



No 141 September 2016

President's Message

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Early Childhood Education Council (ECEC) of the Alberta Teachers' Association. Fifty years ago, early childhood education was not recognized or valued in the education field. Today, extensive research is proving that success in early childhood leads to success in the later grades. We are excited about what the future holds for our council and for our students. Join us at our annual conference, to be held November 3–5 at the West Edmonton Mall.

The ECEC has been very busy this past year. Many thanks go to the conference committee for their preparations for the 2015 annual conference in Kananaskis. It was a great conference, with more than 450 delegates coming together to further develop their passion for and expertise in early childhood education.

The ECEC's provincial executive continues to create opportunities for learning and dialogue across the province with our members. Our regionals have hosted various learning experiences and produced newsletters to keep us connected and current.

Our Fort McMurray Regional is active again as their community rebuilds. We look forward to reconnecting with early childhood teachers from this part of the province.

Many people have shown interest in becoming part of the council, and there are many ways to become more involved. We invite you to put your name forward for regional, conference committee and executive positions. Consider contributing your skills and talents in a variety of ways to any of the 50th-anniversary events we will be holding this year.

I hope to see you at the annual conference, to celebrate, collaborate and learn together.

May the 2016/17 school year be one of new challenges, exciting student learning and celebration!

Danielle Kowalchuk

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 eccc.teachers.ab.ca.

In This Issue

Advocating for Early Childhood Education

Nesotehk: Walking Together: Our Journey Begins

PD Corner

A Postcard from Opal School in Portland, Oregon

Advocating for Early Childhood Education

Current research shows a direct correlation between early years learning and continued success in high school and beyond. As teachers, we understand the importance of providing high-quality learning opportunities for our youngest learners as they embark on their education journey. We also recognize the importance of play for a child's brain function and for the development of the whole child.

The ECEC executive encourages all members to advocate on behalf of early childhood education. You can meet your MLA in an informal setting, such as at a public event, or you can call his or her office to set up an appointment.

When talking with your MLA about early childhood education,

- keep your message short and on point,
- share personal examples and
- tell your own story.

The following are possible topics for discussion:

- The need for small class sizes, especially for kindergarten to Grade 3
- The need for support for inclusion
- The benefits of mandatory kindergarten for all children in Alberta
- The need for a common entrance age throughout the province (children entering Grade 1 must be six years old on or before December 31)
- The ECEC's support of full-day kindergarten that is optional, fully funded and taught by certificated teachers
- The inclusion of kindergarten as an integral part of the education system

You can find out who your MLA is by going to www.assembly.ab.ca/lao/mla/mla_help.htm.

If you have any questions about advocacy, please contact ECEC president Danielle Kowalchuk at dkowalchuk@me.com.



Nesotehk: Walking Together: Our Journey Begins



Educators from across Alberta gathered at the River Cree Resort in Enoch on May 30 to attend an invitational symposium on Indigenous education. The goal was to deepen their understanding of the legacy of residential schools and to ponder the critical role of K–12 education in supporting the calls to action for reconciliation and in enriching First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) education. Teachers play a pivotal role in empowering students with understanding, potentially having an impact on the mindset of future generations. Walking together means all of us together, as a society, moving forward with knowledge and truth about Indigenous history in Canada.

Stephen Kakfwi, former premier of the Northwest Territories and current president and CEO of Canadians for a New Partnership, gave the opening address, noting that the winds of change are shifting in Alberta. The premier and the education minister have boldly committed to work with the Indigenous people to bring about change and to educate all children about the First Peoples—their history, culture and world view—and about residential schools and reconciliation. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada wants everyone to know what happened and has come up with 94

calls to action (TRC 2015). It's about respect for Canada's First Nations and Inuit people and for the truth.

The symposium offered participants many enlightening experiences. The blanket exercise, through role-playing, provided them with an understanding of the history of early Canada and how life changed for the First Peoples with the coming of the Europeans. Through listening to residential school survivors share their poignant lived experiences, school leaders and teachers got a glimpse of the shocking legacy of



Stephen Kakfwi, a residential school survivor, shared his lived story.

residential schools—intergenerational trauma. The schools aimed to “take the Indian out of the child.” How many families sent their children to school, never to see them again? How many schools had cemeteries right next to them? How many students experienced emotional, physical and sexual abuse at school, as a norm?

Earlier in May, the ATA’s Annual Representative Assembly voted in favour of a number of resolutions (some reaffirmed and some new) that show respect and advocate for knowledge about Indigenous people and their ways. Among them, the ATA urged

- postsecondary institutions in Alberta with teacher education programs recognized by the Association to ensure that, during teacher preparation, all students take at least one regular course on FNMI histories, cultures and education;
- school boards to support FNMI students through affirmation of their cultures, histories, world views, ways of knowing and languages; and
- the Alberta government to enhance the use of FNMI literature in language arts programs.

The winds of change are, indeed, shifting, with changes to occur in the Teaching Quality Standard and the School Authority Leadership Quality Standard, to include applying foundational knowledge and teaching FNMI world views, culture, perspectives, ways of knowing and history.

As early childhood teachers, we will be thinking about embracing these ways of being, knowing, doing and relating through the lenses of our young students and early childhood education. Learning through play. Provocations to spark curiosity. How will we engage our students? Hikes through the woods, being one with nature, investigations, experiential learning.

Reference

Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada. 2015. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action. Winnipeg, Man: TRC. Also available at www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf (accessed August 24, 2016).

PD Corner

Resources

Forest and Nature School in Canada

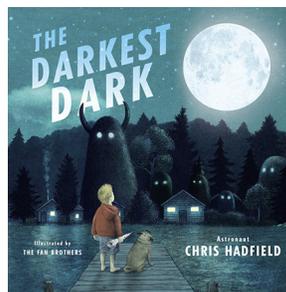
www.forestschoolcanada.ca/wp-content/themes/wlf/images/FSC-Guide_web.pdf

In 2014, Forest School Canada published *Forest and Nature School in Canada: A Head, Heart, Hands Approach to Outdoor Learning*, a guide to inform educators about the Forest and Nature School model and its benefits for children.

New Children’s Books

The Darkest Dark

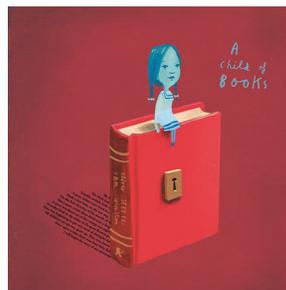
by Chris Hadfield and Kate Fillion
Tundra Books, 2016



The publisher says, “Inspired by the childhood of real-life astronaut Chris Hadfield and brought to life by Terry and Eric Fan’s lush, evocative illustrations, *The Darkest Dark* will encourage readers to dream the impossible.”

A Child of Books

by Oliver Jeffers
Candlewick, 2016



The publisher describes *A Child of Books*, by Oliver Jeffers, as “a stunning prose poem on the rewards of reading and sharing stories—an immersive and unforgettable reading experience that readers will want to pass on to others.”

A Postcard from Opal School in Portland, Oregon



Hi, all!

Wish you were here to share this wonderful learning opportunity!

I am at the Reading the World retreat hosted by Opal School staff and the Portland Children's Museum Center for Learning. Reading the World focuses on approaches to developing literacy through play and meaning making with children aged three through Grade 5. About a hundred educators from seven states and two provinces have come together to explore the following questions that live at the core of our practice:

- What conditions do human beings need in order to thrive?
- What is the role of schooling in creating these conditions?

- How are literacy, creativity and sustainability related and interrelated?
- How do we help children connect their reading of the world to the things we do in school?
- How is creativity necessary for the sustainability of our democracy and our planet?
- How do we best support the transition between reading the world and reading the word in a way that doesn't limit creativity?

To prepare for our discussions, we were asked to read the first chapter of *Opening Minds: Using Language to Change Lives*, by Peter Johnston (2012). He is the honoured guest at the retreat, because his work has driven the practice of the Opal staff. In hopes of inspiring us, the organizers also shared the following words from Johnston and Ivey's (2015) essay "Engagement: A Hub of Human Development":

Children live their lives in school. They do not merely come to school to learn academics. It is time we embraced the wholeness and complexity of human development as a goal of schooling and recognized that academics are not the only tools humanity has produced to pass on. When research is so consistent regarding the importance of student engagement as a hub of healthy human relationships and personal, social, and academic development, we have to ask what perversity allows us to persist with status quo schooling. Some will argue that pressures of academic achievement in the interests of subsequent employment (and current test scores) make it necessary to focus on academics rather than human development. However, the evidence makes it clear that there is no such trade off. When we attend to individual and collaborative engagement within a community of learners, particularly encouraging difference rather than standardization as central to learning, children (and teachers) find each other

interesting and are successful socially, emotionally, personally, and also academically. In other words, we can have our cake and eat it.

For the next two days, we will be using the above focus to observe students and teachers during their morning lessons and then come back to the large group and smaller breakout groups to share and discuss our findings.

Opal School is housed in the Portland Children's Museum. Some of the classrooms have huge windows facing outside, whereas others only have windows facing the hallway. I would say that all the classrooms stand as living texts of the learning within. They are rich with examples of student wonderings, inspiring all who enter. While in the classrooms, we are asked to be invisible, only observing and journalling our thoughts. Later, we will reflect and discuss how we can grow in our own practice.

The experience has been very personal for all of us, each focusing on different aspects of our own needs to thrive in the profession and support our students so that they may also develop as they need to in order to become critical thinkers.

The trajectory of my path has been altered. I am truly inspired. At this point, I am not exactly sure of what or how I will change, but there will be transformation.

For more information about Opal School and its work, check out the school's blog at <http://opalschoolblog.typepad.com/opal-school-blog/>. Even better, attend one (or all!) of the school's 2017 workshops (February 1–3, April 12–14 and June 21–23). Registration information is available at www.portlandcm.org/teaching-and-learning/workshops-and-classes/.

Having fun here! See you all at the ECEC annual conference in November!

About Opal Charter School

The child has a hundred languages, a hundred hands, a hundred thoughts, a hundred ways of thinking, of playing, of speaking . . . and a hundred, hundred more.
—Loris Malaguzzi, founder of the early childhood centres in Reggio Emilia, Italy

As its website states,

Opal Charter School is grounded in the belief that education opens opportunities for all children to participate in creating and shaping their own lives and to contribute to the quality of life around them. We value the creativity, interests, ideas and questions of the children and adults at our school. We practice listening, observing, inquiring, staying attentive, and reflecting together with children and families. We value the role of the arts and sciences as languages for thinking, expressing ideas, and communicating stories. We are committed to working in partnership with families to provide a rich and joyful childhood. (www.portlandcm.org/teaching-and-learning/opal-school/opal-charter-school)

References

- Johnston, P H. 2012. *Opening Minds: Using Language to Change Lives*. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse.
- Johnston, P, and G Ivey. 2015. "Engagement: A Hub of Human Development." In *The Teacher You Want to Be: Essays About Children, Learning, and Teaching*, ed M Glover and E O Keene, 50–63. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Karin Rivard

ECEC Awards



The Early Childhood Education Council offers several awards and grants to recognize the work of educators. Watch for information about application deadlines in future issues of *Issues, Events and Ideas*.

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 consists of the past president and two members of the provincial ECEC executive; each regional of the ECEC may nominate up to two candidates each year.

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, 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 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.

Applications are received by members of the provincial ECEC executive.

Early Childhood Education Council Executive 2015/16

President

Danielle Kowalchuk
Bus 780-461-2551
danielle.kowalchuk@ecsd.net

Past President

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

President-Elect

TBA

Secretary

Jennifer Bridle
Bus 403-777-6288
jmbridle@cbe.ab.ca

Treasurer

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

Journal Editor

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

Newsletter Coeditors

Lisa Schoeler
Bus 403-777-6740
lcschoeler@cbe.ab.ca
Kim Wrathall
Bus 403-777-6740
kcwrathall@cbe.ab.ca

PD Cochairs

Danielle Kowalchuk
Bus 780-461-2551
danielle.kowalchuk@ecsd.net
Elan LaMontagne
Bus 403-777-6360
erlamontagne@cbe.ab.ca

2016 Conference Director

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

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 780-463-5976
markiana.hryschuk@teachers.ab.ca

ATA Staff Advisor

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

Web Manager

Sarjenka Kuryliw
Bus 780-297-3491
s.kuryliw@gmail.com

Associate Web Manager

Stephanie Funk
Bus 403-977-0870
stephanie.funk@sd76.ab.ca

REGIONAL PRESIDENTS

Calgary and District

Donna Lawson
Bus 403-777-7060
dmlawson@cbe.ab.ca

Central West

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

Edmonton

Michelle Bezubiak
Bus 780-430-1121
michelle.bezubiak@ecsd.net

Fort McMurray

Heather Fisher
heather.sceviour@fmprsd.ab.ca

North East

Carrie Fox
Bus 780-657-3383
carrie_fox@sperd.ca

South East

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

South Peace

April Brown
Bus 780-532-9276
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 403-500-2006
kjrivard@ucalgary.ca

Copyright © 2016 by The Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA), 11010 142 Street NW, Edmonton, Alberta T5N 2R1. Unless otherwise indicated in the text, reproduction of material in *Issues, Events & Ideas* is authorized for classroom and professional development use, provided that each copy contain full acknowledgement of the source and that no charge be made beyond the cost of reprinting. Any other reproduction in whole or in part without prior written consent of the ATA is prohibited. *Issues, Events & Ideas* is published for the Early Childhood Education Council (ECEC) by the ATA. Editing and production: Document Production staff, ATA. Opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the ATA or the ECEC. ISSN 0704-6936

Individual copies of this newsletter are available at a cost of \$2 per copy plus 5 per cent shipping and handling and 5 per cent GST. Please contact Distribution at Barnett House to place your order. In Edmonton, dial 780-447-9432; toll free in Alberta, dial 1-800-232-7208, ext 432.

Personal information regarding any person named in this document is for the sole purpose of professional consultation between members of The Alberta Teachers' Association.