



*"I have no particular talent. I am merely inquisitive."*

Albert Einstein

## Happy 2014! We wish you all a wonderful year!

As always, we start off our year with our annual conference, Children the Heart of the Matter, which is being held Feb 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. We have more than 500 participants registered for this event and it's not too late to register for the Friday evening if you haven't already. We are pleased to have Dr. Tina Bryson as our Friday evening keynote speaker and Lisa Murphy, a.k.a. *The Ooey Goey Lady*, as our Saturday morning keynote.

Options Community Services and Child Care Options have launched new websites recently. Hopefully you have already had a chance to check out our new website; we have made a lot of improvements to make it more user-friendly. One new feature of the site is that families can get lists of child programs directly from our website. We are still doing enhanced referrals from the Child Care Pro database in-office, but have noticed an increase in families looking for information online who want an immediate response to their search. Let us know what you think about the changes - we would love to hear your thoughts.

We want to say a heartfelt goodbye to Mary Peirce Biagi who is leaving Child Care Options after 13 years to manage the new Bridgeview Child Care Centre that is being operated as a partnership between the City of Surrey and Options Community Services. We wish her all the best!! Daljit Sahota from our reception services area will also be taking a temporary leave from Child Care Options to join Mary as an ECE Assistant at the child care centre.

With both of these staff moving you will see some changes and new faces at Child Care Options in the coming months. Angela Garcha, our store coordinator currently in reception services will be transferring to Mary's outreach position. We are working on filling the two vacant reception positions as quickly as possible.

Although spring seems far away it will be here before you know it, so save the date for our Child Care Provider Appreciation evening on May 26<sup>th</sup>. If you have not attended in the past we hope you will come out this year for a night of recognition and fun.

Happy Reading! - cuddle up and enjoy this newsletter. We hope you are inspired by the library resources - read on!!

Ruth Beardsley and Sharlene Wedel

Save the date!  
Child Care Provider Appreciation evening  
May 26  
Watch our website for more details!

Looking for professional development opportunities? Our Winter Training calendar is packed with exciting and informative workshops and courses! Visit our website for all the details!

**CCRF** Child Care Options  
Child Care Resource & Referral  
 resource & referral program



**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CALENDAR**

**Winter 2014**

Training topics included in this session:

- Supporting & Guiding Children
- Identifying & Preventing Anxiety
- Storytelling
- Problem Solving
- Responsive Curriculum
- Emotional & Sensory Regulation
- And much more!

options Please share our training calendar with staff and colleagues

[childcareoptions.ca](http://childcareoptions.ca)

# early years

learning store

## Upcoming Sales

**February**  
**25% Off**  
**"Learning Resources"**  
**toys & games**

**March**  
**25% off**  
**"Melissa & Doug" Wooden**  
**vehicles**

**April**  
**25% off**  
**Plastic animals**

**May**  
**30% off**  
**1 item for**  
**Child Care**  
**Month**

#100-6846 King George Boulevard, Surrey, BC

### Project Nights

Bring your felt stories, big books, folder games or whatever project you're working on for your child care setting, or get started on something new while you're here! We'll have the laminator, book binder, die-cuts and big books to copy all set up for you to use and we'll be glad to share some patterns and ideas as well.

Project nights are held from 5:30-7:30 pm on the following Thursday evenings:

February 20    March 20    April 17    May 15    June 19    July 17    August 21

This is a free event other than any laminating, copying, or supplies you may purchase while you're here.

#### Did you know...

As of December 31, 2013 on our database:  
 Number of library subscribers: 284  
 Number of RLNRs: 70  
 Number of LFCC: 190  
 Number of IHMA: 56  
 Number of Group 3-5 years: 44  
 Number of Infant/Toddler: 15  
 Number of Preschool: 80 (plus 75 in multiple license)  
 Number of Out of School: 42 (plus 95 in multiple license)  
 Number of Multiple license: 125  
 Number of Multi-age: 83

October 1 to December 31, 2013:  
 Number of library items borrowed: 1815  
 Number of families assisted with child care subsidy: 523  
 Number of families assisted with child care referrals: 385  
 Number of attendees at training: 535

#### Training update

We've added two more training courses to our current schedule.

**20 Hour Responsible Adult in Child Care Settings Course**  
 4 weeks, Fridays, March 21, 28, April 4 & 11 from 9:30 am to 3:00 pm  
 Cost: \$180.00

**Good Beginnings Professional Development for Family Child Care Providers (Punjabi, Hindi & Urdu)**  
 9 weeks, Fridays, April 25, May 2, 9, 16, 23, 30, June 6, 13 & 20 from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm  
 Cost: \$400.00

For more information or to register call 604-572-8032.  
[www.childcareoptions.ca](http://www.childcareoptions.ca)

# Opal School

## Of the Portland Children's Museum

Last November Nina, Gisele and I were fortunate to attend a two-day workshop presented by teachers of Opal School of the Portland Children's Museum. Having heard of the school and accessed some of their resources, we were keen to learn their story. How many children's schools do you know of that are housed in a museum? Here's a brief history . . .

The Portland Children's Museum opened in 1946 and in the 1970's shifted the focus from visual displays and art and craft classes to more hands-on and experience-based learning. A move to a larger setting in 2001 included space for the Opal Charter Public School (K-5) and private preschool (Opal Beginning School) for children age 3-5. Over time, the museum and school have become a place for parents and teachers to learn alongside the children.

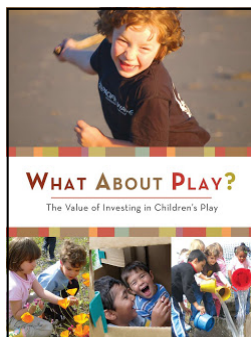
*"Opal School serves as a resource for teacher-research by supporting and provoking fresh thinking about learning environments that inspire playful inquiry, creativity, imagination and the wonder of learning in children and adults."*

. . . Museum website

The Museum Center for Learning is the adult learning component. It is a place of research—to study how children learn and develop strategies to support and strengthen learning. The Center hosts many professional development opportunities including workshops, on-line study, summer symposiums, Opal School visitations, mentorships, and teacher apprenticeships. The Center has produced a variety of educational materials, some of which are available at no cost. Visit the Portland Children's Museum website to learn more

and be inspired! <http://www.portlandcm.org/>.

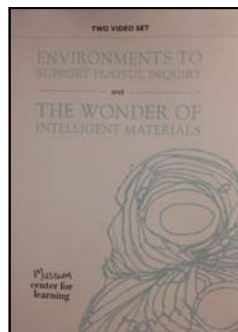
Subscribers can borrow these Center resources from our Early Childhood Resource Library:



### **What About Play? The Value of Investing in Children's Play**

By Susan Harris MacKay,  
from Opal School.

Susan discusses the  
value of play and how  
communities can sup-  
port play-based learning  
opportunities.  
Book with DVD.



From the Museum Center for Learning.  
Originally two videos, now two 10-minute  
segments on one DVD:

**Environments to Support Playful Inquiry**  
highlights the importance of designing en-  
vironments that support children to wonder,  
imagine, interpret and reflect upon ideas  
and projects in playful, creative ways.  
**The Wonder of Intelligent Materials** pre-  
sents possibilities for materials and  
organization to inspire children and adults  
to tinker, create, and invent.

So what about that workshop we attended? Our presenters (Opal School teachers Susan MacKay and Kerry Salazar) and Opal School Founding Director Judy Graves described how the school's philosophy developed over time. They have been inspired by the schools of Reggio Emilia but were very clear that what has evolved is very much specific to Opal School. As stated on Opal's Beginning School web page, *"We are inspired by the early childhood schools of Reggio Emilia, Italy; built on inquiry-based learning strategies; and influenced by a strong image of children as intelligent, creative, and resourceful."* Following are some key concepts from the Opal School workshop describing their own approach to inquiry-based learning.

## **Inquiry-Based Learning**

Through the Languages of the Arts & Sciences

Inquiry-based learning as defined by Opal School is *"a learning approach in which a 'provocateur' presents a question, scenario, or a problem to individuals or groups. The group or individual identifies issues, poses questions and researches possibilities to make meaning, develop understanding, increase proficiency, create knowledge and uncover solutions or possibilities."*

### **Common Elements of Inquiry**

Learning is provoked by a question, issue, or problem. Children make discoveries through active hands-on, minds-on engagement. Adults facilitate the processes and offer needed and/or requested resources. Students interpret and make meaning of their experiences.

## Language often associated with inquiry-based learning at Opal School



### **Provocation**

A question/problem/scenario designed to provoke thinking and communication in ways that reveal connections and relationships. Can be offered through words, materials, environments, mentor texts. (*this photo is a sample at ECR Library—drop in to see the rest of it*)

### **Provocateur**

The protagonist (or person) who poses questions/problems/scenarios and offers ideas/actions.

### **Schema**

What you know based on your life experiences, identity, background, age, culture, education and more.

### **Science Talk**

A conversation about how something might work that is open to ideas, questions, theories, connections, relationships, comments, debates and wonderings without the need to find the "right" answer or draw predetermined conclusions.

### **The Ball Toss**

Active exchange (serve and return) between two or more protagonists.

*"We must catch the ball the children throw to us and return it to them in ways that makes them want to continue playing the game, perhaps reinventing the game as they go along"*  
- Loris Malaguzzi, early childhood schools of Reggio Emilia, Italy

## **Three Possible Approaches to Inquiry: Structured, Guided, and Open Inquiry**

### **Structured Inquiry**

#### **PROCESS**

Individuals or groups are provided with a scenario or problem and the research procedures to follow. Outcomes are established by the provocateur in advance. Assessment is based on the individuals finding viable answers, solutions, or results that are supported by the inquiry procedure provided.

#### **PURPOSE**

To introduce or practice a skill or ability. To experience a specific process, procedure, or method. To practice a specific skill or gain knowledge about specific content. To produce a known product.

#### **ROLES OF THE TEACHER**

Provides the problem, scenario or inquiry question; provides a procedure to follow; clarifies expectations; decides if students work in groups or alone; models specific skills or procedures; provides examples; determines how the students will share their results; evaluates results using assessments such as rubrics, criterion-based assessments, points or A grading system.

#### **ROLE OF THE STUDENT**

Follow teacher instructions.

#### **SUMMARY**

This approach to inquiry is primarily determined and controlled by the teacher who does the preparation, planning and design. The teacher is the provocateur. The students are the doers who follow the teacher instructions to the best of their abilities.

## **Guided Inquiry**

### **PROCESS**

Small groups are provided with a scenario, problem, or question and an end-product, solution, or goal to achieve. However, each group designs its own inquiry processes and procedures, materials and resources, data collection, and interpretation, and method of sharing results. Assessment is based on the quality, efficiency and usefulness of the research process selected, the viability of the interpretation, the clarity of the presentation to the larger group and the ability of the group to address the inquiry questions/problem/scenario.

### **PURPOSE**

**To seek information about the known world.** To provide experience in working with a small group to investigate a topic. To try out different ways of designing an inquiry. To practice selecting materials and resources to strengthen the inquiry. To collaborate with peers to find viable approaches, solutions, or products that address the inquiry questions.

### **ROLES OF THE TEACHER**

Provide topic of the investigation (problem/scenarios/research questions). Clarify expectations: end goal/product/result. Provide resources including different approaches for designing an investigation, ways of collecting and presenting data. Model dialogue skills for constructive participation as a group member. Provoke thinking by asking reflective questions, making contradictions and paradoxes visible throughout the inquiry. Evaluate the quality of the work according to pre-determined criteria.

### **ROLES OF THE STUDENTS**

Work with peers to select or design an inquiry process using collaboration skills. Identify resources and materials needed. Use class members and parents (children & adults) as resources. Interpret findings. Present the investigation results to larger group using a self-selected process.

### **SUMMARY**

Teacher provides the provocation and the end goal. Students take control of the inquiry process with the teacher as provocateur, facilitator and guide.

## **Open Inquiry**

### **PROCESS**

A group of people (children and adults) pose their own questions, design their investigation and determine ways of communicating their emerging processes and new discoveries to themselves and others. The inquiry is emergent in that one possibility uncovers another in ways that influence next steps. No one knows where the inquiry might lead.

### **PURPOSE**

**To wonder** about a topic, question, or problem that doesn't have ready answers or solutions. To experience the power and influence of uncertainty. To stay open to multiple possibilities. To explore possible worlds. To support the in-depth investigation of a topic in ways that inspire and encourage the use of creative thinking, imagination and innovation. To support a playful, joyful approach to learning. To use reflection as a process for making meaning, finding connections and uncovering new ideas. To provide the support necessary for long-term project-based learning. Assessment is a process of documentation that takes place throughout the inquiry to make visible the thinking and interpretations of the group. Documentation reveals the quality of the conversations, the creative and innovative use of language, the imaginative use of materials to explain ideas, and the processes the group used to cover ideas.

### **ROLES OF CHILDREN AND ADULTS**

In the process of open inquiry the adults and children are co-researchers around a topic selected by the students, the teacher, or both. The teacher works alongside the children, not in front leading or behind following. The roles of each are not always distinct and often overlap. The metaphor of the "ball toss" is in play. Dialogue and reflection are processes used to uncover possible directions that the inquiry may go. Each member (adults and children) brings experiences and ideas to the group for consideration. Adults such as teachers, school staff and parents provide resources, materials, tools, and equipment as needed. The groups documents its experiences as a way to support reflection and wondering. The investigation finds closure by communicating the journey and discoveries to others. The ending may provide a beginning for another topic of investigation.

## Common Strategies that Support Open Inquiry

**SCIENCE TALKS:** wondering together about a fascinating question. Theory creation without a predetermined expectation or answer.

**DIALOGUE GROUPS:** Thinking together using the skills of listening, connecting, questioning, reflecting, inferring and making assumptions viable.

**USE OF MATERIALS, VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS** to generate images that help ideas come alive and deepen meaning.

**COLLABORATION** among students, teachers, parents, and staff to share ideas, hypothesis, expertise, resources, life stories, experiences and wonderings.

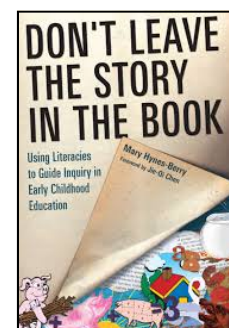
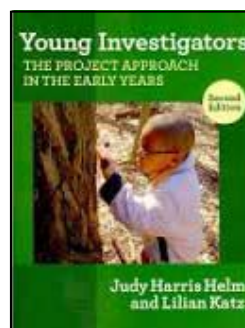
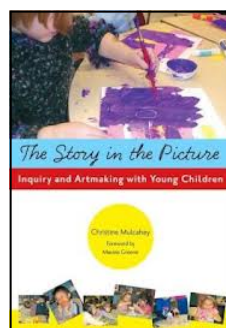
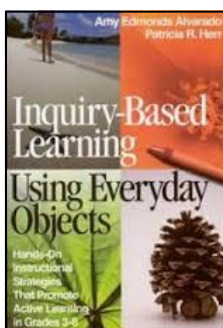
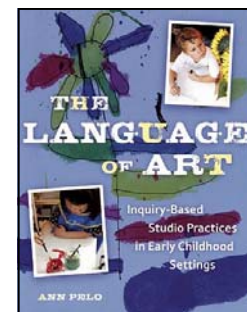
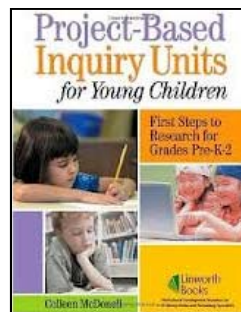
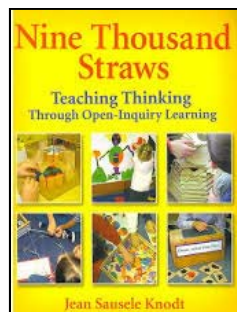
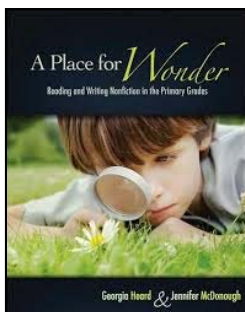
**DOCUMENTATION:** To capture the learning processes and thinking of individuals and groups as the work progresses through transcriptions of conversations, photos, video, work samples, data collection or products students create. To use this record as a basis for reflection, decision-making, and next steps. To make visible the learning to students, parents, and the public.

. . . Excerpts from a document written and compiled by Judy Graves, Founding Director, Opal School of the Portland Children's Museum

In an attempt to conserve space, I did not include the story examples provided in Judy's original document. If you would like a copy of the full text, please email the library and we'll send it to you: [ecrlibrary@options.bc.ca](mailto:ecrlibrary@options.bc.ca). I also can't share with you the wonderful video segments we saw during the workshop, which really brought it to life for us. We were captivated at seeing three years olds working so well together to solve a problem, sharing their ideas and supporting one another's work. They were completely engaged in what they were doing.

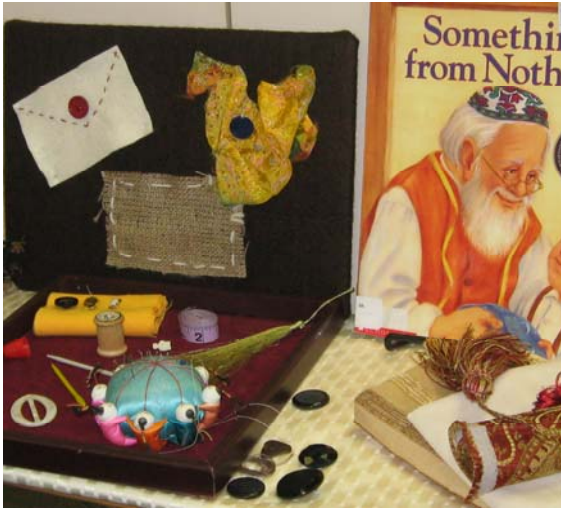
If you get a chance, visit the Portland Children's Museum, and see if you can arrange to visit Opal School as well. If nothing else, make sure to check out the website for inspiration, resources, and to subscribe to the Opal School blog: <http://www.portlandcm.org/>. ~ Elizabeth Kimura

**Are you interested in finding out more about inquiry-based learning? These books are available to subscribers of the Early Childhood Resource Library!**



## Inspiration...

The librarians here at Child Care Options are a very resourceful group. They are avid nature collectors, bits and pieces recyclers, dollar store sleuths, masters of craigslist, decorators at heart and even "pick up off the side of the road" lovers. They work very hard for all of you to make our library a warm and inviting space whenever you visit. They are continuously creating invitations and transforming the space so you'll be inspired to take back some great ideas to your centers. If you haven't been in lately here are a few photos of what you've been missing. But honestly the photos don't tell the whole story. Be sure to drop by the library soon to see what new ideas you can learn from them!







**Save the date!**

We're partnering with BC Family Child Care Association for their annual conference. The conference will be held on Saturday, May 31 at Child Care Options! Stay tuned for more details!

**IMPORTANT: Cheque Overpayment Fraud**

Child care providers have been approached by an individual attempting to fraudulently obtain funds through a scam called "Cheque Overpayment Fraud" where a potential client will advise a child care provider they wish to secure a child care space and will forward a cheque greater than the amount required to secure their space. They will then contact the child care provider asking them to forward them a cheque for the overpaid amount.

Caregivers should never agree to a transaction in which a potential client wishes to issue a cheque in an amount greater than the contract requires. For information on "Cheque Overpayment Fraud" please see the Government of Canada Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre website at [http://www.antifraudcentre-centreantifraude.ca/english/recognizeit\\_advfeefraudover.html](http://www.antifraudcentre-centreantifraude.ca/english/recognizeit_advfeefraudover.html)

For more information on current frauds, or if you have been a victim of a Cheque Overpayment Fraud, please contact the Anti-Fraud Centre toll free at 1-888-495-8501.



**DIFFERENCES BETWEEN COLD, SEASONAL FLU & H1N1 SYMPTOMS**

SYMPTOM	COLD	SEASONAL FLU	H1N1
FEVER	Fever is <b>rare</b> .	Fever is <b>common</b> .	<b>Fever is usually present</b> with H1N1 in up to <b>80% of cases</b> with a temperature of 101°F.
COUGHING	A hacking, <b>productive</b> (mucus-producing) cough is often present.	A <b>non-productive</b> (dry and hacking/ non-mucus producing) cough is often present.	A <b>non-productive</b> (dry and hacking/ non-mucus producing) cough is usually present.
ACHES	<b>Slight</b> body aches and pains can be present.	<b>Moderate</b> body aches are common.	<b>SEVERE</b> aches and pains are common.
STUFFY NOSE	Stuffy nose is commonly <b>present</b> with a cold. Typically resolve spontaneously within a week.	A runny nose is commonly <b>present</b> .	Stuffy nose is <b>NOT</b> commonly present.
CHILLS	Chills are <b>NOT common</b> .	Chills are <b>mild to moderate</b> .	60% of people experience <b>chills</b> .
TIREDDNESS	Tiredness tends to be fairly <b>mild</b> .	Tiredness is <b>moderate</b> and more likely referred to as a <b>lack of energy</b> .	Tiredness is <b>moderate to severe</b> .
SNEEZING	Sneezing is commonly <b>present</b> .	Sneezing is commonly <b>present</b> .	Sneezing is <b>NOT</b> common.
SYMPTOM ONSET	Cold symptoms tend to develop over a <b>few days</b> .	Symptoms tend to develop over a <b>few days</b> . Include flushed face, loss of appetite, dizziness and/or vomiting/nausea. Symptoms usually last 4-7 days, depending on the individual. Diarrhea is also common.	H1N1 has a <b>rapid onset</b> within 3-6 hours. H1N1 hits hard and fast. Includes sudden symptoms like high fever, aches and pains. Symptoms usually last 4-7 days, depending on the individual. Diarrhea is also common.
HEADACHE	A headache is <b>NOT common</b> .	A headache is fairly <b>common</b> .	A headache is <b>VERY common</b> and present in 80% of cases.
SORE THROAT	Sore throat is commonly <b>present</b> .	Sore throat is commonly <b>present</b> .	Sore throat is <b>NOT</b> commonly present.
CHEST DISCOMFORT	Chest discomfort is <b>mild</b> to moderate.	Chest discomfort is <b>moderate</b> . <b><i>If it turns severe, seek immediate medical attention!</i></b>	Chest discomfort is often <b>SEVERE</b> .

## 2013 Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Early Childhood Education

The Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Early Childhood Education honour outstanding educators who, through their dedication and skill, are giving children an important head start that helps them succeed at school.

Congratulations to Christine MacLeod of Wee Kids Family Daycare in Delta for receiving a Certificate of Achievement.

To view all of this year's awards recipients visit <https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/pmaece-ppmepe.nsf/eng/home>

## Change in Child Care Licensing Regulations

There have been recent amendments in the licensing regulations regarding reportable incidents.

The definition of "choking" has been amended to require facilities to report incidents of choking where first aid practices were administered (such as the Heimlich maneuver).

To read about the changes and how they affect your child care facility please access the information at <http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/ccf/pdf/q-a-incident-reporting-2013.pdf>

## 2013 BC Child Poverty Report Card

The latest figures from Statistics Canada (2011) show that BC is the worst province in Canada when it comes to major measures of child poverty. View the report at: <http://worstinacanada.org/>

The national report card can be found at <http://www.campaign2000.ca/reportCards/national/2013C2000NATIONALREPORTCARDNOV26.pdf>  
Go to page 14 for the child care section.

## BC Family Child Care Association's 2014 Record Keeping Calendar for Child Care Professionals is now available

- Focusing on nutrition & fitness
- Family child care tracking sheets for your business (attendance, expense pages, yearly summary page)



Order your copy today—order forms are available at [www.bcfcca.ca](http://www.bcfcca.ca)

BCFCCA Members: \$20.00  
Non-members: \$25.00



## Slow Down Kids Playing

BCAA is offering free "Slow Down, Kids Playing" signs at all of their service locations. The signs, which can be displayed on residential properties, are a reminder to drivers to pay close attention to their surroundings when driving through areas where kids are likely to be present. Details at: <http://www.bcaa.com/campaigns/kids-playing>

## Newly Diagnosed Support Centre

This site from Anaphylaxis Canada is for parents of children recently diagnosed with a food allergy. View the site at: <http://www.allergysupportcentre.ca/>

## Two New Information Sheets for Parents from the Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development

Anxiety and Depression: Recognizing the Warning Signs

[http://www.child-encyclopedia.com/pages/PDF/Anxiety-depression\\_ANGmCP.pdf](http://www.child-encyclopedia.com/pages/PDF/Anxiety-depression_ANGmCP.pdf)

Eating Behaviour: A Recipe for Healthy Eating Habits

[http://www.child-encyclopedia.com/pages/PDF/Eating\\_behaviourANGmCP.pdf](http://www.child-encyclopedia.com/pages/PDF/Eating_behaviourANGmCP.pdf)

## Playing it Safe: Fragrances

The Canadian Partnership for Children's Health and Environment has a new fact sheet, Playing it safe: Fragrances. This fact sheet outlines the potential harm associated with fragrance chemicals and suggests ways to reduce exposure, especially for children. View the fact sheet at:

[http://www.healthysenvironmentforkids.ca/sites/healthysenvironmentforkids.ca/files/CPCHE\\_FactsFragrancesEN.pdf](http://www.healthysenvironmentforkids.ca/sites/healthysenvironmentforkids.ca/files/CPCHE_FactsFragrancesEN.pdf)

## Dealing with Baby Gap Syndrome

By Lisa Murphy, The Ooey Goody Lady®

Lisa is the keynote speaker on Saturday, February 8th at our Children the Heart of the Matter Conference.

Lisa will also be offering a workshop for us on Thursday, February 6.

See our website for more details or to register call 604-572-8032.

Don't you wish you had a dollar for every time you have said, "Please send your child to school in clothes you don't care about!" We can encourage, demand, threaten, bribe, write notes home, scream, post signs and tell parents until we are blue in the face about the importance of wearing "play clothes" to school, but to no avail! It is frustrating to feel like our words are ignored, and even more so when, after all our efforts and insistence, the children still come to school suffering from what I call, "baby gap syndrome".

And it affects the children the worst – over the years I have seen children cry because they got a little bit of paint on their shirt, have witnessed emotional breakdowns on the play yard because mud was on the new sneakers, had children tell me to throw their "dirty shirt" away so mama won't get mad and have had children bound into school announcing that they aren't allowed to paint anymore because it "ruins my clothes". I have seen children proudly drag their parents out onto the yard to show off the tree forts, castles and mud houses they spent all day building and creating, designing and painting only to be asked, "Why are you so dirty?", or be told, with a heavy sign, "Oh no... there's paint on your new shirt!"

What kinds of messages are being sent to the children when there is so much emphasis on their clothes and shoes? Can the shirt really be more important than the opportunity to engage in a new creative experience? If it is, then it is a shirt that does not belong in preschool. I actually had a child come to school once wearing a green, crushed silk, flower girl dress...and her tap shoes! Like you, I have really struggled with this over the years.

### What are we to do?

We tell our families, "Send them in clothes you don't care about!" and then I show a slide show of the children "in action" and they immediately understand why! I met a director who tells parents, "If your child doesn't get dirty at school, then we aren't doing our job!" Another friend who provides family child care tells all her new clients, "I guarantee I will ruin their clothes!" And a colleague who teaches preschool tells her families, "If you want the children to be able to wear it in public again, don't send it here!" The reason I like to show parents the slide show is so that they can then see for themselves what the children are doing. They can witness the creative process first hand! I have discovered that parents sometimes have a misconception that their children are getting dirty because teachers are not paying attention. Slide shows, short video clips and photographs are tools for educating the parents not only on the creative process, but also of your involvement and investment in the activity as well.

Educators and providers need to be able to verbalize why creative art and other kinds of messy play is important and be able to identify for the parents the skills that are being developed as the children are engaged in these experiences. Remember that the parents aren't there during the day to see the creativity, cooperation and process first hand; all they might see is the red paint in the hair and the glue on the jeans.

At our schoolhouse the children are not made to wear smocks. We use washable paint for all projects and, at orientation, parents are informed of the high level of creativity we encourage at our school and as such, are required to have lots and lots of extra clothes in their child's cubby. Knowing that having lots of extras can be taxing for some families, there is also a big tub of clothes I have accumulated over the years at garage sales and consignment shops that children can "borrow" if they run out of extras.

Through parent workshops, parent meetings, articles about hands-on, creative messy play, a back to school orientation and well-written contracts and parent handbooks, you can begin to battle baby gap syndrome.

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# Child Care Phone Skills to Increase Your Enrollments

By Kris Murray, Child Care Marketing Coach

The phone is often the first live contact you have with prospective parents. You spend most your child care marketing dollars to make the phone ring, so get the most out of each call.

Skilled telephone contact, following a simple method practiced in advance, will greatly enhance your child care enrollment success. Consider, what happens to your carefully crafted marketing plan when your phone rings? It is all for naught if your staff is so poorly trained or overwhelmed that the most vital things are not being said when the phone rings.

## 3 questions will help to successfully start each phone call.

1. Immediately ask each prospect: May I have your name, please? Almost nobody does this when they haven't been properly trained. People love to hear the sound of their own name; it's human nature. Even when the caller jumps in and asks you questions, it is possible to get this key piece of information.

Here's an example:

ABC (Director): Thanks for calling ABC Childcare Center, this is Kris. Let me be the first to welcome you to ABC! (With warm enthusiasm!)

Prospect: I just want to know your rates for toddlers.

ABC: I can help you with that. May I have your name, please?

Prospect: My name is Sophie.

Defer the rate question until you get the name. You are in control. From that point forward, you should be using the name interspersed in each of your questions or answers. This builds trust and rapport.

2. Immediately after she (or he) gives you the name, ask for her phone number. Here's how that works:

ABC: Thanks for calling us, (Sophie). What's your phone number in case we get disconnected?

You are extending customer service by requesting it, and now you have the name and the phone number. 99% of the time you will obtain the number if you approach this question with confidence.

3. Now, right away, you ask the next question: "May I ask you, [Sophie], what prompted you to call us today?" Using this open-ended question, you can get a feeling for what is going on with the client. Did they just have a family status change? Are congratulations in order because she's newly pregnant or she got a promotion/job change? Is she new in town, just moving into the area? Is she switching from a competitor?

These possible scenarios are all very pertinent pieces to the puzzle of why your client is interested in your services, and by giving the opening of "...what prompted you to call us today?" you can respond appropriately. You will be having a very different conversation if she is switching from a competitor than if she is moving to town. You want to be a trusted advisor. Knowing what prompted her to call is the best place to start to glean what her story is.

If she's not giving you what you need, you can say, "Could you tell me a little bit more about that?" You are probing with friendly customer service-oriented questions. You are not being nosy; you are doing your best to build rapport.

Most child care facilities are not answering the phone with this simple 3-question sequence that will give you the key information and the opportunity to build rapport and book a tour. 99% of centers give their rates right away, no tour is booked and the client is off the line without leaving contact information; OR they launch into a spiel about the curriculum, giving information that the prospect is not interested in at the moment. Neither of these conversations builds rapport or secures enrollments.

Far more tours get scheduled, leading to enrollment success, when this sequence of questions is followed. Train your staff to follow this valuable 1-2-3 script and see your own centers book more tours!

Your "Success Assignment": Practice this 3-step opening for every prospect phone call. Role-play with your staff. Practice "sprinkling" the prospect's and child's name into the conversation to build rapport and trust. Gain confidence asking for the phone number, as if it were completely natural and routine. WATCH your level of tours grow!

Used with permission from Child Care Marketing Solutions. To learn more, visit Kris at <http://www.childcare-marketing.com>



**FOUND: Great website with hundreds of ideas for outdoor play!**

The Woodland Trust Nature Detectives website from the United Kingdom has resources for all seasons and all types of outdoor play. Their resources include booklets to inspire children with outdoor play ideas. These seasonal play booklets were created with Westonbirt Arboretum and they're bursting with fun. Download the free Winter booklet to inspire you and the children with outdoor play ideas.

[http://www.naturedetectives.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/8FD2747A-D131-4E51-A2B0-6A80F9DE9247/0/winter\\_booklet.pdf](http://www.naturedetectives.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/8FD2747A-D131-4E51-A2B0-6A80F9DE9247/0/winter_booklet.pdf)

For more great ideas visit their website:

<http://www.naturedetectives.org.uk/winter/>



Here's a fun way to use loose parts. Provide the children with a variety of empty frames and natural materials such as rocks, pinecones, sticks and any other materials you've gathered on your nature walks. Allow the children to experience manipulating the materials.



**Try some of these activities to keep the children healthy and active.**

Fly like birds – high and low and fast and slow. Pretend to fly south for the winter and return in the spring!

Explore Speed – move fast, then really slow, and now in between. Which one makes your heart go faster?

Pretend to be Rain. Can you act out a mist, or a drizzle, or a downpour? What about a windy rain, a cold rain, or a heavy rain?

Ask the children to use their bodies to pretend:

- to move like spaghetti
- like applesauce
- a melting ice cube
- Ask the children to think of other ways.

Practice throwing soft objects into a laundry basket. Move the basket close to you and then far away.

Get outside and practice your running. Pump your arms forward and backward. Feel your heart!

Put a sheet of newspaper across your chest and run – the paper should stay on your chest.



For some great ideas to get outside this winter download the Winter Activity Guide from Nature Rocks:

<http://www.naturerocks.org/nature-rocks-winter-activity-guide-2013-14-final.pdf>

# Contact Us



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## Office Hours

Monday	12:00 pm - 8:00 pm
Tuesday	9:00 am - 12:00 pm
Wednesday	9:00 am - 4:00 pm
Thursday	12:00 pm - 8:00 pm
Friday	9:00 am - 4:00 pm
Saturday	1st & 3rd of each month 9:00 -3:00 pm excluding long weekends

## Office Closures

February 7	closed at noon for conference
February 10	Family Day
February 18	Staff Planning Day
April 18	Good Friday
April 21	Easter Monday

Library closed Wednesdays



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## SURREY LOCATION:

Early Years Centre - #100-6846 King George Blvd, Surrey  
Office hours: Please see times listed to the left.

## DELTA LOCATION:

Harbour Centre - #205-5000 Bridge Street, Ladner  
Office hours: Wednesdays 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

## SOUTH SURREY LOCATION:

Kensington Prairie Community Centre - 16824 32 Avenue, Surrey  
Office hours: Tuesdays 9:00 am - 11:30 am



Please share our newsletter with staff and colleagues