



Government
of Canada

Gouvernement
du Canada

Exemplary Practices

2014



Prime Minister's Awards
for Excellence in Early
Childhood Education

Canada

This publication is also available online in HTML at www.pma.gc.ca.

To obtain a copy of this publication or an alternate format (Braille, large print, etc.), please contact:

Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Early Childhood Education
Industry Canada
Jean Edmonds Tower North
300 Slater Street, 20th Floor
Ottawa, ON Canada
K1A 0C8
Telephone: 613-991-4255
Fax: 613-998-0943
Email: pmaece-pmaepe@ic.gc.ca

Permission to Reproduce

Except as otherwise specifically noted, the information in this publication may be reproduced, in part or in whole and by any means, without charge or further permission from Industry Canada, provided that due diligence is exercised in ensuring the accuracy of the information reproduced; that Industry Canada is identified as the source institution; and that the reproduction is not represented as an official version of the information reproduced, nor as having been made in affiliation with, or with the endorsement of, Industry Canada.

For permission to reproduce the information in this publication for commercial purposes, please contact the:

Web Services Centre
Industry Canada
C.D. Howe Building
235 Queen Street
Ottawa, ON Canada
K1A 0H5

Telephone (toll-free in Canada): 1-800-328-6189
Telephone (Ottawa): 613-954-5031
Fax: 613-954-2340
TTY (for hearing-impaired): 1-866-694-8389
Business hours: 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (Eastern Time)

Email: info@ic.gc.ca

© Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, represented by the Minister of Industry, 2015.
Cat. No. Iu1-3/2014E-PDF
1929-7866

Aussi offert en français sous le titre *Prix du Premier ministre pour l'excellence en éducation de la petite enfance 2014 – Pratiques exemplaires 2014*.

Information, views or comments offered in this publication have been submitted by the 2014 Prime Minister's Award recipients and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Prime Minister, Minister of Industry or the federal government departments involved in this program. Provision of links from this publication to sites located outside of the Prime Minister's Awards program domain does not imply endorsement or credibility of the service, information, or product offered through the linked sites.

Table of Contents

Ruby Anne Chartrand.....5

Angela Daniels-Drummond.....6

Marina Giovinazzo.....7

Julie Kamiya.....7

Cristina Primerano.....7

Mona Khan.....8

Arnold Laplante9

Resources.....10

Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Early Childhood Education

2014 Exemplary Practices

One of the most enjoyable parts of the four days national Prime Minister's Award (PMA) recipients spend in Ottawa is **Teachers' Talk**. The sharing that takes place during this best practices session is motivating and memorable for both the participants and those in the audience privileged to hear these extraordinary educators speak first hand. Sometimes funny, often moving, and always inspirational, the unique ideas and innovative solutions these top teachers have found to common challenges will be of service to anyone interested in excellence in education and early childhood education. Teachers' Talk Moderator Dr. Joel Westheimer opened the event by saying,

"Some people think of teaching as a way of pouring information into children who are empty vessels. Paulo Freire talks about this as the "banking method" of education, where the teacher deposits information into the child and then makes a withdrawal during examinations... I think that education, and teaching in particular, is about creating a space in the classroom where children's imagination and abilities can flourish. And that's hard work on the part of teachers. When I read through the projects that we will be celebrating today, and the work that you're all doing, it really reminded me that the role of the teacher is a challenging and an ambitious one."

Dr. Westheimer is the University Research Chair in Democracy and Education at the University of Ottawa and an Education Columnist for CBC Radio.

Topics for discussion at Teachers' Talk are drawn from recipient's nomination packages and are based on what they feel are their best and most transferable teaching practices. Reflecting the growing trend in Canada toward integration, recipients of both the PMA for Teaching Excellence and for Excellence in Early Childhood Education take part in the same forum. Topics for 2014 were: "Fostering the Wonder of a Child" – Inspiring Learning Through Emergent Curriculum; « Une démarche bienveillante » – Building Foundations for Lifelong Learning; "No Child Left Behind" – Ensuring Success for All Students; "Learning in Common" – Collaboration to Support Student Achievement; "If you Build it..." – Using STEM to Inspire and Engage; and finally, "Child-Lived Experience" – Challenging Students in Learning for Life. Summaries of these [best practices](#), as well as links for the [resources](#) these educators use regularly in their classrooms and childcare centres can be found in this publication.

The [Prime Minister's Awards for Teaching Excellence](#) honour outstanding and innovative elementary and secondary school teachers in all disciplines who instill in their students a love of learning and who utilize information and communications technologies to better equip them with the knowledge and skills needed to excel in a 21st century society and economy. The [Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Early Childhood Education](#) honour exceptional ECEs who excel at fostering the early development and socialization of the children in their care, and at helping build the foundation young children need to make the best possible start in life. Each recipient's [biography](#) highlights the teaching philosophies and best practices of some of Canada's most inspirational educators.

The Prime Minister's Awards for Teaching Excellence and Excellence in Early Childhood Education are administered by Industry Canada in partnership with Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, Employment and Social Development Canada, Health Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada, and with the generous support of the RBC Foundation. For information about this program, its partners and recipients, please [contact the program office](#).

Building Foundations for Lifelong Learning

I am a strong believer in the lasting benefits of early learning programs. The learning experiences in these first years can influence the rest of a child's life. I choose to be an early childhood educator to be part of such a wonderful and exciting stage of development. I try my very best to make each child that attends the Aboriginal Head Start Program feel special by providing them with plenty of affection, giving them quality one-on-one time, and getting to know their families personally. Children need to feel secure in their environments and with their caregivers before any learning can take place. Building relationships and creating supportive environments provides children with the love, nurturance and security they need to begin growing socially and emotionally.



Ruby Anne Chartrand
Children of the Future Aboriginal Head Start Program

Swan River, Manitoba



In order to build positive relationships with children, it is essential to gain a good understanding of their preferences, interests, background, and cul-

ture. As a Metis woman myself, I feel a responsibility to be a positive role model to the children in my care and to make them feel proud of their Aboriginal heritage. I teach them basic Ojibway and Saulteaux language and incorporate words in a variety of fun games we play and songs we sing. I introduce the children to traditional Aboriginal customs such as jigging, drumming, jingle dancing, and shawl dancing. A play-based curriculum like this helps develop children's self-confidence, imagination and social skills. I also try to invite elders from the community to en-

tertain children with fascinating stories about their past. By exposing my children to different aspects of their culture, they begin to gain a better understanding of where they come from and start to feel a stronger sense of self-identity.

Parent involvement is also very important to a child's development and early learning. Without parent support, a child is less likely to be successful and engaged in school. I make sure to communicate with my children's parents on a daily basis to build effective relationships and to keep them informed about what their children are learning and how they are progressing. I involve parents and families as much as possible by inviting them to different activities throughout the year. The [Aboriginal Head Start Program](#) holds an annual Bike-a-thon, Barbecue, and family camping retreats to provide opportunities for families to spend quality time together and for parents to socialize with one another.

To be an early childhood educator, it is important to be patient, caring, understanding and have a love for children. We must strive to build positive relationships with our children and their parents in order to make a difference in a child's lifelong learning and to build a strong foundation for their future educational achievement.

Team Work Makes the Dream Work

Whether you are a seasoned worker or someone new to the field of Early Childhood Education; whether you have walked through the doors of your centre for the very first time or have been there twenty years, we all have dreams, goals and aspirations. We have big hopes that everything we desire for each individual child will one day come to fruition.

I have the pleasure and privilege of working with children with special needs. My work consists of integrating children into the daycare setting and designing plans and routines that complement their level of development. I encourage parents to fully understand and take advantage of all the benefits of being in an inclusive early learning environment. Over the years, I have learned that each child is so very unique. Their parents, their community, and their culture all help define who they are. I have learned to take each stage of their development one beautiful step at a time. I have learned that building relationships is the key to any new and successful beginning.

Being an Inclusion Coordinator, I understand that children with special needs and their parents are faced with many challenges. It is my goal to assist them with these challenges and modify learning programs, classrooms, toys, and play environments to make each learning experience a successful one. It is very important to understand that each child is so very unique and should be treated as such. My daily work demonstrates that we are far from round pegs but that we can be any shape or size. We may never fit perfectly in the eyes of many but we fit perfectly in the eyes of those who love us and care.



I absolutely love the word inclusion. I love living it and making it work for my children each and every day. This one word, put in practice, has changed the lives of so many children. The children and parents who attend Dartmouth Day Care centre have the assurance of knowing we are in a fully inclusive environment. The unique needs of their child will be assessed and a wonderfully designed learning program will be tailored for them.

At the end of the day when all adjustments have been made, when routine-based plans are polished full of wonderful and unique goals, and when classrooms and teachers have been prepped, it all boils down to the relationships that we build. How can I get a child and their parents to trust me so we can move forward with all the hard work that needs to be done?

This is when team work is crucial. The staff I work with, thankfully, has the same mindset as I do. We work very closely every day to reach goals for our children. They also see the value in teamwork and it shows in their commitment daily. I have the pleasure of working with many other professionals who visit the children at our centre. They present fresh ideas that are geared to each individual child. I am thankful for every collaborative and professional experience.

I believe the future of daycare is bright and hopeful. I believe that, as Early Childhood Educators, we need to stay committed to our children, our parents, and our communities. We need to remain diligent in our never-ending quest to demonstrate that we are competent Early Childhood Educators who make a difference every day in the lives of children and play an essential role in society.



Angela Daniels-Drummond

Dartmouth Day Care Centre
Dartmouth, Nova Scotia

Type of setting:

Childcare centre for children ages
12 months to 5 years old

Fostering the Wonder of a Child; Inspiring Learning through Emergent Curriculum

We believe in learning as a life-long process that happens through interactions with one another, materials and the environment. Author and education activist Ken Robinson said, "We need to recognize that most great learning happens in groups. The collaboration is the stuff of growth." Our learning community is comprised of children, families and teachers. With relationships at the core, our philosophy is based on acknowledging the questions of our community and using these questions and curiosities to develop an emergent inquiry based curriculum. Emergent—it is flexible, and emerges within the interests of the children and the classroom community. Inquiry-based—we listen and watch closely to what the children are saying, how they are using materials and what concepts they are exploring. We believe curriculum is a living process that is organic and always changing and growing.

The cycle of inquiry is a reflective tool that we use to facilitate the planning process. It can begin with a provocation and then we observe; actively listening to children during their exploration, even when they are silent. We are inspired by the pedagogy of listening from Reggio Emilia which asks us to listen to what the children are doing, why they are doing it, and why is it important to them. We reflect. We look for patterns and connections, and ask questions as the children represent their ideas and build theories to make their own meaning. In order to make the learning and thinking of our community visible, we document our reflections. Lastly, we provoke. Based on our reflections we create provocations that allow the children to further explore their theories, leading us to co-construct meaning as a group. We encourage collaborative learning as it helps the children to identify gaps in their theories, create new knowledge and build a shared understanding.



Marina Giovinazzo, Julie Kamiya and Cristina Primerano

Brentwood Nursery School Society
Burnaby, British Columbia

Type of Setting:

Preschool for children ages 3 and 4 years old



Using the cycle of inquiry in our curriculum planning, we value:

- Listening to the children's theories and questions to guide the process of learning;
- The importance of all of our classes coming together to collaborate in thinking and to also inspire one another;
- The necessity of providing children with materials to test out their theories;
- The richness and excitement of being in our neighborhood as an inspiration for learning; and
- Creating a learning environment where it is essential to think critically and intentionally, and to challenge one another.

Some people may say that a comfort zone is a beautiful place, but the truth is nothing will ever grow there. We believe the cycle of inquiry is mysterious and exciting due to a feeling of unpreparedness, of unpredictability, and for the mystery of the unknown. Like any adventure, it involves risk—a risk of not knowing what is to come. But this way of thinking allows us to discover rich places, rich questions, and rich ideas with the children. As David Jardine says, "We have to risk being transformed, risk changing, risk learning more than we might have originally anticipated or hoped or desired."

Building Foundations for Lifelong Learning

The first six years of life are truly miracle years. Development through these critical years sets the stage for the rest of a child's life. This simple but profound truth has inspired my education, research and work in the field of early childhood development.

Dr. Maria Montessori has said that, during these miracle years, children have a remarkable and innate ability to learn and absorb the world around them. As educators we can cultivate this ability and help each child build a foundation for lifelong learning. I have discovered that this is best done with a harmonized approach of following the child, sustaining their natural love of learning and empowering them as leaders and advocates. This approach has enabled me to shape my programs into a model early learning and care institute and a buzzing hub for families in the community.

I encourage my team of educators to observe and follow each child to the place they show us they need to be for their optimum development. The objective of my follow the child principle is to listen and observe what is individually appropriate, discover what is culturally important and then help each child meet challenging, yet achievable learning goals.



Mona Khan

Little Scholars Montessori Academy
Ottawa, Ontario

Type of Setting:

Licensed childcare centre for children
ages 18 months to 6 years old



In order to sustain the child's natural love of learning, the environment, the educator and experiences must work together to inspire freedom and independence. In our programs, children are encouraged to seek out activities that spark their own interest. We enable children to control their own choices, movements, and activities; the educator gradually steps back from the child's active learning as children grow and become increasingly capable of managing their own activities. As children arrive at a stage of self-directed autonomy, the educator and child partner with each other so that children can learn the skills that they will eventually handle on their own. Learning to recognize and follow their own interests from an early age allows children to retain the curiosity, creativity, and innate love of learning with which they were born.

Dr. Montessori put it well when she said "free the child's potential and you will transform him into the world." Each child has unique potentials. Empowering them as leaders and advocates allows them to develop those fundamental foundations that form the basis of personal fulfillment and social responsibility. In our classrooms, students participate as members of a real, functioning community. They partner with The Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) and The Red Cross to raise funds for international disaster relief, join hands to clean up their neighbourhood on Earth Day and resolve conflicts using the class peace table—learning from an early age that they can make a difference in their world!

Children are our future and, as early childhood educators, we are privileged with an opportunity to shape the future. By following their interests, nurturing their innate abilities, and empowering them with responsibility, we can inspire children to become lifelong learners—the best possible preparation for meeting the challenges of a constantly changing world.

A Watchful Approach

I strive to take a watchful approach in my work with children aged four and five. Throughout my 34 years of experience at the daycare, I have drawn inspiration from my colleagues and artists and based my practices on data from recognized educators and psychologists.

My approach with the children essentially relies on respect for each child's personal development. I make sure that I am particularly attentive the first time I meet parents and their child so that they feel expected and welcome. For me, it is very important to greet the parents and put myself in their shoes as people entrusting their child to an adult who is essentially a stranger. When they are reassured, parents are much more receptive to prompting their child to trust me and create new ties that will lead to new experiences. This way, frank and open relationships are created over time.

Also, working together toward a child's development requires acknowledgement on all sides of the specific roles played by each person, roles that must complement one another. This joint endeavour is realized through the watchful communication I establish with the children and their parents. My daily encouragement and positive comments regarding the children's "exploits" help bolster parents in the role they play. These moments are meant to be a time of sharing with parents, where our mutual observations work to broaden and enhance how we see each child.



Arnold Laplante

Centre de la petite enfance

La Goélette enchantée

Baie-Saint-Paul, Quebec

Type of setting:

Daycare centre for children 4 and 5 years old



With the children, I create a relationship that will help them see me as a partner and make them more inclined to work with me and participate fully in the experience. This bond of trust forms the basis of the basic skills and knowledge they acquire through play. Because symbolic play is prevalent among children at that age, I plan my work with them accordingly and give them free rein with their imagination. Slowly but surely, the children develop the way they create, invent, and formulate their play. I also fuel the children's imagination by telling stories and playing all kinds of wacky characters. It is a wondrous thing to open yourself up to the children's delight. Attentive to the children's games and stories, I observe, I ask questions and they ask me questions. I give them "keys" to help them make connections, find solutions, and feel ever more capable.

Thanks to my watchful attitude, the children take risks, engage in new games with their peers, and know that no matter what, I will watch over them. In short, being watchful is important to sow pride and hope, hope for a happy life and being a better person.

Resources

Online Tools/Communities

BrainyQuote - <http://www.brainyquote.com>

Damien Kee – Technology in Education - <http://www.damienkee.com/home/2011/8/20/domabot-classroom-robot-design.html>

FIRST Lego League - <http://www.firstlegoleague.org>

FIRST Tech challenge - <http://www.usfirst.org/roboticsprograms/ftc>

Ground Breakers - <http://lovesmithers.com/businesses/groundbreakers-collective>

Lego Mindstorm Robotics - <http://www.lego.com/en-us/mindstorms/?domainredir=mindstorms.lego.com>

Q is for Question - <http://qisforquestion.com>

Skype - <http://www.skype.com/en/>

Team 2056 - <http://2056.ca>

TED - <http://www.ted.com>

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award - <http://www.dukeofed.org/home>

The Learning Coats Project - <http://learningcoats.com>

The Teaching Coats Project - <http://teachingcoats.com>

Twitter - <http://twitter.com>

VEX - <http://www.vexrobotics.com/vex/competition/>

VEX IQ - <http://www.vexrobotics.com/vexiq/>

YouTube - <http://www.youtube.com>

Organizations

Centre for Child Honouring - <http://childhonouring.com>

Center for Courage & Renewal - <http://www.couragerenewal.org>

Marine Advanced Technology Education - <http://www.marinetech.org>

Ministère de la Famille du Québec - <http://www.mfa.gouv.qc.ca/fr/Pages/index.aspx> (French only)

Physical and Health Education Canada - <http://www.phecanada.ca/programs/physical-literacy/what-physical-literacy>

Skills Canada - <http://skillscompetencescanada.com/en/>