

- **Tom Sticht** shares the connection between breastfeeding and literacy.
- **What are national, provincial and regional Family Literacy groups doing? Find out here.**
- **“Pull my Finger” - one Dad’s suggestion for making learning fun.**
- **Why Did She Do It? The Inside scoop on Corinne Bantle’s Literacy Quilt**



Literacy Matters

JANUARY 2008

Families in Focus

What is Family Literacy?

Family literacy refers to how family members use language to learn, play and work together within the context of home and community. Family Literacy focuses on the role of parents and caregivers as the child’s first teacher. This powerful influence fosters the intellectual, emotional, spiritual and physical growth of the child. Family literacy occurs naturally within the routines of daily life. Making a grocery list, scheduling activities on a calendar, playing a board game, looking at

a map, following a recipe together or talking during mealtime are all examples of family literacy activities.

Why is Family Literacy Important?

Family Literacy provides an opportunity to strengthen the family unit and develop literacy skills at the same time. Family members are connected through sharing stories, values and traditions. A sense of belonging is created through shared experiences that are familiar to the family. Family Literacy activities

provide an important foundation for acquiring literacy skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing. This groundwork paves the way for future success in learning.



Literacy....
Families in Focus

Family Literacy at the SLN

The Saskatchewan Literacy Network (SLN) is dedicated to supporting family literacy in Saskatchewan.

Shortly into the New Year we will launch a *Family Literacy Tool Kit* on an updated family literacy web page. The Tool Kit will be a mix of resources

that can be accessed by the field to give family literacy presentations for different organizations. We hope that as practitioners in the field use the Tool Kit they will add ideas and materials to the collection.

We are also pleased with our newly revised *Come*

Read With Me manual. It will be printed in early January in time for our upcoming Train-the-Trainer workshop.

Our booklet, *For The Love Of Reading*, was updated recently and we are in the process of printing 10,000 copies. (continued on page 2).



Family Literacy at the SLN continued...

Please remind any organizations you have contact with to request as many copies as they need to ensure every family has a copy of their own.

Last but certainly not least, the New Year will begin with the very important task of helping to review and distribute the

CanWest Global Raise-A-Reader Family Literacy funds. Last year 64 communities from across our province were fortunate to receive Raise-A-Reader funding to help support Family Literacy programming.

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Mapping the Field of Family Literacy in Canada

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During the funding year 2005-2006, MCL and its coalitions decided that MCL should conduct an environmental scan of the family literacy field. The need to conduct such a scan was requested by the Executive Directors of the provincial and territorial coalitions. They felt the results of the scan would provide MCL, its coalitions and the field in general, with a "map" of family literacy. This information would allow MCL to clearly articulate its role within family literacy in

Canada. Conducting the scan was built into MCL's work plan for 2007-08.

MCL and its members have a long-standing interest in this issue. MCL hosted the first Canadian Family Literacy conference in 1994, bringing together Canadian and international pioneers in this area. Many of those people have continued to develop knowledge

and programs in this evolving field. More recently we partnered in a multi-year project with the Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs, "Weaving Literacy into Family and Community Life".

As an alliance of the provincial and territorial literacy coalitions, MCL's role is to be a national forum, voice and support for the field. The coalitions play a similar role at the provincial/territorial levels. Since 1994, the coalitions have steadily increased their involvement in Family Literacy, conducting research, sharing knowledge through conferences and professional development opportunities, and developing materials. Some have partnered with Family Literacy and Family Service organizations, or developed multi-sectoral initiatives to support intergenerational literacy development.

The field of family literacy is an uneven one in Canada. In some provinces and

territories (and in some large urban areas) there are a wide variety of family literacy programs and services available. This is not the case across the country. One of the things that makes the field uneven is funding. Program funding may come from a number of sources—government ministries/departments (that don't fund adult literacy, per se), foundations, United Ways and fund-raising—or there may only be project-based funding.

The scan is a necessary first step in working with a broad range of players to develop a national action plan for this issue. While recognizing that family literacy can have many definitions, this study attempts to scope out as much as possible:

Who is doing what in Family Literacy across the country, and how is it being described?

What are the key issues, challenges, needs and gaps?

How might the broad community work together to move this issue ahead?

What roles might MCL take on at the national level to move this issue ahead?

"The field of family literacy is an uneven one in Canada."



The “Mother’s Milk” of Literacy: How Breastfeeding May Improve Literacy



Research has long established strong, positive correlations among most IQ tests and literacy

(Gottfredson, 1997). This is based largely on the role of reasoning, language, and knowledge common to both intelligence and literacy tests.

Now recent research has revealed a relationship among breastfeeding, genetics and IQ scores indicating that the average IQ scores of children who possessed a particular gene and whose mothers breastfed them when they were babies, was seven points higher in later years than breastfed children who lacked the special gene (BBC News, 2007). According to the article, “The gene in question helps break down fatty acids from the diet, which have been linked with brain development.” Referring to the effects of IQ upon educational achievement, according to the researchers, Seven points difference is enough to put the child in the top third of the class.”

Given that a major factor in educational achievement is the acquisition and development of literacy, and literacy and IQ are highly related, the new research suggests that literacy itself may be affected by breastfeeding amongst women whose children also possess the special gene. Genetic research indicates that some 90 percent of children possess the special gene. For this reason, Belinda Phipps, of the National Childbirth Trust in the United Kingdom, said: “This shows for the majority of parents they

can have a positive effect on their babies IQ by breastfeeding.”

Teach the Mothers and Reach The Children

The new research on genetics and breastfeeding of infants focuses attention upon the importance of educating women. For many decades, nations have emphasized the education and literacy development of boys and men. The failure to focus resources on girls and women shows itself in the international literacy statistics compiled by UNESCO. From 1980 to 1995, the illiterate population of men fell from 327 to 318 million, while the numbers of illiterate women grew from 551 to 565 million (Aksornkool, 2001).

However, research for UNESCO (Sticht & McDonald, 1990) illustrates the many positive effects of girl’s and women’s education on children and their educational development at various stages from before birth to the school years:

Before Pregnancy

Better educated girls/women show higher economic productivity; better personal health care; lower fertility rates; and hence they produce smaller families. The latter, in turn, is related to the preschool cognitive development of children and their subsequent achievement in school.

During Pregnancy and at Birth

Better educated women provide better pre-natal care; produce more full term babies; provide better post-natal care and this results in babies with fewer learning disabilities.

Before Going To School

Better educated women produce better children’s health care; better cognitive, language, and pre-literacy development; and better preparation for schoolwork.

During The School Years

Better educated women produce higher participation rates in schooling; better management of homework; better advocacy for children’s education and negotiation of school/child conflicts; and they produce children who achieve higher levels of education and literacy.

All this, and the new evidence on genetics and breastfeeding of infants with a special gene, suggests that we should pay special attention to the need for resources to provide literacy educational opportunities to the millions of less literate women who will bring the next generation of children into the world. We should remember that, when we teach the mothers, we reach the children!

Poorly educated children are the source of adult functional illiteracy, and functionally illiterate adults are the source of poorly educated children. Perhaps through education based on a Multiple Life Cycles policy (Sticht, 2006), in which children are guaranteed their right to educated parents, the vicious intergenerational cycles of functional illiteracy can be stopped at their sources.

References on page 6.

**Tom Sticht
International
Consultant in Adult
Education**

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**“This shows for
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babies IQ by
breastfeeding.”**



**For breastfeeding support:
www.workandfamilybalance.com**



News from Prince Albert



The Prince Albert Literacy Network is a group of agencies, interested citizens and learners that promotes and supports literacy in the Prince Albert community. Support for Family Literacy programs is offered to local schools and community agencies by providing children's books, facilitator honorariums, program supplies and mentorship. Currently, *Alphabet Soup*, a Health and Family Literacy program, is run in all Catholic pre-kindergartens and at the West Flat Community Preschool. *Come Read With Me* has been offered in many of our local

schools. Free books are given to families attending all Family Literacy programs in Prince Albert to start or add to their home library. The Prince Albert Literacy Network also operates a Storysack Lending Library on Monday afternoons.

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News from Regina

"There is always room to celebrate the wonderful work that is going on in the field of family literacy."

I would like to thank everyone in the field and the board of the Regina Family Literacy Network (RFLN) for the wonderful welcome I have received to my new post as the Executive Director of the RFLN. I have been involved in the literacy field for several years through work with the Regina Family Literacy Project, the Saskatchewan Literacy Network and as a family literacy program facilitator.

Although Tam Miller has left the position of Executive Director, she has left a legacy of family literacy initiatives that will continue to thrive at the RFLN. She will continue to work with the Network as a program facilitator for the "Dads Connection" program as well assisting us with future family literacy initiatives. We would like to thank Tam for the years of hard work and support she has dedicated to the RFLN. We are confident she will find success in her educational endeavors in Family Literacy.

As the New Year comes closer plans are underway to host a "What is Family Literacy?" session in Regina. The session will take place in January and is part of Planting the Seeds for Tomorrow (a Provincial Family Literacy Project) that the RFLN is proud to be a part of.

For information on the session or other family literacy initiatives in Regina and surrounding area – don't hesitate to contact me any time – 306-352-READ (7323) or reginafamily@sasktel.net. There is always room to celebrate the wonderful work that is going on in the field of family literacy.

Hilary Dahnke, Executive Director
 Regina Family Literacy Network, Inc

Family Literacy Fun Contest

Win a \$50.00 book basket! If you are running a family literacy program, e-mail your contact information to marilyn.stearns@sasktel.net before June 15, 2008.



News from Saskatoon

READ Saskatoon is a volunteer literacy organization that provides free literacy services to adults and families. Our vision is to help create a community that values literacy. We offer a one-to-one tutoring program, family literacy programs, and free training and workshops for parents, teachers, family literacy workers and community organizations. Our adult classroom offers the opportunity to improve literacy,

parenting and employability skills and will start in January 2008.

If you know someone who would like to improve their reading and writing or would like more information about family literacy, contact our office.

Phone: 306 652 5448

Web: www.readsaskatoon.com



56 Blocks to Literacy: Corinne Bantle's Literacy Quilt

I work as a Library Technician for Saskatchewan Rivers School Division #119 in Prince Albert. I've been a quilter for about six years and consider myself a 'Read-A-Saurus.' This quilt was inspired from an article in the Fons & Porter's Love of Quilting (September/October 2004). One of the quilts featured in the article was a quilt made by students for "Read across America" day (Dr. Seuss' birthday). Each student's block was a picture of their favourite book. The sidebar featured a couple of blocks that were made by children's authors. I thought that someday this would be a great project, but I'd do the whole quilt with children's authors and illustrators.

In November 2005, I thought about that quilt again and made the decision not to

wait another minute. I started writing letters to children's authors and illustrators – those whose work I am familiar with and love their books. Some were easier to contact than others as they had websites under their own name. I contacted other authors and illustrators through publishing companies. In total I had contacted about 90 authors and illustrators and about fifty five participated.

As the blocks started to arrive, I became more excited. Each block was great! I could hardly believe these famous authors and illustrators would agree to make a block for my quilt. By the end of November 2006, all the blocks were received. I never expected so many people would say yes – this project was turning out to be much larger than I anticipated.

My mom helped me put the quilt together. We'd decided to put a coloured post where the blocks join to add some interest. As the quilt was being sewn together, I knew it was going to be amazing but when the quilt top was finished it was so beautiful, I couldn't believe it.

The quilt went for longarm quilting in February 2007. I did not have any ideas about what kind of quilting design I wanted. The only thing I asked Shelly Baldwin (the quilter) was to not quilt over top of the blocks – to keep the quilting in the sashing and the borders.

When the quilt came back, it was so much more than I ever anticipated. I made this quilt in celebration of literacy – something that is dear to my heart.

"I made this quilt in celebration of literacy - something that is dear to my heart"



Saskatoon Parent and Tot Program

Cathy Sieben
Program Coordinator

The Parent and Tot (Family Support Centres) Program, is a free drop-in program for parents, grandparents, caregivers and their children aged birth to five years. All in the community are welcome; 12 centres (or sessions) run for two hours each week in 9 elementary schools and 1 community centre.

Each session focuses on two distinct, but related components: family literacy with a Come Read With Me program that includes play-time, circle time with songs, stories, rhymes, finger-plays and a make and take craft (theme-based). It also includes a parent education component or 'parent-talk', where

adult participants can share their parenting experiences, issues and ideas and learn about positive, respectful Adlerian parenting strategies. Childcare is provided. The program is an ideal way for families to meet others in their community, to initiate or expand family literacy routines at home, and for parents to build capacity in their role as their child's first and most important teacher.

When asked what the benefits of being involved in a family literacy program are, one of the groups responded:

For the children:

- I notice an expanded vocabulary
- It helps with my child's imagination

- It gives them options for later on with education
- It gives my child knowledge and independence
- The kids get so much from all the learning—about structure, routine and interacting with other children.

For the parents:

- It gives me ideas on how to expand stories and I can share my own ideas for songs, stories and crafts
- Camaraderie and friendships with others who are also raising and caring for young children
- I gain knowledge
- Overall it's a great chance to learn a lot, and to feel a part of a group.



References from page 3: The “Mother’s Milk” of Literacy

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10 Ways to Have Fun With Family Literacy...

1. Turn off the TV and play a game of I spy. This increases descriptive vocabulary, listening and logic skills.
2. Go for a walk and point out the words you see in signs. This helps foster word and letter recognition.
3. Sing a song and dance to it. Rhyming, memorization and imitating sounds helps build language skills.
4. Bake cookies. This teaches following directions, sequencing, measuring, and counting.
5. Cut up old greeting cards to make puzzles. This strengthens attention span, problem-solving and fine motor skills.
6. Draw someone in your family and have everyone guess who it is. This teaches fine motor skills, creativity, explaining and describing ideas.
7. Visit an animal shelter. This teaches classifying, making comparisons, counting, and broadening knowledge base.
8. Have an indoor picnic. Learn planning, counting, sequencing, and following directions.
9. Set up and visit an imaginary garage sale, store or restaurant, and try different roles. Practice counting, sorting, classifying items, organizing, building imagination and creativity.
10. Share some family stories. This helps memorization, descriptive vocabulary, sequencing, listening and speaking skills.

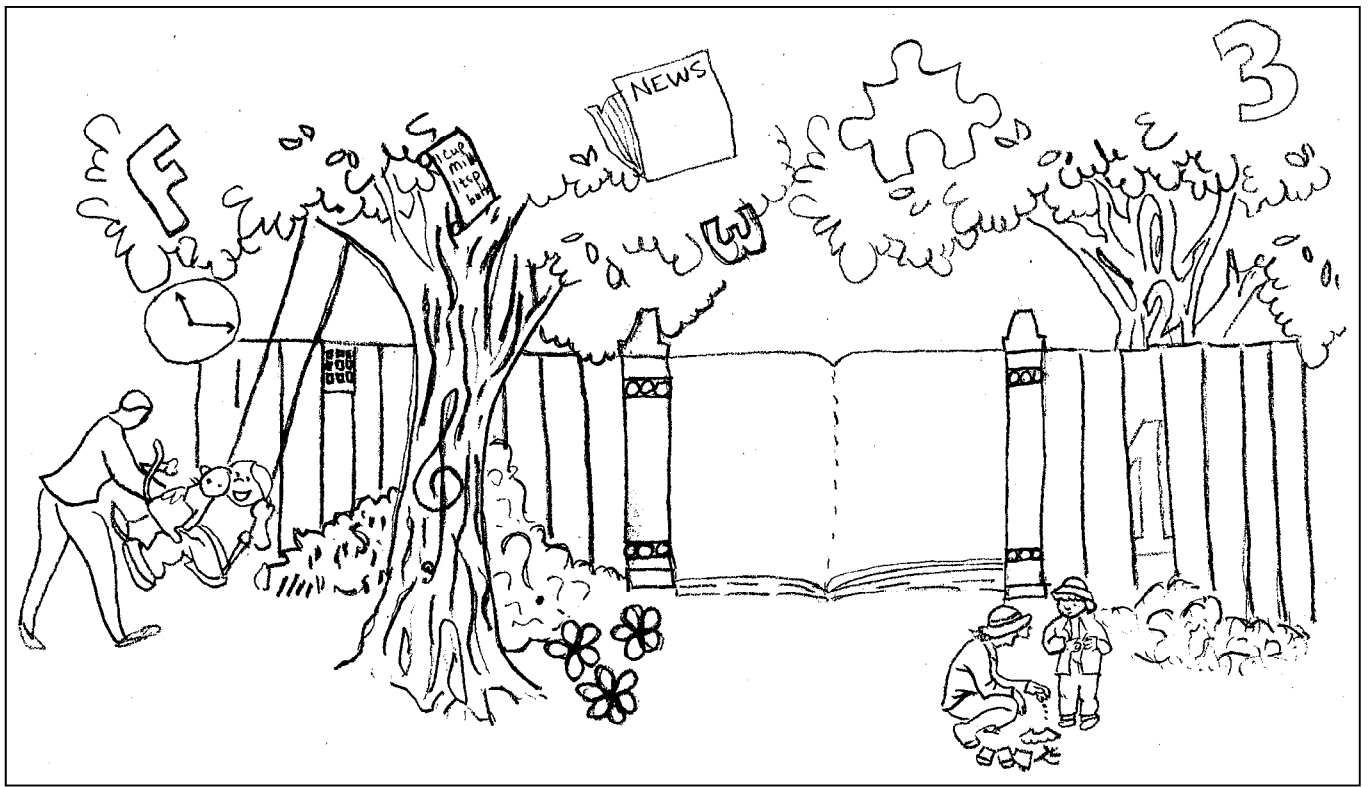


Jamie Ham, the author of "Do's for Dads" is the father of 2 year old Charlie.

Do's for Dads

1. As well as reading to your child, tell stories and allow your child to pick the character and what will happen.
2. Play games that use counting and math: building towers, counting poker chips or playing monopoly.
3. Make learning fun...it doesn't have to be serious. "Pull my Finger" is not just for your friends.
4. "Princess Auto" and "Ritchie Brothers" flyers are a great place to learn about tools and tractors.
5. While watching sports, take time to explain the rules: what are off-sides and the in-field fly rule?
6. Ask your child (depending on his/her age) to help you sort things like bolts, cards, socks, etc.
7. Ask your child to help with cooking and chores. It may take longer but it gets them involved, they learn, then when they grow up it can be their job.





Can You Find....?



Clock



Newspaper



Recipe



Puzzle Piece

What Else Can You Find?

