

OCHAP's Special Initiatives

SPEECH AND LANGUAGE PROGRAM

Background

OCHAP's speech-language services started fifteen years ago, when the Headstart Association received financial support from the then Ministry of Community Family Social Services for Speech-Language Services for the Ottawa region.

Program Goals

Through a purchase-of-service agreement with the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, Headstart programs provide families with an opportunity to have their children assessed for speech and language problems. The assessments are done on-site at the schools, increasing access to much needed services.

Headstart is expanding its Speech and Language program to Francophone Headstart families. In addition, Headstart is piloting a direct therapy program for Speech and Language development at the Children's Aid Society Nursery School in conjunction with First Words.

OCHAP's Speech and Language Program:

- i** Improves the transfer of information between Headstart preschools and First Words clinicians. This helps to support families when they have questions about service, and to support teachers in facilitating communication goals in the preschool.
- i** Supports families that face barriers to service by informing them what extra help they can receive. This includes the pilot therapy project First Words ran at the Children's Aid Society Headstart Nursery School.
- i** Has an adaptable schedule for service (i.e. more days in the fall and less in the summer). Children were seen in a timely manner and flexibility in scheduling helped accomplish this task.
- i** Offers educational opportunities to OCHAP staff with respect to communication. Several topics have been developed into workshops and are ready to present.

Accomplishments-To-Date

Several nursery schools have invited parents to attend sessions to “meet the SLP”. This has been a positive experience in fostering relationships with parents and sharing information. This opportunity may be also be useful in other preschools.

Case conferences or mini-workshops developed on a site by site basis are in the works. These provide relevant information about specific children and allow a formal time for sharing of observations.

Across the eleven Headstart preschools, the following numbers of children were seen between September 2001 and September 2002.

- , 98 children were assessed (includes screenings and full assessments)
- , 126 referrals were made to First Words
- , 211 referrals were made to Child Development Service
- , 44 children were assessed before September 2001 and are still receiving service

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French Therapy Pilot Project

Using funds from OCHAP’S language program, special Francophone Speech and Language services were purchased from Paulina Finak from Aim 2 Talk. Ms. Finak provided speech services to our centers who needed French services. She worked between CAS Nursery School, Esther By Child Care Centre and Corner Stone Day Care from February to June.

The Francophone services were provided from February to June 2002. Eleven out of fourteen children were identified as having speech and/or language delays. These children were then referred to agencies. Weekly goals were posted and practised for each child in his/her daycare or nursery school setting, and children made slow but steady progress.

Obviously there is a need for these services, and the children benefited from them. OCHAP will continue to offer and seek additional funding to provide assessments and speech-language therapy to Headstart francophone children.

BOOK BAG PROGRAM

Background Information

Early or emergent literacy refers to the set of skills children use to learn to read, write and communicate. Early literacy begins prenatally and combines a child's ability to speak, to listen and to experience, with their ability to understand, to create and to talk about ideas, events and experiences in their world. Early literacy skills evolve in relation to a child's interaction with their family and community environment. (Early Literacy Specialist Fact Sheet Oct. 2002 Parent Resource Centre Host Agency, Ontario Early Years Initiative.

The child care programs of the Ottawa Carleton Headstart Association for Preschool (OCHAP) although very unique, all have a common purpose -- to help children reach their full potential by offering enriched environments. These environments promote early childhood development and early literacy. OCHAP's Book Bag Program endeavours to promote literacy in the home by providing parents, the first and primary teachers in a child's life, with quality reading materials.

Program's Development

The Book Bag Program of the Ottawa Carleton Headstart Association for Preschools was made possible by the generous funding provided by the Poverty Initiatives Fund. In January 2002, a Book Bag Committee was formed with representatives from Headstart preschools and the Child Care Services Branch of the City of Ottawa. Since that time, partnerships were developed with the Early Years Specialists and the Ottawa Public Library. To date, 400 books have been purchased and the framework for the OCHAP Book Bag program has been fully developed.

Program Objectives

The Book Bag Program endeavours to promote Early Literacy by linking the preschool program, the home and the library. The objectives of OCHAP's Book Bag Program are to:

- 4 Enable children to take their love and respect of books home to share with families members.
- 4 Enhance the literacy curriculum in the preschool by providing training for staff.
- 4 Provide quality reading materials for the children to borrow.
- 4 Promote daily reading by parent to their children.
- 4 Provide literacy training for parents.
- 4 Promote concepts of borrowing and returning and responsibilities attached.
- 4 Create awareness and linkages of community services to parents and professionals, ie. public library, early literacy specialists and First Words.
- 4 Establish and maintain links with the Early Literacy Specialist and the Public Library

Accomplishments-To-Date

The OCHAP Book Bag materials (book boxes, manuals and CDs, bags, etc.) were organized and distributed to each of the eleven Headstart preschool programs. Headstart staff received training on the goals of the Book Bag program, its objectives and strategies to ensure the program's success.

The actual launch for the Book Bag program will occur early in 2003, after Headstart parents have received some training, as well. In the meantime, the Headstart programs are introducing children to the concept of borrowing and returning books.

The Book Bag Committee Members

June Adamson, Supervisor, West End Nursery School

Beth Dewan, Supervisor, Esther By Day Care

Janie O'Leary, Supervisor, CAS Headstart

Janet Chadwick, Child Care Program Development Specialist, City of Ottawa

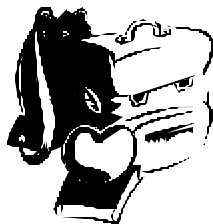
Acknowledgements

OCHAP acknowledges the support of the Ottawa Public Library and the Early Literacy Specialists.

A special thank you is extended to the following:

- < The Ottawa West Kiwanis for their contribution to covering the cost of the bags,
- < Lucie Marcoux (CAS Preschool Services Unit Assistant) for her work on the Book Bag manual,
- < Stephanie Caught (CAS Preschool Services Unit Co-Op student , Osgoode High School) for her work on the Book Bag manual.

OCHAP is especially grateful to Jane Joy, whose ongoing support of the Ottawa Carleton Headstart Association and her continued commitment to children and their families was instrumental in allowing us this opportunity.



Literacy is the key to success.

EARLY NUMERACY PROGRAM

Background

“Rightstart,” an early math enrichment program, was acknowledged in April 1999 in the “Mustard/McCain Early Years Report” as an initiative that improves early child development. OCHAP became interested in Rightstart as the findings of the research have specific significance for the children enrolled in Headstart programs.

In December 2001, with the assistance of the City of Ottawa, \$20,000.00 in funding was secured for a pilot project to create and implement an early numeracy curriculum based on “Rightstart” theory for Headstart programs.

Program History

The project was made possible by generous funding provided by the Poverty Initiatives Fund. In January 2002 an Early Numeracy Committee was formed to plan and implement the project. The Committee met several times over the ensuing months. The Committee’s work began with a review of “Rightstart” theory (which included a review of the “Number worlds” program) and progressed to the planning of the early numeracy project.

The Committee developed the math curriculum in three parts. Parts One and Two address the needs of children enrolled in Headstart programs. Part One reviews basic early numeracy theory and implementation in the preschool setting. Part Two presents a series of games and activities based on Rightstart theory, using the Number worlds program as a model. Part Three presents materials created to encourage family participation in the program. Part Three includes an outline of the parent program, early numeracy tips /newsletter inserts for parents and instructions on how to play the games at home (translated into major languages), as well as feedback forms for parents.

Accomplishments-To-Date

With regard to the Early Numeracy Program, OCHAP’s accomplishments-to-date

- The development of an Early Numeracy Manual and CD which includes: Early numeracy theory and Rightstart theory; Instructions on how to implement in Headstart programs; Set of activity cards on how to implement extrapolated games; Children’s assessment tool and instructions on how and when to use; and Staff feedback forms
- The creation of an Early Numeracy Kit which includes: A set of activities/games, including all materials required and activity cards to assist staff to implement Rightstart component of program
- A set of games, and instructions for families to use at home (translated into major languages)
- Staff Training – On November 21, 2002, staff had an opportunity to participate in a workshop to implement the OCHAP Early Numeracy Program;
- Parent Training – This training is being planned for Spring 2003.
- Project Evaluation – The Early Numeracy Committee will meet after implementation of the program to evaluate feedback forms from parents, staff and children.

The Early Numeracy Committee Members

Cori Thompson	Nanny Goat Hill Nursery School
Kirsten Partanen	Queensway Preschool
Mona Rowland	National Capital Region YMCA-YWCA Headstart Nursery School
Wendy Miron	Foster Farm Child Care Centre
Nancy Rowley	Hawthorne Meadows Nursery School
Janet Chadwick	Child Care Program Development Specialist, City of Ottawa

Acknowledgements

OCHAP thanks Jane Joy for the instrumental role she played in securing the funding for this initiative.

