



Early Literacy Alliance of Waterloo Region

Partnering for early literacy. Ensuring a stronger future.

ELAWR Meeting Minutes for Thursday, March 31, 2016

Location: KidsAbility, 500 Hallmark Drive, Waterloo (free parking on site)

Present: Kim Krueger-Kischak, Gabriele Croft, Maria Milne, Vicki Miles, Julie Tonin, Joanne Stronge, Cathy Scott, Marci Nicolaisen, Jaime Griffis, Andrea Siemens, Joanne Davis, Amber Holmes, Janelle Wenger, Rebecca Dahle, Stephanie Denison.

Regrets: Laura Dick, Laura Reed, Machel Denison, Chris Beck, Wanda Kampijan, Katherine White, Maria Andrei-Gedja, Jill Watson, Brenda Mak.

Visitor: Caylea Simpson, ECE student visitor with Joanne Stronge

1. Welcome and Introductions - Members shared resources used in their programs to support literacy developments – a number of books, program guides, materials, etc. were shared and displayed on a table for others to view.
2. Update on Lynda Silvester Award
 - Communications plan – Gabriele noted that Barefoot creative has a 3-part campaign strategy which will run from mid-August to mid-October: It will consist of
 1. A postcard campaign focusing on regional demographics info that shows where children entering school have low levels of readiness for school. Postcards will be engaging, and delivered cost-effectively through a “postal drop” method. Info will build on our messages of “Play” “Read” and “Talk”. This drop will also target key community influencers to let them know of the campaign that is happening in Waterloo Region, and will encourage them to support it. Members will be asked for input into key influencers that we wish to address in our communications. (We do have list of invitees to last year’s environmental scan meeting as part of strategic planning, as a starting point.)
 2. Short videos that illustrate early literacy activities- launched through social media.
 3. Prompt regional media to promote the cause – request television or radio interview with ELAWR member who will act as spokesperson.
 - Advocacy - Kim noted that the Advocacy committee has had preliminary discussions with a skilled advocacy professional, Avvey Peters from Communitech to help guide our questions to ensure that our Advocacy training matches our needs. Training for ELAWR will likely occur in the fall and may be accompanied by broader training for the whole community.

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3. Budget update (Gabriele)

LS Award: \$2,358.62 has been spent primarily for communications since the last reporting period. Currently there is \$27,435.76 remaining in the fund.

Regular ELAWR account: one deposit of \$31.70 was made due to insurance “excess” charge and the current remaining fund amount is \$8128.31.

4. Updates from subcommittees

- Family Literacy Day – nothing new to report – Kim will post the report once final stats are entered and will put the abbreviated version on the ELAWR website. For the detailed report, members can access through the members only section. Password is ELAWR 2016.
- Literacy Café – a tour of the Baby Lab at University of Waterloo will be offered as our May ELAWR Café. Attendees will be limited to 35 due to space constraints. Some research will be presented along with small group tours. Registration will occur on Eventbrite. Members to watch for more info and share broadly.
- Conference – plans at this time – a ½ day conference is planned with theme of “Literacy through Different Lenses”. Hoping to use same site as previous conferences (Conestoga College). Keynote being considered: Laurel Trainor – use of beats/rhythms in early language and literacy development. Consider opportunities for networking, mingling, knowledge-sharing which can be a benefit of a conference (vs. webinar).
- Promotions/Communications/Marketing – see LS update (Item 2) above.
- Core Planning – working on updating Terms of Reference, developing an orientation plan currently.

5. Updates from ELAWR’s involvement in the community

- Children’s Planning Table- Kim attends on behalf of ELAWR – next meeting of CPT is April 27th. There is an upcoming Waterloo Region Rural Reality Forum coming up on April 7th and a conference “Embracing the Change” on April 21, 22 with a Mental Health Focus.
- Other – ELAWR with a display table at the ECE conference this year – Kim has arranged to do this on behalf of ELAWR. Considering the possibility of setting up booths at other regional events. All committee members are encouraged to do the same – let Kim or Gabriele know – we have two banner of each to use broadly.

6. Updates from member organizations

- a. Highland Stirling community Centre – Marci noted all programs are full and some people are coming from further afield. Programs have been busy throughout the winter.

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Program in spring lasts 10 weeks. Marci shared a wasp's nest on "please touch" table along with a book on bees and wasps.

- b. U of Waterloo – Baby Lab – Stephanie noted they are busy – more families to participate in research are always welcome. Families receive a free children's book for participating.
- c. Amber has recently returned to work after a leave. She noted Our Place is hosting a "Bungee fair" and are supporting Autism Awareness Day with a "Light It up blue" campaign. An autism specialist is available to meet families at Our Place.
- d. Rebecca noted no new updates with Public Health. She did note that there have been some recent concerning developments with some doctors advocating against universal developmental screening (Source: Canadian Medical Journal) with arguments that tests have a high false positive rate. This could have implications with use of Nipissing screening.
- e. Janelle reported that Region of Waterloo Library programs are starting 8 week summer programs, and making plans for Summer Reading club. School age programs (6 and up) are being revamped. A new supervisor will begin on April 11.
- f. Maria noted that LINC programs have doubled their enrolment with the arrival of Syrian refugees. Initially some of the children were quite distraught, but most have settled in nicely after 1-2 months in the program. Three staff are Arabic speaking which has helped with settling. She noted that some children demonstrate fear of construction vehicles and trucks in the English at First location (LRT construction currently). Donation centres request household goods. Many families are large and require additional beds.
- g. Julie works with teachers in the WCDSB to support professional learning around literacy. Noted there are huge gaps in teacher knowledge basis depending on when they were trained. She is looking for feedback from learners – what helped them to become literate? Julie noted the benefit of SLP and teachers collaborating in programing to attain better outcomes for all children in a class. Also has discovered that many successful older children (Grade 7/8) appear to have excellent language/literacy skills, yet often lack the depth of understanding of vocabulary meaning and flexible use of vocabulary. (e.g. "board" could be used as a noun, adjective, verb, etc.)

Vicki noted that SLPs in WCDSB are putting together a "menu" of services that schools can request depending on need. She commented on the successful running of Learning Language and Loving It (LLLI) program, a Hanen based program for child care providers (ECEs, JK/SK teachers) that builds on children's initiations and adult's responsiveness to build engagement and language skills. They are also running More Than Words (MTW) for high needs children with autism – for parents and teachers. A Kindergarten Reading program at ST. Theresa School has continued from last year and a successful grant allowed the program to purchase books for the children.

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- h. Joanne Davis noted Project READ is beginning their spring programs in mid-April for families on OW or ODSP. There is still space if others would like to refer families. Project READ is currently revising their curriculum, which is exciting. Also they have hired consultants from Capacity Canada from their recent Trillium Grant funding. Programs are expanding to Arthur (program is full already), and a new site in Victoria Hills and another in Shelldale (Guelph). No eligibility requirements for these 3 new programs.
- i. Andrea indicated Idea Exchange spring programs are starting (8 weeks). Some highlights:
 - a) “Math buddies” pairs JK/SK/Gr1 children with a teen mentor to experience math and literacy games with a Math teacher assisting;
 - b) French story time at Preston branch,
 - c) “Puppies and PJs” – at the Hespeler branch- very popular program, good for children’s self-esteem. Children read to dogs and often dog related games and activities accompany the program,
 - d) “Make your own book” for ages 4-7,
 - e) Summer programs will have a “Wild” theme
 - f) outreach programs will have a “Mental health awareness” focus with drumming circles.

Jaime noted that Idea Exchange is re-looking at space for programming – how to work in larger venues (e.g. staff moving various “centres” in a large space). Another focus in measuring progress – use of logic model to measure impact of library programs using stats, interviews, impact videos – this helps in communicating stories to their board, city council, etc.

- j. Cathy noted that SLPs in the WRDSB are reviewing and revising their service delivery model. Melanie Gravel is the new Chief SLP, replacing Pat Pietrek who has retired.
- k. Joanne Strong noted that licensing for home child care according to the Child Care Early Years Act is now complete. There is still some updated paperwork to complete. All home child care providers have to adhere to the principles of “How does Learning Happen” document. Conestoga students with placements have been helpful, with daily journaling required.
- l. Gabriele reported that services to JK children referred while in JK have included an extended period of referral acceptance (January 31st), which has led to significant increase in referrals and the addition of JK language groups “Adventures in Language”. These programs for qualifying children run in after-school hours at KidsAbility. Some delays in picking up younger children from the waitlist are expected due to increased use of resources to JK children. All SLPs at KidsAbility recently received training in Complex feeding assessment and treatment.
- m. Kim reported that Baby Connections is in process of rolling out their new website and data base. On April 29th, there will be an open “Facilitator Chat” with open invitation to those who have provided BC programs. Kim commented on Professional Learning in our community, recognizing learning happens in different ways. It appears to be particularly

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helpful for learners to have time to reflect on their own practices. Kim is involved with a project at LINC to support parents to recognize the value of their home language for songs, stories, rhymes. Five nursery rhymes will be used as a basis for the project. Kim is involved also with various “Welcome to Kindergarten” programs from now til June.

7. Other Items

- a. Book Drive for Cameroon – Kim shared a flyer “Book Drive for Children and Youth Literacy Library Cameroon, Africa from April to June 2016.” – A campaign to collect books, jigsaws, puzzles, learning games, leap pad or any learning aid can be dropped off at YMCA Early Years Centre, Waterloo.

8. Optional: subcommittee meetings and Tour of KidsAbility – after 3 pm.

Next ELAWR meeting: May 31, 2016 - location to be decided

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