



# Macaulay Today

Issue 9-1

## Macaulay Child Development Centre

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

Helping children reach their full potential in caring, responsive families and communities

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## Home Visitors Promote Literacy

Many children in our Parent Education and Support Program have very little exposure to early literacy activities. The program offers in-home parenting support to high-need families with young children. Home visitor Maria Medeiros says, “Some parents don’t read in their own languages. Others expect the children will learn at school, so they don’t do anything directly to encourage reading.”



Maria Medeiros shares a book on a home visit

Home visitors have

always shared books with families but last May the program adopted a more intentional focus on literacy. Program Supervisor Valerie Kenny says,

“Research shows that in order to improve outcomes for the child, it is important to spend part of every visit focusing on the child...pg. 2

## Every Day is Literacy Day at Macaulay

We are often reminded about the important role that literacy plays in our lives and the lives of our children. Research tells us that early literacy helps stimulate brain development; enhances listening skills; vocabulary and language skills and increases the likelihood of school completion and school success. Literacy is the key that opens up the doors to

effective parenting and good health. For many, it is the path out of poverty.

Right across Macaulay, in homes, childcare centres and community settings, our programs promote the development of literacy and numeracy skills, with babies, children and youth. Because the role of parents and caregivers is critically important, many of our programs assist adults to

better understand how they can promote literacy and the love of learning in their children.

I hope you enjoy reading about our exciting literacy initiatives. As always, thank you for your interest in our work.

*Sharon Filger*  
Executive Director

## Patterns in Scribbles

Drawing is the first written language that children produce. Macaulay program worker Eddie Woo argues that there is ample research to show that free-hand drawing helps children develop important early learning and literacy skills.

In studies of one million children's drawings from 30 countries, psychologist Rhoda Kellogg found that children from every culture go through the same stages of scribbling and artistic development. They begin by producing 20 basic scribbles and then create shapes such as rectangles, ovals, triangles and crosses that they later combine to create pictures.

Eddie shares this research with parents in Macaulay's Creative Expressions Art Program. He says, "When I show parents pictures, it helps them see that there are patterns in those scrib-



bles. Sometimes they get stuck on wanting their kids to make faces, so I pull out a Picasso painting and we look at where he put the eyes or ears. Then we make faces from our imaginations using mismatched eyes or ears torn from magazine ads."

During the program, Eddie talks with parents about how positive feedback about the child's drawings reinforces self-esteem and confidence. He introduces children and families to a variety of media to explore shapes, lines, colours, textures and their own creativity. The program introduces parents to activities and materials that they can easily use at home.

The Creative Expressions program is offered in collaboration with Mount Dennis Library, a "perfect link", according to Eddie. The library donates space and staff members select children's books that complement the weekly themes.

Participants are enthusiastic about the program and report that it has inspired them to do more artwork at home. As Eddie says, "Art is not about aptitude. You don't need to be good at it. You just need to be willing to try and explore."

## ...p.1 Home Visitors

directly."

Maria and the other Parent Education Support visitors now spend part of every visit reading and singing a song with the parent and child, often in the family's first language.

Maria shows parents how to sit with their children on their laps and how to follow the child's lead. Sometimes parents expect too much from their child; they are embarrassed or upset when children put books in their mouths or turn them upside down. That is when the home visitor explains about different stages of child de-

velopment. Maria explains, "They want to read a book from beginning to end but I show them that it's okay if the child wants to go back ten pages." The goal is for parent and child to enjoy the experience together.

Some parents have trouble reading. The visitor shows the parent how to tell a story using a picture book. That is equally effective.






Singing helps build vocabulary and awareness of sound. But some parents are embarrassed to sing. Maria says, "I tell them it's not *Canadian Idol!* After a few

sessions they sing along because they see how the child's face lights up when they hear their parents' voices."

Home visitors emphasize the importance of reading every day. Maria notes, "we talk about carrying a book in the diaper bag or making time to sing a song at the grocery store."

Maria can already see how this intentional focus on literacy is benefitting her families. "I feel I'm leaving the parent with valuable tools to develop a love of literacy."

## You can help us promote literacy!

-  Share a book with a preschooler in our school readiness programs.
-  Become a volunteer tutor in our homework clubs for newcomer children.
-  Donate books or school supplies.
-  Make a financial contribution to our literacy fund.
-  Support our work on-line at [www.canadahelps.org](http://www.canadahelps.org) or [www.paypal.com](http://www.paypal.com)

For more information about how you can get involved, please contact our head office at 416-789-7441.

# Early Literacy Specialists Support Programs

Macaulay is the host agency for the Ontario Early Literacy Specialists (ELS) in Toronto. Four specialists work with parents, caregivers, Ontario Early Years Centres and community organizations to strengthen and promote literacy-rich environments for young children.

## Literacy Leaders Groups

The ELS host quarterly Literacy Leaders Groups to help community agencies develop their expertise in promoting literacy. A recent meeting focused on how to help families maintain their first languages. The ELS explain that the research is very clear: the stronger a child's first language is, the better prepared they are to learn English. Families who speak more than one language can create a strong foundation in each by designating one language to a particular rou-

tine—such as Italian for dinner and Somali for bedtime.

## Community Literacy Facilitators

In an innovative pilot project, the ELS are using a community development approach to help parents and caregivers in two high need communities become Community Literacy Facilitators.

In a series of five workshops, parents learn how to share books and stories with other families during storytime sessions.

Participants practice their new skills during scheduled storytime sessions, with coaching from OEYC staff. They may read books or tell stories in their first languages. After leading 5 storytime sessions, participants receive a certificate of completion. This "whole family" approach helps parents share a love of literacy with others in their communities while

they care for their own children.

Reading and singing to young children helps develop:

- Language skills
- Larger, more sophisticated vocabularies
- Longer attention spans
- General knowledge about the world
- Attachment
- Self-confidence

Visit our website to see the latest issue of ***The Literacy Connection***, a newsletter that offers ideas, resources, and information about literacy.



## Macaulay's 24th Annual Theatre Night

# SHIRLEY VALENTINE

Tuesday, March 24, 2009 at 8:00 pm  
The Canstage Bluma Appel Theatre  
27 Front Street East

Pre-Theatre Reception, Light Supper & Silent Auction at 6:30

Ticket Price: \$75.00 each or \$65 for 3 or more tickets  
To purchase a ticket or donate a Silent Auction item,  
please call 416-789-7441 ext. 227 or visit [www.macaulaycentre.org](http://www.macaulaycentre.org)

## Youth Mentors Support Literacy

Many of the children who attend our Homework Clubs have difficulty reading. That is why we decided to introduce Reading Circles and Book Clubs for students at three high need sites. And because the students look up to our volunteer Youth Mentors, we enlisted their support to run the new reading sessions and act as positive role models.

To prepare the Youth Mentors for their new role, Macaulay Early Literacy Specialist Dave Page ran a workshop on how to conduct a reading circle that is both fun and effective. Dave demonstrated how a leader's enthusiasm can result in a rousing and effective story circle.

Time is set aside at the Clubs for students and Youth Mentors to read

together. After the students read and summarize three books, they each earn a free book to take home—a rare treat for many of them.

Overall, our goal is to help our students enhance their reading skills and develop a love of learning at the same time.



## Introducing Woven Word

Our child care staff and children are enthusiastic about our newly-introduced *Woven Word* program that helps preschoolers increase their vocabulary, become better listeners and develop language to express thoughts and feelings. Teachers read a series of books aloud with children and engage them in a discussion

about the story. They read each book several times in one week until the children are familiar with the language and concepts. Manager Joanna Mazurek says, "The books all deal with situations that the children might have been in, such as making friends, feeling different or feeling angry. The teachers use a structured

technique to help explore the themes."

Parents support the program by reading the books at home with their children. The *Woven Word* program complements the Second Steps social skills and problem-solving program that was implemented in 2007.

## Peek-a-Boo Builds Language

Consultants now have a growing collection of interactive training modules to help Home Child Care providers enhance their program. Hands-on training is carried out in the home and suits providers' busy schedules and diverse learning needs.

One module helps providers understand the importance of talk-

ing and interacting with babies. Literacy research shows that children with robust vocabularies find it easier to learn to read; it is easier to learn to read a familiar word than one you have never heard. Consultants share this research with providers and demonstrate ways to use everyday moments and simple games like "peek-a-boo" to

enhance language development.

Providers share this information with parents to encourage them to talk to their babies at home and further strengthen their language development.

### Getting in Touch with Macaulay

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### Macaulay Today

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