

# big PLANS in print

Connecting Big Plans' Parents to their Communities

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## Learning Starts At Home

*Helping to educate and improve literacy in families*

Before Alina and Zain\* became involved with the **Learning Starts At Home** program they did not realize that every day activities such as taking their children to the grocery store, driving their children to school, and having them set the table for dinner were all opportunities to increase the literacy skills of their family. David and Linda are not alone. Many families today are not familiar with the variety of ways they can increase their family literacy beyond reading books.

### What is Family Literacy?

*"An initiative that promotes the importance of reading and learning together as a family. It encompasses all the ways parents, children and extended family members use literacy skills to accomplish day-to-day tasks and activities at home and in their community. It includes making drawings to share ideas, writing messages, keeping records, making lists, reading and following instructions, sharing stories and ideas through conversation, reading and writing. Family literacy also has to do with adults being literacy role models for their children."*

ABC Canada Literacy Foundation

*"Family literacy refers to the way parents, children and extended family members use literacy at home and in their community. Family literacy occurs naturally during the routines of daily living and helps adults and children get things done."*

Centre for Family Literacy, Edmonton

The CanLearn Society (formerly known as the Calgary Learning Centre) realizes that the home is the first and most important learning environment for the children, and parents are key partners in the literacy development and education of their children. During the first years of life, children's experiences with

language and literacy begin to form a basis for their later reading success. Research consistently demonstrates that the more children know about language and literacy before they arrive at school, the better they are equipped to succeed. Knowledge and love for literacy can develop only through experience and children's learning and literacy efforts are best supported by their family in their home environment.

For this reason, the CanLearn Society is excited to be able to offer the **Learning Starts at Home Program** to educate families about early learning, child development and connect them with community resources. It is available at no cost to families with preschool children who may not be able to easily access services in the community. This includes newcomers to Canada and even those that are simply home with their pre-schoolers. **Learning Starts at Home** facilitators go into the home for 12 sessions and each session is approximately one hour long.

Nada Jerkovic, Manager of Family Literacy at the CanLearn Society, explains, "The Learning Starts at Home Program strives to serve families who face unique challenges when raising young children. These include parents who must acclimate to a new country and

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Parents Learning About Needs and Skills

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[www.bigplans.org](http://www.bigplans.org)

*Learning Starts at Home continued from page 1 ...*

culture, learn English and learn how to navigate Canadian education, health or social service systems; families who have few literacy materials at home and parents who, despite their best intentions, are not able to provide the needed support for their children as they themselves often have literacy barriers (limited employment and income opportunities and many other quality of life issues)."

With such a variety of backgrounds and cultures in our society, Learning Starts at Home is a very flexible and diverse program. Kim Parke, Family Literacy Facilitator for **Learning Starts At Home**, describes what a session may involve, "Learning Starts at Home is truly unique in how it responds to the goals and needs of each individual in the family. Each of our 12 visits will look completely different. During one week, we may introduce the alphabet or colours or shapes and the following week we may respond to a parent's request to learn how to make pizza dough or apple pie. As an illustration of the responsiveness of our program, this week a family needed to decorate a pumpkin for the child's kindergarten pumpkin contest. The child wanted to create a "Spiderman" pumpkin and we planned and painted and had a lot of fun."



How is learning to make playdough, apple pie, pizza dough or pumpkin decorating family literacy? Kim explains, "It all comes down to language and communication in the home. Before beginning an activity such as making pizza dough, a parent might ask her child to get the mixing bowl from the cupboard and a mixing spoon from the drawer. Mom will read the recipe and learn that she needs to get flour, yeast and baking powder from the pantry. Together they will measure out the ingredients, add the water and stir up the dough. And all the while, there

is conversation. What a child may learn from an activity such as this is that there is a process to baking or cooking by following a recipe and that following a recipe requires reading. What a parent may learn from such an activity is the confidence to try something new. It is also an opportunity to learn new words and enhance her literacy while doing something enjoyable."

With the help of **Learning Starts At Home**, Alina and Zain learned that a trip to the grocery store could involve their child helping to make the list with words or pictures and counting out money to make the purchase; driving around the city could become an opportunity to read signs and licence plates together or sing songs on the radio; and setting the table for dinner could be a chance to count spoons or recognize patterns.

*Many studies have shown that improving parents' skills directly and positively affects the language development of children (Literacy Skills for the Knowledge Society, IALS 1997, page 62). With this in mind, both children and parents are learners in the **Learning Starts At Home** program.*

### **Interested in Learning Starts at Home for your Family?**

- Learning Starts at Home facilitators go into the home for 12 sessions and work with a parent and child/children
- Each session is approximately 1 hour. This time is flexible depending on the age and needs of the child and families.
- Learning Starts at Home facilitators share their knowledge on literacy, learning, child development, parenting and strategies and ideas that parents can use to help their children with their literacy and learning.
- Learning Starts at Home works with families that have preschool children with a priority on ages 3-5. Older and younger siblings are also welcome to participate in the program.
- Learning Starts at Home offers in home support that will assist parents to enhance their children's early literacy and learning.
- Sessions will include time for parents to talk with a facilitator and for parents and children to learn, play and have fun together!

**For more information and to register, please contact Nada Jerkovic, Manager, Family Literacy at 403 686 9300 x 128 or email at [nada.jerkovic@calgarylearningcentre.com](mailto:nada.jerkovic@calgarylearningcentre.com)**

*\*Names in this story have been changed.*

## **make your own memory game • shapes**

Cut out 2 of each shape: heart, circle, square, rectangle, triangle, star, oval.

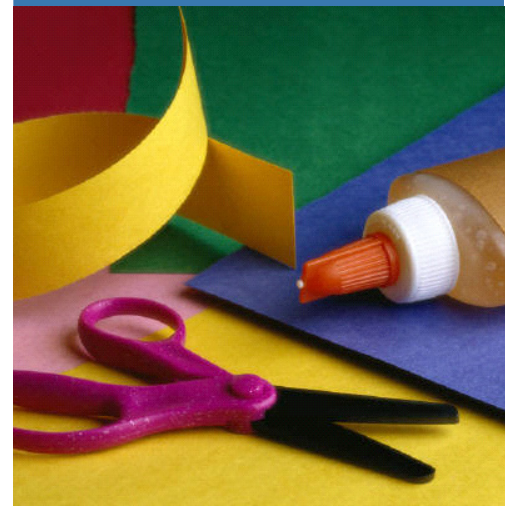
Glue them onto squares cut from an old cereal box or other cardboard you may have around the house.

Mix up the pictures and turn them upside down.

Each player turns over 2 squares at a time and tries to find matching pairs.

Each player should say what the shape is each time they turn a square over.

You can make shape, colour, number memory games. You can even use the metal lids from orange juice concentrate and stickers from the dollar store to personalize your child's memory game.



**Most of all...have fun!**



**Calgary Learning Centre**

changing lives through learning



# Parent Link Centres

Supporting parents and their children

**What is a Parent Link Centre?** Parent Link Centres are a province-wide network of 46 family resource centres that support Alberta's parents as their children's first and most influential teacher. A Parent Link Centre provides parents and their children with supports to ensure that the children come to school ready to learn and ensure that parents have the supports needed to help their children develop and fulfill their potential. Parents will be able to access information about community services, obtain referrals, and meet other parents, children, and families, while taking part in quality early learning activities at a Parent Link Centre.

Every centre is uniquely designed to meet the needs of families living in each community and offers a range of free services, which include: play-based learning activities for children and parents; parent education including the Triple P – Positive Parenting Program (*watch future issues of Big Plans in Print for more on this program*); toy-lending and resource libraries; and information about other resources in the community. Parent Link Centres also offer family

support services such as nutrition programs, support groups, clothing exchanges. Parent Link Centres are specifically designed for young children ages 0-6, by giving them a place to laugh, learn and play during their early years. The provincial framework ensures that all parents have access to similar types of services and the same standards of excellence in each Centre.

Included in the many services offered by Parent Link Centres is the opportunity for parents to monitor and support the development of their children. It's exciting and rewarding to see your child learn and grow. Just like regular visits to the eye doctor or to the dentist, it's important to have a developmental check-up for your child. With the assistance of a Parent Link facilitator, parents and their children can participate in a simple screening that captures their child's stages of development. The facilitator then can provide you with ideas to continue to support your child's healthy growth and development.

*Stay tuned to Big Plans in Print for an inside look at some of Calgary Parent Link Centres and the programs and services they offer.*



## Triple P Seminar in November

**"Raising Resilient Children"**

**Thursday, November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012**

**3:00 pm - 4:00 pm**

Bow Valley College  
332--6th Avenue Southeast, Room #N 252

*Spaces are limited. For more information or to register for these free parenting workshops please call 403- 262-0497. All participants are welcome to attend, however please not that this program will be written and presented in advanced English.*

## Calgary Parent Link Centre Locations

**Calgary is home to  
seven Parent Link  
Centres:**

### Aboriginal Parent Link Centre

Phone: (403) 240-4642  
19 Erinwoods Drive

### Awo Taan Healing Lodge Parent Link Centre

Phone: (403) 531-1880  
#100, 1603-10 Avenue Southwest  
Website: <http://www.awotaan.org/>

### Family Pride Parent Link Centre

Phone: (403) 288-1446  
3940 - 73 Street NW (located inside  
Bowcroft Elementary School)  
Website: [www.parentlinkalberta.ca/familypride.asp](http://www.parentlinkalberta.ca/familypride.asp)

### Hand in Hand Parent Link Centre

Phone: (403) 293-5467  
2623 - 56 Street NE

### North Central Family Connections Parent Link Centre

Phone: (403) 275-6668  
520-78 Avenue Northwest  
Website: [www.weconnectyou.ca](http://www.weconnectyou.ca)

### New Family Place Parent Link Centre Outreach

Phone: (403) 266-6686  
1410 - 1st St SW

### Parent Link Corridor – YWCA of Calgary

Serving residents in the downtown core  
Phone: (403) 262-0497. Room  
226, 320 – 5th Avenue Southeast

**For more information on these  
locations and more please visit  
[www.parentlinkalberta.ca](http://www.parentlinkalberta.ca).**

**Watch future issues of Big Plans  
in Print for an inside look at  
some of these Centres.**

# Parent-Child Mother Goose Programs®

*Sharing the power of rhymes, songs and stories with families*

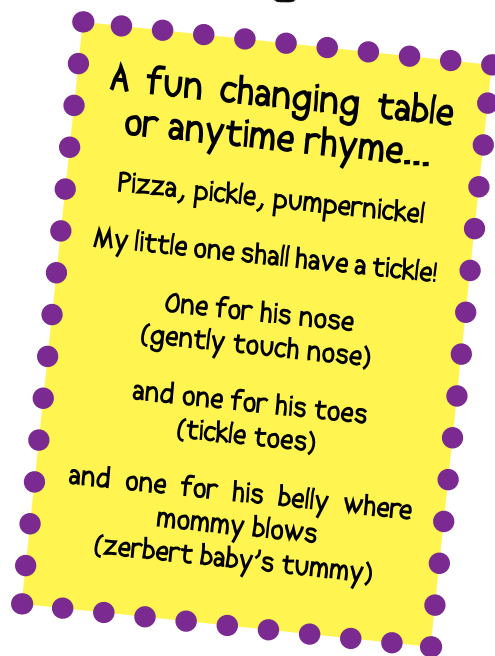
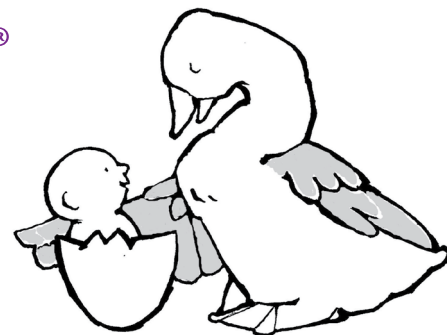
There is nothing more important than the bond between parent and child. The Parent-Child Mother Goose Program® builds on this essential relationship and gives parents the tools that make daily life with a young child more fulfilling. The Parent-Child Mother Goose Program® started as a grass roots movement in Toronto in the 1980's and has expanded throughout Canada and internationally. There are many different agencies in Calgary that offer the program including the Calgary Public Library, Families Matter, Parent Link Centres and Ready 4 Learning.

The Parent-Child Mother Goose Program® is committed to inclusive services that provide a climate of mutual respect and understanding. Welcoming diverse cultures, languages, family situations, physical and mental abilities, and more; some Calgary agencies even offer this program in multiple languages.

Rhymes, songs and stories are beautiful, practical tools that make daily life with a baby or young child easier and more joyful. In the Parent-Child Mother Goose Program®, parents, their babies, and young children (newborn to age four) come together as a group and experience the pleasure and power of using rhymes, songs, and stories. The program is oral and the material is taught to the parents so that they can use it in everyday situations and routines with their children.

In addition, the program is a wonderful opportunity to build community among parents with young children and for children to develop language and social skills. There is no cost to the parents who participate.

To find a program held in your area, visit these websites: [www.calgarypubliclibrary.com](http://www.calgarypubliclibrary.com), [FamiliesMatter.ca](http://FamiliesMatter.ca), [parentlinkalberta.ca](http://parentlinkalberta.ca), and [Ready4Learning.org](http://Ready4Learning.org)



## Who Benefits From This Program?

### Parents

- gain confidence as learners and parents
- learn appropriate alternatives to physical control
- learn ways of handling stressful times
- develop a network of friendship and support

### Children

- show a marked improvement in language, pre-literacy and cognitive skills
- gain self-esteem
- develop social skills

### Community Services and Agencies

- can effectively deliver their mandate(s) for families with young children
- build and strengthen their communities
- provide a safe entry point for other services
- provide transferable skills for staff to use in other service areas

### Parents and Children

- experience the spark of delight and magic that comes from enjoying a favourite rhyme or song together
- learn and keep a repertoire of rhymes, songs and stories
- enjoy strengthened bonding
- These skills, pleasures and insights are taken home and shared with older children and often with the other parent and with grandparents. The whole family benefits.



For more information or to find a program in your area, visit: <http://www.nationalpcmgp.ca>

## Share the MAGIC!

Many children in Calgary have few books to call their own... so Share the Magic can help. If you are from a high needs area of Calgary, you can arrange for a Share the Magic volunteer to visit your preschool or daycare. The volunteer will perform a 20 minute story time and will bring two new or gently used books for each of the children to take home and keep. More than 4,000 books are distributed to more than 2,000 children yearly by Share the Magic and these good quality, gently used books are received through donations.

If you would like Share the Magic to visit your preschool or daycare, please contact Marilyn Martin, Share the Magic Coordinator at 403 686 9300.

