



NOVEMBER 2018

NEWSLETTER NO. 53

all kids belong

Inclusion Support Services

Message from the Program Manager

Welcome to the fall 2018 AKB Newsletter! This issue is all about Connecting with Children. We chose this topic because it applies to all children, all families, and all professionals who interact with children. Building relationships and interacting with children in meaningful ways helps to build a foundation for development. In the words of Dr. Jean Clinton (Clinical Professor, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences at McMaster, division of Child Psychiatry) “connection is the key,” and “relationships are the active ingredient in healthy development, especially brain development.” In our busy lives and busy classrooms, it isn’t always easy to find those opportunities to connect and interact, but even small moments can make a big difference. This newsletter will tell you more about the importance of building responsive relationships with children, and give you some ideas on how to do this.

Connecting and relationship building isn’t just important for children; as parents and professionals we also benefit from meeting with and supporting each other. All Kids Belong benefits greatly from connecting with our community by having representation on many community committees including the Licensed Child Care Network, Child and Youth Networks, Strive Advisory and Professional Learning committees, Inclusive Child Care Network, and the Ontario Network of Special Needs Resourcing Providers . We encourage professionals to connect with their community through organizations like Strive (<https://striveswo.ca/>) which offers a wide variety of opportunities to learn and network. Families can connect with each other by attending EarlyON Family Centres, (<http://familyinfo.ca>) or asking their AKB Resource Consultant or other professionals for additional resources to help in finding families who may share the same interests and challenges.

All Kids Belong also values our relationship with members of our Advisory committee who each bring a unique perspective to the table. We are always looking for parents to join our Advisory Committee, so if you are interested please give me a call!

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

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Creating a Welcoming Environment

The environment is the context in which learning takes place. The environment was described by Loris Malaguzzi as “the third teacher” and is valued for its’ power to organize, promote relationships and educate. It mirrors the ideas, values, attitudes, and cultures of those who use the space. As suggested by Karyn Callaghan, “the environment is a teacher”. From the aesthetics of the space, to the type of furnishings and type of materials available, to the organization of time, the environment can communicate a powerful message and contributes to shaping the actions that can be taken within it. (HDLH document)

Child care environments convey a message to the children. Take time to evaluate your classroom; does it convey the message you intend?

A caring, inviting, organized environment has a major impact on the children’s sense of belonging, comfort, safety and capacity to be productive. Environments affect feelings and feelings affect behavior: this influences how we interact. We as educators need to show children how to respect items and people in our shared environments. If things are presented to the children in a beautiful way, they have more respect for them and interact with them differently.

What you can do to promote a welcoming environment?

Provide spaces that invite children and families to engage in and contribute to learning experiences.

Provide cozy area with soft furnishings where children and adults can connect.

Provide a variety of child-related displays.

Be physically and emotionally available to the children and families.

Provide a space where parents can read with their child. Have you considered providing a “take a book, leave a book basket?”

Provide a variety of materials that represent different cultures and family environments.

Consider using sound absorbing materials such as carpets, drapery, wall furnishings etc.

Try to provide a variety of lighting such as natural, lamps, twinkle lights and flashlights.

Things to consider:

Is this a happy place to be?

Do I belong here?

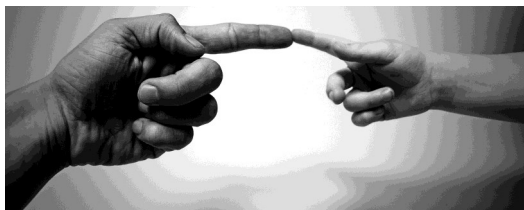
Is this a place I can trust and feel safe?

Are there places I can be by myself when I want or need to be?

Do I know what I can and cannot do?



Connection Counts



Attachment or positive connections refers to the emotional bond which develops between children and their parents or caregivers. Healthy positive attachments are critical for all humans regardless of age. Parents and caregivers can support their children's attachment needs and provide a secure base for children to explore and develop the skills they will need later in life.

Attachments vary from one person to another and children form many attachment relationships which contribute to their overall development.

You can make a conscious decision to show children that you notice them, are interested in them, and want to get to know them better. Authors Amy L. Dombro, Judy Jablon, and Charlotte Stetson (2011) have called such an intentional connection a "powerful interaction" because it nurtures relationships and supports learning. They describe the steps of powerful interactions as being present, connecting and extending learning.

When we take time to connect throughout the day even for short periods of time, it can have the following effect on a child's wellbeing.

	<u>When we connect...</u>	<u>When we don't connect...</u>
Emotional Development	<p>Children are better able to develop a positive sense of self and explore their world.</p> <p>Children can increase their self-confidence and believe "I can do it".</p>	<p>Children may have a lower self-esteem and rely on an adult for support more often.</p> <p>Children may have a harder time dealing with stress and adversity.</p>
Physical Development	<p>Children may have more energy and be more engaged.</p> <p>Children may have less physical symptoms of distress like sore tummy, headaches, etc.</p>	<p>Children may be more fatigued and complain of physical symptoms that come and go.</p> <p>Children sometimes have different relationships with food such as refusing to eat or overeating.</p>
Social Development	<p>Children are more engaged and willing to explore their environments.</p> <p>Children are able to find ways to help calm themselves down and try to solve their problems in a developmentally appropriate way.</p>	<p>Children often ignore adult's requests more than their typically developing peers.</p> <p>Children have difficulty displaying self-control and maintaining friendships.</p>

Strategies to Connect

It is important to be present and actively engaged when you are strengthening the connection with children.

Connecting with children should happen throughout the day. Here are some ideas of things to try.

- Show affection– give hugs, high five’s and gentle touches
- Engage with children in everyday activities like cooking.
- Be aware of your body language. Smile and make eye contact.
- Show children that they are important, by following their lead in play.
- Put your screens down and actively watch what children are doing.
- Offer and respect children’s choices to build trust.
- *Be aware of the distance between you and the children. Positive attachments are formed when parents and/or educators are in close proximity to where the children are playing.*

Another effective method for developing a positive view and strengthening your connection is to reframe a child’s behavior. Make it a strength, not a deficit (Goldman, 2005; Hallowell, 2012; Larrivee, 2006). A change of view point gives us an opportunity to build the relationship instead of thinking about conflicts.

Strength view	Deficit view
Persistent	Stubborn
Curious	Distractible
Creative	Impulsive
High energy	Hyperactive
A plea for help	Defiance
A request for connection	Attention seeking

From Challenging Behavior in Young Children- Barbara Kaiser & Judy Sklar Rasminsky

When you take those precious moments to connect with your child you will notice:

- * Children are more gentle and positive in their interactions.
- * Children may seek out positive interactions on their own.
- * They demonstrate positive emotions when exploring their environments.
- * They take more safe risks when exploring and learning.

In twenty years when a child reflects back on their life,
how would you like them to remember you?

Child Care Director's Perspective

Meetings! Swimming lessons! Dentist appointments! Doctor's appointments! Deadlines! Breakfast preparation, lunches packed, dinner preparation! Hockey practice! Wow! Our families live such busy lives! Western Day Care Centre is committed to positive open communication and interactions with all of our families. Children's parents and guardians know their little ones the very best and it is essential that we work together to ensure that our children feel a strong sense of well-being and belonging in our environment. However, these busy lives sometimes make it a challenge for our families to be as connected and involved in their child's day as much as they wish. Nothing will ever take the place of responsive, empathetic face-to-face conversations with our parents and guardians in the mornings at drop off time or in the afternoons at pick up times. However, we also recognize the challenge of always having enough time during those busy transitions from home to child care and child care to home. Therefore, we have implemented the HiMama Child Care Software and App to supplement and enhance those daily interactions. Families can email their educators directly. They receive confidential digital messages regarding their child's eating, toileting and sleeping patterns throughout the day. Educators can document children's learning in the form of learning stories and pictures and send them directly to families. Newsletters, announcements, holidays, special days – all can be sent directly to families and they can read them at their leisure in the comfort of their own homes. We have found many advantages tapping into the digital world in terms of communication for our families. It does not replace face-to-face authentic connections and relationships with our families - it simply enhances them. It is simply another tool that is available to help cultivate positive experiences, invite different perspectives and provide opportunities for families to be involved and participate in meaningful, respectful, and reciprocal ways.

Kimberly Mitchell, Director, Western Day Care Centre



If I Had My Child to Raise Over Again

If I had my child to raise all over again,
 I'd build self-esteem first, and the house later.
 I'd finger-paint more, and point the finger less.
 I would do less correcting and more connecting.
 I'd take my eyes off my watch, and watch with my eyes.
 I'd take more hikes and fly more kites.
 I'd stop playing serious, and seriously play.
 I would run through more fields and gaze at more stars.
 I'd do more hugging and less tugging.

Diane Loomans

Videos and Books

60-Second Strategy: TUMS at the Door <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=956br98qWbE>

Dr Jean Clinton - Connection is the key <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gVolmQzSITo>

Rita Pierson Every Kid Deserves A Champion https://www.ted.com/talks/rita_pierson_every_kid_needs_a_champion/discussion?utm_medium=t-451214

Four Hugs A Day Charlotte Diamond <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Il7JzSW7PJo>

Imp of Building Positive relationships: jeffery trawick https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nxnUSyoOp_o

How does learning happen at PLASP? With Belonging. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UoAoCl3uRwg>

Every Opportunity Video Clip <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VxyxywShewl&feature=youtu.be>

Duck, Duck, Goose by Tad Hills

My Friend Suhana by Shaila and Aanyah Abdullah

How Do Dinosaurs Play With Their Friends by Jane Yolen

How to be A Friend: A Book About Friendship by Laurie Krasny Brown

The Rainbow Fish by Marcus Pfister

Stick and Stone by Beth Ferry



TUMS at the Door

- **T**ouch them
- **U**se their name in a positive way
- **M**ake eye contact
- **S**mile



*See a child differently,
you see a different child.*

Dr. Stuart Shanker



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.

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