



Macaulay Today

Issue 10-1

Macaulay Child Development Centre

- Early learning and child care centres
- Licensed home child care
- Early years programs
- Family literacy
- Homework clubs
- Parenting groups
- In-home parent education and support
- Speech and language services
- Early identification and intervention
- Youth mentoring
- Support for children with special needs
- Consultation services

Helping children succeed—today and in the future

Inside this issue:

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| OEYC Symposium | 1 |
| Skills for Success | 1 |
| The Play's the Thing! | 2 |
| My Favourite Storyteller | 2 |
| Mentoring the Mentors | 3 |
| Building Social Skills | 3 |
| Rhyme-time Lunches | 3 |
| Program Boosts Skills | 4 |
| Celebrating Vital Ideas | 4 |

Ontario Early Years Centre Symposium



Zanana Akande

Early Years Centres (OEYCs) are all about connecting and responding to child and family needs. That's why Macaulay's OEYC developed the special Nonna and Me Program for grandparents caring for grandchildren. And that is why the OEYC held a symposium on this emerging issue, providing an arena for

service providers and grandparents to exchange insights. The event also marked the launch of our new program guide: *Young at Heart: Nonna and Me*.

Zanana Akande, former Ontario Cabinet Minister, opened the event with reflections about being a grandmother. (...p.2)

Skills for Success

Macaulay helps children succeed – today and in their future.

This edition of Macaulay Today features some of the many ways we help children and families develop “skills for success”. At Macaulay, we consider success to be multi-dimensional and very individual. For some of our children, success is being able to participate in a circle or make a friend. At our Homework Clubs, success means solving a math problem or feeling confident -for the first time. Our youth mentors succeed when they take on

leadership roles or commit to finishing high school. At our Early Years Centres, parents' success comes from a new understanding of their role in their child's development. Many of our children have a special need; for them, success is being able to participate- just like the other children. Macaulay's distinctive range of services work together to have maximum impact and provide optimal support—so all children can succeed.

Sharon Filger
Executive Director

...Ontario Early Years Centre Symposium from p. 1

The packed audience laughed appreciatively as she confessed that she “scrubs clean pots” when she disagrees with her daughter about how to care for her grandchildren. “I do it in order to keep my mouth shut. It’s very important to recognize and respect that it’s their turn to raise

today’s children.”

A panel of grandparents described the joys and challenges of caring for young children in their retirement years. Everyone agreed programs like Macaulay’s Nonna and Me have tremendous benefits for both adults

and young grandchildren.

We are grateful to an anonymous donor and the Ministry of Child and Youth Services for supporting the OEYC and the Grandparents’ Program.

The Play’s the Thing!

Many of the children in our Homework Clubs struggle with reading and writing. That is why we introduced innovative ways to engage students and help them overcome their fear of learning situations. Here are just two examples of how Macaulay uses creative and culturally appropriate approaches to help children succeed.

At **HJ Alexander School**, educator Naomi Tessler introduced a unique combination of drama and games that simultaneously build literacy skills and confidence. Students participated in group story-telling, writing exercises, poetry writing, journal writing, dancing and simple dramatizations of stories they read. With a sense of fun and playfulness, the children were totally absorbed in literacy-building activities.



Students learn through dramatic play

Staff often find it challenging to engage older students in Homework Club activities, but this winter attendance at the **Greenholme Homework Club** soared. The grades 5-8 students were enthusiastic participants in a new Hip Hop and Spoken Word program. Students loved the pro-

gram and look forward to another session in the next school year.

This two year project is offered in partnership with the Royal Conservatory of Music and sponsored by Geoffrey H. Wood Foundation.

My Favourite Storyteller

Children thrive in strong neighbourhoods and families. For this reason, many of our efforts focus on family and community.

My Favourite Storyteller is a new program that brings together ten families from the Eglinton/Oakwood/Vaughan area to develop their skills as literacy leaders.

At six weekly sessions, parents explore ways to use voice, expression, and body language to captivate children’s attention and enhance their knowledge of language and story. Parents also learn about choosing and using children’s books, rhymes and songs to engage their children.

The result? Stronger families and improved children’s pre-literacy skills!

At the end of the program, parent leaders will share their knowledge and stories at community events.

The expected result? A stronger community where children can thrive!



A mentor takes the lead

Mentoring the Mentors

In Macaulay’s Youth Mentoring program, teens are accustomed to leading activities for the children at the homework clubs where they volunteer. Mentors tap into their own interests and talents and introduce activities that the younger children enthusiastically embrace. In this exchange, mentors benefit from taking charge, and the children benefit from seeing strong and positive role models with whom they can identify.

This year, Youth Development Coordinator Kwame Djan introduced new opportunities and challenges. Youth were encouraged to lead their own team meetings and training sessions. Their response

has been extremely positive.

The Mentors are enthusiastically chairing meetings, organizing agendas and choosing the topics they would like to explore. They are emerging as strong community leaders and their confidence is soaring.



Building Social Skills

Learning to participate in a circle or make a friend is an important developmental challenge for all pre-schoolers. For children with special needs, this is especially significant.

That is why our child care centres introduced evidence-based programs to address this critical skill area.

Proud to Be Me and ***Second Step*** teach children to listen to each other and to express thoughts and feelings. Teachers report that our children use the techniques in the centres and at home. Children calm themselves by counting and breathing; they acknowledge other children’s feelings and problem-solve together.

Even parents benefit as their children encourage them to use the same techniques. One child advised his mother to “Put your hand on your tummy and take a deep breath.”

Stronger social and self-regulating skills are key ingredients to life-long success.

Help us build skills!

- Become a volunteer in one of our programs.
- Make a financial contribution.
- Support our work on-line at www.canadahelps.org or www.paypal.com
- For more information about how you can get involved, contact our head office at 416-789-7441.

Macaulay Resources

Please contact our head office to purchase these resources and more:

- *From Lullabies to Literacy*
- *Nonna and Me: Guidebook for Service Providers*
- *More than a Haircut DVD*

Program Boosts Literacy Skills

Our Healthy Babies Healthy Children team provides education and support to high risk families with young children. Since 2009, these visits have included a formal literacy component that models for parents how to sing, share rhymes and read books with young children.

A recent evaluation of this literacy component shows impressive positive changes in both parents and children. Here are some of the changes we observed:

- 50% of parents were not reading books with their children before the start of this component. Within 6 months,

all parents were reading books with their children

- There was close to a three fold increase in the number of parents who weekly sang songs and rhymes with their children.
- The number of children who showed interest in books increased from 33% to 100%
- The number of children who turned the pages of a book from left to right increased by five fold.

Our thanks to the Macaulay Literacy Fund donors for supporting this

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Celebrating Vital Ideas

More than a Haircut:

The Barbershop Project held a public education and community celebration event on March 9.

More than a Haircut is a unique program that reaches out to Black fathers in barbershops in the Eglinton Oakwood area to promote positive father involvement.

The capacity crowd at the celebration included local residents, service providers, barbers, families and representatives of the United Way Toronto and Toronto Community Foundation. A screening of the documentary *More than a Haircut* and a panel



discussion with barbers and program participants elicited a spirited dialogue. A family celebration followed.

In 2009-10, with the Toronto Community Foundation's Vital Ideas grant, *More than a Haircut* conducted public education sessions that reached over 50 community organizations and 900 individuals.

Barbershop meetings continue each month with the support of local businesses, United Way Toronto and individual donors.

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