



Early Literacy Alliance of Waterloo Region

Partnering for early literacy. Ensuring a stronger future.

ELAWR Meeting Minutes May 31, 2016

Location: KidsAbility, 500 Hallmark Drive, Waterloo

Present: Machelles Denison, Gabriele Croft, Maria Milne, Vicki Miles, Chris Beck, Cathy Scott, Marci Nicolaisen, Jaime Griffis, Joanne Davis, Wanda Kampijan, Amber Holmes, Janelle Wenger, Rebecca Dahle, Tierney Hunter, Benda Mak.

Regrets: Kim Krueger-Kischak, Julie Tonin, Joanne Stronge, Laura Reed, Laura Dick, Katherine White, Stephanie Denison, Mary Trottier

Visitors: Corinne Cameron, Bree McFarland (Nursing Student with Rebecca Dahle)

1. Welcome and Introductions – Gabriele welcomed the Alliance members and introduced Corinne Cameron, Executive Director of Salvation Army Parent and Child Resource Centre who is visiting today.
2. Update on Lynda Silvester Award
 - Communications plan:
 - a) Postcards – Gabriele described the process for the preparation of these postcards, now in second draft, and included input from Communications/Marketing committee and Project READ. There will be 3 postal drops starting in mid-Sept, spaced out every 2 weeks, targeting about 2700* households that have been identified as having children who are at risk for learning based on current EDI data. Regional cross-representation is planned. Households will be “saturated” with the campaign of early literacy messages – “Talk, Play, Read (and Sing)”. Due to insufficient funding for 4 postal drops, “Sing” will most likely be targeted in a different way (e.g social media only, website presence on the campaign landing page; print partner support for future campaign?). There was strong support from members at the meeting to include “Sing” messaging and to develop the materials accordingly. Consider a photo on Sing Postcard to feature hand gestures typical of songs like Eensy Weensy Spider, Pat-a-Cake. (* Please note: the number estimated at the meeting was 1800 households, though it is likely closer to 2700)

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b) video shoots – Gabriele went over possible scenarios to match the video portion of the campaign with the messages in the postcards. Settings suggested: homes, parks, library, grocery store. In addition, the Voice overs for the videos were reviewed. General principles/suggestions included:

- ensure all audiences can relate to messages (e.g. grocery store scenario should refrain from making “food choices” that are not available to some (e.g. “steak”)
- avoid reference to “winning a race”, (Play – shot setting #2) – but rather focus on turn-taking non-competitive play with lots of reference to action words, locations. Consider a sandbox or truck play scenario instead of racing.
- watch use of “her” in most examples – ensure gender balance in use of pronouns
- ensure homes are representative of families in region (diversity- socioeconomic, multicultural if possible, include dads and grandparents, visible disabilities, such as child with glasses). A few ELAWR members offered to approach some families to help with this.
- suggestions under library scenario: “Get a library card.... It’s free”
- parents encouraged to make comments vs. too many questions.
- Make sure to say ‘Play, Talk Read AND Sing” (not “or”)

c) key influencers – Gabriele passed out the Influencer list prepared for last year’s Environmental scan meeting (part of the Strategic plan work). ELAWR members were encouraged to check the list to see if influencers were still in their current situations, and add other names as appropriate. List was collected at end of meeting for further development by the Core Planning committee. The purpose of this list was described: i.e. key influencers will be contacted at the start of campaign to let them know what our plan is and to ask for their ongoing support. Members are asked to be mindful of this request, and send additional names to Gabriele or Kim for inclusion (E.g. CEOs of organizations that serve young children, mayors, etc).

- Advocacy - the Advocacy subcommittee is having a planning meeting on June 16th, facilitated by a consultant to finalize the learning needs for Advocacy training. It is hoped that a ½ day event for ELAWR might occur in late November – if possible, to coordinate with an ELAWR meeting date. Plans for a community advocacy meeting will be determined throughout this planning process.

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3. Budget update (Gabriele)

As of May 31, 2016:

- LS Award remaining: \$25, 175.75
- ELAWR regular account: \$7, 337.49 (include \$5,000 conference fund reserve)

4. Updates from subcommittees

- Literacy Café – On May 18th, approximately 15 professionals gathered at the U Waterloo Baby Lab to learn about the research being conducted by Dr. Katherine White, and Dr. Stephanie Denison about how babies process speech sounds and how they learn/make predictions, etc. A visit to the labs was part of the evening, and greatly appreciated by those who attended. A request to post the ppt presentations on elawr.org was made and is likely to be available in the near future.
- Conference – Our Place OEYC in Kitchener will be the new host location for the ELAWR conference and will take place for ½ day (morning) on October 29, 2016. Keynote: Laurel Trainor. Theme: “Early Literacy through Different Lenses”. Conference Committee is meeting this Thursday, June 2 to review the proposals received.
- Promotions/Communications/Marketing – see above – Item #2.
- Core Planning - Committee is working on updating the Terms of Reference.

5. Updates from ELAWR’s involvement in the community

- Children’s Planning Table - a)CPT is hosting a meeting on the morning of June 13, with topic: Continuing the dialogue on learning and diversity. From 11 to 12 there will be an input session with the City of Kitchener on their neighbourhood strategy. Deadline to register is June 6th. b) Previous meetings at CPT discussed Healthy Kids Community Challenge - focusing on get moving and drinking more water; and Joint Virtual access point; information about settlement experiences for newcomers– see link below for more info about CPT activities:
<http://communityservices.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/childrensServices/2016-CPT-Meeting-Materials-.asp>

6. Updates from member organizations – 2-3 minutes per organization

- Gabriele shared KidsAbility’s SLP May month promotion handout for children who are first word users “Work your core- vocabulary, that is!”
- Tierney noted that the Catholic school board provides summer reading programs during the month of July – feel free to contact her for more info

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- Janelle that ROWPL program is gearing up for summer reading programs. There is a new administrator at ROWPL – Nancy Duncan
- Marci noted that programs at Highland-Stirling community centre are preparing to close on June 10th. Currently programs run in the morning only, and Marci is attempting to increase programs until 1:30 or 2:00 pm. She noted she has many dads and grandparents involved in programs there. She is working on some partnerships with Nature Connect (city of Kitchener) and KPL.
- Chris Beck noted this is a busy time with transitions to school meetings. She described the new SNAP referral process which involves child care providers' enhanced role in gathering the intake information and helping families to "tell their story once only". The new approach has required training/mentoring ECE staff to enable them to take these histories, which takes about 1 hour per referral. She also noted that enhance staffing is often provided to children with challenging behaviours.
- Corinne provided some information about Salvation Army Parent-Child resource centre which has been in existence since 1998. Some programs involve parent education while children attend a program, while others involve parents together with their children – e.g. Family Math. Programs run Monday to Friday from Sept to June. Some programs require pre-registration while others are drop-in. Referrals tend to be through word of mouth, though families can learn about programs on their website or through leisure guide advertising. Family picnics, camp on Lake Simcoe and August school readiness programs were mentioned.
- Amber described projects she is working on through the Pedagogy role which is designed to build capacity of service providers for reflective practice. Her workshops are designed using the Community of Practice model. She is doing a presentation at Conestoga College on better ways for adults to learn (beyond the traditional lecture style) and hopes to train others on how to present in this way.
- Maria noted that LINC programs are winding down on either June 17th or June 24th. With Ramadan starting on June 6th, many families may choose to withdraw their children from programs earlier. A family picnic is being held on June 3rd. Her program at English at First has been at capacity, almost completely full of children of Syrian refugee families. Some new people are expected as the privately sponsored refugees are still arriving. Most families from her program have residences now, in the Fairway area.
- Wanda noted that ELAWR's 4 messages "Play Talk Sing Read" are intertwined in everything that they do at OEYC Our Place. She noted a survey of parents is being

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circulated to request feedback on their experience with Our Place programs. Our place does not close for the summer but work reduced hours starting July 4th.

- Mabelle noted that Strong Start programs (Letters Sounds and Words; Get Ready for School) are both wrapping up now. Over the summer program kits are reviewed and inventoried. They are starting some volunteer coaching in June so that programs can start early in the fall. Also a new volunteer tracking system allows for online tutorials, and also a more efficient way to match up volunteers with service sites.
- Joanne Davis noted Get Set Learn program is wrapping up this week. She described 2 year funding received from Trillium grant which allows expansion to new sites (5 in total), revision of curriculum opportunity and allows Project READ LN to hire consultants from Capacity Canada to look at how to make programs sustainable and explore social enterprise opportunities. Up until now participants have been limited by eligibility for Ontario Works funding.

Next ELAWR meetings: Tentative: Sept 20th; November 22, 2016. (Tuesday afternoons)

Please note: due to some requests for an alternate meeting date, a survey monkey will be conducted to determine participants' preferences. Future meeting dates to be confirmed before the end of June.

Special thanks to Mabelle Denison for offering to assist with the meeting minutes today.

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