



Macaulay Today

Helping children succeed—today and in the future

It Takes a Team to Make a Difference

Many families in our Home Visiting Program face complex challenges that “take a team” effort. Macaulay Supervisor, Lois Nuk, described one family’s struggle to get appropriate support for their young child who had special needs. Very new to Canada, they connected with one of Macaulay’s staff shortly after their child was sent home from kindergarten because of unmanageable behaviour.

Little “Alex” is an example of a child whose living situation compounded his developmental challenges and it took a team effort – family, Macaulay, Public Health, School and Children’s Mental Health – to finally come up with a right mix of solutions – for Alex and his family. Alex arrived in Canada with his mother, never having met his father or the other members of his extended family with whom he would share a small apartment. Alex’s behaviour at this point was unmanageable and the extended family responded with ridicule and verbal abuse. Mom, in desperation, used the parenting techniques she was familiar with from her own childhood: physical punishment which only escalated Alex’s aggression.

Initial screening by Macaulay suggested that Alex had significant needs and would need extra help in school. However, without a formal diagnosis, the family kept running into closed doors. It took several attempts and considerable determination by Alex’s parents, Home Visitor and Public Health Nurse. Finally, with a proper and accurate assessment of Asperger’s and ADHD, Alex was able to get an appropriate

school placement.

Macaulay’s home visitor also worked with Alex’s family around how to manage her outbursts. She taught them how to use positive discipline strategies, set limits and follow through on expectations. This support helped transform a tense and frustrating situation into a much more positive relationship. As Lois Nuk describes it, “it was a light turned on” as the family experienced a new and more effective way of connecting with Alex.

Alex’s story is a testament to Macaulay’s commitment to building strong partnerships and to helping parents develop the skills, knowledge and confidence they need to resolve very complex problems.



Message from the Executive Director

Welcome to our spring edition of *Macaulay Today*. Eighty years ago, Macaulay began as a nursery in the home of Mrs Hazel Macaulay. Since then, we have become a full-service agency that families rely on for a range of child development and family support services. Our 5 areas of focus (Early learning and care; Family education and support; Inclusion and special needs; Skills for success; and Community building) reflect our goal of providing comprehensive and seamless supports to children as they grow.

We believe that children thrive in nurturing, resilient and informed families. In this edition, we are highlighting Macaulay services that build parenting knowledge, skills and confidence. We hope this newsletter inspires you to join our cause: giving children the skills they need to succeed. Please consider an agency membership or join us at our AGM on June 12.

Sharon Filger

Every Child Belongs

Macaulay's Special Needs Resource Consultants believe that "Every Child Belongs". This City of Toronto-funded program aims to ensure that every child, including those with special needs or challenging behaviors, can have their needs met in a neighbourhood child care program. Here is one example of how this Macaulay program impacts children, parents and childcare programs.

"Rosa" was 3 years old with developmental delays. She couldn't sit still for circle time, screamed when she was upset and was highly disruptive to the rest of the children. Most worrying was her tendency to try to run away when she was very distressed. Her childcare centre began to wonder if Rosa could continue to attend the program and this created a crisis for her family.

One of Macaulay's consultants, Toni Giovanna was brought in to assist. He worked with the child care staff, teaching them how to observe and analyze the difficult behaviors. The teachers soon realized that Rosa tried to run away during transition times that can be overwhelming. With Toni, the staff identified ways to keep her calm. Even the other children helped. They learned to be more patient with Rosa's outbursts and to take her by the hand to calm her during noisy times. Before long, Rosa was able to sit longer during meals and circle time. She was calmer and more independent. Most important, Rosa stopped trying to run away. The other children began to enjoy her talent for imaginative games and her very funny sense of humour.

Toni's role extended to providing direct support to her parents. Rosa's parents recognized that she had special needs that would need attention beyond participation in the child care centre. Toni worked with the family to prepare for school in the

fall. She led a case conference with the child care and school personnel to determine the best placement and to arrange bussing. In the summer, she will work with Rosa's mother to set up a new school routine and help Rosa prepare for her new adventure.

Everyone benefited from Toni's consultation service. The Child Care teachers learned new skills; Rosa learned new ways to manage her feelings and succeeded in being a part of a child care program. Rosa's peers learned to be patient and to accept someone with different needs. The school is already prepared with appropriate supports to welcome Rosa in the fall. And Rosa's family has a more comprehensive plan for supporting Rosa through the next stages of her development.

Macaulay Special Needs Resource Consultants:

- Consult, mentor and role model so staff can actively include children with special needs
- Assess children's strengths and challenges
- Provide professional development to child care staff, providers and parents
- Help parents navigate the system of services for children with special needs

NEW Special Needs Program

Macaulay uses many strategies so that children with special needs can participate in integrated community programs. Some children have extraordinary needs and require special programming or settings in order to participate. Parents of children with these significant challenges seek group support and safe places where they can explore "regular" parenting concerns with their unique perspective. Together with the support of Toronto Children's Services, Macaulay is piloting a new Early Years Program for children with special needs and their parents/caregivers.

This 6 week, play-based program was developed by Macaulay Program Worker, Shahla Yaghoobian. Smaller group settings provide a calmer environment for anxious or aggressive children to build skills and prepare for participation in an integrated program. At the same time, focused workshops provide a platform for parents to share concerns and learn practical strategies that address their unique challenges.

Writer: Valerie McDonald

Other Contributors: Heather Anderson-Ross, Sandra Aretusi, Beata Cwiek, Sharon Filger, Shana Gelbart, Joanne Long, Tina Osahan

Storybook Dads

Not all fathers can be at home for story time and some don't live full-time with their children. Macaulay's new pilot program offered a group of fathers the chance to learn how to build their children's literacy skills while strengthening their relationship at the same time.

Working in partnership with Toronto Public Library (TPL) and facilitators from the More Than a Haircut program, Macaulay's Lorraine Kirlaw led the program with a diverse group of fathers.

Facilitator Dalton Higgins showed the men how to choose a book that reflected the lives, culture and interests of their children. The TPL staff explained the importance of reading and Lorraine showed the fathers how to engage young children through pictures and common language.



Fathers chose books from a selection donated by Macaulay's Book Nook.

Dub poet Peculiar I taught the men to use tone, expression and sound effects to excite and interest the children. Finally, each father recorded a story on a CD to give to his child, along with the book. Now, whether they are home or away the children can have

story time with their dads.

The program was a hit! The fathers developed the confidence and skills needed to approach reading with their children. In addition, Lorraine says, Storybook Dads proved to be a great starting point for fathers who were reluctant to attend programs. Most of the participants have already signed up for workshops in the spring, eager to build on their new parenting skills.

Celebrate your Dad this Father's Day with a gift to Macaulay's Literacy Fund

Give your dad the gift that keeps on giving by supporting Macaulay's innovative programs and services that provide literacy rich experiences for children and families.

For more information, please contact: Shana Gelbart (416) 789-7441 ext. 250 or sgelbart@macaulaycentre.org or visit www.macaulaycentre.org to make your gift. *We will send a personalized tribute card to your dad!*

Macaulay Supports Early Literacy:

- Each year, over 10,000 books are distributed through Macaulay's Book Nook
- Macaulay Early Literacy Specialists provide over 1,000 hours of training and workshops each year aimed at strengthening, supporting and promoting effective literacy and language development for children 0-6

Did you know that a child's knowledge of songs and rhymes at age 3 is a strong predictor of his/her ability to read by age 6?

Knowledge is Power: Training Parent Advocates

Many parents experience great frustration and anxiety in their role as advocates for their children. Ontario's service and education systems are complex and resources are scarce. So the pressure is on parents to figure it all out and to effectively represent their children's best interests. That is why Macaulay recently launched a new initiative to support parents in their role as advocate for their children. *Parents as Partners Workshops*, developed by The Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders (OAFCCD), are being offered to parents across the agency, in English and in Spanish. The workshops prepare families to plan the

transition to kindergarten, find information on services they need, and understand education terminology. A "Communicating for Success" module uses fun activities to teach parents how to talk to school and other professional staff, how to make effective phone calls and how to prepare for meetings. They learn how to plan ahead to prepare their children for new routines and how to anticipate challenges. Two of the modules offer specific information and training about special education and the parents' role in that system.

There's No Place Like Home

Thank you to everyone who supported Macaulay's 2013 Theatre Night

Thanks to the support of over 150 patrons along with our corporate and individual sponsors, Macaulay's 2013 Theatre Night was a resounding success raising over \$30,000. We hope you enjoyed your evening with us, but most of all, we hope you left with the knowledge that your support will make a lasting difference to the many children and families who rely on the proceeds of this event. Together, we are building a brighter future for children and families—and in the words of Dorothy, there's no place like home!



We extend our sincerest thanks to all our patrons



United Way
Member Agency

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