



Engaging Parents in Early Learning – How Parents Are Involved Matters!



Message from the President/CEO

Welcome back to the start of another exciting school year. The Learning Partnership's Welcome to kindergarten program, together with our partners, continues to encourage family and community engagement. This past spring we hosted a successful Early Years Family and Community Engagement Symposium in Toronto. Representatives included early years' educators, school

administrators and community agencies from across Canada. These participants shared effective community based models for addressing family engagement.

Joan Green, former Director of Education for Toronto School Board and CEO of Education Quality and Accountability Office, was the key note speaker. Her thought provoking messages are referenced in the newsletter.

This edition of the *Welcome to Kindergarten™* Newsletter will highlight the importance of parent engagement and ways for schools and community agencies to build relationships and parent participation.

"Thirty years of research shows that parents' engagement in their children's education has a significant impact on children's academic and developmental goals." – Epstein, 2001; Nye, Turner, and Schwartz, 2006

I wish you a happy and safe start to the year, and may you continue your important efforts to prepare all young children for a successful school experience.

Akela Peoples, M.Ed.
 President and CEO
 The Learning Partnership



Why is Parent Engagement Important?

A variety of studies have indicated that parents must play an active role in their children's education for successful student learning and development.

"Parents reading age-appropriate stories to their children contributes to the development of children's listening, comprehension skills, oral language skills, positive attitudes towards reading, larger vocabulary acquisition, and learning that text conveys meaning" (Saracho & Sopeka, 2010)

In addition, collaborative partnerships between schools and community agencies are essential in order to enrich the supports for family engagement.

Benefits of Parent Engagement

- More opportunities for parents and children to be engaged
- Increased parent knowledge/skills
- Children better prepared for school
- Stronger partnership among schools, community agencies and parents
- Greater sharing of resources
- Enhanced leadership profile of partners supporting children and their families
- Increased enrolment of young children in other community programs
- Secure an understanding that schools and other community agencies in local neighbourhoods are there to support them

Welcome to Kindergarten Awards for Partnership Excellence

Nominate a school team, individual or community group

>> Deadline: September 30, 2013

Early Years Family and Community Engagement Symposium – Winnipeg
 May 13,14,15, 2014.

Visit: www.thelearningpartnership.ca

Engaging Parents in Home Based Activities that Really Make a Difference

Encourage parents to:

- have high but reasonable expectations of their children
- talk with their children regularly and particularly about school
- help their children develop strong and positive attitudes about learning and practical work habits
- read with their children
- communicate with teachers
- attend meetings about their child's progress
- volunteer in the classroom
- become involved in School Council work
- attend early learning programs in their community.

"Research shows that Home Based activities and attitudes are more closely linked to students' academic achievement." – Joan Green, 2013

Strategies Used by Some Communities to Engage Parents

Welcome to Kindergarten™ Follow-up Family and Community Engagement Sessions



Longue Sault P.S.

Longue Sault P.S. – Upper Canada District School Board

Together School and Ontario Early Years staff planned and presented a fine motor activity session based on identified need.

Activities for children and parents included:

- sorting coloured cotton balls using salad tongs
- hanging doll/baby clothes on small clotheslines with pegs
- sorting small objects in egg cartons/ ice cube trays
- cutting playdough with scissors
- drawing and colouring on large pieces of paper on the floor

These activities provided practical, simple ideas using found objects in the home.

Strategy for engagement – Families were invited to attend this second session at the conclusion of the spring *Welcome*

to *Kindergarten* Orientation and were informed that they would **receive an additional resource** (The *Welcome to Kindergarten My Story Scrapbook*).

R. H. Cornish P.S. – Durham District School Board

Collaboratively, community and school staff planned and delivered a health and fitness session. The partners involved included Public Health and Early Years Centre staff, vision/hearing screening staff and a chiropractor.

Activities for children and parents included:

- making healthy snacks,
- experimenting with children friendly lunch containers,
- learning about appropriate sizes of backpacks and contents,
- sound recognition, tips on vision development,
- ball throwing activities.

All the above activities stressed oral language development. This session provided parents with many strategies and information on supports in the community.



Family engagement at Rideau P.S., Limestone DSB

Engaging Marginalized Families in Sudbury

- In order to encourage all families to participate in schools and early learning activities, the community partners focused on developing awareness, sensitivity to all cultures and learning outreach skills.

Particular attention given to:

- ensure materials are culturally, ethnically, socially representative and diverse
- hold sessions in community settings e.g. community centre, agency space, recreation centre
- be aware of transportation, food, child care needs
- be knowledgeable and honour all cultural and religious practices
- develop trust, be approachable and responsive

All partners engaged in the session entitled "Getting Everybody In – Learn the Skills we Need to Build Inclusive Environments" reported increased knowledge and enhanced skills to better outreach to diverse communities and build trust.

Outcome: Family Engagement Framework, 2012 WTK/FACES Sudbury Steering Committee

Congratulations to WTK/FACES Cornwall Steering Committee for receiving \$20,000 grant from the Province's Regional/Provincial Parents Reaching Out Grants to continue their work.

Welcome to Kindergarten Program Team

National – Karen Rallis, Sue Rowan, Stefania Silisteanu, Alban Joxhe, Kim Miller

Alberta – Rosalie Bain, Lorraine Berg

British Columbia – Barbara Claridge, Patricia Shields

Manitoba – Deb Thompson

New Brunswick – Colombe Smith

Ontario – Karen Cobb, Janice Deacon, Danielle Filatrault,

Torre Hansson, Gayle Kirsh, Nancy Vail, Jill Watson

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