

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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I am capable! I am competent! I can do it! *Supporting Risk Taking in Early Childhood & Beyond*

By: Bev Laking, RECE

Let's travel back in time for a moment. Think about your own childhood experiences and the times when adults weren't around. These were probably your most exciting, exhilarating, and scary experiences. They were for me. On most of these occasions no one really experienced any significant harm from taking these risks. This is where you "pushed the envelope", did things that if your parents every found out, would have probably stopped you dead in your tracks before you even got started.

Today we live in a society of fear, and the thought that we need to keep children safe. We often let this fear take control without even realizing it. It filters down to the children we care for and I'm sure we've never even given it much deep thought as to what this does to the children of today. Hopefully, that will change today!!

How often do you feel a bit nervous when children engage in activities that you think might hurt them or think are not safe? How often do you stop or redirect activities based on "it's for your safety, you might get hurt? How often do you limit the amount of children in an activity area because you need to keep the area safe or it might be too busy?

There is a saying,
"With few risks there are few rewards. Learning involves risk." – Carter & Curtis.
 There is also the notion that:
Learning doesn't happen without making mistakes. If we did everything right all the time we

would never learn anything.

I have come to believe that you can't have children's best interests in mind if you haven't re-examined your own attitudes and beliefs regarding risk taking. This topic forces us to look at many influencing factors. It causes us to consider and look at the rules we make, our own fears and views about risk taking, the fears and views of our co-workers, and the children's abilities and desires. We must also look closely at what is truly written in the documents that govern us, whether it be the Day Nursery Act, your playground safety guidelines or any other guidelines your environments adhere to.

Come with me for a moment, sit down, and look around this childcare environment....
Immediately you see children climbing up stacked stools, "flying through the air" into a pile of big pillows, over in the block area a small group of children are perched on stacked stools on their tippy, tippy toes reaching high above their heads to carefully balance blocks on their sky high structure. Behind you an excited group of 8 children are negotiating roles in the House Centre. Your first thoughts may be "That's too many children in there, it seems chaotic". You get up and move towards the snack table where to your surprise children are using real



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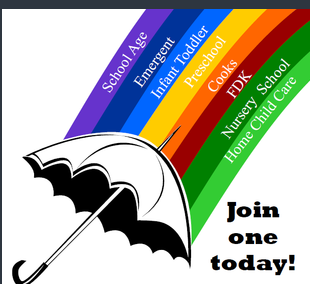
RTB Umbrella Networks

- Cooks Network
- Emergent Network
- Full-Day Kindergarten Network
- Home Child Care Network
- Infant & Toddler Network
- Nursery School Network
- Preschool Network
- School-Age Network

Upcoming Network Meetings

Visit www.eceprc.ca for more information on these networks and current events.

Upcoming network meeting will be posted under the community calendar.



knives to slice their own bananas. Loud banging catches your attention, and you look to see children using real hammers, banging with all their "umpf" to drive nails into a piece of wood. At this point your heart starts racing and you wonder... What is going on here! These children could get hurt. Later in the day you venture outside with the children only to see them climbing up the slide, jumping off benches and using real garden shears. Children in a near by forest are taking turns climbing a tree. Fast-forward to winter and you then observe children using toboggans as snowboards. You give your head a shake and think, "What could these teachers be thinking? How can they let this type of behaviour occur? Do they not have control over the group? Do they not believe in protecting children and keeping them safe?"

An important detail in the above story is that in every situation an adult was close by, observing, guiding, and teaching technique.

The teachers in this environment believed that the children were capable, competent and that they could do it! They knew their own role in this environment and they believed in allowing children to take risks.

To begin your transformation you must first understand what a risk is. When we hear the word risk we may think danger, harm, not a good idea. Let's broaden our understanding of risk and define it in this manner... ***A risk is anything that one engages in that might be new, take one's abilities to the next level, and challenges one's own comfortable level.*** Is there an element that one could get hurt, possibly, but everything we do involves some kind of risk. Walking out your door, getting in your car, experiencing what the day has in store for you could be a risk. This definition applies to not only the children, but to you as well. Trying something new can be scary for us as adults to. Doing something that is out of our comfort zone or making change is hard and challenging at times.



We need to provide for risk taking while keeping the children safe. Taking risks needs to be part of childhood. We need to "quiet" or put aside our adult fears. We need not bring them to the forefront. When we tell children not to do something or they can't do something because it's not safe we spark their curiosity. They probably are now more intrigued to want to try it. If I told you not to eat chocolate because it tasted horrible I'm not sure you would actually believe me, you may be more intrigued to try it to see if I was right or not. The same goes for children. Have you ever stopped to think about what happens to children when our own fears come to the forefront? We often end up instilling unnecessary rules and limits. This quickly translates into adults stopping a child in the name of protection. This actually translates into "protecting the adult from facing their fear". Often without realizing we are doing it, we are passing along that fear to the child.

What can we do instead?

We as teachers can move into physical proximity where safety might be a concern. We can become the "spotter" and be there if children need physical support. We can talk through with them where their hands or feet need to go next to be able to be successful.

We can use descriptive language with a child before stopping an activity where risk is involved. This may mean asking questions, inquiring about what they are trying to accomplish, and asking them how they are feeling at that moment.

Consider this: Externally-imposed vs. Self-imposed

If adults always externally impose limits, will a child be able to self-impose limits? Will they truly learn what their own limitations are? I want to share a real experience with you.

A group of children I worked with gathered all the stools in the centre and stacked them up to see how high and how far they could jump in the classroom. I supported their play by physically being present. I watched as the children judged their own comfort level with this risk. Some children independently jumped. Others asked if I could hold their hand and others chose to just watch their peers.

We often don't give children enough credit in being able to make decisions for themselves. I encourage you to closely watch children and look for the self-regulation abilities that they show us each day. Next time don't stop the activity but watch to see what they are doing instead. Try not to snuff out the learning the next time you want to go in and stop an activity. Instead, be there but really watch what it is they are doing.

Ask yourself, What happens if we don't allow children the freedom to take risks and to feel capable of doing different things? How do they learn to make good judgments about whether something is safe if they have never experienced the consequences of their limitations?

Children may be at risk for increased injury. They may have underdeveloped motor skills. They will receive fewer physical health benefits because they are less physically active. They will develop poor evaluation skills of risky situations. They will experience frustration, develop lower self-esteem and they will probably develop inadequate decision making skills. On top of all this they may engage in inappropriate risk taking. If too many safety measures are put in place it may cause children to engage in greater risky behaviour.

What do children learn through taking risks?

They learn the natural consequences for their actions. They develop a sense of their capabilities. They are provided with opportunities to learn new skills, try new behaviours, reach their full potential, test the limits of their physical, intellectual and social development, and learn sound judgment in assessing risks by themselves. They develop a feeling of success and they believe in themselves. They have the ability to face new challenges, move beyond their own "comfort zone", and can persevere in the face of difficulty and uncertainty. These are just a few of the many skills and abilities children can acquire while taking risks. Is this not what we want for the children we care for?

If we make "blanket" rules based on "a child may get hurt", what are we doing to the development of a child who can negotiate the risk?

Instead..... Let's ask ourselves this question: Are the children who are trying this able to do it? For those who can: be there to support them For those who are struggling: Look for ways to support them in mastering this element of risk. Let's use our new ability to observe and watch what is really transpiring in our programs. Let's be the best supportive teacher we can be!



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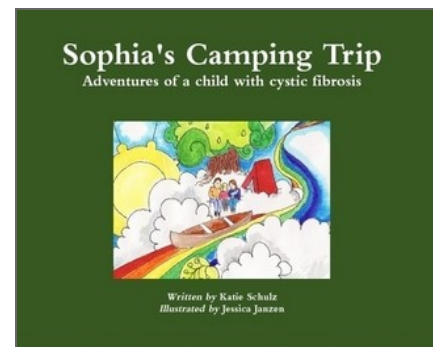
Sophia's Camping Trip: Adventure of a Child with Cystic Fibrosis

A Book Review by: Mechelle Jarman, ECE Student

There is an exciting new children's book on the shelves at the PRC. It's called *Sophia's Camping Trip: Adventures of a child with cystic fibrosis* by Katie Schulz. Katie was inspired to write this story by her daughter Sophia, who is a young child with Cystic Fibrosis. It is based on their experience camping in Killarney Provincial Park in Ontario. The twenty-four page children's book presents a touching story about a girl named Sophia who dreams of going on a camping trip, but fears she won't be able to because of the medication and equipment she needs for her exceptionality. The book is written from Sophia's point of view, and gives a sense what a child with cystic fibrosis experiences. It also points out that although their lives are somewhat different from other children, they can still do many of the same fun activities. The very last page of the book is a note written to parents. Katie shares her love of camping, as well as some insightful tips and tricks when camping with a child who has cystic fibrosis.

For those who may not be familiar with cystic fibrosis, "Cystic fibrosis (CF) is the most common fatal genetic disease affecting Canadian children and young adults. There is no cure. CF is a multi-system disease, primarily affecting the lungs and digestive system. In the lungs, where the effects of the disease are most devastating, a build-up of thick mucus causes increasingly severe respiratory problems. It may be difficult to clear bacteria from the lungs, leading to cycles of infection and inflammation, which damage delicate lung tissue. Mucus and protein also build up in the digestive tract making it difficult to digest and absorb nutrients from food. Large quantities of digestive enzymes (average of 20 pills a day) must be consumed with every meal and snack. As improved therapies have helped to address the malnutrition issues, virtually all cystic fibrosis-related deaths are due to lung disease." (Cystic Fibrosis Canada)

Sophia's Camping Trip is on sale at the PRC for \$12.00 each, and all proceeds from the sales will be donated to Cystic Fibrosis Canada. We also have it on our shelves as part of our lending library for our PRC members. This book is a good resource for both children and teachers when learning about what cystic fibrosis is and what a child with CF goes through each day.



A Recipe to Enjoy!

QCCI's Child Care Cooks Crustless Carrot and Cheese Quiche

This dish is easy to make and well liked by children. It's bright orange colour looks great with a simple side salad!

- 8 eggs
- 1 ¼ cups (300 ml) milk
- 2 tbsp (25 ml) butter
- 2 cups (500 ml) grated carrot
- 2 tbsp (25 ml) minced onion or onion flakes
- 1 tsp (5 ml) salt
- 1 tsp (5 ml) curry powder (optional)
- 1 ½ cups (375 ml) shredded cheese, such as Swiss or Cheddar

In a large bowl, whisk together eggs and milk. Set aside.

In a non-stick skillet, melt butter over medium heat and cook carrots, onions, salt and curry if using) until golden brown, about 8 minutes.

Add into the egg mixture and stir to combine. Stir in 1 cup (250 ml) of the cheese and pour into a greased 8 inch (1.5 litre) square baking dish. Sprinkle top with remaining cheese.

Bake in 350 F (180 C) oven until knife inserted in centre comes out clean and top is puffed, about 45 minutes.
Cut into squares to serve.
Makes 12 to 16 servings.

Over 120 recipes can be found from the child care cooks of Guelph and Wellington County, local restaurants and celebrity chefs! Pick up your copy of this book for \$20.00 in the PRC or check it out of our library! Each recipe connects to the DNA requirements making this a "must have" book for any childcare centre!



A Message from your Local AECEO President, Cathy Barrie:

Look for the AGM and local branch meeting to take place in June, 2012!

For other AECEO events of interest please check out these links!

May 26th, 2012 Sudbury AECEO Conference
Transparency in Teaching Sharing Inspirations of the Reggio Emilia Approach in Practice. <http://www.aeceo.ca/ece/sudbury-aeceo-conference/>

June 8-9th, 2012 CAMP AECEO! Trent University, Peterborough, ON Team Building & Leadership Camp. <http://www.aeceo.ca/ece/camp-aeceo-2012-2/>

If you would like to connect with your branch or have any questions please leave us a voice mail by calling:

519-748-5220 ext. 8026

What's New in Childcare

Links to the News in Early Learning and Care

INVEST IN OUR FUTURE: EARLY LEARNING & CHILD CARE for the 21st CENTURY:

Speakers: Honourable Margaret Norrie McCain & Kerry McCuaig

Date and time: Wednesday, April 25, 2012, 5:00 PM

Location: OISE/UofT Library, 252 Bloor Street West, Toronto (light refreshments will be served).

ENCYCLOPEDIA on ECD:
TEMPERAMENT:

Source: Centre of Excellence for ECD; Strategic Knowledge Cluster on ECD, April 2012

The Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development has been revised on the topic of Temperament with four papers, as well as the addition of a new paper, "Temperament, parenting and implications for development" by Alice C. Schermerhorn & John E. Bates. <http://bit.ly/EncyclopediaECDTemperament>

PLAY POD VIDEO:

Here is a video that will provoke some thoughts around the importance of play and engaging outdoor experiences we can offer the children we work with.

ENJOY!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nq1lKyJJeKg&feature=youtu.be>



RTB Binder drop off dates:

Thursday May 10th, 2012 & Friday May 11th, 2012

RTB Binder pick up & re-charge date:

Thursday June 14th, 2012



A Quality Initiative for Waterloo Region

For Further Information: Debbie Jones, Supervisor, Quality Initiatives
Phone: 519-883 2111 x. 5044—Email: djones@regionofwaterloo.ca



Beginning with Books

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

Boys and Reading

We have been hearing for years, decades even, that boys don't read, can't read, won't read. That they are, by and large, reluctant readers, who read less, less willingly, and less sophisticated books than girls. There is a crisis with boys and literacy. The question now is, is it true? Is there a crisis? Do boys read? The answer is neither simple nor agreed upon. A recent UK study actually shows that the gap in reading skills between boys and girls has shrunk significantly. While reports from the US Department of Education cite that boys continue to score lower than girls on reading scores at all ages. There are also early reports that eReaders, such as KOBO readers, are having a positive impact on boys' interest in books and reading. So, where does this leave us?

Well, I think that all of us who have worked with children

know that boys and girls learn differently, they experience the world differently, they interact with books differently.

But, we also know it is possible to get young boys hooked by the right picture book, to get them excited by books and stories. As with most things, the key is to get them young. Instill an appreciation of books early and it will stick, even if they stray during those tumultuous tween years, they will come back to books.

A few tips to help get them early...

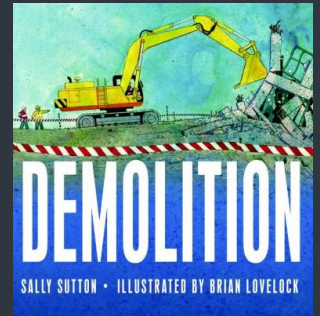
- Read. Read regularly. Don't make a big deal of it, just do it, and make it fun.
- Read a wide range of books. Have lots of books available for them to choose from. Don't be afraid to fall back on those stereotypical boy themes, they really do work, themes such as: animals; trucks; trains; all things that move, dig, or build; pirates; mon-

sters; dinosaurs; and books with silly language.

- A book like *Dinotrux* by Chris Gall is great - dinosaurs, trucks, and demolition!
- For preschool boys big, bold books with large print and simple words will leave the biggest impact. Books like *Freight Train* by Donald Crews and *Go Away, Big Green Monster!* by Ed Emberley.
- Active stories are a great way to engage boys by getting them moving. Don't just read it, be it. Books like *I am a Backhoe* by Anna Grossnickle Hines and *Wiggle* by Doreen Cronin.
- Look for male role models to read to the kids. This will leave a big impact.

Want to learn more? A web search will bring up lists of recommended books, tips, and research. A good place to start is the GUYS READ website (guysread.com), a web-based literacy program for boys founded by author Jon Scieszka. It is full of facts, fun, and all things boy. You can also count on your local library to have lots of great books available.

Children's Book - of - the Month



***Demolition* by Sally Sutton; illustrated by Brian Lovelock**

Crush! Chip! Grind! Whirr! Chirr! Crunch! Crack! This picture book is full of words and sounds and actions. The team who brought us *Roadwork* is back, and this time instead of building things, they are tearing things apart. What is more from than rambunctious, reverberating, satisfying demolition? This is a book that is fun to read and that is sure to capture the attention of even the busiest preschoolers.

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

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

Building a Community Through Early Literacy

Full Day Conference

Saturday October 13th, 2012
at Conestoga College

For more information visit: www.elawr.org



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RESOURCE CENTRE



Winter Hours of Operation

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The PRC will be closed
Monday May 21st, 2012 for
Victoria Day

Conestoga College

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Kitchener, Ontario N2G 4M4

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The Early Childhood Professional Resource Centre

Tell a Friend Today!

Our evidence based resources combine current research and quality materials to enhance your programs, and understanding of learning. We are working towards bridging the gap between research and practice!

Our members receive a monthly newsletter, discounts on in-house workshops, lending privileges for our library and access to our data bank of research and early learning and care articles. Members also receive updates on current information in the ELC community and have access to our work stations and equipment (laminator, computer, binding machine, etc.)

Join today and discover the value of belonging to a professional organization that is invested in your professional growth, our community, and the future!



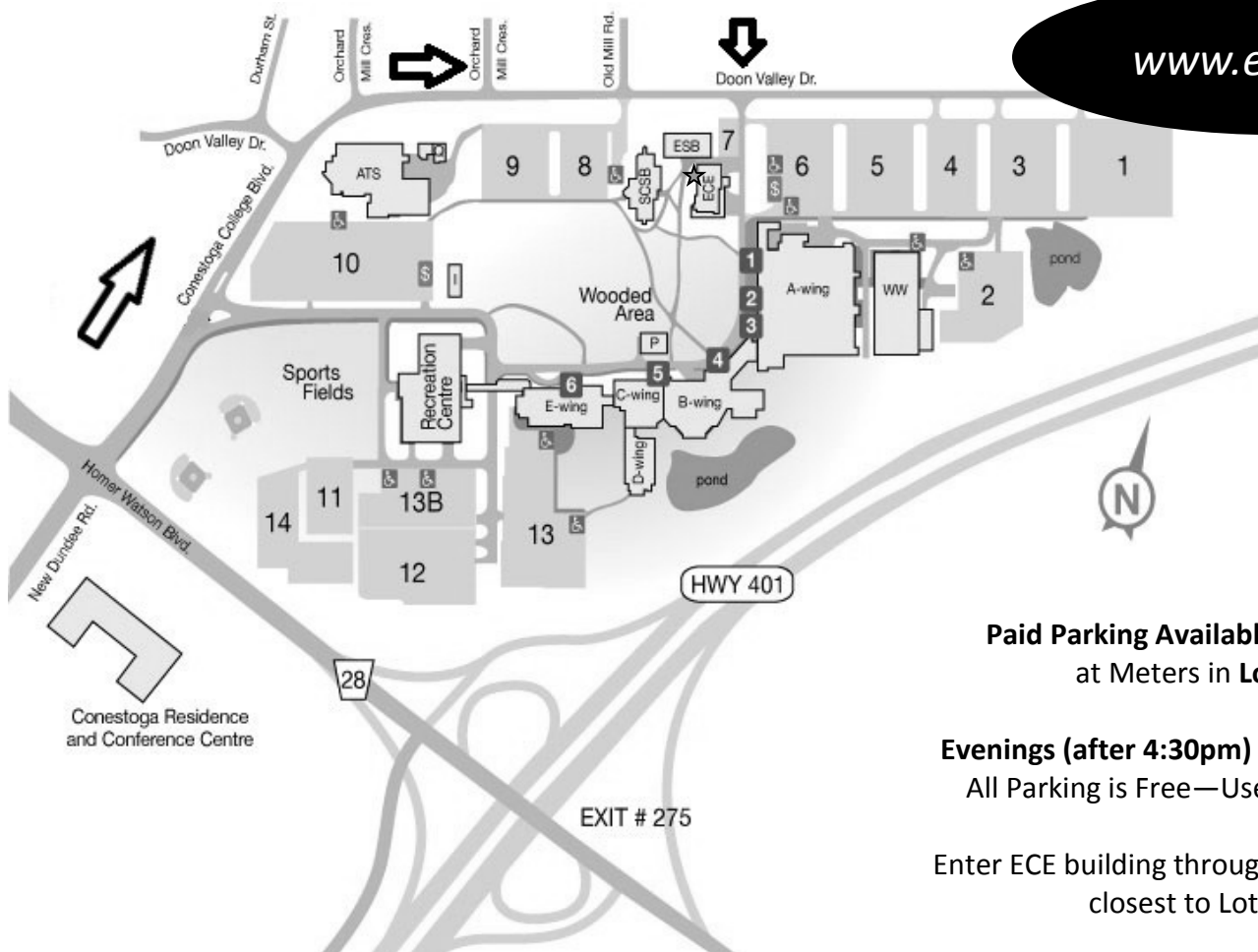
Region of Waterloo
SOCIAL SERVICES
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www.eceprc.ca

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All Parking is Free—Use Lot #6 or #7

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closest to Lot #7.