



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

AKB Then & Now	2
A Director's Perspective	3
Transitioning To School	4
Transitioning To School Age Programs	6



Message from the All Kids Belong Program Manager

It's an absolute privilege to be here with All Kids Belong as we celebrate 20 years of service! In 1998 huge changes occurred in the London-Middlesex area. Funding from several specialized pre-school resource services was combined to create a brand-new resource consultation program called All Kids Belong, hosted by Merrymount Children's Centre. It was a huge undertaking, and a significant change for families and the community. With many details and supports to work out, a Manager and a dedicated team of Resource Consultants were hired. Along with an enthusiastic Advisory Committee, this team worked together and consulted with the community and other service providers to develop the model, create forms, and start to build relationships with community child care programs. In 2006 we were happy to begin to serve the St Thomas-Elgin community. AKB has certainly grown over the years! In our first year we provided services and supports to 214 children in London-Middlesex. In 2017 we served 774 children in London-Middlesex and Elgin St-Thomas.

Now, in 2018, we are a well-established program with twenty years of experience and a team of highly trained and dedicated Resource Consultants, about half of whom have been with AKB from the start! Our Advisory Committees in London-Middlesex and St-Thomas Elgin continue to provide community validation and endorsement of AKB directions and actions, and advice on policies, procedures and practices. AKB staff stay connected with our communities through participation in a variety of committees and workgroups, including Strive Professional Learning and Advisory committees, the London Licensed Child Care Network, St Thomas-Elgin Child and Youth Network, Middlesex Child and Youth Network, and more. We share and learn best practices about inclusion support services through participation in the Inclusive Child Care Committee and the Ontario Network of Special Needs Resource Providers.

Twenty years is a good time to stop and reflect, and we intend to do so this year with an increased focus on learning more about the outcomes of our services. Twenty years is also a great time to celebrate, and we look forward to the years ahead with a bright new logo with hands thrown in the air saying "count me in!"

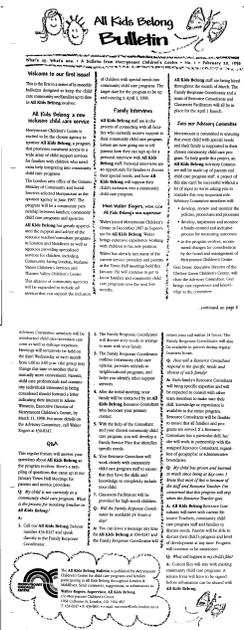
Your feedback, questions and comments are important to the All Kids Belong Program. Please feel free to contact me (Lee-Anne Cross) at any time at 519-434-8247 or lcross@merrymount.on.ca





20 years later Then And Now

- Merrymount Children's Centre was chosen as the agency to sponsor the All Kids Belong program in June, 1997 and the program was officially launched on April 1, 1998.
- The AKB Program has had 5 different managers over 20 years.
- The AKB Program started with 1 Manager, 1 Family Response Coordinator, 16 Resource Consultants and 2 Enhancement Facilitators for a total of 20 staff.
- The AKB Program now has 1 manager, 16 Resource consultants and 1 Enhancement Facilitator for a total of 18 staff. Ten of the original staff are still working for the program.
- The first All Kids Belong Bulletin was published February 20th, 1998 and we are currently publishing # 52. It evolved from bi-monthly, to quarterly to it's current format of 2x's per year.
- In 1998, the AKB Program serviced 214 children in 120 licensed child care centres in London-Middlesex area.
- In 2017, the AKB Program serviced 774 children in London-Middlesex, St Thomas area combined
- In January, 1999 the AKB Program began servicing school age programs.
- The AKB staff originally worked out of one office space at Merrymount Children's Centre, then moved to 4 offices and currently have 3 London offices and 1 St Thomas office.
- From the beginning, the AKB Program has had a dedicated Advisory Committee made up of parents, child care professionals and community individuals ; several original members are still serving in this capacity.
- In May, 2006, the AKB Program began servicing the St Thomas/Elgin region.
- We are proud to note that the community is more aware of children with social emotional and mental health needs.
- We also celebrate that inclusion has become the norm for children attending early learning programs.
- The AKB Program now utilizes computer technology to help deliver services to the community.
- The AKB Resource Consultants are involved in a variety of community committees.
- The AKB Resource Consultants continue to provide support to parents of children transitioning to school.
- The AKB Program started using screening tools for development and have added screening tools for toddlers and school age children regarding resiliency, and social/emotional challenges.
- The AKB Program has supported the child care programs through many different philosophies, and tries to adapt to meet the needs of each program.
- Our logo has evolved from multiple faces to hands thrown in the air saying "count me in".
- The AKB Program looks forward to continuing to work with the community to service London-Middlesex and St Thomas /Elgin.



Transitioning To Child Care

A Child Care Director's Perspective

Transitioning your child to a new age group, child care or “big school” is fun and exciting and sometimes scary too for all participants. Here are some points to consider when making the move to a new setting:

- Staff should be prepared in advance for a child new to a playroom. Whether it be a new age group or a whole new day care, take the time to get name tags, cubbies and bed labelled before the first day of care.
- In the program, staff should welcome the new child individually on his/her level. Imagine if you were walking into a new job situation. It is kind when others who are familiar with the setting to spend some time with you.
- Show the new child around the new playroom. Highlight the “special” areas with the child especially if you know it is interesting to that child. (eg. Blocks; creative).
- Introduce the child to peers and other parents. This will make the child feel welcomed and belong. A basic principle for anyone in any new setting.
- All children love to be helpers. Partner a new child with a Buddy for a day or two which can help everyone connect more quickly.
- All children like to know “what comes next”. Make sure you are communicating the next steps to every child, but especially the “newbie's” to the room. We can't assume anyone knows what time it is.
- Try to include the new child in group opportunities as a means of encouraging social success. Having parents and staff working with the child in these opportunities will help facilitate the growth and development with new friends.
- Visit, visit, visit. Ratios allowing, and parents being informed in advance, have a new child visit the next class-

Communication is always important. It is also the key to success for all persons involved with transitions. Parents talking with staff and vice versa. Parents and staffing talking with the child, whether he/she has verbal skills, they can hear us. Everyone needs to know what's new, what's the same and what's different in the new setting. Sharing information with all parties is helpful to alleviate stress and help everyone prepare and be prepared for the changes to come. Time is another important aspect of change. Everyone needs patience, understanding and support when the change occurs to help all parties know it's o.k. for a settling in period. Adjustments can sometimes take days/ weeks before everyone feels comfortable and at ease with the new rooms. Using some or all of the suggested tips, can support staff, parents and children and help to reduce the challenge with change for all of us.

Deborah Lukings, Director

Tips for families about how to make the transition to child care smooth:

- ◆ Arrange for numerous visits in your child's new environment
- ◆ Talk about Child Care with your child
- ◆ Read stories about transitioning into child care
- ◆ Practice experiences outside the home
- ◆ Visit EarlyON (formerly OEYC) centres with your child
- ◆ Reassure your child that you will be back to pick them up
- ◆ Provide your child with their favourite comfort items (stuff animal, blanket, family picture)
- ◆ Be kind to yourself, separating from your child isn't always easy
- ◆ At pick up time, convey how happy you are to see them and how excited you are to hear about their day

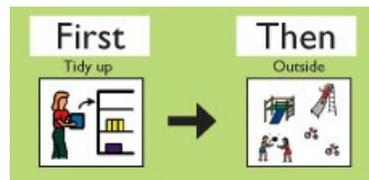
*On the places you'll go,
Today is your day!
Your mountain is waiting.
So ...get on your way!*

--Dr. Seuss

Transitioning To School

Getting ready for Kindergarten is exciting and also a time for change, and sometimes change is difficult. Here are some tips to help make the transition to school easier for children and parents.

- Set up playdates with other children. You may set up playdates with other children in your neighbourhood or child-care who will be attending the same school or visit a family centre in your neighbourhood for opportunities for your child to interact with peers in a fun safe environment.
- Establish regular routines at home. Children who have regular routines know what to expect and learn that one action stops before another starts. Children do best when routines are regular, predictable, and consistent. Use visual supports to help a child remember what comes next. This strategy can help with children who do not have strong receptive language skills.
- Practice your morning and evening routines before the emotions of the first day of school set in. Think about what your child is going to eat for breakfast. School requires a lot of energy to pay attention and participate.
- Think about your child's social readiness for large groups. Are there any skills that you would like to practice over the next few months? Think about their ability to wait, take turns, and problem solve. Social readiness refers to your child's ability to listen and learn as well as their ability to interact with others in a structured setting like a classroom. Break the skill down into smaller steps and practice with your child.
- Foster independence by encouraging and providing opportunities for your child to do things for themselves. Small chores like cleaning up after dinner, helping putting laundry away, or tidying toys up before moving to another part of a routine are easy ways to build autonomy and provide children with responsibility and decision making skills. This also helps your child learn to follow directions. Use phrases like "first" and "then" or "next" when giving directions to support children with language delays or distraction concerns. Pair verbal requests with visual supports.



- Practice fasteners on their clothing to help develop their independence skills. Elastic waist bands are much easier to manage independently than buttons, zippers or clasps. When breaking down self-help skills consider what type of seating helps foster as much independence as possible. Not everyone can sit on the floor to get dressed.
- Make sure all your child's belongings are labeled with their name. This makes it easier to find lost belongings. Highlight the first letter of your child's name so they can focus on one letter if they are still working on name recognition. Attach a picture of your child to their backpack if they are not able to recognize their name.
- Provide opportunities for your child to practice using their large and small muscles. From running, and climbing to drawing with crayons, markers, and pencils.
- If your child is still working on their toileting skills call the school to find out how they will approach this skill development. The school often uses a visual toilet strip to help the children follow the routine and increase their independence. Practice at home with a visual toilet strip.



- Complete a short version of an “All About Me Book” to let the teacher know what is important to your child until they get to know them. What do they need to participate to the best of their ability in the different activities throughout the day?
- Visit the school and take pictures of the different rooms your child will be using with their class. Looking at pictures and talking about what they might do in the gym or library can help reduce any anxiety your child might feel in a new environment. These pictures can also help a child remember what each room is called.
- Read stories about starting school and ask questions about what is happening in the pictures. The library has many choices available. If the book belongs to you, tape pictures of the school rooms on the pages to foster recognition and make it individualized for your own child.
- When choosing containers to send to school with your child be sure to choose containers that are easy to open and close. Snap top or twist lids may be easier for children. Self-help skills with containers are much easier to master when children feel success rather than frustration. Practice opening and closing a variety of containers at home to ensure your child is comfortable with these before going to school. Think about using one container with dividers if your child has difficulty with their motor skill development. It is easier for an adult to help the child access their lunch.
- Eat snack or lunch on the weekends using the containers that your child will be using in school.



- Have your child participate in packing snacks and lunch for the next day. Children are more likely to eat it if they like it!
- Ask the school about their daily schedule, rules around clothing and behavior, and expectations around arrival and dismissal times. Practice some of the routines at home. You will be prepared for September.
- Walk or drive to the school over the summer this will help your child become familiar with the route.
- If your child is taking the school bus in September ride the city bus over the summer or visit the school bus open house offered in the summer.
- Take your child to the school playground and reinforce the school rules about the equipment.
- As September gets closer mark the days off on a calendar.
- Call the school at the end of August and set up a time to visit the classroom before all the children arrive if some extra exploration time will help your child become familiar with their new environment.

Remember to allow time to adjust to this new transition in your and your child’s life.



Transitioning To School Programs

Tips for families about how to make the transition to school age smooth:

- ◆ Try to visit the program
- ◆ Meet the staff
- ◆ Transition book
- ◆ Visit the school
- ◆ Play on the playground
- ◆ Talk with your child about the program and expectations in the program
- ◆ Look for more information on the website about the program (parent handbook)
- ◆ Provide a consistent drop off and pick up routine
- ◆ Communicate concerns/needs with staff

Common Acronyms Used in Schools

TVDSB Thames Valley District School Board

LDCSB London District Catholic School Board

LST Learning Support Teacher (TVDSB)

SPST Student Program Support Teacher (LDCSB)

TOSA Teacher on Special Assignment (TVDSB)

ALT Affiliate Liaison Teacher (LDCSB)

EA Educational Assistant (TVDSB)

System EA Educational Assistant (LDCSB)

ECE Early Childhood Educator

IPRC Identification, Placement, and Review Committee

OSR Ontario School Record

Acronyms copied from TVDSB and LDCSB websites

Books About Going To School

The Night Before Kindergarten by Natasha Wing

Monsters Love School by Mike Austin

Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten by Joseph Slate

When I Miss You by Cornelia Maude Spelman

Maisy Goes to Preschool by Lucy Cousins

Bye-Bye Time by Elizabeth Verdick

Llama Llama Misses Mama by Anna Dewdney

Pete the Cat: Rocking in My School Shoes by James Dean

Wembley Worried by Kevin Henkes

A Kissing Hand by Audrey Penn



<http://www.merrymount.on.ca/>

The **All Kids Belong Bulletin** is published by **Merrymount Children's Centre** for child care programs, early learning programs and families throughout London/Middlesex & St Thomas/Elgin. Send comments, suggestions, or submissions to: **Lee-Anne Cross, Program Manager, All Kids Belong** Telephone: 434-8247 Fax: 434-6851 Email: lcross@merrymount.on.ca

This newsletter is published in the year 2018.

Articles printed in this newsletter may be reproduced with credit given to **All Kids Belong**