

Newsletter #3

January / February 2003

Calendar

January

16 ECS Registration for 2003-2004 Begins. Class lists will be filled starting February 3rd.

February

13, 14 Theme Day - Teddy Bear's Picnics in ECS – Send your child in their PJ's with their favourite teddy!

13, 14 Classes Open during Teacher's Convention - No Handi-bus for students

17 Alberta Family Day – No Classes

21 Wonder Years Workshop @ Hospitality Inn

22 Extended Family Workshop @ Hospitality Inn

25 Coffee Morning with Kimberly Eckert – “My Child's Ready for ECS, But Am I?”

March

7 Coffee Morning with Kimberly Eckert- “My Child's Ready for Preschool, But Am I?”

18 Coffee Morning with Jane MacKinnon – Reading Readiness

20, 21 Language Group Parent Interviews

22 – 30 Spring Break – No Classes

31 Classes Resume

April

18 Good Friday – No Classes

Feature Article

'Keep the Pace': Using Finger Pacing to Help Your Child Talk More

Many of our parents are successfully using **finger cuing** to prompt their children to “use words”. *Finger cuing* is a visual cue that alerts the child to watch the movement of the speaker's lips and tongue, and prompts the child to talk. The speaker gently taps her own lips with her index finger as she models sounds or

words for the child to imitate. Once you hear your little one saying a lot of words on their own, spontaneously labeling familiar toys or requesting a snack, it is time to introduce a new strategy that will help your child learn to sequence words into phrases.

It is generally recognized by speech-language therapists that once a child is using about 50 single words, he is ready to start practicing phrases. Parents and teachers can then add '**finger pacing**' to their toolbox of speech & language stimulation strategies. *Finger pacing* is a visual cue to use words, speak slowly (i.e., 'pace yourself') and sequence words or sounds together.

To finger pace, the speaker holds up one finger per word as she slowly models the sequence of words to be spoken. Start by cueing the child with, "Thumbs up", and wait for him to imitate that action. The child is encouraged to imitate each word and the associated finger movement. The finger going up is a visual cue that signals your child to 'use more words'. Start using finger pacing with 2-word phrases, then move up to 3-word, then 4- to 5-word, and so on as your child's sequencing skills improve. Once the child becomes familiar with a phrase, parents and teachers may only need to prompt with the visual cue of "thumbs up" and the child will spontaneously say the words in order on his own, e.g., 'more juice please'.

Finger pacing is most effective if a child learns to finger pace himself. The visual and movement feedback works as a natural and portable visual tool to *self-cue* word production. Finger pacing greatly assists children in moving from imitating sounds or words to more spontaneous word and phrase production. Rest assured, finger pacing fades away naturally as the child gains confidence in sequencing his words together. However, when working on new goals (e.g., wh-questions; prepositions) the strategy of finger pacing is always on hand to help your child learn new skills.

Finger pacing is a handy tool that can be used at all ages to help children:

- listen and understand the expectation to respond with words
- use real words instead of jargon (i.e., speech that has the intonation of a phrase, but no real words are used).
- sequence sounds into words or syllables (e.g., use one finger per syllable, 'bu-tter-fly)
- practice question forms (i.e., yes/no, 'wh'-questions)
- slow down and repeat when not understood
- sequence ideas and tell a story
- stay on topic / repeat key points

To **start** finger pacing with your child, practice modeling familiar short phrases using one finger per word (e.g., 'more cookie'). Just like you do now with finger cuing, remind your child to "use your words". It is amazing to see how quickly

children can move from 1-word utterances to 2-3-word phrases with a visual prompt. Let your fingers cue the talking and listen to the words that follow!

Adapted from: Effective Teaching Strategies for Successful Inclusion: A Resource Guide for Educators and Parents. Submitted by Lorraine Sykes, Speech-Language Pathologist

Classroom News

News from the ECS Classroom

What a great start to our Winter/Bear Theme! The children came back from Christmas Break healthy, well rested, and eager to learn. Parents will be surprised to see how fast the children have caught on to our new circle songs and activities and how they are anticipating what comes next. We are focusing on learning each others names and the concept of “at home” and “at school”. The opening circle is incorporating high knee walking and following actions to new songs.

Dressing skills and clothing names are being practiced at the dress up center and during circle activities. Weather permitting; the water table will be filled with snow for building snowmen. Mittens on the clothes line will be available to keep hands *warm* from the *cold* snow. *At home, make sure to get outside and play! Use your “winter words” while dressing and undressing. Put on those mittens and feel the “cold snow”.*

At center time, the small water table equipped with eye droppers and turkey basters is a favourite with all the class who are building up hand strength, their pincer grip and large grasp while they play in the water. The crafts are focusing on a wide variety of skills: tearing, cutting, scrunching, stuffing, placing, grasping, and exploring lots of textures.

Something new this year: we are having a theme day on February 13 and 14th. The Teddy Bear’s Picnics will be during regular class time. Send your child dressed in pajamas and send their favourite teddy bear (please label). We are also having a Valentine exchange on this day, so send cards along if you’d like.

The 3 year old class is enjoying Music Therapy on Monday mornings. Pamela is a professional music therapist from *JB Music Therapy* who has experience working with young children. Music Therapy is the use of music in a specialized and practical way to affect change in people and enhance their quality of life. Pamela has designed a program that is suited to our class and consists of singing, instrument playing, rhythmic movement and listening. The program works to develop skills in:

- attention span
- following directions
- group participation

- building communication
- improving motor tone
- inspiring creative exploration

The children are having a great time listening to and singing with Pamela. Please help us welcome her to our classroom.

Letter to Parents from Barb Tien

January 23, 2003

To: Parents of Children in Early Learning
(Learning Through Play and Language Group)

From: Barbara Tien
Executive Director
The PREP Program

PREP is pleased to announce that Calgary Rocky View Child and Family Services has approved an application for funds for counseling services for parents of children 12 months to 3 years.

Counseling services will be provided by the **Eckert Centre for Wellness**. Appointments with *Kimberly Eckert or Susan Rochow* can be booked at their offices (conveniently located on 14St NW, at PREP, or if there are transportation issues – in your own home. Please be assured that sessions are confidential and information will not be shared with PREP without your prior consent.

Private sessions can include any or all of the following depending on what you feel your family would benefit from talking about:

Individual Needs

Impact of DS
Language Development
Behaviour – tantrums
Sleep/Eating Concerns
Health Issues

Family Needs

Acceptance – emotions, feelings
Sibling Relationships
Dealing with Family Members
Stress on the family unit
Proactive problem solving

The funding is a **one time** grant, so PREP staff will be encouraging families to utilize the service before the end of March at which the funding expires.

I would be pleased to answer any of your questions and assist your family in accessing these valuable services. Please drop into my office or call 282-5011-extension 103.

News from Learning Through Play

Welcome to Jakob, Daniel, MacKenzie, Ethan, Vincenzo and Hee Won. It is wonderful to have so many new and eager children (and parents) join our group.

It is great to see little faces beaming and hands clapping as the familiar routine of circle time begin for a new session. The children are excited to have mom or dad massage their shoulders, arms, legs and feet in preparation for the circle time activities. What fun it is imitating sounds and gestures and 'shaking' the bells!

New toys are welcomed by the children, who love to press buttons on the cause and effect toys and kick their feet in the ball tub. Sitting on the trampoline and asking for 'more' bounce is a wonderful way to encourage communication through sign and vocalization.

We are delighted to have Cindy Shyry Hanik join us as the new speech therapist. Barb will still drop in occasionally to say "hi" and stay for a visit. We are pleased to have a new volunteer join us, Dana Henrickson. She is hoping to attend Mount Royal College next fall and pursue a career in working with children with special needs.

Dates to Remember

Tuesday February 25 – Danette Rowley (OT)

Tuesday March 11 - Danette Rowley

Tuesday March 18 – Kimberly Eckert (Psychologist) and Last class before Spring Break

Tuesday April 1 - LTP classes resume

News from Language Group

With a New Year beginning, Language Group is gearing up for many new and exciting changes. First, a big welcome back to all of our returning students and their parents and welcome to our new student Joshua, who graduated from Learning Through Play. Joshua will join the Friday morning Language group. After a one year maternity leave, we welcome back Cindy Shyry Hanik. Cindy will be the speech therapist for the Thursday morning group.

With the snow and cold weather finally upon us, our theme for January/ February will be "Winter." At circle time we will learn to turn take and request a turn as we 'stack the blocks'. The children will also give their shoulders and arms a good work out lifting the weighted blocks. We will continue to work on body parts as the children put the snowflake on their head, arm etc. At centers, the children are able to burn off their extra energy as they practice jumping on the trampoline, and climb up and down the large slide. Poking and rolling play dough, painting with ivory snow and digging in the rice table will certainly wake up the senses.

The children will be introduced to 'snack' as part of their classroom routine. The purpose of this new addition is to prepare them for ECS/preschool. It will also be an opportunity for the OT to assess and implement new strategies:

- 1) drinking with a straw
- 2) using utensils i.e. spoon for refining pincer grasp
- 3) allowing the children to try a variety of textures i.e. soft, crunchy, and chewy.

As February nears we will move into Love and Valentine's. Remember to wear something RED for our Valentine's Day party.

If you are considering registering your child with PREP'S ECS, please submit your registration form as soon as possible. This will help to ensure the adequate number of classroom staff and provide educational assistants for those considering preschool placements. We will be starting a class lists as of February 3, 2003.

Dates to Remember: Thursday Feb. 6, Friday Feb. 7 – Kimberly Eckert
 Thursday Feb 13, Friday Feb. 14 – Valentine's Party
 Thursday Feb. 20, Friday Feb. 21 - Danette Rowley
 Thursday Feb. 27, Friday Feb. 28 – Kimberly Eckert
 Thursday Mar. 6, Friday Mar. 7 - Danette Rowley
 Thursday Mar. 13, Friday Mar.14 – Last LG class
 Thursday Mar. 20, Friday Mar. 21 – Parent Interviews

Thank you's

Stampede Queen's Alumni

The staff and families of PREP are most grateful to the **Stampede Queen's Alumni** for choosing the Early Learning Program as a beneficiary of the Giddy-Up Gala.

Our appreciation also goes to **Barb Colborne** and **Nancy Bradich** for organizing the silent auction items from the PREP families.

The PREP Program would like to thank the following for their generous donations:

The Bradich Family	Fitters International (Andrea Faas)
Jane MacKinnon	Flying Cloud Company (Robin Herbert)
The Coulis Family	Bar C Resort
The Gulley Family	Shillelagh's Pub
The Kiazzyk Family	Crabapple Cottage
The PREP Staff	Eveline Charles
Olga Sutherland	Cannery Row
SuModa Design	Walden Music Dist.
Fitness Northwest	Penny Tam
Ginny Price	The Tien Family
Lyda Helme	Lissa Bourgeault
Annamarie Zobatar	Nicole Guillemaud
Jane MacKinnon	Claire Clelland
Jocelyn Moore	Tammy Brennan

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank the following staff and parents who volunteered at the Gala:

Annamarie Zobatar, Jennifer Brand, Lyda Helme, Carolyn Weaver, Aziz Khalil and son, Jane McKinnon, Barb Colborne, Lorraine Sykes, Bonnie Moschopedis, Annette Gillon, Tammy Brennan, Dianne Woodward, Barb Tien.

Thanks to the PREP 4 teens who volunteered to sell balloons for the raffle. Great Job!

We would also like to thank the many people who generously donated items anonymously towards the gift baskets. Please accept our apologies if we have missed anyone.

Surprise Donation

Thank you to the Insharla Zuannas # 10 for their generous donation of \$750.00. Six members of the group, a branch of the Rebeccah Oddfellows, visited the ECS class on December 20th for a snack and a visit from Santa. Their donation will be used for ECS and Early Learning materials.

ECS Information Night

On Thursday January 16th, about 20 families came out to find out about PUF (Program Unit Funding) Grants and what they can expect during the three consecutive years their child receives a PUF grant. Barb Tien, Executive Director, and the ECS, Early Learning and Outreach Teams were available to answer questions to assist parents with important future planning. Thank you to Annette Holash and Tara August for sharing their experiences of advocating for their children.

Remember to read through your information package carefully and feel free to contact any PREP staff with questions and concerns you have so that we can enable you to make an informed decision about your child's future education.

Registration forms for ECS are available from Kim or Annamarie. ECS classes will be filled starting Feb. 1st. PREP 3 registration forms for children entering into their third year of their PUF Grant (Community ECS) will be available in May.

Announcements

Coffee Mornings

Kimberly Eckert, Chartered Psychologist will be joining us for two coffee mornings. On Tuesday February 25th from 10:00 – 11:30 she will help parents explore their feelings about “My Child’s Ready for ECS, But Am I?” On Friday March 7th from 10:00 – 11:30 the topic will be, “My Child’s Ready for Preschool, But Am I?” Sign up sheets are posted in the downstairs waiting room. All parents are welcome to attend.

Family Workshops

Ups and Downs are sponsoring two workshops, free of charge.

Extended Family Workshop for grandparents, aunts, uncles, caregivers and friends who want to learn more about Down syndrome.

Friday, February 21, 2003
Best Western Hospitality Inn
7:00- 10:00 pm

Wonder Years Workshop for parents of children under three. Topics for discussion will include: medical issues, genetics, access to programs and services, and stress management.

Saturday, February 22, 2003
Best Western Hospitality Inn
9:00am – 4:00 pm

RSVP: Kathy at 289-4394 or info@upsdowns.org by Feb.18, 2003

Scissor Sales

“Learning to Cut Scissors” as recommended by Danette Rowley, OT are available for purchase from Kim or Danette at the price of \$6.00.

Check Out the PREP Resource Library

The PREP resource library, located in the ECS office, is open to parents to browse through and take out a book or two for a week or two. It is important for parents to be aware of developmental milestones in order to confidently predict the “next step” for their child. The following books are parent friendly and will help you in setting realistic expectations in all areas of child development.

Kid’s Are Worth It

(1994) By Barbara Coloroso. One of the most difficult challenges in parenting is discipline. On every page this book offers solid, practical advice for parents of children from toddlers to teenagers, that shows how to utilize the very stuff of family life – chores, mealtime, bedtime, allowances, and more - to create a home environment in which your kids can develop their own sense of inner discipline.

Infant and Toddler Experiences

(1999) By Fran Hast and Ann Hollyfield. The authors have assembled a guide to making the most of care giving interactions with children. The book offers a wide range of activities that focus on curiosity, connection and coordination. Each experience offers children the chance to choose their own approaches to tasks that promote their development.

Songs to Enjoy Practicing at Home

Hello Everybody

Hello everybody, I see you
I see you, I see you
Hello everybody, I see you,

Songs to Enjoy Practicing at Home
--

I'm a Little Snowman

I'm a little snowman, short and fat.
Here are my mittens, here is my hat.
When the sun comes out, I melt away.
See you on a winter's day!

Hello, Hello, Hello

Hello, hello, hello, hi to (child's name)
Hello, hello, hello, hi to (child's name)
We're so glad you came today,
We will sing and laugh and play.
Say hello, hello, hello, hi to (child's name)

Five in the Bed

There were five in the bed and the little one said, "Roll over, roll over"
They all rolled over and one fell out,
(Ouch! Bumped my head!)
There were four in the bed
There were three in the bed....
There were two in the bed
There was one in the bed and the little one said, "Roll over, roll over"
He rolled over and he fell out.
None in the bed and the mommy said, "Go back to bed!"

Teddy Bear

Teddy bear, teddy bear, turn around.
Teddy bear, teddy bear, touch the ground.
Teddy bear, teddy bear, reach up high,
Teddy bear, teddy bear, wave good-bye!