

No 138 March 2015

President's Message

Teachers' Convention just wrapped up for most teachers in the province. Along with hearing keynote speakers, one of my favourite activities is perusing the excellent children's book selections in the display area. Below I share with you the books I bought for my school—they are whimsical and follow my love of number, fairy-tale and alphabet books.

Take Away the A – An Alphabeast of a Book, by Michael Escoffier, focuses on the phonemic skill of deletion. “Without the *H* ... three climb a tree.” “Without the *U* my aunt is an ant.” The rhyming pairs offer interesting illustrations.

The Hueys in None the Number – A Counting Adventure, by Oliver Jeffers, has captivating, simplistic oval illustrations and highlights addition in a fun way. Humour is embedded in the character's explanations of numbers.

A Bean, a Stalk and Boy Named Jack, by William Joyce, is a fractured Jack-and-the-beanstalk tale. The descriptive language and illustrations are excellent.

Almost an Animal Alphabet, by Katie Viggers, uses a combination of colour and black-and-white illustrations. “P is for penguins” shows a variety of penguin types, but “G is for gorilla” is a solitary, gorgeous black-and-white charcoal illustration.

1 to 20, Animals Aplenty, also by Katie Viggers, is a rhyming number book. The number pages combine counting, the visual number and characters in a unique way.

A group of Calgary kindergarten teachers is conducting a book study of the second edition of *Designs for Living and Learning*, by Deb Curtis and Margie Carter. The photographs are amazing and there are many suggestions for redesigning classrooms and outdoor spaces.

On a political note, I encourage my fellow early learning educators to be proactive and contact your MLAs to express your feelings about programming and teacher cuts. In the Klein days, kindergarten funding was cut by 50 per cent; parents had to pay \$400 one year and \$200 the next until funding was reinstated. Let's be united in our support of the value and importance of early education.

Joy de Nance

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A Day of Inspiration

Early Childhood Education Council Executive Professional Development

This incredible adventure began with conversations earlier in the year, at our executive meetings. We wanted to see spaces and places that promoted student learning and early childhood practices. What came from this experience was far more than any of us had anticipated. On a beautiful warm May day we all drove to the Genesis Centre with excitement and wonder of what our day would bring. Upon entering the building we were met by a sea of yellow sunflowers and a staff that greeted us with open arms. Our day of inspiration was about to begin.



Just the idea of being in this space was amazing in itself.

The hallways were full of beauty around every corner, you couldn't help but take pictures. Every space lent itself to more inspiration and pure joy. I remember I walked into one of the learning spaces and just stood there for a moment to take it all in. I even commented at one point that I didn't think I was going to be able to leave because I was so in love. It is incredible what one beautiful invitation to learning can do for the soul.



Getting Ready to Play

A little background history before jumping in

Before we continued our journey through the building we learned some of the philosophy and understanding behind the building and how it came to be—how it was once an older standard style building until the staff decided that it needed to reflect the learning that they were promoting with teachers in their school district. Each area of the building has been designed to allow staff to work in spaces that they are comfortable in. Areas include large tables, small sitting areas, couches and even desks, if they so desire. All areas are open and invite you to come in and learn. The staff then took us on a tour where at every corner there was a new invitation to be amazed. Every single area of the building has been thoughtfully designed to promote the belief,

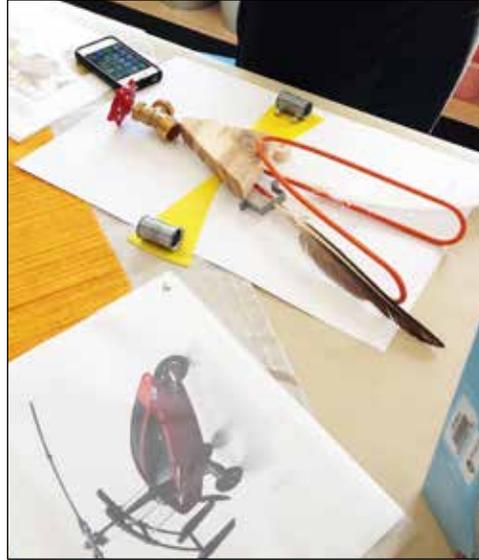
understanding and philosophy of what early childhood is meant to be. The Genesis Centre has areas for students, parents and teachers to learn, observe and engage in activities in the areas of the curriculum. Areas have been designed with observation rooms, music therapy and curriculum components in mind. The most important aspect of this is that it was all done with careful consideration to build a celebration of learning. Even the way staff have their pictures in the hallway was done with purpose and celebration of what they had to offer others.

The Invitation

In our groups we were then taken into the classrooms and presented with ideas that allowed us to create and play, just as students would when they visited. All around the room, abundant laughter and joy exuded from all of us. This was truly a moment of wonder and learning that did not require reading a piece of literature—this was in the moment, one of great impression. All the materials were there for us to use, create and play, and play we did.

Many would have thought that we were done. Then our hosts led us to the brand-new outdoor natural space and water play areas.





Outdoor Spaces and Water Play

The outdoor space provided wonderful opportunities to children of all ages and created such an incredible open dialogue between us all. We were truly immersed in learning. The passion and energy were infectious, and the creations by all were things of beauty.

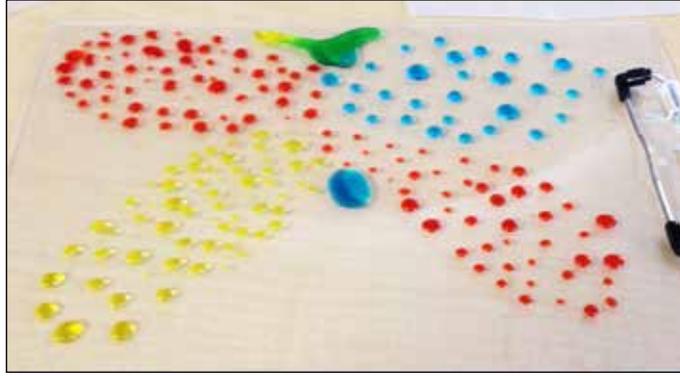
We then delved into water play, with some great ideas from staff such as using fruits and

vegetables for buoyancy, plasticine to create boats, and numerous tubes, funnels and metal cages to create elaborate mazes and water play, both inside and out.

Once back inside we learned new ideas about water tension and ways to have kids build temporary art pieces with Plexiglas, wax paper and eyedroppers.

What an ingenious way to learn scientific concepts and create unique pieces at the same time.





Their Mobile Unit

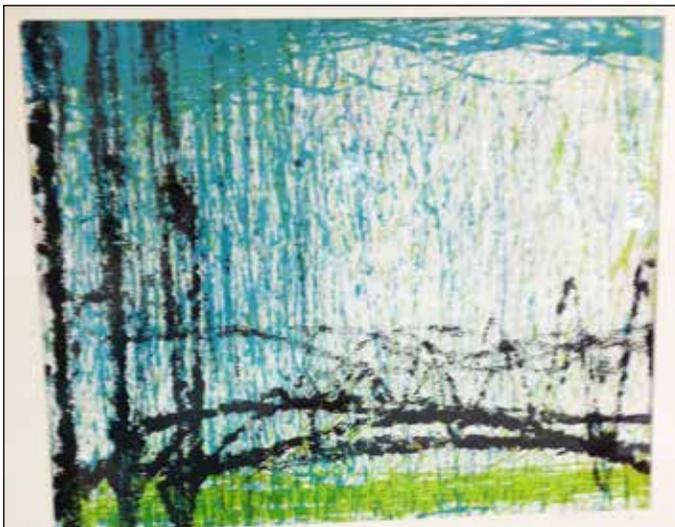
The philosophy of the Genesis Centre is to build capacity within the school division and promote early childhood practices. What better way to do that than to have a mobile unit that comes to events and demonstrates the importance of learning. As part of our day, we toured the unit and discussed the projects they have undertaken, such as learning to make musical instruments out of

found materials, promoting literacy and math skills through play, and building scientific concepts.

What an incredible adventure! It was a day full of joy, learning and, most of all, the love of kids.

We can't wait to visit again someday, and I am sure that much more will await us. Thanks again to the incredible staff and organizers for this amazing experience.

Kim Wrathall



Conference 2014

Awakening Genius



Thomas Armstrong, PhD, keynote speaker

Thomas Armstrong, executive director of the American Institute for Learning and Human Development, inspired each of us to see the inborn genius in every child. He listed twelve qualities of genius: curiosity, playfulness, imagination, creativity, wonder, wisdom, inventiveness, vitality, sensitivity, flexibility, humour and joy.

He noted that this genius gets shut down in most people over the course of their lives by a number of factors, which he described as

- *home-miliation*: factors within the family such as dysfunction or disadvantage;
- *dysteachia*: testing, grading, textbooks and worksheets; and
- *media-ocrity*: violent or trivial content, stereotypical images.

So what is a solution? Armstrong spoke of the benefits of reawakening the genius in us as teachers and sharing this with our students. He talked about the importance of offering simple exploratory experiences. He noted the importance of recognizing multiple intelligences and seeing the many faces of genius. And finally, genius needs to be nurtured in the right environment where students feel believed in, are given choice and time to explore, and have freedom from judgment.

For more detailed information, visit <http://institute4learning.com>.

Lisa Schoeler

Positive Behaviour Supports

Presented by Meghan Cox, Shane Hewitt and Shawn Reynolds

Editor's note: there are several uses of the masculine pronoun in this summary; the masculine pronoun is deemed to include the feminine.

This highly informative and engaging session focused on using the positive behaviour support approach (PBS) to support students with oppositional behaviour or who are on the autism spectrum. The presenters explained that the term *positive* is very important as a part of this approach for two reasons. First, the term *positive* implies that undesirable behaviours can be changed without relying on punishment. Second, it is positive in the mathematical sense, because new skills are being added to the student's repertoire. These new skills will make it less likely for the student to rely on oppositional or defiant behaviour.

One example of this would be a student learning how to use a cue card to signal that he needs a break from a task or from the learning environment. At first he may need coaching and a careful eye from the teacher, who may offer him the card when he appears to be getting frustrated. The goal would be that he could independently use the card to ask for a break when he was feeling frustrated. He may also learn to use a particular phrase to communicate the difficulty he is having. The important thing here is that the behaviour is being dealt with in a positive way before it occurs, and the student is given tools and strategies that maintain his dignity.

Lisa Schoeler

Choose How You Play It

As a wrap to a wonderful conference, Sami Jo Small, Canadian Olympic goaltender, treated attendees to an inspiring lunch keynote address. The mood in the room was instantly full of nostalgia and pride as we watched highlights from CBC coverage of the Olympics. Each table also had the opportunity to hold and take pictures of Sami Jo's gold medal as it made its way around the room.



Keynote speaker Sami Jo Small's Olympic medal

Sami Jo then took us on a trip with her as she described her journey from a little girl dreaming of joining her brother's street hockey team to being a celebrated Olympian. Far from being a story filled with amazing highs and glory, it was an honest tale of grit and determination. She also told of her greatest Olympic disappointments: not playing in the final game in Salt Lake City and not receiving a medal in Torino.

Sami Jo described how she was able to move from questioning her place on the team to making the decision to be there in whatever way possible for her teammates and country. She now describes her motto as "In life you don't always get to choose the role you play, but you do get to choose how you play it."

Lisa Schoeler

Digital Storytelling and Apps

Lissa Davies, teacher-librarian with Edmonton Public Schools

This was an intimate session in which participants had the opportunity to explore a variety of Web 2.0 and digital storytelling tools on Chromebooks. Web 2.0 tools are digital creation tools that allow students or teachers to create content that is then shared online. This material can be shared in a password-protected safe zone or publicly, depending on the tool and the settings you choose. Be sure to check with your school board's digital citizenship policies to make sure that any Web 2.0 tools are approved for you to use with students.

Lissa shared her experiences with using digital devices and tools with early learners and the importance of keeping things simple. A great suggestion was pairing up with a buddy class in an older grade to make it easier to manage logging in and getting all students using the devices.

Lissa is a contributing blogger to an amazing blog about using educational technology with Division I students. Visit her site, <http://div1edtech.blogspot.ca>, to learn about all of the wonderful resources that are available to you online.

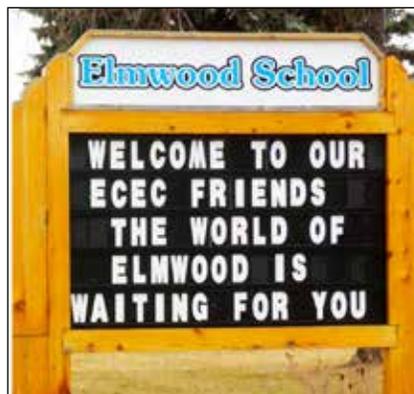
Lisa Schoeler

Wintergreen Playground

On Friday evening we enjoyed a fantastic playground and social sponsored by our friends at Wintergreen. Marcel Gagne, Wintergreen's national sales manager, was on hand to help out with the events. Participants had a variety of stations to complete that were not only a great way to enjoy the evening but also showed creative ways of using some of Wintergreen's educational games and materials to support learning, motor skills and play in the classroom. At the end of the evening, Marcel raffled off all the station materials as well as an overflowing stage full of other resources. Thank you, Marcel and Wintergreen!

Lisa Schoeler

Elmwood Tour



This year many sessions of the conference were hosted at Elmwood School. Principal Karen Keats Whelan, assistant principal Joanne Kuefler and all of the staff of Elmwood made us all feel welcome. The school itself provided a rich environment and left us with so many wonderful ideas to take back to our classrooms and schools. The ECEC executive had the opportunity to tour the school the day before the conference and discuss the work being done in the school with both staff and students. We saw first-hand how the thoughtful consideration of the learning environment, as a third teacher, influenced the inquiries going on in the school. The naturalized area in the school also offers another location for deep learning and exploration.

Lisa Schoeler

Interactive Literacy and Music



*Eric Litwin,
Thursday night
keynote speaker*

Eric started our conference off with a dancing, interactive, energetic presentation on the importance of literacy and song. As the author of the first four Pete the Cat books and his newest creation, The Nuts, he was sure to get everyone's attention. As he spoke he strummed his guitar, drawing everyone into his conversation, full of laughter and the utmost respect for literacy and the work that we do as teachers.

Eric spoke passionately from the perspective of a songwriter and teacher about making literacy part of everyday learning in our classes. It should be used as a way to reach our most energetic students and help to build on classroom management through times for students to become immersed in the songs, words and actions. He stressed that his books were not meant for a sit-and-listen type of delivery. By the end of the session we had all been up dancing and grooving and learned the real meaning of "It's all good." It was such a pleasure to hear Eric speak from the heart, and we look forward to his online presence in the coming months.

Kim Wrathall

Considering the Layers of Inquiry-Based Learning: Transforming Educational Practices

Joanne Babalis

This incredible educator and inspiring speaker invited us into her world of teaching and her classroom transformation in the last few years. As an advocate for students and inquiry-based

learning, she spoke openly about her start as a teacher using commercially created items and showed pictures of what her classroom looked like at the time. She spoke of how she had followed the role that she thought was important, with blocked times in the day for specific subject areas and all of her teaching scripted. She started to realize that her teaching lacked the passion that she so desperately had gone into the profession for and that she didn't feel the real sense of learning that she wanted for her students. She was a first-year teacher and she felt overwhelmed, was dealing with behavioural concerns regularly and felt as though she was just going through the motions of the day. She decided at the end of that year that she needed to do something; it needed to be a transformation like no other, one that she would record and document to see where it would take her. Thus her blog, www.myclassroomtransformation.blogspot.ca, was born.

During her presentation, Joanne spoke thoughtfully about what it was like to see her classroom come alive and the passion that started to grow in her teaching and her students. Her emphasis was on three main areas of the inquiry process: designing learning environments, the layers of inquiry, and making learning visible. She stated that all of these areas need to be considered in order to make good foundational inquiry. Items such as the image of the child, time, space, materials, taking time to listen, planning and documenting are essential to the process and the learning that occurs in our classrooms. To truly "do" inquiry means that the student is seen as strong, capable, curious, knowledgeable and creative. Transforming her environment also meant transforming her teaching and allowing for more flow in her day, more extended periods of time for exploration and design, opportunities to eat throughout the day (not in a scripted and set time), student independence in their creations, and ways of preserving and honouring students' learning.

To do this effectively has been a process over many years that will continue to be built upon as time goes on.

Joanne's entire presentation was such an inspiration and left those in attendance with a

renewed spirit and energy that was unsurpassed. When she started her presentation that day she did something that demonstrated her understanding of the world around her and the respect she had for others. She had designed business cards that were all pictures to inspire; there were several creations and she asked us to pick one that inspired us that we could take back to our rooms as a way to renew our love of learning. That message resonated throughout her presentation.

I highly recommend checking out her blog posts and seeing all the great work she is doing now. I can't wait to hear more from her and continue to be inspired by her amazing journey.

Kim Wrathall

Self-Regulating— Supporting Children to Be Ready for Learning

Shamalla Manilall and Lynette Dubchak

This afternoon-long session was packed with great practical ideas for teachers to use immediately in their classrooms. The emphasis of the presentation was on understanding that students will often react to situations negatively and with behaviour due to a sensory overload. Sensory processing concerns can be felt by students and adults alike and will often cause irritation physically and emotionally. By being like a detective in your own classroom, you can reduce sensory concerns to a minimum with some simple strategies and awareness of student needs.

Because the session was the whole afternoon, we were engaged in ways of learning that allowed us to experience areas of concern for students, and ways to alter daily routines and provide tools that students could use independently. It was an interactive opportunity to work with others and get up and get moving.

When speaking about movement breaks Shamalla and Lynette emphasized the importance of the frequency and intensity of the movement and that movement breaks

should start with high energy followed by cardio and end with some heavy work to ground students. They mentioned that often we will do the cardio and then ask the students to sit; students who struggle with attention are now elevated and will tend to have greater behavioural concerns because they have not been grounded again.

Many programs and ideas were discussed, such as the zones of proximal development, checklists for sensory processing concerns, and numerous handouts and strategies for ways to implement these ideas. Shamalla and Lynette also gave time for everyone to work together on building a plan for our own rooms and to consider items that may be causing stress for students and strategies on how to assist them starting immediately. Teachers left from this presentation with a toolbox of ideas, strategies and ways to assist and calm students in all areas of their learning.

Kim Wrathall

Greg and Steve

Greg and Steve have been writing, singing and dancing their way into people's hearts for many years. In this interactive session there was no need for us to have chairs—we never sat down. Greg and Steve had us up and moving for the entire time. We sang, danced and boogied the night away with their



Friday evening performance and keynote

engaging songs that build literacy, movement and love of learning. Their entire conversation was based on getting kids to have movement built into their day.

Throughout the evening Greg and Steve had teachers join them on stage to build up literacy through songs and playing with words and actions that would be sure to enthrall students throughout early childhood classrooms. Teachers moved on from this session both energized and ready to integrate these fun, physically interactive songs into their everyday learning.

Kim Wrathall

Project Work in an Inquiry-Based Classroom

Michelle Bezubiak and Andrew Wiens

Michelle and Andrew spoke about their teaching partnership as one of great exploration and passion for learning. Michelle, being the experienced teacher who has immersed herself in inquiry for many years, spoke about the journey that students took and the importance of taking the time to build up many areas of learning in students at the beginning of the year, which will help to create rich inquiries within a classroom. Respecting the image of a child, building relationships, documenting the learning, and the environment are all equally important in the process.

The environment needs to be one that is co-created, honours student work and creates ownership. Michelle emphasized the

importance of collaboration between students, even in her Grade 1 setting, through the use of play and centres. She spoke of inquiry projects such as their student-created calendar, which built skills in mathematical concepts and relationships in a real and connected way for students. Students created alphabet work with passion and interest after being inspired by Barbara Reid's work; the work was created as both a physical piece in their classroom and as a book for them to enjoy. Michelle also spoke of the passion and curiosity that her students showed in learning about snakes and how this inquiry worked into a project of epic proportions.

Andrew, Michelle's student teacher at the time of this learning, then spoke about the project that came from their work on snakes. Students had learned so much from their snake inquiry about habitats and environment that they turned to learning about other animals and habitats in our province. Students created iMovies and built models of animals and a huge interactive scaled model of where they lived. The entire inquiry was presented to us in the audience with such passion and excitement that we felt as though we were on the journey with them.

Many areas of learning and suggestions were made that were so thoughtfully done and with such respect for students. Everything, from how the students displayed their work to having them draw their learning and creating iMovies, was done with such care and honour for their learning. This overall presentation left us with a renewed look at how to make student learning come alive.

Kim Wrathall

ECEC Award



Cynthia Prasow is being honoured with the Early Childhood Education Council's annual award. Cynthia has been a member of ECEC for 40 years. As she said, "When I graduated with my BEd from U of A, I thought I would know everything I needed to know about teaching and it was more apparent that I did not—so when an opportunity arose to be a member of ECEC I jumped at it and never looked back."

Cynthia has been chair of our annual conference not once but twice, was president of ECEC for two years, taught in both public and private schools in Calgary and Edmonton and has worked at the University of Calgary Faculty of Education, now called the Werklund School of Education, for many years. Cynthia started the ECEC student chapter at U of C, which now has 80 members.

She was the director of field experiences for student teachers and associate dean, and

currently is the director of student experiences and the director of partner research schools and coordinates the early childhood education graduate certification program. That's a lot of directors! In her spare time she is the University of Calgary Werklund School of Education liaison on the ECEC executive.

Cynthia is also known for her volunteer work. She started the One World Child Development Centre through the Calgary Urban Projects Society (CUPS) for children who are homeless. This program has been running for ten years and has been so successful that an additional one has opened at a different site in Calgary.

On a personal note, I have known Cynthia for many years and worked with her on several committees—the conference one for sure—and I can say with complete assurance that she runs a very tight ship. You want organization? She is your girl. She also shows unlimited kindness and support to her education students and takes a personal interest in their growth and success as new teachers and young adults. She is a wonderful mother and grandmother and enjoys watching her grandchildren as they grow—yet another opportunity to observe children and how they learn.

It gives me great pleasure to present Cynthia Prasow with the Early Childhood Education Award for excellence in our field.

Joy DeNance

Mission Statement: To improve the practice of teaching young children by increasing member knowledge and understanding of this specialty. The ECEC acts on behalf of young children and their teachers to promote excellence in education.

Visit our website at ecec.teachers.ab.ca.

Advocate for Young Children Award

Presented November 6, 2015
by Janice Comrie and Della Reimer

Each year the Early Childhood Education Council recognizes a member who has made a significant contribution to the field of early childhood education. This year's recipient of the Advocate for Young Children Award is Natalie Prytuluk.



We would like to share some stories of Natalie's journey during the past 25 years and highlight the work that Natalie has done as an educator, recognizing the positive impact that her work has had on the lives of many.

So, who is Natalie? She is a challenge to define. She is very artistic and musical. She loves to travel and seeks adventure. She is passionate about her family and her Ukrainian heritage. She met her husband, Phil, while they both danced with a Ukrainian dance group.

Natalie is gracious, elegant and as beautiful on the inside as she is on the outside. She brings a special touch and attention to detail to everything she pursues. Always thoughtful and caring, she makes everyone around her feel at ease.

But she is also very down to earth and one of the calmest individuals I have known. Nothing ever seems to overpower or overwhelm her—she just keeps on moving forward with grace and conviction, singing her song, just like Pete the Cat.

Natalie's passion for both fine arts education and early childhood education has been the supporting strand woven through the fabric of her career. Her parents are both educators, and her mother taught kindergarten for many years.

Natalie began her career as a teacher with Edmonton Public Schools. She taught at an inner-city school, which she embraced wholeheartedly, and she shared her love of the fine arts in her teaching positions at both Virginia Park School and Victoria School of the Arts before taking on a lead-teacher role in the opening of George P Nicholson School.

Natalie and I [Della] were working at George P Nicholson when it opened in 2002. The classrooms were far from being completed even on the long weekend before the Tuesday start. Live wires hanging from the ceiling and other occupational hazards demanded that we wear hard hats in our classroom. (It is so unfair that she looks beautiful even wearing a hard hat!)

Although we did not know it at the time, we had the most Reggio-inspired classroom ever. The school had no furniture (we needed to



borrow some tables from the daycare), no doors, no whiteboards, no gym, no library, no flooring in the hallways—but there were boxes. Lots and lots of boxes—loose parts! The kindergarten classes loved their creative play experiences with all those boxes and blueprints and construction workers in and out for months. One little boy reminisced in June that the best centre ever was those boxes. A construction zone for a classroom! Natalie just kept on creating.

Natalie is very persuasive but she does it in such a graceful and gentle way that people find themselves under her spell. In her music program, dance was an essential part of music class. She had 500 students and teachers doing the Monster Mash in the gym long before *Just Dance* videos were popular on Smart Boards. Did those Grade 5 and 6 boys think that dancing would be fun? With Natalie's dazzling smile and positive assumption that of course they would, dance they did. With Natalie, they just keep on dancin'.

A most memorable field trip was out to the Prairie Gardens greenhouse. Together, Natalie and I [Della] were taking four classes out. The morning of the trip I woke up really sick. Natalie was ever so calm when I called to tell her I had to call in a sub. Apparently, she was also very calm and efficient as she took control and loaded all four classes onto the buses with the willing parent volunteers. It was not until they were about 20 minutes into their trip that Natalie realized that she had sent the supply teacher to the office with the attendance and had left the supply teacher behind! Did the two busloads of kinders turn back? No, with Natalie they kept on going.

Her greatest feat of calm over a storm was the big Christmas concert that the school held at the Winspear Centre. The hall was almost full to capacity when the unthinkable happened—a major power outage and no back-up generator. You can imagine how hard it was to keep all those children quiet and focused while we waited and waited for about 30 minutes. Just when we were set to pull the plug and admit defeat, the power was restored and the show went on. I don't know what Natalie was like on the inside, but on the

outside, she was calm and focused. Did Natalie believe that the concert was a lost cause? No, with Natalie, the show went on.

Nothing seems to overpower her or deter her; she just keeps on moving forward, and with greater momentum. One gift that Natalie has is her ability to understand the role of the teacher. In her leadership capacity, she advocates for teachers because she has maintained that deep understanding and respect for the many of you here today who are classroom teachers, working with children on a daily basis. She recognizes that supporting teachers is another important piece of advocacy for children.

Natalie was seconded to Alberta Education to rewrite the fine arts curriculum—a dream job for Natalie with her love of the arts—how exciting! After one year the project was shelved. Did Natalie cry? Goodness no ... she just kept on walking, singing her song—right on over to the Early Learning Branch, where she worked as a senior manager for four years, an interesting turn of events that led her to exactly where she was supposed to be.

During her years in the Early Learning Branch she had the opportunity to develop an understanding of the provincial context in early childhood education. As her friend and colleague Rae Finlayson (early years program coordinator, Parkland Schools) told us, "During her time at Alberta Education in the Early Learning Branch, Natalie was key in the professional development in partnership with Galileo. Her passion and generous spirit have ensured that good quality early learning experiences are shared and she supports the development of teacher skills everywhere she goes. She is the early learning representative for the College of Alberta School Superintendents."

During her time with the Early Learning branch, Natalie

- successfully coordinated two provincial symposiums, Inclusion in the Early Years: Promising Practices, which involved more than 800 participants across the province;
- was the project lead and contract manager for provincial and cross-ministry initiatives such as the Raising Children website; and

- engaged many provincial stakeholders to collaborate and facilitate workshops, and to develop online resources and an online mentoring community, known to us now as the Early Learning Ning.

After four years with the province, Natalie was again at a crossroads, as secondments can only last for so long. What to do? “Should I stay or should I go?”

Fortunately for Edmonton Public Schools, she returned to her home district, and her work in the district has raised awareness of the importance of early childhood education. It is now included as one of the district’s highest priorities.

Natalie’s present supervisor, Heather Raymond, the director of inclusive learning, speaks highly of the work that Natalie has undertaken in her pursuit to increase the awareness and understanding of the importance of quality early learning:

- Natalie has collaborated on finalizing and publishing the Edmonton Public Schools early years guiding document.
- Natalie and her early years consultants have taken the Early Years Evaluation-Teacher Assessment (EYE-TA) to the next level by supporting the development of play-based centres to gather data.
- Sharing the EYE-TA data with families now serves as the November progress and goal-setting conference, which replaces the November report card.
- Natalie supported the development of meaningful and research-based professional learning to assist teachers in building capacity and further their understanding of

how to create inclusive, play-based learning environments.

- She is the project lead on a district initiative, the Early Years Pilot, a hybrid approach to aligning early education and early learning classrooms to increase access and opportunity for a diverse range of preschool children, using data from the mapping initiative and the EYE-TA to inform practice.

In Heather’s words, “Natalie has done all of this with a positive outlook, never allowing challenges and naysayers to deter her in keeping her focus on quality early years learning opportunities for all children in EPSB. Natalie is passionate about early childhood education and believes that we have the greatest impact in changing the trajectory of a child’s life in the early years. Early childhood teachers are the first teacher, a second parent and the most important step to set children up for success in their educational journey.”

Natalie’s journey continues as she models lifelong learning through her pursuit of her doctorate of education in curriculum studies with a focus on issues in education. She just keeps on learning. Whoever follows in Natalie’s path will have big shoes to fill!

Thank you, Natalie, for being a shining light and inspirational colleague. We thank you for your endless energy and enthusiasm for creating learning environments that honour children and their families.

Janice Comrie is assistant principal at Hillview School, Edmonton Public Schools. Della Reimer is a new teacher consultant with Edmonton Public Schools.



Effective IMMEDIATELY, your annual no-cost specialist council membership will no longer expire in August. Instead, it will continue year after year until you change it. To register or change your council membership, log in at www.teachers.ab.ca with your username and password.

ECEC Awards

ECEC Award

The Early Childhood Education Council presents an annual award to a person or organization that, in the judgment of the council, has contributed to the field of early childhood education by exemplifying the philosophy of the ECEC and has taken action to promote this philosophy. This award is presented at the annual conference in the fall.

The selection committee, consisting of the past president and two members of the provincial ECEC executive, will receive nominations until May 1 of each year. Each regional of the ECEC may nominate up to two candidates each year. Nominations should be forwarded to April Brown, chair of the selection committee, at aprilbrown013@gmail.com, by May 1, 2015.

Advocate for Young Children Award

This award recognizes the work of council members or nonmembers in the service of young children. Recipients can be recognized at the provincial or regional level. Provincial awards are presented at the annual conference in the fall.

Recommendations for recognition at the provincial level shall be approved by provincial table officers. Recommendations for recognition at the regional level shall be approved by the executive of the regional (refer to the executive list on the back cover for contacts).

Recognition of Service Award

This award recognizes the contributions made by members of the council at the provincial and regional levels. Contributions may be to the ECEC, at the provincial or

regional level, and/or significant contributions as an educator to the field of early childhood education in Alberta. Recognition is in the form of a framed certificate.

Recommendations for recognition at the provincial level shall be approved by provincial table officers. Recommendations for recognition at the regional level shall be approved by the executive of the regional (refer to the executive list on the back cover for contacts).

ECEC Grant

An annual grant of up to \$1,000 will be awarded to an Alberta teacher to assist in research or innovative classroom programming in early childhood education. Applicants must be members of the ECEC.

The recipient will receive 50 per cent of the grant at the beginning of the research or classroom project and 50 per cent upon completion. Proposed projects should adhere to the educational philosophy outlined in the ECEC position statement.

Grant money may be used for materials, release time or any other worthwhile component of the research or classroom project. Proposals with school support are encouraged. School support could take the form of matching funding, teacher preparation time or administrator recognition.

The award recipient must share the results of the research or classroom project in a manner that enhances the professional development of ECEC members, such as ECEC journal articles, conference presentations or regional workshops.

The deadline for application is May 1, 2015. Applications are received by members of the provincial ECEC executive.

ECE Bookshelf—Girls with Spunk

The “ECE Bookshelf” introduces titles that beckon young listeners and readers to the magical world of stories, poems and informational texts. The current selection is all about girls—young and older—with spunk! Most are creations of the author’s imagination, but one is very real. Not only will she be Canada’s sixth honorary citizen, she is the youngest person ever to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. She is education activist Malala Yousafzai. Fictitious and real, all are stories of standing up and making a difference. Sitting side by side on the ECE bookshelf, these tales invite both girls and boys to laugh, be entertained and learn together. The next “ECE Bookshelf” will feature stories of boys and young men, their adventures and antics.

Being Wendy. Fran Drescher. 2011. New York: Grosset & Dunlap. Wendy and her family live in Boxville. Each day, all Boxville residents don their boxes and assume their roles. They all, it seems, fit comfortably in the boxes they wear. All, that is, except Wendy. Wendy Starbright must choose a box, but she can’t. She has other ideas! When she speaks up, big changes happen. Drescher’s humour and clever word choice invite all readers to join Wendy in being true to who they are.

Kiss Me! (I’m a Prince!) Heather McLeod. 2011. Markham, Ont: Fitzhenry & Whiteside. “If you kiss me, I’ll turn into a prince.” So begins Canadian author Heather McLeod’s tale of Ella’s encounter with the proverbial frog prince. Ella, a clever young baseball-playing tomboy, is not easily persuaded. When she learns that her froggy pal’s preparation for being king does not include time for play, she decides she prefers a talking frog. Promises of princess gowns are lost on her. In a twist of plot, Ella and her croaking friend learn what it means to be real friends. This unconventional fairy tale easily earns inclusion in classroom libraries.

The Paper Bag Princess. Robert Munsch. 25th-anniversary edition 2005. Orig pub 1980. Richmond Hill, Ont: Firefly Books. Now an

acknowledged classic, this story by the popular Canadian storyteller and author Robert Munsch continues to bring laughter to audiences young and old. Princess Elizabeth is ready to marry Prince Ronald when suddenly a fire-breathing dragon destroys her castle and her clothes and carries off her prince. Elizabeth gives chase. Will she get back her Ronald? When she does, she understands more about him than his pretty clothes and very neat hair. And she tells him so! Young readers will discover that Elizabeth and Ella (*Kiss Me*) have much in common. The 25th-anniversary edition includes the story behind the story—it tells readers how Munsch created the story and introduces the real Elizabeth.

Jamela’s Dress. Niki Daly. 1999. London, UK: Lincoln. Jamela embodies spunk. She is full of enthusiasm and energy, determined and proud, and wants to please. When her mother needs someone to guard her freshly washed fabric as it dries on the outdoor clothesline in readiness to be made into a special dress for a special wedding, Jamela offers. But the temptation is too much. Wrapping the beautiful, expensive fabric around her as a royal robe, Jamela sets off down the street. The sight of the smiling princess catches the attention of a local photographer. The fabric is ruined; both Jamela and her mother are upset, but all is not lost. The photo is an award winner. Daly’s heart-warming conclusion brings a smile to readers’ and Jamela’s faces. *Jamela’s Dress* is just one of Daly’s endearing stories that gently introduce young readers to South African culture. Others include *Happy Birthday, Jamela*; *What’s Cooking, Jamela?* and *Where’s Jamela?* Niki Daly is an internationally acclaimed South African writer and illustrator.

Princess Grace. Mary Hoffman. 2007. London, UK: Lincoln. Some readers will have met the lively, confident Grace in *Amazing Grace* (1991) and will know that she is a girl who loves stories and loves to perform them, always playing the lead role herself. Princess Grace continues to love to be at the centre of the

action. When her teacher announces a contest to be a school princess, Grace is quick to respond. When questions arise about what princesses do and why there are no princes involved, her clever teacher seizes the moment to engage the class in learning about real princesses throughout history. Hoffman resolves the story in a wonderful show of inclusion as princesses and princes of many times and origins ride the class float. Grace, proudly wearing the *kente* cloth of her family heritage (West African), once more shows readers that you don't have to be the centre of attention to enjoy friendships and celebrations.

Fancy Nancy. Jane O'Connor. 2006. New York: HarperCollins. Nancy loves being fancy. Sparkle, glitter and an exquisite vocabulary follow her everywhere. The only problem is that she is the only one in her family who loves being fancy. Nancy gets a stupendous idea. She will teach her family to be fancy! It is a fine idea, but things don't go quite as planned. After all the excitement, one thing Fancy Nancy, the charming, ambitious family teacher, does know is that there is no fancy way of saying, "I love you." O'Connor's endearing story of Nancy and her family has been followed by many others, including *Fancy Nancy's Favorite Fancy Words: From Accessories to Zany*; *Fancy Nancy: Budding Ballerina*; and *Fancy Nancy: Fanciest Doll in the Universe*.

Anne of Green Gables: Stories for Young Readers. L M Montgomery, adapted by Deirdre Kessler. 2008. Halifax, NS: Nimbus. No collection of stories about spunky young ladies would be complete without Anne—that's Anne with an *e*. L M Montgomery's story has won the hearts of avid readers for more than 100 years. Kessler's adaptation in picture-book format makes the Canadian classic available to young audiences. Readers will relish Anne's high spirits, laugh at her mischief with Diana and appreciate her friendship with Gilbert. Presented in 13 short chapter-stories, *Anne* would be a welcome read-aloud in Grade 3 and up.

The Quiltmaker's Gift. Jeff Brumbeau. 2000. New York: Scholastic. ***The Quiltmaker's Journey.*** Jeff Brumbeau. 2004. New York: Orchard Books. Not all princesses live in

luxury. Brumbeau's creation, a brave young girl, chooses to leave her village in search of true happiness. In doing so, she sees a world of happy people, many of whom live in poverty, beyond her palace gates. Published first, *The Quiltmaker's Gift* is a charming fable centred on the generous quiltmaker, who sews with magic in her fingers to create beautiful quilts. She gives her quilts only to people in need. She is determined. Not even the king can persuade her to do differently. *The Quiltmaker's Journey*, a prequel to *Gift*, takes readers back to the quiltmaker's youth, when she made her decision to leave her riches and to live a life of generosity to the less fortunate. The illustrations, including the endpapers and paper jackets of both, are exquisite. They are as rich in colour and detail as the quiltmaker's quilts. Together, *Gift* and *Journey* hold tremendous potential to help readers realize the joy of giving as well as to explore the traditional art of quilt making.

Every Day Is Malala Day. Rosemary McCarney with Plan International. 2014. Toronto, Ont: Second Story. Malala Yousafzai has captured the attention of the world. Not only is she the youngest recipient of the Nobel Peace prize, she is the youngest person ever to address the United Nations, and she will soon be the sixth honorary Canadian citizen. As a young girl living in Pakistan, she was shot by the Taliban simply because she wanted to go to school. Since her remarkable recovery, the world has come to know her charm, courage and conviction. This book, created using Plan International's exceptional photographs, is a letter to Malala from girls around the globe to express their sympathy to and admiration for her. Many of the girls know first-hand the barriers to education she experienced. Their messages, in simple text, explain why they feel Malala represents all of them. In her message, quoted in concluding author notes, Malala speaks volumes for all girls and boys. She speaks of rights, poverty and injustice, then concludes, "Education is the only solution. Education first" (npn). *Every Day Is Malala Day* deserves a place in every classroom. Malala epitomizes spunk.

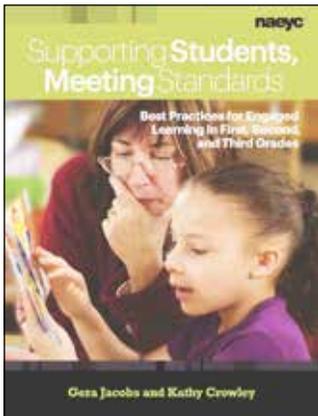
Pamela Winsor

Books from the NAEYC

The ECEC has purchased a comprehensive membership with the National Association for the Education of Young Children on behalf of all its members. The books and magazines will be catalogued in the ATA library (Barnett House) to allow access for everyone. Below is a brief summary of each book.

The library can be accessed at <http://library.teachers.ab.ca/Presto/home/ATADefault.aspx>.

Supporting Students, Meeting Standards: Best Practices for Engaged Learning in First, Second and Third Grades
Gera Jacobs and Kathy Crowley



The authors of this book take you through best practices for learning in the early years with a particular focus on classroom design, social and emotional development, and meeting the common core standards in English language arts, mathematics, social

studies, science and the arts. The authors provide teachers with research-based information, ideas, strategies and activities.

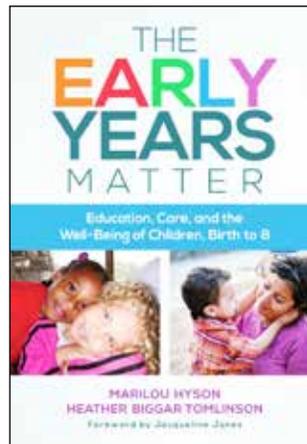
Technology and Digital Media in the Early Years: Tools for Teaching and Learning
Chip Donohue

This comprehensive resource looks closely at effective and appropriate use of technology in the early years. The book presents perspectives from the Fred Rogers Center and my personal favourite, “What would Maria Montessori say about an iPad?” The book links research with best



practices while providing educators with resources for a solid program enhanced by technology.

The Early Years Matter: Education, Care and the Well-Being of Children, Birth to 8.
Marilou Hyson and Heather Biggar Tomlinson

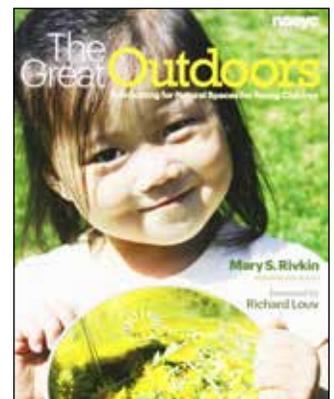


Not only does this resource provide a thorough look at development from age 0 to 8, but it also provides detail with respect to children with disabilities, challenging behaviours, immigrant families, low-income families, children who experience violence and stress, and children in developing

countries. Throughout the book, the authors summarize how to transfer their research into high-quality care for young children and the positive effects this has on child development.

The Great Outdoors: Advocating for Natural Spaces for Young Children
Mary S Rivkin; forward by Richard Louv

This resource is an intensive guide to learning with children in the great outdoors. It connects readers to the ideas of Montessori, Dewey, Reggio Emilia, Gardner and Sobel (to name a few) and their perspectives on outdoor experiences for young children. The author provides quality suggestions for ways to engage in the outdoors, concerns to be considered and how to overcome any barriers.



Early Childhood Education Council Executive 2014/15

President

Joy de Nance
Bus 403-777-7300
jadenance@cbe.ab.ca

Past President

April Brown
Bus 780-532-9276
aprilbrown013@gmail.com or
aprilbrown@pwsd76.ab.ca

President-Elect

Danielle Kowalchuk
Bus 780-476-7634
danielle.kowalchuk@ecsd.net or
dkowalchuk@me.com

Secretary

Jennifer Bridle
Bus 403-777-6288
jen-jones@shaw.ca or
jmbridle@cbe.ab.ca

Treasurer

Karin Gizzas-Rivard
Bus 403-500-2023
kgrivard@shaw.ca or
karin.rivard@cssd.ab.ca

Journal Editor

Pamela Winsor
Bus 403-329-2433
winsor@uleth.ca

Newsletter Coeditors

Lisa Schoeler
Bus 403-777-6740
lcschoeler@cbe.ab.ca
Kim Wrathall
Bus 403-777-6740, ext 3001
educ8tr@telus.net or
kcwrathall@cbe.ab.ca

PD Cochairs

Danielle Kowalchuk
Bus 780-476-7634
danielle.kowalchuk@ecsd.net or
dkowalchuk@me.com
Elan LaMontagne
Bus 403-777-6360
erlamontagne@cbe.ab.ca

Multimedia Chair and Ning Advisor

Janice Comrie
Bus 780-463-8108
janicecomrie@shaw.ca

2015 Conference Codirectors

Cynthia Tulissi
Bus 403-500-2118
cynthia@tulissi-environmental.com

Lynn McEachern
Bus 403-500-2081
lynnmce@gmail.com

Alberta Education Liaison

Karen Sliwkanich
Bus 780-422-6527
karen.sliwkanich@gov.ab.ca

University of Alberta Liaison

Larry Prochner
Bus 780-492-5416
prochner@ualberta.ca

University of Calgary Liaison

Cynthia Prasow
Bus 403-220-6288
cprasow@ucalgary.ca

University of Lethbridge Liaison

Pamela Winsor
Bus 403-329-2433
winsor@uleth.ca

PEC Liaison

Markiana Cyncar-Hryschuk
Bus 780-436-7888
markiana.hryschuk@teachers.ab.ca

ATA Staff Advisor

Shelley Magnusson
Bus 780-447-9478
or 1-800-232-7208
shelley.magnusson@ata.ab.ca

Webmaster

Sarjenka Kuryliw
Bus 780-623-4672
kuryliw@ualberta.ca

REGIONAL PRESIDENTS

Calgary and District

Donna Lawson
Bus 403-777-6177
dmlawson@cbe.ab.ca or
dmlawson@shaw.ca

Central West

Sandra Summers
Bus 403-887-3088
ssummers@chinooksedge.ab.ca

Edmonton

Michelle Bezubiak
Bus 780-436-7888
michekille.bezubiak@ecsd.net

Fort McMurray

Heather Fisher
Bus 780-215-5887
heathersceviour@hotmail.com

North East

Carrie Fox
Bus 780-657-3383
dcfox@telus.net or
carrie_fox@sperd.ca

South East

Jennifer Deruyter
Bus 403-528-3722
jennifer.deruyter@sd76.ab.ca or
jennifer.deruyter@hotmail.com

South Peace

April Brown
Bus 780-532-9276
aprilbrown013@gmail.com or
aprilbrown@pwsd76.ab.ca

South West

Deb Watson
Bus 403-381-1244
deb.watson@lethsd.ab.ca

University of Alberta

Jocelyn Finn
Bus 780-819-6543
jfinn@ualberta.ca

University of Calgary

Katarina Rivard
Bus 403-869-6801
rivardkatarina@gmail.com

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