

INcare

... inclusive practices in child care
FALL 2011 • Issue 2

The Region of Peel's Brampton West Nursery School



Innovation – seems like a buzz word that's thrown around all too often. But, the Brampton West Nursery School showcases innovation, in every sense of the word.

The nursery school offers a morning program for up to 16 children, with four spaces designated for children with special needs.

But what makes the school truly one-of-a-kind is its afternoon programming. Through its partner agencies, such as Brampton Caledon Community Living (BCCL), ErinoakKids, Infant and Child Development Services Peel (ICDSP) and Peel Children's Centre (PCC). The nursery school offers:

- Parent and child workshops, including Mother Goose
- Parent Support Groups hosted by BCCL
- Parent and Child Dressing and Drama Therapy Program facilitated by an Occupational Therapist and Drama facilitator
- Halton Peel Preschool Speech and Language Therapy Programs
- Adaptive Yoga Program for children

For more information on the Brampton West Nursery School and its programming, please call Mirela Anthony or Meg Renwick at 905-791-1585, ext. 5903.

IN this issue:

- Everything happens for a reason
- Down syndrome support group
- What is an inclusive classroom?
- Spotlight on Pumpkin Patch Child Care Centres
- WELCOME to our second edition
- Awareness dates
- The importance of American Sign Language



Everything happens for a reason

The words still echo in my head today, even as I write these words: "Everything happens for a reason. The Universe is as it should be ... and Jaya is fulfilling her purpose in the grand scheme of things." These were the words a close friend of ours said to me, as he held Jaya, then a four day old baby with Down syndrome (DS), as we sat in our tiny room at Sick Kids Hospital.

A few months later I received a phone call from a co-worker. She mentioned that she had shared the news with a mutual friend who had a child born with DS. About a week later I found myself having dinner with this friend, and right after we placed our order a funny thing started to happen. As I listened to the sequence of events that immediately followed the birth of her son, I started to realize some similarities. What was so remarkable, was how she was able to understand the range of emotion that I had been experiencing and how she was able to empathize with what I was trying to cope with. It was at that moment when my healing began.

Fast forward a few more months and I find myself at Jaya's daycare. Lori Lee, resource teacher at Collegeside L.P.C. had the vision and insight to pull a group of parents with DS children together for an educational session. I suppose it was completely natural for the group at large to want to form a grass roots organization devoted to networking with other parents who were experiencing similar issues. Members could come together and hear about each others successes over life's hurdles, and also be an empathetic ear for life's challenges. We could help each other and ensure that other parents who were going through the same thing we had been through, would have the support they needed and would not feel alone.

It is a good feeling to know that we have a group of parents who not only care for their own children, but who care enough about others around them to want to help, which enables all of our children to succeed and fulfill all of their individual dreams.

I guess my friend was right. Everything does happen for a reason.

– Paresh and Anju Mistry

Down syndrome support group

Do you have a child with Down syndrome (DS)? Are you looking to connect with other parents of children with DS?

We are a small group of parents of children with DS, who are looking to network and build a parent support group to share information, resources and experiences.

Our vision is:

- To build a network for parents to discuss common topics
- To be a source of support for each other
- To create more awareness and educate others about DS
- To be the voice for our children
- To eventually become a registered association

Our plan is to hold meetings on the third Monday of each month from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. The location is yet to be determined.

If you are interested in attending a meeting or learning more about the group, please contact Susie Gomes at 905-874-8830 or susiegomes@rogers.com.

What is an inclusive classroom?

All students, regardless of age, ability, or developmental stage deserve an education that allows them to reach their full potential.

The principle of inclusion is based on the idea that every child – whether or not they have special needs – has a right to belong and to be included in their school community.

The most valuable result of an inclusive classroom may be how children learn to work together using their own individual strengths to support each other. An integrated classroom is a place where children succeed together.

Practicing inclusion

All children participate equally in an inclusive classroom. To do so, the room must be set up so that anyone could come in, move around and use the materials.

Ask yourself:

- Could a wheelchair move around the room easily?
- Do the materials allow for a variety of skill levels?
- Are there stories that include children with different abilities?

Spotlight on Pumpkin Patch Child Care Centres

In 1986 the first Pumpkin Patch Child Care Centre opened its doors in Palgrave and has been providing quality, inclusive child care programs for children 15 months to six years ever since.

In 2004 a second centre opened its doors in Bolton and with over 80 children and 14 staff members, Pumpkin Patch Two Child Care Centre is a very busy place.

In addition to its professionally trained staff and educational programming, Pumpkin Patch Child Care Centres are one of the first private child care centres in the area to accept children with special needs. However as with many private daycares, finding and paying for training and resources can be a challenging task. Staff at the centre, including Sandra Vieira, who has been a parent, teacher and now Supervisor and Program Manager at the centre, decided to think outside the box and tap into community resources.

"It is definitely a team effort," said Sandra. "The supervisor, teachers and families work together with community agencies to support children who may be experiencing challenges or going through a diagnosis. We began



connecting with various organizations within the community to develop a support system for centre visits, recommendations, referrals and training opportunities." "Children with special needs have always held a special place in my heart," said Sandra. "Pumpkin Patch staff work to ensure there are no distinctions between any of the children in the centre by providing a fully inclusive environment. We are committed to the education of young children in a nurturing environment that supports a child's total development socially, physically, emotionally and cognitively."

To learn more about Pumpkin Patch Child Care Centres, call 1-905-857-4634.

WELCOME to our second edition

Welcome to our second edition of the Region of Peel's INcare newsletter. INcare was designed as a place to advocate, share and celebrate inclusive practices in child care within Peel Region.

Our initial goal in the creation of this newsletter was to open and promote a dialogue between families and staff, focusing on the unique special needs program we offer within our 12 directly operated Learn.Play.Care. Child Care Centres. As we are extremely proud and honoured to work with the families and children in our care, we saw an opportunity to share the gratification of working directly with children with special needs on a daily basis.

We also felt this publication could provide the perfect vehicle to promote our Regional values of inclusive practices and share our knowledge and resources. As many of you may or may not know, the role of a Resource Teacher extends far

beyond the confines of a classroom. It reaches out to the families, out to dedicated professionals in the field, and out to the entire community.

Our first edition was sent out to our Learn.Play.Care. clients as well as our Human Services Division within the Region. Copies of that issue were shown around and before we knew it we began receiving requests for copies from Raising the Bar in Peel, the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) and other community partners who were excited about our vision. INcare was suddenly very much out there!

For all of us who work with families and children with special needs, this is a place to celebrate children and their accomplishments along with the role that we are privileged to play. Please join the party and share your experiences, knowledge and stories. Everyone is invited! We are just an e-mail away.

"Every child is gifted. They just unwrap their packages at different times." – Unknown

AWARENESS DATES

Month of January	Ontario March of Dimes Month
Jan. 4	World Braille Day
Jan. 27	Family Literacy Day
Month of March	National Epilepsy Month
Month of March	Easter Seals Month
Month of April	National Speech and Hearing Awareness Month
April 2	World Autism Day
April 7	World Health Day
April 29	International Make-A-Wish Day
Month of May	Speech and Hearing Awareness Month
Month of May	Ontario Community Living Month
Month of May	Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month
Month of May	Cystic Fibrosis Awareness Month
1st week of May	National Kids Day
May 12	Canada Health Day
Month of June	Deaf-Blind Awareness Month
Month of June	National Brain Injury Awareness Month
Month of September	Muscular Dystrophy Awareness Month
Month of September	Childhood Cancer Awareness Month
Sept. 8	International Literacy Day
Month of October	National Autism Awareness Month
Month of October	National Learning Disabilities Awareness Month
Nov. 1-7	National Down Syndrome Awareness Week
Nov. 20	Universal Children's Day
Dec. 3	International Day of Persons with Disabilities

The importance of American Sign Language

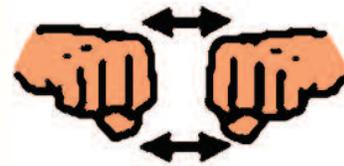
American Sign Language (ASL) is a wonderful way to introduce a new communication tool, especially for those children who may be struggling in their expressive language skills. Since we learn with all our senses, it is recommended that ASL be used in conjunction with verbal language. When we use more than one form of communication children will be better able to hear, see and feel a new way to express themselves!

How to sign "all done"



The sign for "finish" or "all done" is made by placing both of your open hands in front of you. Each hand should face you, with your fingers pointing upward. Twist both hands quickly a couple of times ending with the palms pointing (somewhat) forward.

How to sign "shoes"



The sign for "shoes" is made by closing both hands, thumbs facing. Gently strike your hands together twice.

How to sign "coat"



The sign for "coat" is made by forming both hands into a fist with thumbs on the outside. Place both hands at the base of your neck. Now move both hands downward to your lower chest.

We want to hear from you! If you have ideas, stories or questions, we'd love to hear them.
E-mail: maryann.novak@peelregion.ca

Newsletter contributors:
Maryann Novak, Mirela Anthony, Meg Renwick and Anisa Chernecki