



The Literacy Connection

The Macaulay Child Development Centre Early Literacy Newsletter ~ Issue 10, Winter 2010

Gooch: Creating a Welcoming Program

At 3735 Dundas St. West – just west of Scarlett Road is a program that is simply called “Gooch” by the residents and families who attend. A Family Resource Program operated by College Montrose Children’s Place, ‘Gooch’ is a program where people work together to create a learning environment that is vibrant and inclusive.

When visiting Gooch, it is instantly clear that parents take ownership of the program. This culture has been created by an effective process of identifying and training “Peer Parents”.

“Gooch is like a family. It is important to talk to people about how they can contribute”

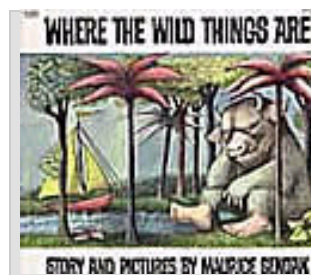
After a nine week training period at the centre, Peer Parents manage routines, run Circle Time and help with the many challenges presented by the large number of small children and families who attend.

The program is run two days a week at the Gooch and Dundas location. On a third day, the program is held at the nearby Lambton Park Community School. This arrangement gives pre-school children and families the opportunity to become familiar with the nearby public school.

Principal Collin Pinkney has been a “phenomenal support”, and has arranged for children to have access to the gym for play and exercise.

“We encourage the parents to bond and get together socially outside of the program”

Program Manager Filomena M. Costa explains that “Gooch is like a family. It is important to talk to people about how they can contribute. We make sure that every person that comes in here is greeted – every parent and child.” Filomena’s passion, energy, and high expectations are infectious. “Once every six weeks we host a Participant’s Breakfast. We provide childcare, and meet to discuss (cont... p. 2)



With the popularity of the film, Where The Wild Things Are, many of us are revisiting the classic book by Maurice Sendak. Careful, Where The Wild Things Are can frighten small children. We suggest that you save this story for children aged four and up.

Gooch (continued from page 1)

what is working, and what needs tweaking. One day a week is soup day. This is a way to encourage parent-child bonding. And we encourage the parents to bond and get together socially outside of the program.”

“All the people involved in this program are what makes it work so well. Everybody takes on leadership roles at different times”

Bianca Charles is a young mother who regularly attends the program with her two sons. “The first time I came I was apprehensive. The other parents were a bit older, but they were very welcoming and very receptive to all of my questions. I had a lot of new Mom questions.” Now, Bianca bustles around the room assisting with the busy activities of all the toddlers. Her own boys have become role models.

“It’s important we have a program rich with language – we do a lot of talking with parents and children”

Chantal Bombardier, of partnering agency The Four Villages Community Health Centre, with the Early Years 2 Team, states “All the people involved in this program are what makes it work so well. Everybody takes on leadership roles at different times.” The Health Centre delivers workshops based on the needs and interests of parents and caregivers. Health and nutrition presentations are held in the small kitchen while two or three Peer Parents engage children with craft activities in the play-room.

One of my most delightful moments as an Early Literacy Specialist was at a Gooch Circle Time.

Children and adults were sitting on mats in a big circle. First, Peer Parents Kristine David and Lily Spinoza led stories and songs which they brought to life by having children add animals figures to a felt board. This was followed by singing the story of ‘Brown Bear Brown Bear, What Do You See’ by Eric Carle and Bill Martin Jr. .

When we reached the picture of the nine children, we all counted the children aloud - first in English, and then parents led the group counting in Spanish, Japanese, Somali, Portuguese, Tagalog and French. The children were fascinated by the many ways we could count. We then counted on our fingers – the parents and caregivers using the hands of the children to count to ten.

Filomena Costa explains that literacy is a main concern at Gooch. “What we try to do here is provide literacy support not only for children but also for adults. We also try to instill respect and knowledge of the importance of first language learning. It’s important we have a program rich with language – we do a lot of talking with parents and children.”

POSTSCRIPT - Filomena M. Costa is the 2009 recipient of the Bhayana Family Foundation Partnership Builder Award.

Congratulations Filomena!

- article: Dave Page

If you would like to learn more about Peer Parents and the Gooch program model, contact Filomena at fcosta@cmcp.ca

Hold the Date!

The next Literacy Leaders event will be on Wednesday, January 20th at 477 Mount Pleasant Rd., (3rd floor)

from 1:30 to 3:45 pm.

More information to follow!

Autism: Questions and Answers

Q - What is autism?

Autism is a brain development disorder characterized by delays in communication and social interaction, and by repetitive behaviors that are nonfunctional.

Q - What is Autism Spectrum Disorder?

Autism Spectrum Disorder or ASD is a term developed to encompass five different types of autism. There can be severe autism, where a person may never learn to speak, and there are very mild behaviours at the other end of the spectrum.

Q - How many children are being classified as having autism?

Approximately one in 150. The number with severe autism is closer to one in 800. Four times as many boys as girls are being diagnosed with autism.

Q - Are there more children with autism than there were a generation ago?

It is not proven that the actual prevalence of autism has increased despite common opinions that it has. More likely the number of children diagnosed with autism has increased due to increased awareness and changes in diagnosis.

Q - What are signs that a young child may be autistic?

- ◆ failure to make eye contact
- ◆ rarely showing pleasure
- ◆ fixated on bright lights
- ◆ often passive
- ◆ avoiding interaction
- ◆ delayed onset of babbling
- ◆ lack of response to name

Q - How can we help parents if we have a concern?

- ◆ Tactfully suggest they set up an appointment for their child with a developmental pediatrician (the family doctor will refer)
- ◆ City KIDS will also provide assessment, call 416 920-6543, www.mothercraft.ca, or citykids@mothercraft.org
- ◆ Be empathetic - parents will be dealing with a range of emotions, such as anger and grief. Offer genuine help that you can follow up with.
- ◆ Engage the children with conversation, stories and books– provide a rich literacy experience as you would with all children.

Further Resources on Autism:

The Community Resource Directory for Children and Adolescents With Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and their Families in Toronto (<http://www.surreyplace.on.ca/Documents/community-resource-directory.pdf>)

Autism Canada Foundation
(www.autismcanada.org)
-site provides definitions, treatments, research

Autism Treatment Services of Canada
(www/autism.ca)
- site provides articles, information on careers, as well as information on early detection, early intervention and education suggestions

Concerned About a Child's Development?

Click on the City of Toronto's Red Flags Guide for tips on "*How to Talk to Parents about Sensitive Issues*", and to see a list of identification and support services for families:

<http://www.toronto.ca/health/earlychilddevelopment/pdf/redflagsguide.pdf>

Songs to Sing with Families

Featuring two songs in Mandarin Chinese

Twinkle Twinkle Little Star

Yi shan ,yi shan liang jing jing,
mian tian dou shi xiao xing xing,
gua zai tian shang fang guang ming,
hao xiang xu duo xiao yan jing.

Liang Zhi Lao Hu

(to the tune of Frere Jacques)

Liang zhi lao hu,liang zhi lao hu,
pao de kuai, pao de kuai,
yi zhi mei you er dua,
yi zhi mei you wei ba,
zhen qi guai,zhen qi guai.

Baby, Baby, Clap Clap Clap - D. Page

Baby baby, clap clap clap
Baby baby, take a nap (sleep sign)
Baby baby, hide your eyes (peek-a-boo)
Baby baby, a big surprise ... (BOO !)

Father and Mother and Uncle John

Father and Mother and Uncle John
went to the market one by one
Mother fell off and Father fell off
but Uncle John went on and on and on
and on and on

Toronto's Early Literacy Team

Maria Velasquez – West Quadrant x 327

Cathy Webb – East Quadrant x 329

Dave Page – South Quadrant x 328

Ruth Gayle – North Quadrant x 338

Susan Gowans – Program Manager

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Working with Children with Different Abilities

Adapted from article by Maria Velasquez

Adapt your play materials

1) Stabilize: Steady play materials by attaching them to a surface

- ◆ Use a rubber placemat under the toy to prevent sliding (eg: shape sorter); use trays for small toys (cars)

2) Enlarge: Build up handles for paint brushes, markers, pencils and crayons by using plasticine or sponge hair rolls.

3) Enhance: Playdough can be placed in a Ziploc bag for children who are sensitive and don't want to touch the material.

4. Simplify: Reduce the number of steps. (eg: simplify a shape sorter by blocking some openings)



Adapt your Circle Time

- 1) Two staff needed: one to lead, one to support.
- 2) Choose songs and rhymes in advance.
- 3) Define your area : have a mat for each child to sit on.
- 4) Allow fidget toys for active children.
- 5) Use props and visual aids to support the rhymes and songs (puppets, props, books).
- 6) Repeat each song.
- 7) Routinely announce "All finished", eg: "Sleeping Bunnies is all finished".
- 8) Have lyric sheets for parents and caregivers to take home.