



Early Literacy Alliance of Waterloo Region (ELAWR) Conference 2010 “Getting Connected for Early Literacy” Summary Report

On Saturday October 16th, 2010 ELAWR hosted 162 community agency service providers from 62 different agencies for a full day conference on Early Literacy development at Conestoga College.

- The **participants** included a broad cross-sector representation as follows:
 - 18% classroom teachers in school boards
 - 13% Speech/Language Pathologists (SLPs)
 - 40% Early Childhood Educators (ECEs)
 - 13% Community programmers
 - 7% representing Special needs children
 - 6% representing ESL children/families
 - Librarians and Early Literacy Specialists (ELS), Researchers (about 2% each)

Within these groupings, 22% were from outside regions (Wellington, Halton, Hamilton, Haldimand-Norfolk and Brantford)

The **conference committee** consisted of 6 individuals:

- Mary Trottier, ELS in the Region of Waterloo (Co-Chair)
- Gabriele Croft, SLP from KidsAbility, (CoChair)
- Kim Krueger-Kischak (Strong Start, Region of Waterloo Libraries),
- Lorri Sauve from Project Read Family Literacy Network,
- Erin Cameron of Conestoga College ECE faculty
- Samantha Burns Harper of the Conestoga College Professional Resource Centre (PRC).

The partnership with the PRC was highly valued due to the economic benefits afforded by “at cost” printing and catering, and “no-cost” use of building facilities and technology. In addition, 8 student volunteers assisted on the day of conference.

The **program** included:

- 1 keynote presenter – Donna Messer, founder of ConnectUs Canada
- 14 presentations including 20 presenters
- 20 vendors of literacy materials

The **format** of the day was as follows:

- **8:00-8:45am** Registration, coffee, morning snacks
- **8:45-9:45am** Keynote Presenter: Donna Messer, Connect Us Canada “*Getting Connected Effectively for Early Literacy Learning*”
- **9:45-10:10am** Coffee Break – Networking , shop among the vendors
- **10:10-12:10pm** Morning Presentations (7 pre-selected options)
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- **12:10 – 1:00pm** Lunch
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- **1:00-2:00pm** Round Table and Panel Discussion
“*Where do we all fit in with early literacy learning?*”
- **2:00-2:20pm** Break
- **2:20-3:25pm** Afternoon Presentations (7 pre-selected options)
- **3:30pm** Evaluation/Gift

Evaluations were provided following the individual workshops and these results were shared with presenters. In addition a full conference evaluation was conducted with the following highlights summarized:

1. Organization of the conference:
79% were “very satisfied”
(100% were somewhat-very satisfied)
2. Conference facilities:
74% were “very satisfied”
(99% were somewhat-very satisfied.)
3. Relevancy of conference topics:
74% rated as very relevant
(94% were somewhat-very relevant)
4. Cost of Conference
94% rated as somewhat-very reasonably priced
5. Keynote Presenter
94% enjoyed the keynote
6. Interest in future conference hosted by ELAWR?
99% said “yes”

Regarding the **round table** discussion:

- Participants for the most part enjoyed the round table as it provided an opportunity to network and learn about other community programs, challenges and successes. Frequently made comments included: “Very good to hear viewpoints of all the different professionals in the community, learn about others’

successes and challenges”; “It was nice to hear from different perspectives and connect those ideas. It was a great idea to discuss ways we can strengthen and work with literacy.”

- Many participants felt that more time could be allotted for this type of discussion.
- Details of the round table discussions are available in a separate “Round Table Report.”

Next steps:

- Identify objectives for work of ELAWR using information learned from the conference
- Develop Policies/Procedures from the conference experience
- Determine timelines for future conferences and other educational events (e.g. Literacy Cafes, other forums)

Summarized by: Gabriele S. Croft, SLP, KidsAbility
Chair, Early Literacy Alliance of Waterloo Region
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