



Community Literacy of Ontario

Family Literacy Bulletin

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Community Literacy of Ontario

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Ontario's Best Start Plan

In May 2005, the Ontario government announced the Best Start Plan with the aim of improving access to affordable, convenient, high quality child care and of investing in children's healthy early development. As part of a recent agreement with the federal government, Ontario will deliver approximately \$1.1 billion in federal funds to implement Best Start over the next three years.

The goal of Best Start is to for Ontario children to arrive in Grade 1 healthy, ready and eager to learn. This will be achieved by providing more quality, affordable, accessible child care and early learning programs through:

- ⇒ Rapid expansion of child care spaces for children in junior kindergarten and senior kindergarten (4,000 new spaces were created in 2004-05 and approximately 25,000 licensed child care spaces will be added by the end of 2007-08).
- ⇒ Half-day learning programs and child care spaces for young children.
- ⇒ Child care subsidies, based on income instead of means, that will make child care more affordable for more Ontario families.
- ⇒ A new College of Early Childhood Educators to establish high professional standards and ensure quality care.
- ⇒ Enhanced connections between early learning and care and kindergarten communities.

Single points of access will be set up to help meet the above goals. This will include:

- ⇒ Establishing community hubs to bring together screening, assessment and treatment, child care and parenting programs and to provide direct links to other children's services such as mental health and speech and language resources.
- ⇒ Centrally located services, with hours and programming convenient for families (ideally in elementary schools).

Three areas have been selected to implement Best Start at an accelerated pace. These are the District of Timiskaming in northeastern Ontario, the rural areas of Lambton and Kent, and Hamilton's east end. Each of these areas is still in the development and planning stages.

For more information, please visit this source:

Ontario's Best Start Plan to Expand Early Learning and Child Care.
Ministry of Children and Youth Services Backgrounder: July 28, 2005.
www.children.gov.on.ca/CS/en/newsRoom/backgrounders/050728.htm.

Interesting and Useful Family Literacy Websites

There are many, many websites chock full of information about family literacy programming from here in Canada and from around the world. It would be impossible to list them all here. But to help you get started, Community Literacy of Ontario has listed some useful and interesting websites that we have discovered over the years.



General Information

- ⇒ Ontario Early Years Centres: www.ontarioearlyyears.ca. This site provides information about the Centres and about early child development.
- ⇒ The Early Years Study (and the follow up report, *Three Years Later*) can be downloaded from www.founders.net.
- ⇒ Early Child Development Review: www.earlychilddevelopment.ca. This online journal is updated regularly and provides links to many family literacy-related and child development sites. Dr. Fraser Mustard is the editor-in-chief.
- ⇒ Centre for Family Literacy: www.famlit.ca. This site provides information about this Alberta centre – the home of the National Foundational Training in Family Literacy.
- ⇒ Action for Family Literacy Ontario: www.on.literacy.ca/aflo.htm. This is the home of a provincial working group sponsored by the Ontario Literacy Coalition. Their mission is to sustain, promote and strengthen family literacy services in Ontario.



Healthy Eating and Safe Food Handling

- ⇒ Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care – information on safe food handling: www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/pub/foodsafe/foodhandl.html. Here you will find a comprehensive checklist of safe food handling tips.
- ⇒ Canadian Partnership for Consumer Food Education: www.canfightbac.org. Another good source of information about safe food handling.
- ⇒ Canada's Food Guide: www.nms.on.ca/Elementary/canada.htm. Check out this resource to review the food guide and incorporate healthy snacks into your family literacy program.



Promotion

- ⇒ ABC Canada: www.abc-canada.org/fl-d-jaf. Family Literacy Day is a national initiative that promotes the importance of reading and learning together as a family. ABC Canada is an excellent source of news, updates and promotional material on this important event.
- ⇒ Road to Reading Festival: www.roadtoreadingfestival.com. This is one of the many exciting literacy-related festivals held in Ontario each year.



Family Literacy Programming

- ⇒ Adult Learning and Resources Centres, Niagara West: <http://alrcniagarawest.org>. Find out what's happening in the Niagara Area in family literacy (scroll down and click on "family literacy").
- ⇒ Men Behaving Dadly: www.lsc.gov.uk/westyorks/Media/PressReleases/MenBehavingDadly.htm. A description of a prison-based program in the UK.
- ⇒ Simcoe County School Board First Steps Project: www.scdsb.on.ca/programs/first_steps.cfm. First Steps is a complete language resource that supports the Ontario curriculum and the achievement of literacy goals for all students, including those who are identified as being "at-risk" as a result of language difficulties.
- ⇒ Centre for Expertise in Family Literacy: www.familyliteracyexpertise.org. This site is designed to provide information and resource support for anyone interested in family literacy in the Eastern Ontario region.
- ⇒ Macaulay Child Development Centre: www.macaulaycentre.org. Follow the family literacy links for information about "Lullabies to Literacy."
- ⇒ Australian Storytelling Guild: www.australianstorytelling.org.au. Here you will find all sorts of links and resources to help you incorporate storytelling in your family literacy program.
- ⇒ Mother Goose Program: www.nald.ca/mothergooseprogram/start.htm. This program provides group experiences for parents and their babies and young children by focusing on the pleasure and power of using oral rhymes, songs and stories together. They also provide training on how to use the program, and there are many associate programs across the country.
- ⇒ Northwest Territories Environmental Print "How-to" Kit: www.nwt.literacy.ca/familit/howtokit/enviro/cover.htm. This is just one of the many excellent resources available from the Northwest Territories Literacy Council. We encourage you to visit their main site at www.nwt.literacy.ca for many more wonderful literacy resources.
- ⇒ Literacy for Life: Home Reading Guide: www.nlta.nf.ca/HTML_Files/html_pages/publications/hrguide/hrabout.html. The guide is designed to help you establish the kind of home environment that will encourage and support reading and writing.
- ⇒ Read to Me: www.lili.org/read/readtome/booksandbabies.htm. Visit this site for some tips on reading with babies.



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Adult Learning Centres: Grey-Bruce-Georgian

The Adult Learning Centres of Grey-Bruce-Georgian are located in Brockton, Wiarton, Flesherton, Saugeen Shores, Owen Sound and Collingwood. They have worked together to produce and launch their new website, which you can find at www.adultlearningcentres.ca.

These centres are active in both adult and family literacy. The website lists the following family literacy accomplishments:

- ⇒ The “Leading to Reading” initiative assisted school-age children requiring supports over the summertime.
- ⇒ The Bruce Peninsula Adult Learning Centre piloted the book bag concept.
- ⇒ The Port Elgin Adult Learning Centre developed, produced and delivered a show called “Welcome To Words” on local cable television.
- ⇒ The Centres have been active in “Books for Babies” and “Books for Christmas” campaigns over the years.
- ⇒ The “Spread the Word Learning Festival” focuses on family literacy initiatives.

The Adult Learning Centres have also organized and operated a variety of parents and children reading and activity groups. Staff have provided many workshops on helping with homework and encouraging family reading.

When planning its local Early Years Centre, the County of Grey recognized the variety of skills and training that the Adult Literacy Centres had in family literacy. A partnership was developed for staffing the Early Years Literacy Specialist position.

Literature for Life

This Toronto program is designed for teen moms. It helps them develop their literacy skills and get back on an educational track. Its premise is that when a young mother learns to love reading, it changes two lives.

Literacy for Life offers book groups at five centres. Each week, the participants receive new books and blank journals and take part in a discussion group. Local writers offer writing workshops. The participants also produce a newsletter called *Yo’ Mama*.

To date, more than 500 women have participated in Literature for Life. The majority of participants are between 16 and 25. Currently, the program is funded by The Trillium Foundation. You can find out more about the program by visiting their website at www.literatureforlife.org.

Source: Turnbull, Barbara. *The Word is Hope*. Toronto Star. September 3, 2005.

