers and students as the children might also be able to help with comprehension or pronunciation if needed. The original intent was not to have parents introduce and teach new vocabulary and language structures; rather, it was for parents to play, review, and further extend the children’s learning. In the initial notice inviting parents to come into the Kindergarten classroom, parents were asked to come “play learning games and lead hands-on activities which review concepts that have already been taught by the Teacher.” Meetings were organized at the beginning of the program for the volunteers during lunchtime and after school, in order to introduce and share materials and possible activities. Tapes and CD’s of the teacher modeling targeted French vocabulary, letter names, etc., were also available to borrow and take home.

During their time in the classroom, parents were involved in reading simple French stories, playing games, and exploring various activities with small groups of children in different Centres located throughout the classroom (see Figure 1). Throughout the session, “resource kits” containing a variety of manipulatives, several game choices, simple French storybooks that were chosen to provide practice with vocabulary related to our current or a previous theme, and other materials were available for caregivers to use. These “Sacs de Jouons” were created with some

volunteer parent help (e.g., photocopying, cutting and pasting, etc.), and items were added and rotated regularly.

The program was successful and very well received by my students, who waited excitedly for the adults to arrive on “Jouons Day,” and also by the parents who participated in the sessions. This was evidenced by their positive feedback during and at the conclusion of the program. As one mother wrote, “I love how the parents have so many opportunities to participate in the whole Kindergarten experience.” Other comments included, “It was really fun being in class today,” “I got some great ideas for activities to do at home,” and “Being in the classroom has really helped me to picture what [Matthew] is talking about as we walk home from school each day.”

“Jouons” Session

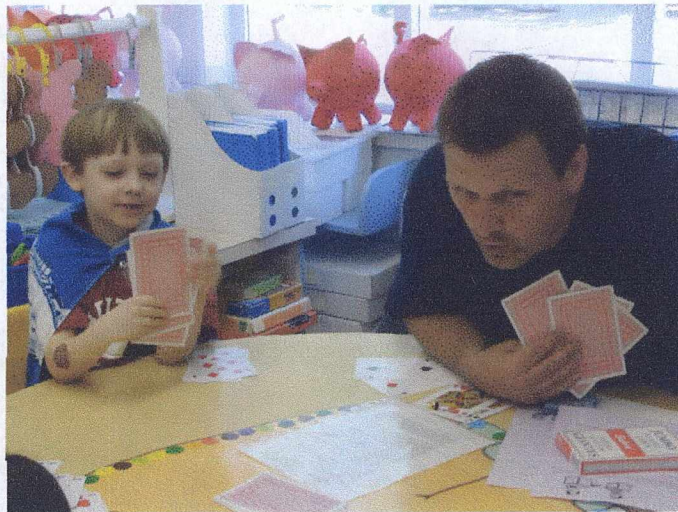


Figure 1. Having fun and learning!

As with any new program, there were also improvements that needed to be made, particularly with regard to increasing overall parent participation since only about one-half of my families were directly involved in the sessions. My goal was to engage my students' families in a meaningful and empowering way so that we might learn from each other and work together to

build a strong support system for our young learners – a system based on mutual respect and reciprocity between the teacher, child and parent. Was there another way to ensure that all of the parents of my students felt truly welcome and able to come, collaborate and work with me in creating this type of a classroom community?

Adaptations Follow as We Find Our Way.

There were several changes made to “Jouons” based upon parent comments I had received in the feedback box that had been placed in the classroom, as well as on the research I was reading and other family literacy programs I had reviewed. Adaptations also occurred since my position changed during the time of my Master’s Program, and I was no longer teaching in a Kindergarten classroom. This situation created both positive, as well as negative implications for my studies.

Parents were again invited to come to school once a week during regular Kindergarten classroom hours; however, the format of each “Jouons” session was altered. Table 1 shares an overview of a typical “Jouons” session, and the types of activities in which parents were involved. Due to scheduling challenges, the length of the program was also changed from eight weeks to six weeks in duration.

Each session began with l’Ouverture (the Opening), a 30-minute meeting with the parents and myself on our own, in order to introduce, discuss and exchange ideas about various themes and activities, as well as to share pedagogical documentation. Coffee and tea was available for caregivers during this time, and the Kindergarten students were already in the classroom with their teacher. Knowing that the overall success of the program would depend on the extent to which a family member of each student would be able to actively participate in the sessions, it was also clearly stated in the introductory notice, and emphasized during the first Family Night

meeting that when parents were unable to attend, other caregivers were most welcome (e.g., extended family members, family friends, etc.). My purpose was to enable more children to have someone close to them be involved in the building of our supportive classroom community, and to open up other possibilities for partners for those children in the class who had either very few or no extended family living nearby.

After this opening session, caregivers went into the classroom for a 45-minute block of time where they were actively involved in guided play using books, games and other activities with individual children, or with small groups of children in various Centres located throughout the classroom. This in-class play session was followed by an additional 30-minute block of time for debriefing, sharing and further discussion – la Clôture (Closing).

Table 1**Shape of a Typical “Jouons” Session**

Sample Schedule	Activity
9:00 – 9:15 / 12:30 – 12:45	Drop off children in class Adults gather, Sharing coffee/tea in a different room (e.g., portable, multi-purpose room) <i>15 minutes</i>
9:15 – 9:45 / 12:45 – 1:15	l’Ouverture – Adult discussion (Children are in class together) <i>30 minutes</i>
9:45 – 10:30 / 1:15 – 2:00	In-class Play Centre activities – adults and children together in the classroom <i>45 minutes</i>

Sample Schedule	Activity
10:30 – 10:45 / 2:00 – 2:15	Break/Recess - playtime (may be outside) <i>15 minutes</i>
10:45 – 11:15 / 2:15 – 2:45	la Clôture - Debriefing and Sharing – Adults only (in an alternate room) <i>30 minutes</i>
11:15 – 11:30 / 2:45 – 3:00	“Make and Take” <i>15 minutes</i>
11:30 / 3:00	Dismissal and Home Time

Table 1

“Jouons” was intended to be a collaborative program between parents, children and teacher(s), and therefore, the discussion sessions were kept flexible. Some topics were decided upon as a result of parental requests, and several topics were predetermined by myself and planned in advance of the start of the program. Preplanned discussion topics included home-school connections, family literacy, the value of children’s play, and early literacy development through play. Parent requested discussion topics included numeracy development in Kindergarten, outdoor play, and Cummin’s notion of “cross-linguistic transfer” (2008, p. 65) that had been introduced during the Family Night workshop. Parents were particularly interested in this topic and much time was spent discussing the process, as well as sharing concrete examples and practical ideas (e.g., alphabet letter names and sounds, numerals, French colour and shape words, etc.).

During the final part of the session, materials such as construction paper, felt pens, scissors, glue, various masters for photocopying, and so on, were also available to give parents

an opportunity to reproduce some of the learning activities in which they had been involved. A small group of parents decided to take turns remaining after the session in order to make class sets of certain materials for all children to share and take home, for example, the ABC and numeral cards that were used to play such games as Concentration, and Go Fish.

Some of the comments received from parents who were involved in the new format of “Jouons” included, “It was really helpful to have a chance to talk to other parents about some of the concerns we’ve been having, and to share ideas with each other,” “We’re already doing some of the activities we talked about in our discussion group at home. That was so good to hear!” and, “I really enjoyed learning more about how [Elisabeth] is learning French. It seems so magical!” A parent who had also been involved with the initial “Jouons” version affirmed that, “. . . being able to talk about what we just experienced was really valuable!”

During the classroom-guided play portion of the session, the resource kits were again available for caregivers to use. These “Sacs de Jouons,” however, were created together with volunteer parent help and input, and manipulatives, books, learning games and other materials were added or changed on a weekly basis according to the current theme. CD’s of the teacher modeling targeted French vocabulary, letter names, etc., were available throughout the program to borrow and take home, and two mini-workshops were also offered to help with the learning and practice of very simple and functional French words and phrases.

Finally, it should be noted that “Jouons” was created in a half-day Kindergarten program; however, school districts across the province of British Columbia will be required to implement Full-Day Kindergarten in September 2011. For families with young children attending Kindergarten classes having the all day schedule, I believe the morning timeline should continue to be a workable option.

“Jouons” Session Overview and Keynotes for Parent “Workshops”

As part of this project, I have included a sample plan of one of the “Jouons” sessions, along with three of the Keynote presentations that were created to be shared with parents during the program. These plans and presentations, along with oral narration notes and parent handouts are included in the Appendices at the back of the paper.

Appendix A – “Home-School Connections and Family Literacy”

An introductory session or Family Night was offered prior to the beginning of “Jouons” to introduce the program background and goals, to discuss potential topics of exploration, highlight possible activities, and share documentation, as well as other information. This session was offered after school hours in order to encourage and support the inclusion of as many parents and/or caregivers as possible. Big Buddies were available to help with babysitting services during this time as well. “Provocation” as a means of inviting and encouraging attendance and discussion was done through the use of child-made invitations, and by including an information notice and photographs that had been taken of the children during school activities in a class newsletter.

Appendix B – “Jouons” Session - Topic: PLAY

This “Jouons” plan gives an overview of the “Play” session detailing all three parts – l’Ouverture, In-Class Play, la Clôture – and includes key ideas about the topic, activities to be shared, and necessary materials. During this session, parents are given the opportunity to experience play with or beside their child at various Kindergarten Centres in the classroom.

Appendix C – “The Value of PLAY”

This is the Keynote presentation that is part of the “Jouons” Play session. It explores how children create meaning about the world in which they live through their play, laying the

important foundation for later academic success. Discussion centres on play-based learning including learning outcomes, types of play behaviours, forms of children's play, and what is needed for quality child's play to occur.

Appendix D – “Developing Early Literacy through Play”

This Keynote presentation focuses on how early language and literacy develop through child's play. It describes some of the characteristics of Kindergarten children, and reviews both child- and teacher-initiated play, focusing on intellectual development. The social context of language learning, oral language development, and young children's emergent writing and reading stages are explored. Examples of what this might look like in a classroom setting are shared, in addition to various ways in which growth in these important areas is facilitated and supported.

All of this is a great forest. Inside the forest is the child. The forest is beautiful, fascinating, green, and full of hopes; there are no paths. Although it isn't easy, we have to make our own paths, as teachers and children and families, in the forest. Sometimes we find ourselves together within the forest, sometimes we may get lost from each other, sometimes we'll greet each other from far away across the forest; but it's living together in this forest that is important. (Malaguzzi, 1994, p. 53)

Section 4: Reflections

“Voyaging through . . . seas of Thought” (Wordsworth, 63)

What have I learned?

I acknowledge that there may be a number of challenges for classroom teachers wanting to implement a family literacy program such as “Jouons.” First of all, to give the “Jouons” Program the greatest chance of being successful and creating lasting change, all members of the triangle of reciprocity (parents-child-teacher) should have the opportunity to participate together in the various aspects of the program. The hope would be to have everyone who is involved develop a strong sense of investment and belonging in the classroom community that is being created, and to enable all members to gain confidence and awareness of their role within that community. Furthermore, to form an authentic partnership or solid “bridge” between the parents and the teacher - a primary goal of “Jouons” - there needs to be a level of comfort and trust that is built between them. Comfort and trust grows through interaction in all of the different parts of the program, and this highlights one of the biggest challenges for “Jouons.”

In order for the classroom teacher to be the facilitator of the adult only discussions and exchanges that occur at the beginning and at the end of each session, additional funding to be used to hire a Teacher-On-Call would need to be accessible, or a team of volunteer support staff with a similar passion and belief in building community with the families in the school would need to be available and willing to help (e.g., Classroom Teacher, Administrator, Librarian, or Physical Education Teacher). These team members could work together to enable the teacher to be free to collaborate with the parents throughout the “Jouons” session by coordinating the care and supervision of the Kindergarten students. Other creative solutions might include making arrangements for the children to visit the library or gym if an open block exists in the schedule,

having the students participate in a peer learning activity while being supervised by another classroom teacher, or recruiting grade 7 Big Buddies to play with the children outside on the playground or inside the classroom under the supervision of an Administrator. In some school districts, it may also be possible to have an Educational Assistant (EA) or Teacher's Aide help with supervision; however, in the district in which I have developed "Jouons," EA's are not permitted by their employment contract to be responsible for independent supervision of students.

My own role as a facilitator in the second version of "Jouons" was perhaps unusual in that I already had a strong investment in this particular group of children. Having taught French Immersion Kindergarten at this school for many years before moving to my new position, I had a previous relationship with some of the families who had children enrolled in the class.

Moreover, I knew all the children quite well because I was also their Physical Education teacher at the time. An additional solution might arise as British Columbia moves forward with Full-Day Kindergarten implementation since there is a wonderful potential that several Kindergarten classes may be housed in a single school setting. The teachers of these early childhood classrooms might choose to work together as a team, taking turns facilitating and supervising children as necessary, in order to make the program not only doable and sustainable, but also highly successful.

Although there was an increased number of parents involved in "Jouons" overall, perhaps as a result of some of the adaptations that had been made, consistent attendance and participation each week for some of the parents in the program continued to be a challenge. The context in which any program is offered is extraordinarily important and needs to be carefully considered when planning all parts of the program. This includes the backgrounds and cultures represented

in the classroom, the school and neighbourhood in which the program is to be implemented, the availability and work schedules of family members, babysitting needs, etc. The lack of consistent participation could have been due to a variety of factors including the reality that for many of the families in the class, both parents went to work each day. In one particular case, the student's mother and father were both teachers, and therefore, they were working during the hours of "Jouons." They solved this issue by inviting their child's Aunt, who was retired and available during the day, to join our gatherings. Another recommendation for resolving this problem is for the teacher to try and keep the schedule of the days of "Jouons" flexible and responsive to parents' needs by alternating the days of the week on which the program is offered. In this way, consideration is shown to parents who have work or other commitments on specific days, and their potential for participation would be increased. It also shows parents that they are understood and valued as busy people trying their best for their children, and reaffirms to them that the teacher sincerely wants them to be actively involved in their child's education.

A request made by several parents was to continue the program over a longer time period. Spreading the program out with bi-weekly or monthly sessions instead of weekly sessions, might further enhance the possibility that some parents could attend more frequently, resulting in more families being represented in each "Jouons" session. In the intervening weeks between these more formal sessions, an open 45-minute drop-in session of "noisy reading" and interactive games could be organized to take place for those parents who are available, a similar concept to the original "Jouons".

There were also families in the class who had younger siblings at home, and were finding it difficult to secure babysitting services in order to be able to participate in the sessions with us. These parents were supported in their efforts to attend by inviting them to bring their younger

children with them. Another possible solution may be presented through a Red Cross babysitting certification course that is offered during lunchtime at our school several times throughout the year. Grade 7 students who have completed this course could be encouraged to give service to their school by playing with preschool-aged children in an area of the same room where the adult discussion is taking place.

Additional ideas for increasing attendance at the initial Family Night might include sending home the evening's agenda in advance, inviting parents from previous years to come and share their experiences and be available for potential questions, or adding an invitation to view a DVD that has been created of class activities to the original newsletter announcement. An invitation to attend, and a reminder of the event could also be sent out and confirmed using a class email list or posted on the class website, if one has been produced.

Most importantly, throughout the "Jouons" session, caregivers should be shown that their input and ways of doing things are accepted and honoured. When a volunteer's actions are too quickly and too often corrected by the teacher, or the teacher imposes too many restrictions and expectations, the implication may be that there is really only one correct and acceptable way of doing a particular task or accomplishing a specific goal – the way it is done at school. Caregivers need to feel that even though "their way" of completing a task may be different, it is also respected and welcomed. Just as there are multiple pathways to literacy, it must be remembered that there are multiple ways of doing many things (e.g., holding a paintbrush while creating a picture, arranging a bouquet of flowers, making a salad, helping a child learn how to ride a bicycle). There may be very successful alternatives, not just the "teacher's way" or the "school way." For some tasks, there may even be a cultural foundation or tradition to the approach being used, and teachers need to be sensitive to this. "Jouons" was not created to be a

vehicle for what Auerbach termed, the “Transmission of School Practices” (1989, p. 167); instead, “Jouons” was created as a collaborative, shared effort exploring various options. If teachers are to build upon a family’s strengths, we also need to acknowledge that their ways of doing things, though they may be different, also have value and significance.

Several suggestions arose from the debriefing and sharing portions of “Jouons.” One request was to offer some of the Keynote presentations in the form of evening Family Night workshops in order to enable both parents to be able to attend together, as well as to allow those who were unable to attend during the day to be involved. In addition to the CD's of the teacher modeling targeted French vocabulary that were available to borrow and take home, several parents asked to have more mini-workshops offered to help with the learning and practice of the French words and phrases the children were being exposed to during the day, and to schedule these workshops throughout the school year. Although there are sometimes Continuing Education courses that are offered to parents of French Immersion students through the school board, these additional workshops could provide a wonderful opportunity for the grade 6 and 7 students at the school to develop leadership skills, as well as have a unique opportunity to experience a reversal of roles by being the “experts” for our “novice” adults (Duff, 2010).

The Journey Continues . . .

As the province of British Columbia continues its move toward Full-Day Kindergarten implementation, I contemplate the possibility of returning to the “Maternelle.” Taking the perspective of a classroom teacher, I need to also consider some of the practical “realities” that come with a classroom teaching position in regard to the introduction of a family literacy program such as “Jouons.” Focusing on the particular context of my school, and further considering the challenges of obtaining school or district level funding, or having a support team

who would enable my direct interaction with the families of my students, I believe it may prove rather difficult to offer “Jouons” in its second format. The lack of accessibility to a support team or funding may indeed form a barrier for other teachers contemplating offering this type of program to their students and their families. Is there perhaps another practical and sustainable alternative?

In my efforts to move forward, I also look back to the beginnings of “Jouons,” and a third potential model of collaboration between teacher, child and parent emerges. This alternate model would be a blending of the two approaches previously discussed in this paper, and would consist of a family literacy program that builds on a concept similar to the “noisy game days” format that made up the original “Jouons” Program. These in-class sessions would be further extended and enriched by opportunities for families to come together, to share and exchange ideas through the addition of a series of evening Family Night workshops offered throughout the year.

A very important and valuable part of “Jouons” for myself was having the opportunity to come together to debrief the in-class play experiences, and discuss any questions or comments that arose. Parental comments also underscored the value that parents placed upon this part of the session; however, facilitating this discussion in this third format of “Jouons” poses several challenges. For example, if the in-class session were to be scheduled during the last block of class time in either the morning or the afternoon, it would enable the teacher to be free to pursue a discussion with parents at lunchtime or after school for 20-30 minutes when students are not in session. Unfortunately, this would not be a very practical solution for various reasons. Families are often busy after school, and parents may be anxious to leave promptly since many young children’s extra-curricular activities are scheduled during the hours between school dismissal and

dinnertime, older siblings may have homework to be covered, etc. The timing would also necessitate providing supervision for the Kindergarten children who are no longer in session at the school. On the other hand, students are generally supervised during lunch hour by paid adult noon hour supervisors. Yet, the lunch hour often presents the best or only opportunity for teachers to meet informally with other staff members to make plans together, to share knowledge and expertise, or to simply discuss areas of interest.

An alternate suggestion may be to organize the in-class play session during a block of time that occurs just prior to a scheduled teacher preparation period, so that a discussion might take place while the children are actively involved with another teacher in the gym, library, computer lab, or music room, etc. An obvious drawback to this option is that it does require the teacher to give up some of his or her own valuable planning time. One final, practical recommendation might be to allow for the opportunity to have this discussion at the beginning of the next scheduled Family Night Workshop for those caregivers who are interested in sharing their experiences or asking further questions. This evolving third model of “Jouons” could provide another respectful and responsive pathway to choose when trying to create a welcoming, supportive and empowering classroom community.

Conclusions

Educators know that there are multiple pathways to literacy, and a very important pathway involves “the different cultural and linguistic literacy practices into which families initiate their children” (Taylor et al., 2008, p. 273). Children are highly invested in these text forms and practices, and as a result, may find them to be very powerful. In order to be able to draw upon this “cultural and linguistic capital,” teachers need to show their students and families that they care about them, and offering family literacy programs provides a very effective way of doing this.

The variety of models of family involvement discussed in this paper highlight the potential and the possibilities for learning, development and connection that may occur “through social interaction between those with more proficiency or expertise in language, literacy, and culture (often referred to as “experts” or “oldtimers”), and those with less proficiency (relative “novices” or “newcomers”)” (Duff, 2010, p. 427). Young children are very motivated to learn, and by welcoming their families to school and building their sense of belonging, many wonderful and meaningful opportunities are created that encourage children to become truly “invested in the language practices” (Norton, 2009) of the classroom community.

Adult relationships are of “critical importance . . . to children's well-being” (New, 2001, p. 209), and there are many ways teachers and parents can learn from each other and work together to build a support system for their young literacy learners. Family literacy programs may also be one of the most effective ways of keeping families involved in their children’s education as they provide a very meaningful social context for learning for all participants, regardless of age. In Reggio Emilia, the “creation of a school environment that nurtures adult as well as child relations, their interpretation of curriculum as a catalyst for children’s and teacher’s

imagined potentials, and their commitment to facilitating a process of ongoing communication and dialogue” (New, 2000, p. 355) provides a very inspiring image of education. It is also a wonderful example of “the vital role that children serve as links through which adults in a community come together” (New, 2001, p. 200).

In a French Immersion context, a Family Literacy Program such as “Jouons,” also provides many wonderful opportunities to promote the notion of “cross-language transfer” (Cummins, 2008, p. 65). Indeed, the use of a child's first language as a purposeful resource has a very important role to play in learning an additional language.

By creating an atmosphere in the school that welcomes and values family involvement in meaningful ways, and offering programs and events for parents that are accessible, relevant, engaging and purposeful, teachers help to promote learning at home and at school. Working closely with families, enables teachers to better understand parents’ beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions of the roles they play in the literacy development of their children, and to illuminate and build on their strengths. Parents are given additional practical tools to help them work and play with their own children while they continue to develop their own understandings of emergent literacy. Furthermore, as parents feel invited to actively participate and collaborate with their child’s teacher in the classroom community, they will become more confident partners in encouraging their child’s language and literacy development, and the role of the classroom teacher is also supported. In the context of a second language classroom environment, this reciprocal support is particularly important.

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Appendix A

Keynote Presentation:

Home-School Connections



and Family Literacy

la maternelle - Mme Wilson
"Peek Road" Elementary

1

What is Literacy?

"Literacy is much more than being able to read and write. Literacy allows people to read the world rather than just the word. It involves using the different forms of communication which give us further opportunities in our society - for ourselves, our families, and our communities. Literacy helps us understand the world we live in. It also helps us understand ourselves and express our identity, our ideas and our cultures."

Action for Family Literacy Ontario (AFLIO)

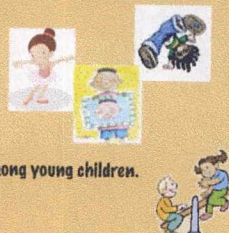
2

"Literacies"

... is a broad term used to describe the development of the


- Physical
- Social
- Emotional
- Creative
- Linguistic
- Intellectual

means of communication among young children.



3

Literacy Development . . .




- begins long before children enter school
- listening, speaking, reading, and writing abilities develop concurrently in an interrelated manner, rather than sequentially
- is "authentic." It develops in real-life settings for real life activities in order to "get things done."
- young children learn written language through active engagement with their world
- children benefit from the modelling of literacy by significant adults, particularly their parents
- although children's literacy learning can be described in terms of generalized stages, children pass through these stages in a variety of ways and at different ages (developmental variation).

4

What does Emergent Literacy look like?


When young children:



- "pretend read" favourite books and poems, songs or chants
- "write" and can read what they wrote even if no one else can
- are able to "track print" - to show what to read and point to the words using left to right, and top to bottom conventions
- know important terms such as, "word" and "letter," can point to just one word, the first word in the sentence, one letter, the first letter in the word, the longest word, etc.
- recognize some concrete words, particularly their names and the names of other children, and favourite words from books, poems, and chants
- recognize if words rhyme, and are able to make up rhymes
- are able to name many letters, and can tell you words that begin with a common initial sound.

5

What is Family Literacy?



6

Keynote Presentation (cont'd):

Family Literacy

- occurs naturally during daily living routines
- may reflect ethnic, racial, or cultural heritage
- helps to develop children's emergent literacy in different and particular ways



7

*Family Literacy may include***Activities such as:**

- using drawings or writing to share ideas
- composing notes and letters to communicate messages
- making lists (shopping, appointments, etc.)
- reading or following directions
- sharing stories and ideas through conversation, reading, and writing
- sharing the traditional bedtime story
- being involved in programs created by schools or communities ...



8

It is "not social status, race, or economics that make a home rich in literacy, but the value placed on education and literacy in that home that is significant."

Nistler & Malers, 1999

9

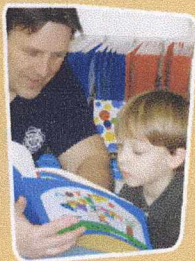
French Immersion and Family Literacy

- children's first language and prior knowledge are important resources for learning
- literacy that is developed at home serves as a foundation for the acquisition of a second language
- this support is highly valued by teachers
- literacy-related skills and knowledge across different languages are interdependent
- much research supports "the role of prior knowledge [as] particularly relevant to the issues of teaching for transfer in the education of bilingual students" (Cummins, 2008)
- research also supports the "principled" and purposeful use of a child's first language as a resource in learning a second language

10

School Connections for Families

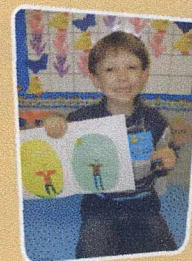
- September conference
- Family/Staff Barbecue and Open House
- Christmas Concert
- Student-Led Conferences
- Field Trips
- Family Fun Night
- Sports Day
- Monthly Calendars of activities, and Newsletters



11

Making Connections with other Children

- School tour
- Terry Fox Run
- the Adventure Playground
- Spirit Days
- playing and learning activities with "Big Buddies"
- Jump Rope for Heart
- planting and weeding in the "Butterfly Garden"
- Grade 1 Orientation




12


Keynote Presentation (cont'd):

Classroom Connections for Families

- on-going Cooking program
- "Noisy Reading" program
- art projects or "ateliers"
- sharing of Occupations and special talents, hobbies or interests
- in-class and at home preparation of materials
- ** "Jouons" **

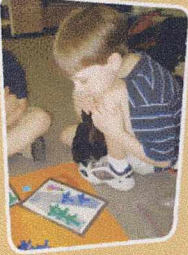


13



"Jouons"


Classroom teachers and parents supporting each other as they work together to help young children with their second language and literacy learning ...



14

The "Jouons" Program

- a family literacy program
- active participation and collaboration of parents-children-teacher sessions once a month, beginning in October / November
- each session has a particular topic or focus
- sessions begin with a 30-minute discussion of the theme (mini-workshop)
- parents then go to the classroom to work with individual children, or small groups of children for 45 minutes
- followed by an opportunity to discuss and share observations and learning
- "Make and Take" at the end of the session.




15

Why participate in "Jouons?"

For Parents:

- to develop a sense of belonging in your child's classroom community
- to continue to develop understandings of emerging literacy
- to gain insights into what children are able to do and what is expected of them at school
- to learn more about the ways in which children learn
- to become more confident partners in encouraging early language and literacy development at home
- to share, and receive, practical and easy to implement ideas regarding the multiple pathways to literacy



16

Why offer "Jouons?"

For Teachers:


- to provide opportunities for children to have fun working together and to experience success
- to help students progress by involving them in a variety of meaningful, interactive games and activities
- to support early literacy in the Kindergarten classroom while respecting its play-based environment
- as motivation - to help children continue to grow in enthusiasm about their learning
- also to encourage children to become excited about their families' involvement in their learning
- to connect to parental views as a form of enrichment for students
- to help families feel more connected to the wider school community

17

What will "Jouons" look like?

Parent Volunteers plus the Teacher:

- playing learning games and leading hands-on activities with individual children or with small groups of children in the classroom
- exploring the world of letters, print and numbers together
- practising vocabulary related to the current or a previous theme
- reviewing concepts taught by the teacher
- reading simple French storybooks
- participating in adult discussions and sharing "make and take"
- a Jouons kit of resources, "Sacs de Jouons," will be available for groups to use
- audio-tapes or CD's of the targeted vocabulary, letter names, etc., will be available to take home
- mini-workshops introducing and practising simple and functional French words and phrases.



18

Keynote Presentation (cont'd):

"Jeux" Kits may include:

- Alphabet Concentration
- "Mot du Jour" Memory
- vocabulary (pictures) letter or number "Salut" or Bingo
- card games, e.g., "Allez Fischer"
- cards and dice math games
- sorting games
- puzzle and domino games
- gameboards
- French storybooks...



19




20

Parent Discussion and Sharing

Possible Themes

Some topics may be pre-determined:

- P-L-A-Y
- Pedagogical documentation for making learning visible (as ordinary moments, a series of observations, as problem solving, etc.)
- Motivation and Engagement
- Oral Language Development
- Emergent Literacy
- Invented Spelling and Journal writing
- Early reading
- Kindergarten numeracy
- "outdoor play"




This list is flexible. Other topics may be identified through parental interests.

21

Suggestions for Home Support


- read and talk regularly with your child, and expose him or her to interesting places, ideas, and concepts
- provide opportunities for your child to explore books, paper and a variety of writing materials, etc.
- encourage your child to write notes, letters, cards, etc.
- encourage your child to write about things that are interesting and important to him or her
- teach your child songs, poems, rhymes, etc.
- understand that making mistakes is part of learning
- encourage your child to "give it a try", and be a risk taker
- do NOT emphasize correctness in the early stages




22

More Suggestions for Home Support

- collect artifacts (tickets, brochures, shells, etc.) when on vacation, and glue into a Journal book as a special keepsake. Encourage your child to add stories using "best guess spelling."
- or create a virtual Journal on the computer using photos and scans of objects
- clap out the number of words in a sentence, or the syllables in a word
- stretch words out like an elastic band (say them slowly), and finger count together all the sounds you hear
- encourage your child to re-enact stories, and knowledge from information books.



23



Kindergarten

a place where a love of learning is nurtured, and childhood is honoured and celebrated...

24

“Home-School Connections and Family Literacy”**Oral Narration Notes for the Keynote Presentation:****Slide #1****Further Discussion:**

For the evening Family Night Workshop:

1. Begin with a welcome and introduction of: Teacher and Parents.
2. Have parents tell who their son/daughter is in the class.
3. Briefly go over the agenda.

Slide #3**Further Discussion:**

“Literacies” - includes using a range of expressive mediums to communicate one’s own thoughts and experiences, as well as to communicate with and understand others (Early Learning Framework, 2009).

Slide #4**Further Discussion:**

- Children learn to read and write in an integrated way.
- Learning about the “functions of literacy is as much a part of learning about writing and reading as is learning about form” (The Primary Program, p. 121).
- Active Engagement: Children interact with adults in writing and reading situations, and also explore print on their own.

Slide #5**Further Discussion:**

- The “seven signs of emergent literacy” (Allington & Cunningham (1994), as cited in The Primary Program, p. 121)

Slide #6**Further Discussion:**

1. This question is to be asked of the caregivers who are in attendance.
2. Give participants five minutes to think about their ideas, and then have them share with the person sitting next to them.

Slide #7**Further Discussion:**

Families have such an important role to play in supporting their child’s learning.

- The “relationships that children have with adults and other children . . . in school programs provide the foundation for their success in school” (Pianta, 2003, p. 24).
- Adult relationships are of “critical importance . . . to children’s well-being” (New, 2001, p. 209)

“Teachers need to respect children’s home language, and use it as a base on which to build and extend children’s language and literacy experiences” (Neuman & Roskos, 2005, p. 3).

- Children bring prior knowledge, values, and assumptions from home.
- parents who ask their children to display their knowledge, gain more experience with the types of questions they will be asked at school
 - e.g., “Where’s your nose?” (display questions)
- other families may ask more literal types of questions.

****The role of older siblings playing with younger siblings is also important in literacy learning (as well as in many other areas).**

Slide #9

Further Discussion:

- In our ever-changing multicultural and social context, “schools need to recognize and validate the culture of the home - including the “funds of knowledge” and belief systems of diverse families - in order to build better collaborative relationships with parents” (Lopez, 2001, p. 434).
- The recommendation is to develop programs that are reflective and responsive to a more expanded, less limiting definition of involvement.

Slide #10

Further Discussion:

Teaching for “cross language transfer” involves both the role of pre-existing knowledge as a foundation for learning, and the interdependence of abilities across languages.

- Prior knowledge includes the information and skills that a person has already learned, as well as the background experiences of the learner.
- Cummin’s “Interdependence Hypothesis” supports the idea that literacy skills developed in one language can predict the development of similar skills in another language that is learned later on.
- There is a “Common Underlying Proficiency” between languages, and we need to “tap into” this commonality.

Some examples of Cross-linguistic transfer:

- transfer of the knowledge that words are composed of distinct sounds (phonological and phonemic awareness)
- transfer of strategies of vocabulary acquisition
- transfer of conceptual elements (e.g., understanding the concept of photosynthesis)

Examples of *the “principled” and purposeful use of a child’s first language* in the Kindergarten French Immersion classroom include:

- Alphabet letter names and sounds (7 letter names are the same in English and French, 17 letter-sounds are the same)
- Shape names that are spelled the same (triangle, rectangle) but pronounced a little differently
 - the circle shape name is spelled and pronounced in very similar manners in French and English (*le cercle*)
- Colour words that are very similar (*orange* is spelled the same, *violet* is purple, *bleu* is blue, *brun* is brown, *gris* is gray).

Slide #11

Further Discussion:

- School-Home Connections organized at the school level.

Slide #12

Further Discussion:

- Wider-School Connections organized by teachers.

Other examples of shared activities that the children would be involved in throughout the school year that are specific to my classroom include:

- looking for their runaway Gingerbread Men by visiting classrooms, and other spaces in the school (Library, Gym, Office, Staff Room, etc.) as a fun, exciting and interactive school tour
- activities with their Grade 7 Big Buddies, such as reading and math games, Halloween Haunted House, Dear Santa letter writing (and reading the response that had secretly been created by the Buddy), sewing stockings together, practising for Student-Led Conferences, Easter egg hunt, playground fun and “Messy Day”
- We also have a “Butterfly Garden” at our school, and our Kindergarten children are involved in weeding the garden in the fall and spring. Our class adds to this wider school community project by planting something new together each year.

Slide #13

Further Discussion:

- Family Connections organized by teachers.

- In “Noisy Reading,” parents or other family members come into the classroom at the beginning of the day to read with small groups of children
 - takes place during the first 30 minutes of school each Friday morning for several months in the Spring.

Background context for “Jouons”:

- I have taught at the Kindergarten French Immersion level for many years
- In most cases, parents of children enrolled in Early French Immersion have limited or no experience with the language of instruction (French).
- One of their main concerns often involves the question of how they will be able to help their child be successful.

Personal story:

When my own children entered into the Immersion Program, I was able to observe first hand my husband’s struggles to try and help with some of their homework. These experiences added a new dimension and insight into my teaching.

- Although it is true that Immersion was originally conceived for families whose first or sole language is not the primary language of instruction, the fact that all other families in their child’s classroom may be “in the same boat” offers little comfort, particularly for parents of a struggling learner or for parents who were not entirely sure of their original decision to register their child in the program.

One of my main goals as a teacher is to help support the role of parents of young children with their second language and literacy learning:

- by inviting them into the community of learners that is the Kindergarten classroom
- led to the creation of “Jouons.”

Further examples of Home-School Connections families experience throughout the school year that are specific to my classroom include:

- during July children receive a personal letter of welcome and calendar of summer months mailed home by teacher
- Home Visits by the teacher at the end of August
- an “Information” package is given out to parents, as well as a “Getting Acquainted” questionnaire for the parent and child to complete
- Christmas stocking and ornament making in December
- in the Student-Led Conferences in January, small groups of children bring their parents to school with them, and share their learning and classroom setting. I also create a movie of a “Typical Day in our Classroom” that we view together while sharing juice and cookies.
- Valentine Bear cards we make and mail to parents
- Mother’s and Father’s Day cards and gifts
- special art projects or “ateliers,” e.g., making papier mache piggy banks together, etc.
- sharing of Occupations and special talents or hobbies, e.g. Firefighters, still-life painting, etc.

- sharing games that parents or grandparents played as children (during Physical Education and in the classroom)
- Year-end Picnic
- Monthly Calendars of activities, and weekly Class Newsletters are sent home.

Slide #15**Further Discussion:**

The “Jouons” Program:

- invites family members to work and play in the classroom
- recognizes that “there are multiple ways into literacy” (Anderson & Morrison, 2005, p. 5)
- supports parents as they work with their Kindergarten children at home, and *honours and builds on what they are already doing*
- provides a wonderful opportunity for teachers and parents to be able to learn from each other, and work together to build a support system for their young literacy learners
- is a program I have developed as part of my Master’s Degree studies.

We try to learn and practice our French together as much as possible (but you don’t need to be able to speak French to be involved).

Slide #17**Further Discussion:**

Working closely with families has many benefits for the classroom teacher:

- enables teachers to better understand parents’ beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions of the roles they play in the literacy development of their children
- helps teachers to be able to build on the strengths of their families.
- Reciprocal support in the context of a second language classroom environment is particularly important and valuable
- Parents provide additional role models for the students. Teachers readily encourage, accept and appreciate as much support and help as possible in order to help their students be successful.

****Family literacy programs may be one of the most effective ways of keeping families involved in their children’s education.**

Slide #20**Further Discussion:**

- photos of children and parents involved in a “Jouons” session.

Slide #22**Further Discussion:**

- children use writing for social engagement

- they are driven by their curiosity and interest in communicating and interacting with others
- children learn about literacy in ways that have personal meaning and value for them
- they may draw on their culture's uses of literacy as a resource for writing, e.g., classic literature, popular culture, and texts from the media.

Adults play a critical role in children's literacy development:

- engaging their interest
- creating challenging but achievable goals and expectations
- supporting their learning (modeling, "scaffolding," etc.).

Slide #23

Further Discussion:

- more specific ideas are included on this slide
- "best guess spelling" is another term for invented spelling.

“Family Literacy” – Parent Handout**Home-School Connections and Family Literacy****Family Literacy**

- occurs naturally during daily living routines
- may also be based on programs that are interventions of some kind
- may reflect ethnic, racial, or cultural heritage
- helps to develop children’s emergent literacy in different and particular ways.

Family Literacy may include activities such as:

- sharing stories and ideas through conversation, reading, writing, and drawing
- composing notes, letters, emails or texting to communicate messages
- making lists (shopping, appointments, etc.)
- reading or following directions (e.g., cooking, manuals)
- playing games together (e.g., board games or video games), role play activities
- web browsing
- sharing the traditional bedtime story
- being involved in programs created by schools or communities . . .

French Immersion and Family Literacy

- children’s first language and prior knowledge are important resources for learning
- literacy that is developed at home serves as a foundation for the acquisition of a second language
- this support is highly valued by teachers
- literacy-related skills and knowledge across different languages are interdependent
- much research supports “the role of prior knowledge [as] particularly relevant to the issues of teaching for transfer in the education of bilingual students” (Cummins, 2008, p. 67).
- research also supports the “principled” and purposeful use of a child’s first language as a resource in learning a second language.

Successful Family “Connections”:

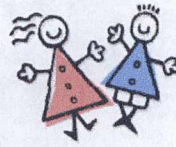
- ✓ respect and show value for the various cultures, ideas, beliefs and customs of the diverse families represented in the classroom
- ✓ are developed in a reflective and responsive manner (contextual)
- ✓ are flexible and adaptable, and meet the needs of families
- ✓ suggestions and activities “make sense” and are “doable”
- ✓ welcome and give opportunity for family input
- ✓ involve “capacity building” for caregivers as well
- ✓ promote sensible goals, “keep it simple.”



Appendix B

“Jouons”

- sample session -

**TOPIC: PLAY****SESSION: 3****Key Ideas:**

- Play is how children create meaning about the world in which they live.
- It provides opportunities for children to be engaged in things they're interested in, and to discover new areas of interest.
- Play is intrinsically motivating, and capitalizes on children's natural curiosity and exuberance.
- Play enhances all areas of children's development, and lays the foundation for later academic success.

Session Overview**Ouverture - Opening (Adults only)** *30 minutes*

- Discussion: What are some different ways that you play? How much time do you spend playing each week?
- Share “The Value of PLAY” Keynote: What is the value of children's play, and what does it look like in the Kindergarten classroom?
- Explain and demonstrate Centre activities (share Centre posters and documentation – photos of children playing at the various open Centres).

In-Class Play Session *45 minutes*

Free exploration and choice of Centres that are open at this time in the Kindergarten program, and with which the children are already familiar.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Dramatic Play Centre | 2. Block Centre |
| 3. Drawing and Writing Centre | 4. Exploration Centre (Math/Science) |
| 5. Imagination Centre / “Atelier”
e.g., painting | 6. “Bricolage”
e.g., collage, playdough |
| 7. Sand Table | 8. Water Table |
| 9. A Centre that is unique to an individual classroom... | |

Allow parents and children to clean up and change Centres according to their interests and needs.

Break Time / Recess *15 minutes***Clôture - Closing (Adults only, Sharing and Debriefing)** *30 minutes*

- Give handout and debrief activities. (What was your favourite Centre? ... as a child?)
- Share additional ideas from home, answer questions
- Make and take.

Materials for the Session

- Classroom Centres

Take Home Materials


- blank shape book (theme-related)
- Playdough recipe

“JOUONS” TOPIC: PLAY**SESSION: 3****CLASSROOM CENTRES / ACTIVITIES**

Dramatic Play Centre (House) - Children and parents may choose to play “house.” - Items may also be included for creating a restaurant or fire station.	Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typical items found in the House Centre • Restaurant – child-made menus, play food • Fire Station – firefighter uniforms and turnout gear
Block Centre - Children and parents may use a variety of building materials to create buildings, roadways, etc.	Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • large hollow blocks • lego
Drawing and Writing Centre - Children and parents may explore various writing tools and materials. - They may choose to create a story together.	Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pencils, crayons, felt pens • blank paper • blank shape booklets
Exploration Centre - free exploration of various math materials	Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • math collections
Imagination Centre – “Atelier” - Children and parents may paint a picture together.	Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • paint trays, tempera paint, brushes • large sheets blank white paper
“Bricolage” - exploration of playdough	Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • playdough mats, rollers, cutouts, etc.
Sand Table - free play with the equipment and sand	Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sand table and toys (shovels, farm animals, tractors, etc.)
Water Table - exploration of water and equipment	Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water table and toys (scoops, water wheel, boats, etc.)
Puppet Theatre - Children and parents may create a puppet show together.	Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various types of puppets (felt, sock, stick)

Appendix C

Keynote Presentation:



The Value of PLAY

la maternelle - Kindergarten


Presented by Mme Wilson

1

Child's PLAY

is how children create meaning about the world in which they live. Play is learning "their way"


- provides opportunities for children to be engaged in things they're interested in, and to discover new areas of interest
- is intrinsically motivating for children
- capitalizes on children's natural curiosity and exuberance
- enhances all areas of children's development
- lays the foundation for later academic success
- provides hands-on experiences with real-life materials that help children develop understanding of abstract concepts
- is critical for the development of imagination and creative problem-solving skills
- develops communication skills



2

Child's PLAY (cont'd)

- gives children the opportunity to practice sharing, negotiating, and resolving conflicts, as well as to learn self-advocacy skills
- fosters empathy, tolerance, and understanding of other perspectives
- encourages cooperation, flexibility, and openness
- fosters self-discipline, self-confidence and risk-taking
- is related to improvement in self-regulation (e.g., impulse control) and reduced aggression
- helps children to work through anxiety and stress
- builds active, healthy bodies
- provides joy and happiness
- is FUN!




3

Quality Child's PLAY

To ensure quality play, children need:

- large blocks of uninterrupted time
- rich, stimulating environments that they are able to help plan and rearrange
- a wide variety of materials
- supportive, responsive, and knowledgeable adults who may guide, engage in, and extend play but who do not dictate or dominate it
- many opportunities for exploring materials and ideas.



4


Learning and Play

- ▶ **Child-Initiated Play (free play)**
 - Children select and initiate their own activities from a variety of learning areas that have been prepared by the teacher
 - They "learn to interact with others, recognize and solve problems, and develop language, thinking and motor skills" (Full Day Kindergarten Program Guide, 2010, p. 141).
- ▶ **Teacher-Initiated Play**
 - Learning opportunities are more structured, and children's activities are directed by the teacher
 - Play may be initiated by the teacher in various ways (creating a thoughtful environment, giving hints and prompts, modelling, providing explicit instruction).

5

Play-Based Learning

- ▶ examples of play-based learning include,
 - ▶ learning through "Inquiry"
 - ▶ learning in "Real-Life Contexts."




6

Keynote Presentation (cont'd):

Types of Play Behaviours

- Unoccupied Behaviour
- Solitary Play
- Onlooker Play
- Parallel Play
- Associative Play
- Cooperative Play



7

Forms of Children's PLAY

- Constructive Play
 - painting, drawing, imagining, building, planning, collecting, organizing
- Socio-dramatic Play
 - pretending, role play, determining tasks and goals and then carrying them out, story telling
- Exploratory Play
 - manipulating, experimenting, construction, creating, exploring, inquiring

8

Forms of Children's PLAY (cont'd)


- Physical or Rough-and-Tumble Play
 - chasing, jumping, play-wrestling, laughing, tumbling, climbing
- Games with Rules
 - board games, computer games, card games, sport-related games, invented games
- Object Play or Symbolic Play
 - manipulating, assembling, pretending, trying new combinations

9

While the children are playing...

The Teacher is...

Observing	Encouraging
Documenting	Connecting
Listening	Playing
Asking thoughtful questions	Giving direct instruction
Supporting	Asking open-ended questions
Guiding	Extending
	Planning ...



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The United Nations has recognized play as a specific right for all children.

"Children have the right to relax and play, and to join in a wide range of cultural artistic and other recreational activities."


Article 31 (Leisure, play and culture)

11

Let's PLAY!

Classroom Learning Centres:

The Dramatic Play Centre	The Imagination Centre
The Block Centre	"Bricolage"
The Drawing and Writing Centre	The Sand Table
The Exploration Centre	The Water Table
	The Climbing Centre




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Keynote Presentation (cont'd):


The Value of PLAY

- What was your favourite Centre that you played at this afternoon?
- ... as a child?
- What are some play-based activities that you do at home with your child?
- What are some different ways that you have played this week?
- Do we play enough?

A simple line drawing of five children of different heights and styles, holding hands in a horizontal line. They are standing on a small patch of ground with some tufts of grass. The children are drawn in a whimsical, hand-drawn style.

"Play has to be reframed and seen not as an opposite to work but rather as a complement . . . Curiosity, imagination and creativity are like muscles: If you don't use them, you lose them."

Dr. David Elkind



What can Parents do?

- Reduce or eliminate television time. Be prepared with simple playthings and give suggestions for make-believe play to inspire their creativity.
- Encourage outdoor adventures. Play outside everyday, running, climbing, and using natural materials (e.g., water, sticks, mud).
- Try not to over-schedule your child's time. Allow and encourage him/her to have time for self-initiated play.
- Include children in adult activities such as cooking, raking leaves, cleaning, washing the car, etc.
- Advocate for play, and lobby for safe, well-maintained parks and play areas in your community.

[illegible]

“The Value of PLAY”

Oral Narration Notes for the Keynote Presentation:

Slide #1

Further Discussion:

If presenting in an evening workshop:

- Begin the evening with a welcome and brief re-introduction of: Teacher and Parents.
 - especially for those parents for whom this is their first workshop/Family Night
- Have parents tell who their son/daughter is in the class.
- Review the agenda.

Slide #6**Further Discussion:**

- Give definitions and examples of both “Inquiry” and “Real-Life Contexts.”

Slide #7**Further Discussion:**

1. Unoccupied Behaviour - Children appear not to be playing at all but are occupied with watching anything that happens to be of momentary interest.
2. Solitary Play - Children play alone and independently, following their own interest without reference to others.
3. Onlooker Play - Children watch other children playing. They may ask questions and make suggestions, but do not enter into the play.
4. Parallel Play - Children simply play beside each other with similar materials without interacting.
5. Associative Play - Children play with each other, sharing similar materials and activities in an unorganized way.
6. Cooperative Play - Children play with each other in an organized purposeful way.

*Note that the types of play listed are not sequential stages, and that children will choose the type of play that meets their needs and interests at the time.

Slide #8**Further Discussion:**

- Constructive Play - child uses materials to build or make a particular product representing objects, ideas, or processes
- Socio-dramatic Play - child takes on or assigns “pretend” roles. He/She may be alone or with others (e.g., “You be the Mommy”).
- Exploratory Play - child experiments with new ideas or new materials, and/or combines familiar ideas or materials in new ways in order to solve problems.

Slide #9**Further Discussion:**

- Physical or Rough-and-Tumble Play - child engages in active, non-aggressive behaviours while physically interacting with a play context
- Games with Rules - child may create his/her own rules, or try to follow established rules while playing various types of games

- Object Play or Symbolic Play - child explores objects in their environment (exploring their properties and uses, e.g., building blocks).

Slide #10**Further Discussion:**

- Materials in each Centre have been carefully chosen. The role of the teacher is to facilitate and extend learning while children are exploring materials at their own level and their own pace.
- **The manipulatives in the Kindergarten classroom should be viewed as the textbooks and science labs of older children's classrooms.
- The play-based activities in which children participate demonstrate the child's application of skills learned independently.

Slide #12**Further Discussion:**

- Time to play in the classroom.
 - These are the Centres that are open for exploration.
- Introduce Centre activities
- also share Centre posters and documentation.

Slide #13**Further Discussion:**

Debriefing Session

- Discussion questions to be shared after the in-class play session.

Slide #14**Further Discussion:**

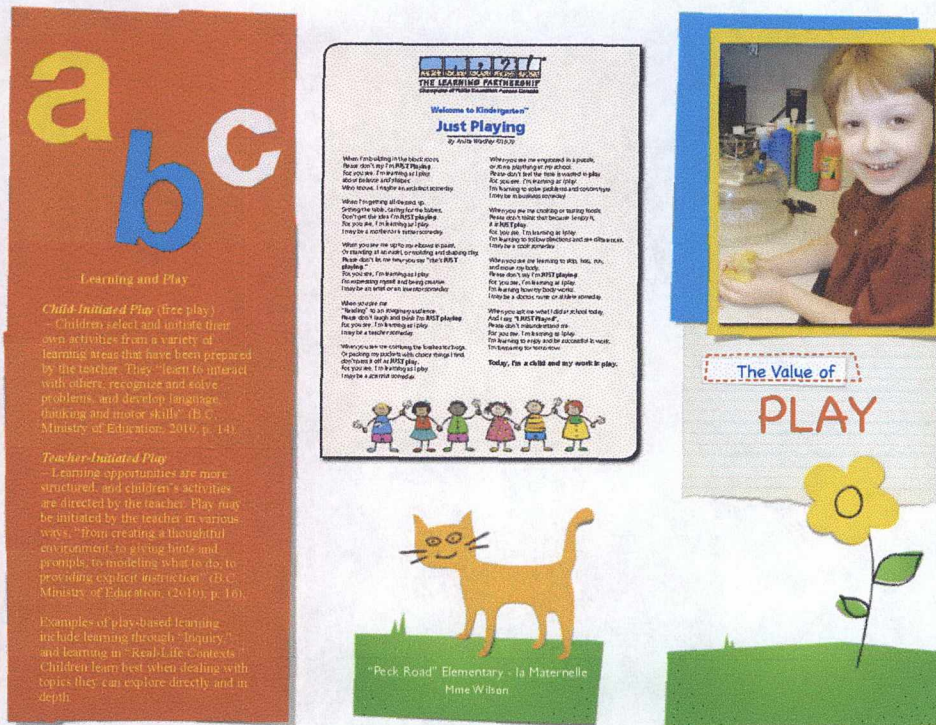
Dr. David Elkind

- an American Child Psychologist, and Professor Emeritus at Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts.
- also the author of the books: *The Hurried Child*, *The Power of Play*, and *Miseducation*.

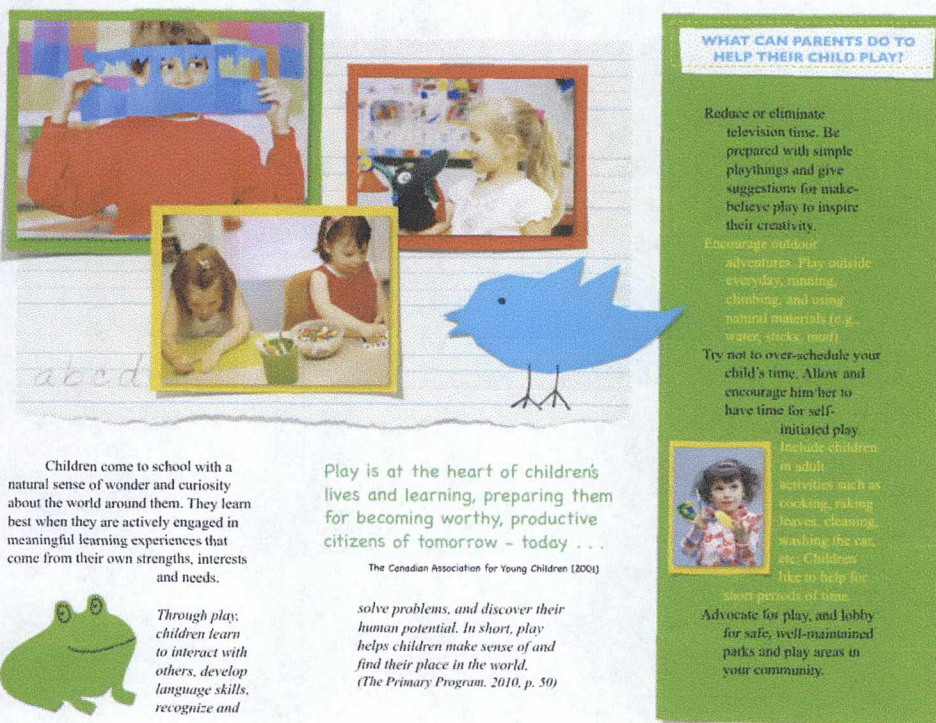
Slide #15**Further Discussion:**

- Children like to help for short periods of time, and then they choose to engage in their own play pursuits.

“The Value of PLAY” – Parent Brochure Handout



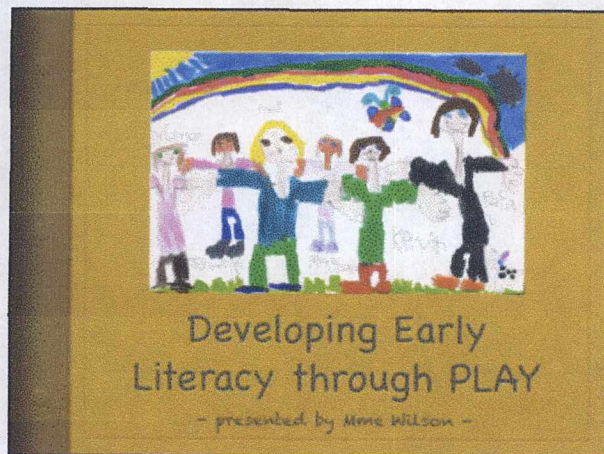
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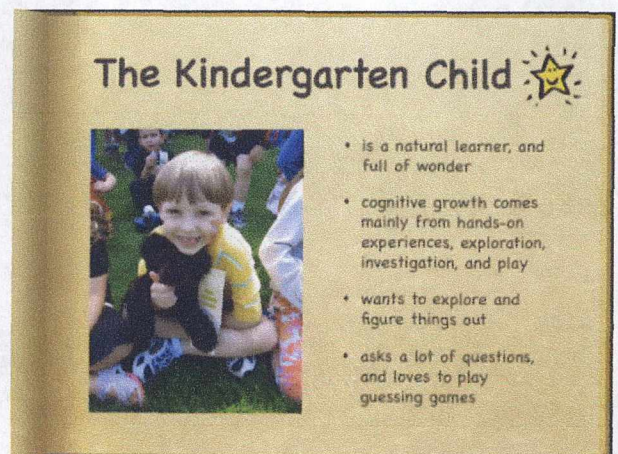
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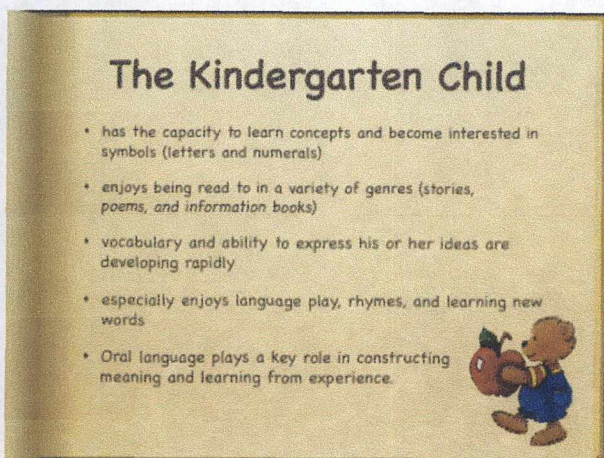
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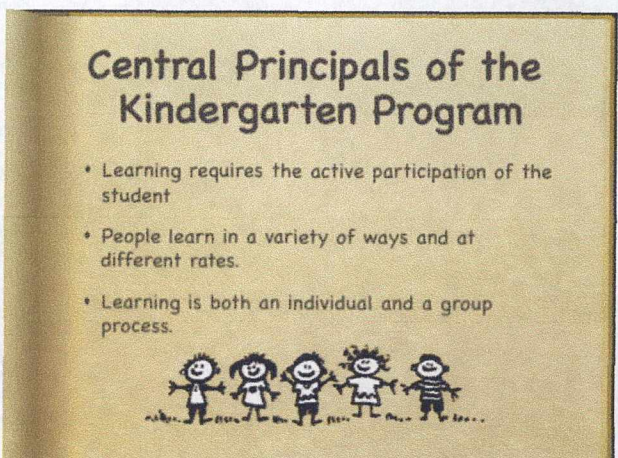
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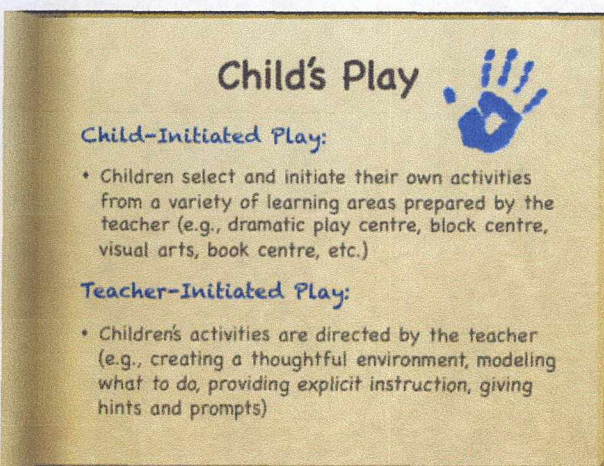
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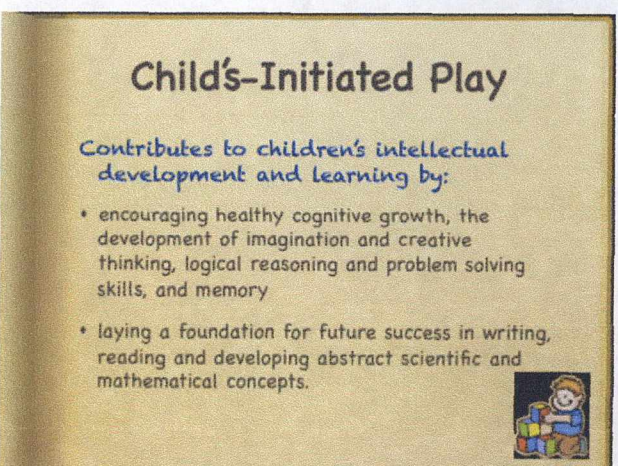
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5



6

Keynote Presentation (cont'd):

Child-Initiated Play and Language Development

- Both involve symbolic representation
 - Language uses words to represent objects, actions, and situations.
 - In play, children use language and objects to represent other things (e.g., using a cardboard box for a tent, using a block for a telephone).
- Socio-dramatic play or "pretend play" fosters Kindergarten children's language development by nudging them to make intentional use of talk to identify and elaborate on their play themes.



7

Teacher-Initiated Play

Also contributes to children's intellectual development and learning by:

- encouraging healthy cognitive growth, the development of imagination and creative thinking, logical reasoning and problem solving skills, and memory
- laying a foundation for future success in writing, reading and developing abstract scientific and mathematical concepts.



8

Teacher-Initiated Play and Language Development

- When children use language to communicate, they are focusing on making meaning, and both the form and structure of the language are transparent.
- The teacher guides the children in playing with language, helping the form and structure to become apparent by:
 - Fostering phonological awareness, such as rhyme, rhythm, onsets and rimes, and phonemic awareness in small and large group meetings
 - Directing children to Centres that have literacy materials and props related to the current theme
 - Providing rich experiences (e.g., field trips, stories, visitors)
 - Gently entering children's dramatic play.



9

Oral Language Development

Why is it important?

- There is a strong relationship between oral language and literacy learning, school achievement, and success beyond school.
- Preschool oral language abilities predict reading success three to five years later.
- Particularly
 - Expressive vocabulary, and
 - Specific school-based language practices (oral and written genres / discourses).

10

Broadly speaking, language can only "grow" through interaction with people and texts that introduce new vocabulary, concepts, and language structures (Biemiller, 2003).

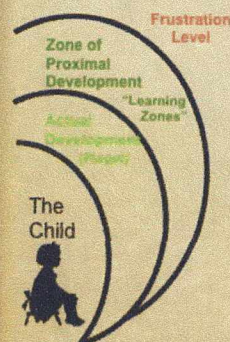
- ❖ "texts that stretch"
- ❖ "wrap language in and around experience"

Language development is facilitated in rich play-based learning environments



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Learning occurs in a social context



"...zones" illustrate how people can stretch beyond their individual capabilities toward more mature cognitive functioning when they learn through social interactions."

Vygotsky, 1978

B.C. Primary Program, p. 46

12

Keynote Presentation (cont'd):

Language is learned

through ...

- Active engagement
- Interaction
- Making connections (attaching meaning)
- Experimentation and play
- Successive approximations.



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Language is facilitated

by ...

- Demonstrating and modeling not only words but also how to use them (the patterns of interaction)
- Focusing on meaning and purpose
- Acceptance of approximations
- Giving support and feedback
- Using a "contingent" response
- Extension and elaboration (stretching children's language out).



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In Language-Rich Environments,

Young Children ...

- have the chance to experience language as a powerful tool to communicate, to explore relationships, to tell stories, to question, and to shape the world around them
- are exposed to diverse ways of using language
 - are encouraged to communicate their thoughts and experiences creatively using many different forms of expression
- are enabled to play with their own language and with other languages spoken in their communities
- experience the stories and symbols of their own and other cultures
- are encouraged to express their own points of view and reflect on others' views.



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Oral Language in Kindergarten

What does it look like?

- Involvement in Morning routines (e.g., Calendar, Daily News, Show and Tell)
- Children/Teacher collaborating and making plans (e.g., field trips, projects, group work)
- Interactive or shared writing
- "Thinking Together," brainstorming, problem solving
- Oral reading and rereading of stories
- Singing songs, reciting nursery rhymes and poems



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Oral Language in Kindergarten (cont'd)

What does it look like?

- Oral Storytelling
- Engaging physically during oral instruction and storytelling (e.g., using puppets, feltboard, etc.)
- Re-enacting real-life activities and language practices in dramatic play (e.g., in the House Centre)
- Playing games with words and sounds (e.g., rhyming, using the initial sounds of children's names, "I Spy")
- Clapping out words or syllables in songs, poems or rhymes
- Sharing the successes and challenges of the day.



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Oral Storytelling

- Allows children to share their experiences and to demonstrate their listening skills
- Helps to sharpen their imagination, working memory, and visualization skills
- Enhances critical and creative thinking
- Increases vocabulary and understanding of unfamiliar words
- Improves listening and speaking abilities
- May spark an interest in reading
- Develops greater understanding of their own and others' cultural heritage.



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Keynote Presentation (cont'd):**The Development of Early Literacy**

- Learning to read and write is an ongoing, lifelong process.
- It begins very early as children learn to listen and to talk.
- Play is the way that children learn.
- Playing with literacy is an important way of making sense of the world.
- When young children draw and write stories, much of their meaning is in the picture.
- Children learn about literacy through engagement in meaningful experiences.
- When children are engaged, they are motivated to understand.



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Young Children's Writing**Begins with Visual Strategies:**

- random scribbles are the beginning of writing and drawing
- scribbles begin to reflect the "shape" of writing in the child's culture
- shapes appear that are similar to letters (capitals first)
- strings of conventional letters are used to represent "words"
- children begin to "invent" spellings for unknown words.

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Invented Spelling**Stage 1: Pre-Representational
(no sound-symbol correspondence)**

- a) pre-syllabic - NKISRR for "animal"
 - b) "Syllabic hypothesis" - still no sound-symbol correspondence
- one letter or letter shape represents one syllable (NKR)



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Young Children's Writing**Develops Sound-based Strategies for Invented Spellings:**

- begins to develop letter-sound correspondences
 - letter name strategy
- single consonants (initial sound)
- multiple consonants (beginning and end sounds)
- includes some middle sounds (vowels appear, usually "long vowels" first).

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Invented Spelling**Stage 2: Developmental - some
"phonemes" are represented
(NMS)****Stage 3: Representational -
represents most phonemes
(ANMLS)**

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Invented Spelling**Stage 4: Conventional - logical
representation of essentially
all phonemes (ANEMULS)**

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Keynote Presentation (cont'd):

Writing and Representing in Kindergarten

What does it look like?

- Children drawing pictures and talking about their pictures
- Children beginning to use symbols and letters to write
- Copying familiar words
- Using chalkboards, mini-whiteboards, pencils, paper, felt pens, stencils and magnetic letters to practice identifying letters and making words
- Purposefully using writing materials in Centres
- Participating in Shared Writing with the teacher.



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Kindergarten Emergent Writing



French:

"O prata jame jous o bazbal"

Au printemps, j'aime jouer au baseball.

English Translation:

In the spring, I like to play baseball.

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Reading and Young Children

- Babies begin learning how to read by doing "book babbling."
- They appear to listen when they are being read to.
- Toddlers begin to "read" signs in context (environmental print) when they are 2-3 years old.
- Next, young children begin to read stories by the pictures.
- They then develop the understanding that "print tells the story."
- begin to track or follow along with the print while the story is being read
- recognize some words by sight
- followed by word-by-word reading, phonemic awareness is developing
- begin to focus on accuracy.
 - sight vocabulary increases
 - make meaningful substitutions and self-corrections.



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Reading and Young Children



- We read for meaning.
- There is substantial evidence that we read in "chunks" of letters, and that these letter chunks help us to recognize even unfamiliar words.
- Good readers use strategies such as making predictions, phonics, syntax, context, etc., in an integrated way.
- The background knowledge that a child brings to a text, and about print and how books work also influence his or her understanding of the written words.
- The development of phonemic awareness is very important in learning to read.
- Phonemic awareness is a "predictor" of success in reading.

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In Literacy-Rich Environments,

- Environmental print surrounds the children, including calendars, schedules, signs, and directions to show how words are used purposefully in everyday activities
- Collaboratively written texts from circle time and words of songs and poems may be written on charts and posted on walls
- A library corner filled with books of different genres (e.g., stories, poems, information books, and magazines)
- Literacy materials are available in Learning Centres (e.g., information books in the Science Centre, notepads and pencils in the House Centre)
- Opportunities are provided for children to respond to literature in a variety of activities (e.g., role playing, visual arts, movement, choral reading, talking).



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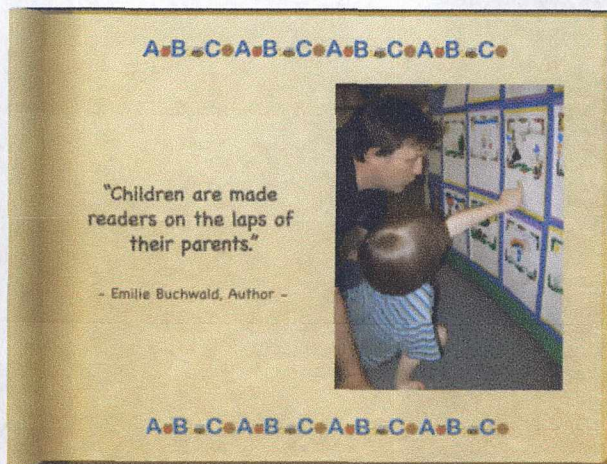
Reading and Viewing in Kindergarten

What does it look like?

- Listening to stories, poems, non-fiction books
- Shared reading (students read/recite familiar books and poems with the teacher)
- Talking about stories - before, during and after reading them
- Making connections to stories
- Predicting patterns in stories, poems, and songs
- Drawing pictures, painting, and acting out events from stories
- Children "acting like a reader"
- Listening to books on tape or CD
- Playing games where children match letters, sounds and objects.



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Keynote Presentation (cont'd):

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“Developing Early Literacy through Play”**Oral Narration Notes for the Keynote Presentation:****Slide #4****Further Discussion:**

- from the Full Day Kindergarten Program Guide, 2010, p. 12.

Slide #5**Further Discussion:**

- Play, as discussed in the previous “The Value of PLAY” workshop, contributes to children’s physical development and well-being, social-emotional development, and intellectual development.

“To foster optimum development in all domains, children need two kinds of opportunities for play: child-initiated and teacher-initiated” (Full Day Kindergarten Program Guide, 2010, p. 14).

Teacher-Initiated Play:

- Teachers can initiate play in various ways
 - giving hints and prompts, e.g., stimulating children’s dramatic play by providing props and helping children to create scenarios, expanding play roles, and developing written plans and rules that will govern their play.

Slide #6**Further Discussion:**

- Children learn to interact with others, recognize and solve problems, and develop language, thinking, and motor skills.

Slide #7**Further Discussion:**

- Active Play (including recess) also contributes to children's academic achievement.

Slide #8**Further Discussion:**

- . . . a repeat of the contributions on the Child-Initiated Play slide

Slide #9**Further Discussion:**

There are various ways that a teacher can facilitate this type of play:

- ✓ Through large group approaches that introduce new materials, ideas, and activities, which children can later explore on their own, e.g., exploring specific skills and concepts in areas such as literacy or mathematics
- ✓ By adding theme related literacy materials and props in Centres:
 - This increases writing and reading activity and furthers children's emerging knowledge of print
 - children often learn to recognize some words in the context of play, e.g., the words "blocks" or "house" ("blocs" or "maison")
- ✓ By providing rich experiences:
 - children may base their dramatic play scenarios on field trips and stories read in class
 - props that are related to these experiences can encourage and extend dramatic play
- ✓ By entering children's play gently
 - when teachers thoughtfully enter into the play of children, they are able to nudge children's thinking to a higher conceptual level.

"Teachers can encourage children to explore their rich linguistic potential by following a child's lead, responding in ways that are appropriate to the context and to the child's level of linguistic development, and elaborating and extending the child's language" (Full Day Kindergarten Program Guide, 2010, p. 32).

Slide #10**Further Discussion:**

Particularly,

- “Expressive vocabulary” (the vocabulary used to communicate in speaking and writing) is a stronger predictor of reading success than phonemic awareness. (This is specifically related to single-word reading.)
- “Semantic skills” (meaning vocabulary) predict passage comprehension
- Phonemic awareness appears to be a side effect of more general language abilities
- Discourse – oral or written communication, conversation, discussion.

Concerns:

- Children who enter grade 4 with lower vocabulary show increasing problems with reading comprehension, even if they have good decoding/word identification skills.
- Research shows that the more knowledge a child has about the world (more concepts), the better his/her comprehension.

Slide #11**Further Discussion:**

- Texts that stretch are richer, more difficult texts than the child would be able to read independently.
- Much language growth comes from non-print sources (e.g., parents, peers, etc.)

*Dr. Andrew Biemiller is a Canadian researcher. He is Professor Emeritus at the Institute of Child Study, Department of Human Development and Applied Psychology, University of Toronto, Ontario.

Slide #12**Further Discussion:**

- from The Kindergarten Learning Project Assessment Framework, B.C. Ministry of Education

Slide #13**Further Discussion:**

- We accept children’s approximations because they have meaning.
- In the “real world,” language is contextualized, meaning that language happens within the context of an activity, not on its own.
 - This is part of the problem with “word of the day” programs.
 - “Isolated vocabulary instruction does NOT work” (Chapman, 2010).

- ****In order to remember something (word, etc.), there must be meaning attached to it. Memory is aided even further if there is emotion attached to it as well.**

Slide #14**Further Discussion:****Scaffolding Language:**

- “Contingent” Response – your response is based upon, or contingent upon, what the child says first, then you elaborate and stretch...
- ****Be careful of too much “teacher talk” as this can get in the way of oral language development.**

Remember also:

- Some children need more processing time
- Some people also need to “think-to-speak” or “speak-to-think.”

Slide #16**Further Discussion:**

“Thinking Together” is not “guess what the teacher is thinking”

- it is building on children’s interests
- asking speculative and process questions
- encouraging more talk from the children.

Slide #17**Further Discussion:**

“Language Play”

****Dramatic play is very important and can be really powerful, especially if the teacher takes part with the children.**

Slide #18**Further Discussion:**

Oral storytelling is a very powerful language development activity.

Teachers may choose to:

- provide opportunities for students to hear Aboriginal stories about the environment, traditions, and history by inviting Aboriginal Elders or storytellers into the classroom.

Slide #19**Further Discussion:**

- In a Kindergarten classroom, the development of early literacy would include having many "rich experiences with language, environmental print, patterned stories, and Big Books" (Chapman, 2009).
- Play "allows children to express and represent their ideas and new knowledge, making it their own" (Neuman & Roskos, 2005, p. 5).
- Playing with literacy includes activities such as:
 - language play, e.g., rhyming and alliterative play
 - also, segmenting words into syllables, onset and rime activities (word families)
 - giving opportunities to help children to notice and use letters and words
 - reading and writing for meaning
 - using invented spelling when writing.
- When children are engaged naturally in play with language, they develop phonemic awareness, e.g., action songs, popcorn song, nursery rhymes, etc.

Definitions:

- Phonological awareness (PA) - the ability to hear and distinguish between sounds of the language. PA also includes the ability to manipulate those sounds, e.g., hearing and creating rhyming words, alliterations, separating the flow of speech (sentences) into separate words (concept of word), hearing syllables as "chunks" in spoken words, separating spoken words into onsets and rimes (e.g., c-at; dr-ink), and phonemic awareness (segmenting words into phonemes and blending phonemes into words).
- Phonemic awareness – is the ability to hear individual speech sounds in spoken words, and is part of phonological awareness. Phonemic awareness is the understanding that words are made up of individual sounds (phonemes), and is the ability to listen to, recognize, and manipulate these phonemes either by segmenting, blending, or changing individual phonemes within words to create new words.
- Phoneme – is the smallest speech sound in a language (more of a mental idea because we attach another sound to it when we try to pronounce individual phonemes).
 - Phonemes combine to form words. A few words, such as 'a' or 'oh', have only one phoneme (44 in English)
 - Most words are made up of a blend of phonemes, e.g., 'go' has two phonemes, 'stop' has four phonemes
 - The term "phoneme" does not refer to individual letters, since sometimes a combination of letters makes only one sound. For example, the word phone has five letters but only three phonemes /f/ /o/ /n/.
- Graphemes - are letter symbols that are used to represent phonemes, e.g., K, P, SH, TH, IGH

- Phonics - a method of teaching that focuses on the connections between sounds and symbols (e.g., letter-sound knowledge)
 - describes the relationship between sounds and letter patterns that make up printed words. A sound, or a set of sounds, can be written down in a predictable way so that others can read what it says.
- Syllable – Part of a word that contains a vowel or vowel sound. For example: the word 'table' has two syllables 'ta' and 'ble'.
- Onsets and Rimes – Onset and rime is a way to break syllables into two parts: the part before the vowel and the part with the vowel and everything after it. For example, bag -- /b/ /ag/ and swim -- /sw/ /im/.

Slide #20

Further Discussion:

Writing Stages:

- “*Scribbling*” is a child’s approximation of writing
- The “*Fluency*” stage is similar to the stage at which a baby begins to string sounds together. It shows that a child now knows how writing should look.
- Writing may begin to look more like printed language (though not readable to an adult). The child has begun to recognize that words are made of letters, but he or she is not particularly concerned about which letters represent the sounds in the story. The child should be encouraged to “read” what his/her message says.
- The child is recognizing that there is a relationship between printed letters and speech sounds (e.g., talk can be written down and what has been written can be read or spoken) – “the alphabetic principle.”

**Strings of random conventional letters - the length of string may be related to the real world object, not the spoken word (e.g., caterpillar – sm; and bear - snniabmm).

Slide #21

Further Discussion:

- At the early stage of sound-letter representation, effort is made by a child to make the connection between letters and sounds of words. Just one letter may represent whole words during the pre-syllabic stage.
- Sometimes called “best-guess spelling.”

Slide #22**Further Discussion:**

******Writing is a process of making meaning. It is more than spelling, and we should be looking at “children’s ways of writing as developmental approximations rather than as errors” (Chapman, 1996, p. 318).

Invented Spelling:

- In this stage, children are beginning to realize that each letter represents a sound. At first, he/she may use letters (usually consonants) to represent beginning sounds, then ending, sounds, and finally, some of the sounds in the middle of words (usually vowels).

Also,

- children spell by using the letter that they think is represented by where they feel the sound in their mouth, e.g., JRUK or DRUK for “truck”
- vowels are often substituted
- some children are “Super-linguists” and represent every phoneme, e.g., DADDEY for “Daddy”

******One of the best ways to encourage the development of conventional spelling later is to encourage children to “invent spell.” Writing with invented spelling helps children to sort out the sounds of our language, and to learn standardized spelling.

*******“Independent writing is one of the best sources of information as to what a child knows about written language. For example, children’s non-standard spellings reveal their knowledge of alphabetic and phonetic principles, level of phonological awareness (including phonemic awareness), and knowledge of the spelling system” (The Primary Program, 2000, p. 124).

Slide #24**Further Discussion:**

- In this stage, children recognize and attempt to use conventional or standard spelling. When a child is writing during this stage, we teach “standard” spelling and letter patterns whenever we model or demonstrate reading and writing.

Slide #25**Further Discussion:****Purposeful Writing:**

- making shopping lists or writing in an order book while playing restaurant in the Dramatic Play Centre (House Centre)
- drawing and making signs for buildings constructed in the Blocks Centre
- labeling paintings in the Imagination Centre (painting / art).

Shared Writing:

- The teacher writes something (e.g., a story, letter, thank-you note, etc.) with the ideas and help of the children.

Slide #26**Further Discussion:**

- Kindergarten French Immersion, Spring emergent writing sample

Slide #27**Further Discussion:**

- Environmental Print - not so much they are reading “M,” as much as they recognize that it is a symbol for McDonald’s.

Slide #28**Further Discussion:**

- “Unfamiliar words are read more by analogy with known words than by identifying letters separately, and then sounding words out” (Weaver, 1998, p. 28, as cited by Chapman, 2009).

Phonemic Awareness:

- some level of Phonemic Awareness (PA) helps children to make sense of phonics instruction
- children with high PA in Kindergarten typically continue on to be good readers
- BUT this does not mean that children who have not developed this will necessarily have problems learning to read
- most children who have developed good PA by the middle of Grade 1 do NOT have reading problems in the future
- sometimes the child is “just not there yet” (Chapman, 2009).

Which phonemes are learned more easily than others?

- easiest ones are the consonants you can hold (physiologically), e.g., mmm
- phonemes that have an emotional response, e.g., those in your name, especially the first letter of your name

Phonics needs to be connected to real reading and writing, not taken out of context as isolated skills.

Slide #29**Further Discussion:****Collaboratively written texts:**

- Examples include stories, thank you letters, field trip plans, etc.

- Students must be purposefully directed to these shared texts, and shown how to use the print regularly.
 - Otherwise, the text will remain merely decorative.

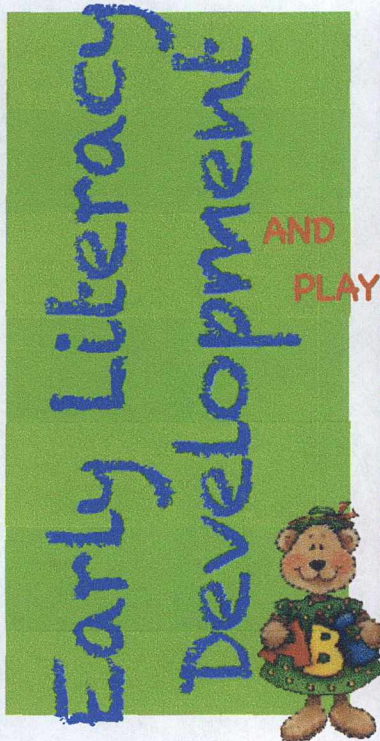
Slide #30**Further Discussion:****Making Connections:**

- For example, “We’re reading a story about planting pumpkins. Does anyone have a story to share about pumpkins or gardens?”

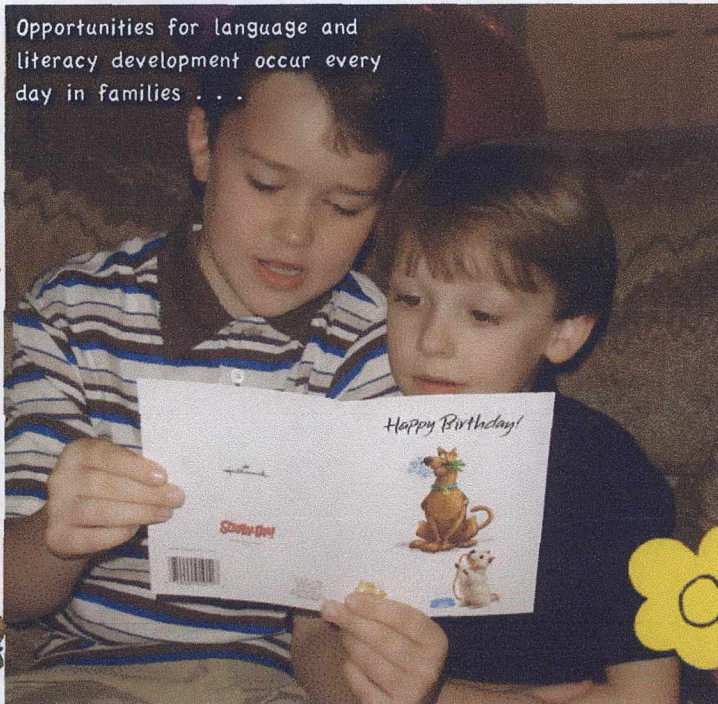
“Acting like a Reader” includes:

- choosing books
- holding books properly
- turning pages
- telling the story from the pictures
- following the words in a book with a finger or fingers (called tracking), or following the words on a chart with a pointer.

“Developing Early Literacy through Play” – Parent Handout



Opportunities for language and literacy development occur every day in families . . .



Learning to read and write is an ongoing, lifelong process.

Children learn about literacy through engagement in meaningful experiences.

Playing with literacy is an important way of making sense of the world.

In language-rich environments, young children have the chance to experience language as a powerful tool to communicate, to explore relationships, to tell stories, to

question, and to shape the world around them.

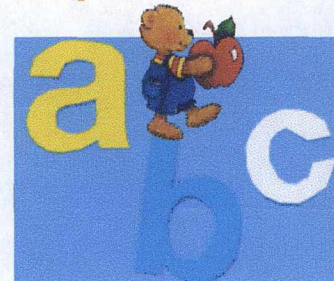
Opportunities are provided for children to respond to literature in a variety of activities (role playing, visual arts, movement, talking, etc.).

We read for meaning.

“Unfamiliar words are read more by analogy with known words than by identifying letters separately, and then

sounding words out” (Weaver, 1998).

Language can only “grow” through interaction . .



Play is the way that children learn!



^bc
la maternelle
Mme Wilson

What can parents do to support their child’s language and literacy development?

- Expose your child to many different ways of using language, and encourage him or her to explore a wide variety of “literacies.”
- Experiment and play with language (rhyming, initial sounds, the “elastic game”)
- Engage in purposeful writing with your child (letters, shopping lists, etc.)
- Share books from a wide variety of genres (stories, poems, non-fiction books)
- provide many opportunities for INTERACTION, and for making connections!!