

The Professional



A Newsletter for the Early Learning and Care Professional, Creating a Bridge Between Research and Practice in the Field

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Rethinking School Age Programs

By: Samantha Burns, RECE Co-chair of the Region of Waterloo School Age Network.

School Age programming has always had its challenges; there never seems to be enough time together, or space to spread out, or retaining dedicated staff that have the flexibility to meet the awkward scheduling of the school boards (before and after care, PD days and holidays). While these challenges are persistent in our current model of childcare, summers offer us an opportunity to expand and apply new ideas that have the time and space to flourish.

Rethinking school age programs begins with changing our ideas around the purpose of having school age programs. Moving beyond generating income to balance the cost of other programs, or the basic needs of before and after school care, to more meaningful and intentional purposes. Children in these programs tend to be at an age where character development and personality are beginning to really emerge as they make discoveries about the world around them. It is my hope that time is taken to foster this development in a healthy capacity, by providing opportunities to strengthen ties to the community, build upon social and emotional skills such as empathy, self-expression, and self-esteem, and support creativity and ingenuity. When we change our perspective from viewing school age children as beings that need to be kept busy, controlled and entertained to individuals that are unique, capable and valued members that can contribute to society, our program shifts from simply filling in the curriculum boxes with random activities to developing inspiring

spaces that foster the growth and support the development of each child within.

It can begin with simple changes to the materials that you provide within your classroom. Select open ended materials that can invoke and inspire creativity. Not sure where to begin? Look to nature for ideas. Collect pinecones and stones to add to your dramatic play area. Plastic food in the shape of a hamburger will likely always be a hamburger... but a stone has the magical ability to be anything! Collect sticks and tree logs; add them to your construction area along with blankets and large pieces of materials. Collect natural materials to add to your creative supplies. Add a mortar and pestle to grind tree bark, mix it with water or lard to create varying shades to paint with (both indoors and out). Large pieces of paper can support concepts of teamwork and collaboration. Look to local agencies and community partners to donate end of the line or damaged materials such as home building stores, carpet or fabric stores, even print shops. Garden centres may have damaged slate or stones that are great for painting with water. The image dries and you can paint again and again.

Beyond materials, it's important to offer long periods of uninterrupted time. From boredom comes new ideas and creativity. Don't feel like you need to push activities, look to the children for inspiration. Play over long periods provides the time and opportunities for children to go deeper into play, allowing for discovers about themselves, but also about the world around them. Long term projects offer chil-



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dren with opportunities to plan, take action, reflect and adapt. Projects can offer opportunities to connect with the community, a valuable aspiration for many. Building friendships, partnerships or even relationships with neighbours, local businesses and agencies supports the development of social and emotions skills. Simple ideas to support this concept can be:

- Fundraising towards a charity that has meaning to the group, or an individual within the group
- Joining local initiatives such as "cleaning the park" or tending to a community garden
- Getting to know your neighbours; hosting a community social, inviting them into your programs (volunteers), interacting through visits, letters etc
- Become involved within the community, visit a local seniors centre, pet shelter, library or park
- Fostering connections and community within the program through family socials, encourage contact sharing, group social media sharing (such as a secure Facebook page).

Feeling you are a part of something, belonging and invested to a common goal sets a strong foundation in children for building a sense of community. The value in this is beyond developing empathy and capacity for others, awareness of the needs and strengths of individuals, or becoming aware of the impact you have on others...it supports children in developing life long skills that will contribute to the greater of our society. When we look at these children in our programs... what do you see? I personally see the future. It is because of this that I hope this next generation not only has an opportunity to experience community, but are taking these lessons learned and applying them, contributing and making a difference.

Planning programs for school age children can be a challenge, finding the balance between your role as the educator and the children's need for autonomy, lead by their interests. How we view young children will guide how we plan and facilitate amongst our programs. May this summer bring you new perspectives, and opportunities to explore your ideas regarding the value and capabilities of the children in your care, ultimately driving the need for more intentional and meaningful experiences for the children we support.

Best wishes for a wonderful summer, may you all discover your inner child as together you make some wonderful discoveries that will stay with you for life.

Teambuilding

What will your group get out of team building activities?

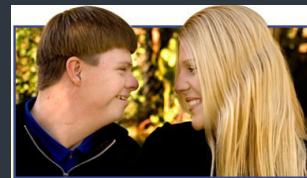
By: Brendan Hancock, Recreation & Leisure Student

Teamwork can be improved by understanding a team's developmental stages, noting the ingredients for their success, and exploring a broad range of team leader behaviours that can enhance their performance. Games play a valuable role in the process of building teamwork. They help the team leader make a point, and support building team morale as members learn to trust each other, become more flexible and adaptive. They provide opportunities for team leaders to reinforce appropriate behaviours and allow individuals to function as a group, looking at the bigger picture. Teams often evolve through the five stages of group development:

- **Forming:** Team members share personal information, start to get to know and accept one another, and begin turning their attention toward the group's tasks.
- **Storming:** Team members compete for status, jockey for positions of relative control, and argue about appropriate directions for the group. Tensions arise as individuals assert themselves.
- **Norming:** The team begins moving together in a cooperative fashion, and a tentative balance emerges. Group norms evolve to guide individual behaviour, and a cooperative spirit begins to blossom.
- **Performing:** The team matures and learns how to handle complex challenges. Roles are performed and exchanged among members as needed, and tasks are efficiently accomplished.
- **Adjourning:** Most committees, task forces, and short-term groups disband at some stage (but not necessarily ongoing teams). The breakup, called adjournment, requires dissolving intense social relations (letting go) and returning to permanent assignments.

Team building involves encouraging team members to examine closely how they currently work together, portraying ideal ways of collaborating, exploring the gaps and weaknesses they currently suffer from, and establishing action plans for implementing more effective ways of cooperating. A team leader, or facilitator, helps the group learn about itself, observes team meetings, feeds back key observations to the team, and sometimes confronts individuals by asking them to examine their behaviour and its consequences (or explore new alternatives).

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Better Productivity: The most logical reason for building a team is that acting like a team results in better productivity, quantity and quality of work.. When you have a team, they are able to put their heads together and come up with ways to complete a task in the shortest time and most efficient manner.



Building Responsibility: When you are a part of a team, you are not only responsible for yourself, but also for your teammates. You represent the entire team. Wherever you go, you take an image of your team along with you. This realization leads to a sense of responsibility within each team member of the team, which shapes them not only as

Problem Solving: Working as a team results in better and quicker solutions to problems. With more heads thinking and more innovative ideas, there are bound to be more solutions to a problem.

Inter-personal Communication: Communication is an important aspect of our daily lives. We encounter people throughout the day and the need to communicate arises constantly. People that belong to a team are more

Adjusting and Acceptance: When you work as a team, you have no choice but to give up any personal prejudices and other issues that you have and behave in a manner that becomes a team.

Try Some Teambuilding Activities..

Purpose: To work effectively as a team to achieve a common goal.

Stack the Cups

Scenario: You have knocked down your grandmothers neatly stacked and polished china cups. You must stack them back on the buffet without getting your finger prints on them before she wakes up from her nap!

Materials: Stackable plastic cups, elastics, strings, flat surface (table), timer

Rules: Using an elastic with as many strings tied to it as there are team member; the team must stretch the elastic around the cups to pick them up with each person holding onto one string at all times. They must place the cup down on a flat surface and release the cup. They must be stacked in a pyramid shape (3 on the bottom, 2 in the middle and 1 on top).

Outcomes: Communicating effectively, problem solving, participation, expressing ideas, sharing of knowledge, developing strategies that support the goals of the team.

Magic Carpet

Scenario: You have spilled grape juice all over your mother's new white carpet she bought from the shopping channel and she will be home from work any minute. Good thing it's a handy dandy reversible carpet!

Materials: Large or small towel/table cloth, timer

Rules: With everyone standing on the magic carpet, they must work together to figure out a way

to flip the magic carpet over without touching the ground around it. At least one foot must remain in contact with the carpet at all times. The team members can use each other for support.

Outcomes: Communicating effectively, problem solving, participation, expressing ideas, sharing of knowledge, developing strategies, developing intimacy and trust among peers (sharing of space/building trust), supporting each other.

Senseless Puzzle

Goal: To complete a puzzle as a team using the senses that you have available. Each member of the team will have a sense or ability taken away.

Materials: 10-20 piece puzzle, oven mitts, masking tape, blindfold, ear plugs, flat surface (table), timer

Rules: One person is blindfolded (sight), one person is wearing oven mitts (manipulation/touch), one has masking tape over their mouth (sound/speech), one has ear plugs in their ears (sound/hearing). Together everyone must include one another and find a way to communicate to complete the puzzle.

Outcomes: Communicating effectively, problem solving, participation, developing strategies, interaction, overcoming adversity, overcoming barriers, developing an understanding of those with challenging/unique needs using multiple perspectives.

Pick up a teambuilding tool kit in the PRC and start your staff meeting with a BANG!

Early Childhood Educator Apprenticeship



Registration is Still Open
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NEWSLETTER: EDI ON THE GO!

Source: Offord Centre, May 2012

This is the first EDI on the Go! Newsletter on the Early Development Instrument (EDI) that was developed at the Offord Centre for Child Studies at McMaster University. The Early Development project focuses on the outcomes for children as a health relevant, measurable concept that has long term consequences for individual outcomes and population health.

<http://bit.ly/EDIontheGo>

TAXPAYERS SAVE \$100,000 FOR EVERY DETROIT CHILD GIVEN TOOLS TO SUCCEED IN SCHOOL

First-of-its-kind study helps policymakers, nonprofits, business leaders measure a per child return on investment in early childhood programs

http://www.mmfisher.org/docs/FINAL_Wilderrelease.pdf

PRESENTATION SLIDES: 'MODERNIZING CHILD CARE: THE POLICY PERSPECTIVE'

Source: George Brown College; Atkinson
Centre, June 14, 2012

Presentation slides from Jim Grieve, Assis-

What's New in Childcare

Links to the News in Early Learning and Care

tant Deputy Minister, Early Learning
Division, Ontario Ministry of Education
from the 2012 Summer Institute are now
available. In his presentation, Jim Grieve
outlined how the Ministry of Education is
moving forward on the government's
commitment to modernize child care in
Ontario. Additional presentations to be
posted shortly.

<http://bit.ly/ModernizingChildCare>



The AECEO had a wonderful teambuilding
experience at Shade's Mill Park in Cambridge
on June 13, 2012. We are undergoing a branch
restructure, part of the large rejuvenation of the
AECEO, and therefore we have not selected a
new President. A meeting will be held in
September to update all members of the
changes you can expect from a better, stronger
and more committed local branch.

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Beginning with Books

Laura Dick, Waterloo Public Library and
Laura Reed, Kitchener Public Library.

Children need to hear a thousand stories before they can begin to learn

Reading Aloud

Reading aloud to children is one of the best ways to engage them in high quality literacy practices like vocabulary building, narrative skill development and phonological awareness development.

For some, reading aloud is like riding a bicycle – try it once and away you go – but for others learning to read aloud effectively is a skill that takes time and practice to get just right.

Mem Fox, author of the wonderful *Reading Magic: Why Reading Aloud to Our Children Will Change Our Lives Forever* is the guru of all things reading aloud.

Here are her Ten Read Aloud Commandments:

1. Spend at least ten wildly happy minutes *every single day* reading aloud..

2. Read at least three stories a day: it may be the same story three times.

to read.

3. Read aloud with animation. Listen to your own voice and don't be dull, or flat, or boring. Hang loose and be loud, have fun and laugh a lot.

4. Read with joy and enjoyment: real enjoyment for yourself and great joy for the listeners.

5. Read the stories that the kids love, over and over and over again, and always read in the same 'tune' for each book: i.e. with the same intonations on each page, each time.

6. Let children hear lots of language by talking to them constantly about the pictures, or anything else connected to the book.; or sing any old song that you can remember

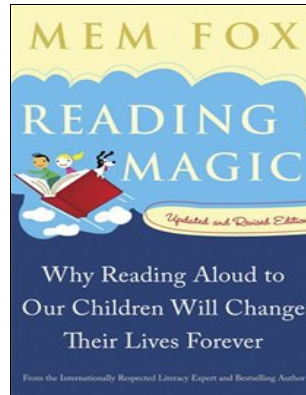
7. Look for rhyme, rhythm or repetition in books for young children, and make sure the books are

8. Play games with the things that you and the child can see on the page, such as letting kids finish rhymes, and finding the letters that start the child's name and yours, remembering that it's never work, it's always a fabulous game.

9. Never ever *teach* reading, or get tense around books.

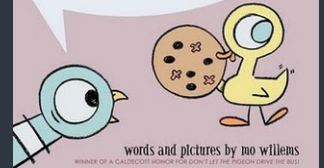
10. Please read aloud every day, mums and dads, because you just love being with your child, not because it's the right thing to do.

Mem's website www.memfox.com offers many other great read aloud tips...



Children's Book - of - the Month

The Duckling Gets a Cookie!?



The Duckling Gets a Cookie!?

By Mo Willems

Poor Pigeon, he can't understand how Duckling got a cookie...just by asking politely! Imagine that asking politely for something would actually work!

If you have any questions about books or early literacy, please send us an email:

dick@wpl.ca
laura.reed@kpl.org



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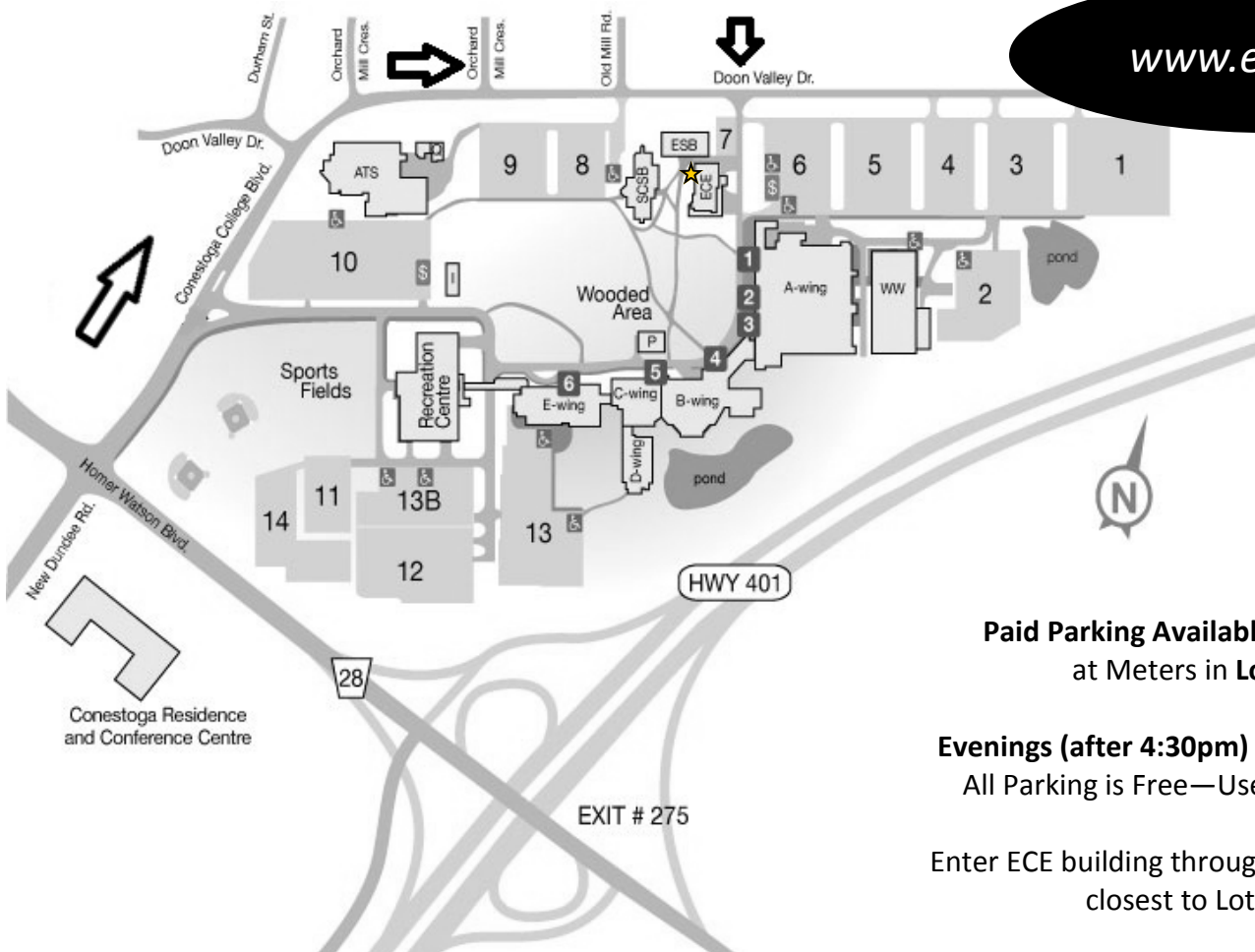
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