

March 3, 2009

Dr. Charles Pascal
Early Learning Advisor
1 Yonge Street, 15th Floor
Toronto, ON M5E 1E5

Dear Dr. Pascal:

I am writing in response to your request for input on the full-day learning strategy. The Public Library plays a critical role in the lives of children with our programs offered year-round, seven days a week and beyond the hours that typically define full-day learning.

The Toronto Public Library and the other public libraries across Ontario are not advocating to run full-day programs in library branches, but do wish to be considered a service partner in the full-day learning strategy for young children.

Public libraries have for generations provided high-quality early-learning programs encouraging children and their parents to get involved in reading and the enjoyment of stories and songs beginning at birth. The services and collections of the public library are universally available and are tailored to the community including collections and services in a variety of languages.

Supporting Toronto's children in developing early reading skills is one of the goals in Toronto Public Library's strategic plan. As a literacy expert, Toronto Public Library works effectively in partnership with City of Toronto Divisions and numerous community agencies in supporting early literacy. A briefing note on some of our preschool learning and literacy programs is included in this package to give an understanding of the range of programs that are offered in Toronto. Also included is a package of materials from our Ready for Reading programs. The Library actively works with parents, childcare

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workers and caregivers as well as young children with our Ready for Reading programs designed to prepare young minds for reading. KidsStops, literacy rich activity centres for children from birth to six years old, have recently been added to some of our locations. Plans are underway to build more of these centres.

The public library's important role in early learning needs to be recognized. Public libraries need to be service partners in Ontario's full-day learning strategy. Visits to the public library and the acquisition of a library card must be an integral part of the strategy. Children benefit immediately from the ability to take materials home and participate in group activities throughout the year while their parents are introduced to the wealth of material available to them. Access to free public computers is vital for many as well. In addition, when the school closes for the summer, visits to the public library continue and children enrol in the very popular reading programs that occur. Library visits provide year-round learning opportunities.

I hope that you consider the Library when developing your final strategy, and recognize that the public library is one of the key community resources available to all children as well as their entire family.

Your schedule is no doubt overflowing, but I would like to invite you to visit one of our KidsStops – to show you how exciting your public library is. If you haven't visited a public library for a while, I am sure that you will be amazed at how dynamic our libraries are.

If you would like to arrange a visit or would be willing to meet with me, please contact Nancy Marshall by phone at 416-393-7215 or by email at nmarshall@torontopubliclibrary.ca

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'mchurch'.

Matthew Church, Chair
Toronto Public Library Board

/nrm

Attachments



BRIEFING NOTE - Toronto Public Library's Commitment to Children, Learning and Literacy

Toronto Public Library (TPL) has a strong commitment to the well being of the children of Toronto and their families. Toronto has been internationally renowned for children's services since the appointment of Lillian H. Smith, the first Canadian children's librarian in 1909. For 100 years TPL has offered innovative, relevant resources, services and programs that have evolved alongside the ever changing needs of children and their families in our city. Our goals have always remained the same - promote literacy, encourage life-long learning in children of all ages and develop a love of reading in all.

Toronto Public Library has librarians with expertise in children's, teen and family literature and literacy working in our 99 branches located across the city. Our branches are open to serve children and their families from morning to evening, on weekdays and weekends. Not only does the Library work to bring early literacy to preschool children and help children struggling with reading – TPL brings the joy of reading to children of all ages through a variety of programs.

The Library's commitment to children and literacy is evident in a number of key strategies, programs and services.

Strategic Plan: *Our Shared Stories: Writing the Future of Toronto's Library 2008 -2011*

TPL's new Strategic Plan highlights the following goals and actions:

- Support Toronto's children in developing early reading skills
- Through our *Ready for Reading* early literacy program, promote the importance of early literacy and support caregivers in developing these skills in children
- Expand access to high quality out-of-school-time and summer programs for children and youth to build leadership, academic and social skills

Early Literacy/Preschool

Ready for Reading

Ready for Reading is an exciting and innovative set of programs and services that supports families and caregivers of children from birth to 5 years, in the development of early literacy skills in their children and encourages a lifelong love of books and reading.

With this initiative, Toronto Public Library ensures that support for the development of early literacy skills is at the heart of all aspects of its preschool programs and services, including storytime programs, Web services and preschool collections.

Ready for Reading is based on the six early literacy skills as identified through research conducted by the American Library Association with their Every Child Ready to Read program:

- Print Motivation – I like books!
- Phonological Awareness – I hear words!
- Vocabulary – I know words!
- Narrative Skills – I can tell a story!
- Print Awareness – I see words!
- Letter Knowledge – I know letters!

Through *Ready for Reading*, our youngest residents and their families are introduced to:

- professionally selected materials in 99 locations;
- books in a variety of languages;
- the best books and materials supporting early literacy;
- current theories in literacy research;
- 7,612 storytime programs with 190,122 children and parents attending in 2007;
- early literacy techniques to use at home;
- workshops for parents, caregivers, daycare staff to promote and teach how to read with children;
- outreach programs in factories and locations where parents work or congregate;
- outreach programs for marginalized communities in shelters, community centres and Toronto Community Housing complexes.

KidsStop

KidsStop is an exciting innovative learning environment that has been designed and introduced for parents and children with specially selected activities which encourage the development of early literacy skills through play. *KidsStop* is currently available at S. Walter Stewart and Dufferin/St. Clair branches and soon to be opened at Thorncliffe and Cedarbrae branches.

Kindergarten Outreach

In partnership with local Boards of Education, TPL staff deliver to all kindergarten children an invitation to visit their local library and register for a library card.

- In priority schools, TPL partners with the Learning Partnership delivering our Kindergarten outreach materials as well as participates in the *Welcome to Kindergarten* sessions for parents in schools
- In 2007, TPL staff visited 41,104 kindergarten students in 2,160 classes in 540 Toronto schools

As a Literacy Expert, Toronto Public Library is an Effective Partner

We partner with a wide variety of agencies, boards, and educators to support child and family literacy in the city. Our ability to leverage our programs, resources and services towards the development of an educated and competitive workforce is

recognized by our colleagues. We partner with the City of Toronto and with various community agencies, boards and corporations.

City of Toronto

Working with the City of Toronto, TPL participates on the Children's Services Advisory Committee, Interdivisional Children's Staff Team and the Best Start Network. TPL works closely with City divisions in planning and delivering services for children, particularly Parks, Forestry and Recreation, Public Health, Children's Services and Employment and Social Services.

Community and Corporate Partners

- Ontario Early Years Centres
- Macaulay Child Development Centre
- Toronto Preschool Speech and Language
- Breaking the Cycle of Violence
- Mothercraft
- Kiwanis
- Paloma Foundation
- Frontier College
- Tropicana
- Boards of Education
- Ryerson University
- Faculty of Education, York University
- OISE at University of Toronto
- TD Bank Financial Group and other corporate partners and sponsors

Partnerships have resulted in training sessions for staff on the most current and relevant emergent literacy theories and their practical application.

- Sessions such as our *Ready for Reading* program, *In Service Training* for kindergarten teachers in the TDCSB and at the Learning Partnership's Day of Learning;
- Annual *Celebrating Stories and Song* workshops for professionals who work with preschoolers, exemplify our pledge to provide professional development;
- Presentations at conferences including, *Reading for the Love of It*, *International Reading Association* and various literacy symposiums;
- Contributions to publications including *Freedom to Read Week* and the forthcoming, *Children's Literature and New Literacies*;
- Staff regularly review children's materials in a variety of publications;
- Our partners recognize the strength of our collections and request our lists of professionally selected titles listed in *Great Reads* for children, *First and Best* and *TD Summer Reading Club* booklists.

The strength of TPL's work with the TD Bank Financial Group has had an impact on the Bank resulting in their research and commitment to children's literacy.

Revised March 3, 2009