

Bowness Montgomery Parent-Child Mother Goose Program

CHST 4403- Community Based Research

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Introduction

The United Way of Calgary had made a commitment in 2003 to poverty reduction in Calgary through its investments in community programs for economically challenged Calgarians, to address long-term and systemic issues. The Bowness Montgomery Early Literacy Initiative was launched in 2004 by the United Way of Calgary. The programs are a community-based development designed to impact school readiness, employability and eventually income through improvement of early literacy practices and conditions in the communities of Bowness, Montgomery, and Greenwood Village (Ripples of Change, 2007). One of the programs created to enhance early literacy is Parent-Child Mother Goose. This program takes place in the Bowness and Montgomery communities because there is a need due to high rates of single parent homes and low income families. The Parent-Child Mother Goose program works at multiple levels including individual, organizational and community, to construct with community schools, pre-schools and day homes, with a core focus on early childhood literacy. The program also increases awareness on parenting issues and support, literacy resources and the community (Ripples of Change, 2007).

The program is funded by Allan Markin and Jackie Flanagan who both grew up in the Bowness community and wanted to give back. Parent-Child Mother Goose program takes place mornings afternoons and evening throughout the week to accommodate individual families' needs. During the one hour sessions parents and their children come

together to sing songs, tell rhymes and share stories. A main focus of the program is to create safe and open environments for parents to build strong relationships with their children.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of our study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the Parent-Child Mother Goose programs and the effects they are having on childcare centers and day homes within the Bowness /Montgomery community. An evaluation of implementation to discover the skills used by Early Childcare Practitioners has been conducted. The skills and strategies they have developed through participation in the Parent-Child Mother Goose program were analyzed to determine how these skills are aiding their own personal practices.

Definition of Terms

Early Childcare Practitioner. is a facilitator of learning who strives to provide quality developmental experiences for young children throughout observations and program planning to enhance their individual development.

Early literacy. “Literacy has come to mean reading, writing, listening, speaking, gaining meaning from pictures by viewing, and communicating ideas by visually representing them” (Bennett-Armistead, 2007, p. 10).

Qualitative research: “is the study of a problem in depth and in detail from the perspective of the research participants in order to understand the meanings people give to situations and experiences. In qualitative research the data are textual rather than numerical” (Westerfelt, Dietz, 2005, p.93).

Limitations of the Study

Some of the obstacles that we faced when performing this study were the small number of participants who have participated in the program and who are currently working in childcare. Time was a contributing factor; we were unable to facilitate a focus group which would have provided us with more detailed feedback.

Significance of the Study

Our research is significant in determining the effectiveness of the Parent-Child Mother Goose program on practitioners and their professional practice. This is a pilot research project to see if it is benefiting the community and if so it will result in the development of more Parent-Child Mother Goose programs throughout the city of Calgary in low income areas. This study is hoping to provide research that suggests that more Early Childcare Practitioners would benefit in their own practices from participating in the Parent Child Mother Goose program. In order to receive additional funding for the program we are hoping to prove the importance of early literacy and how it builds cohesiveness between children and parents.

Research Question

The main issue being targeted was to research the impact on Early Childcare Practitioners practice with young children who have participated in community Parent-Child Mother Goose Programs? Through feedback from early childcare practitioners we were able to determine the positive effects the program has on the community as a whole.

Literature Review

The Bowness Montgomery Early Literacy Initiative is a project which explores the importance of positive parent-child interactions in the critical early stages of a child's life. Educating parents, caregivers and professionals on the importance of early literacy is one of the main goals in hopes of decreasing poverty and helping to provide positive futures for children. This literature review will provide a brief overview about The Parent-Child Mother Goose Programs, the importance of early literacy and the impact that family literacy on a child's life.

A key element of breaking the cycle of poverty for children and families involves focusing on early childhood development as an effective long-term *poverty prevention* strategy. By the time children get to kindergarten, it is possible to identify those who have not had secure, nurturing, and stimulating early childhood experiences. Such children are less ready for school than others - intellectually, socially, emotionally and physically. (Ripples of Change, 2008, p. 6)

Parent-Child Mother Goose Program

Parent-Child Mother Goose Program is a program in which parents and their children learn to create positive relationships through interactions, songs, rhymes, stories and dancing. "The shared words, actions, images and feelings of rhymes and

stories enhanced the relationship between parents and their children and gave them long-lasting resources” (Parent-Child Mother Goose Program, 2009). P-CMGP was created by Barry Dickson, Joan Bodger, Celia Lottridge and Katherine Grier, in 1986, in Toronto, Ontario. Initially the program was put in place to meet the needs of struggling families who needed support in raising their children and to create positive home environments. Throughout the last 20 years the program has spread across Canada meeting the needs of many diverse families and is continuing to connect with people who need support in building strong healthy relationships with their children.

Some of the benefits of the program for infants along with young children are: enhances language development, promotes effective communication skills, builds fine motor development through actions, supports social skills between children, enhances imagination, and encourages early literacy. Parent-Child Mother Goose allows children to interact with not only their own parents but other adults who can model positive behaviour. The facilitators use their education to be effective role models for the parents showing them useful communication skills, how to build confidence and valuable disciplinary techniques. Not only is the program important in the development of a child, it is also important in teaching parents how to build strong relationships with their children, positive exchanges of communication and building support networks to foster their needs outside the Parent-Child Mother Goose program. Parents who attend this program learn social skills, create networks within their community, learn ways to interact with their child orally through stories, songs and rhymes, and build confidence in their ability to parent. “Parents gain skills and confidence which can enable them to create positive family patterns during their children's crucial early years, and give their

children healthy early experiences with language and communication” (Parent-Child Mother Goose Program, 2009). Building strong healthy families helps build effective functioning communities in which everyone can succeed. Although Parent-Child Mother Goose is Canadian wide, there are policies which credited programs need to follow when offering Parent-Child Mother Goose with in their community. One policy is that the lessons concentrate on teaching the parents, while the children participate according to their developmental abilities (Parent-Child Mother Goose, 2009). This is important because all the teaching that is done throughout the sessions is intended to educate the parents with ideas to use in their own homes. All interactions are done without using books or props, meaning that all stories are presented orally. The environment is supportive, laid back, and welcoming to ensure that everyone is given the opportunity to learn as well as grow. According to the program facilitators of Parent-Child Mother Goose, each session must involve two facilitators who are trained to ensure high quality experiences. While this program is available for anyone in the community the target groups for these programs are low income, immigrant, and high risk families.

Through observation, Parent-Child Mother Goose training is also available for caregivers and early childcare practitioners to strengthen and develop new skills to use in their placements to enhance the development of the children in which they care for. These sessions teach how to effectively use songs, rhymes, and stories orally which adds depth to one`s “tool box”, educates about the importance of early literacy as well as, how to model and provide healthy positive relationships for the families. Many families may be unable to attend Parent-Child Mother Goose Program or are unable to see the benefits in which this program provides for families. This is why it is extremely

important that the caregivers who are caring for these children do have a strong understanding of the importance of early literacy and adult-child interactions. It is our understanding that as caregivers for young children, it is important to be able to support the needs they have which may be neglected in their home and teach them positive interactions which will help them in their future development.

Through our observations at the Parent-Child Mother Goose Program, it displays very interactive sessions, everyone participating in the activities and parents not only interacting with their own child but also with surrounding children. The interactions that take place between children and infants are remarkable in that they model and learn so much from each other. The program facilitators have notified that the program usually runs for about 10 weeks at a time for an hour and its location varies depending on the targeted high risk communities. After speaking with one of the facilitators during an observation session, they had commented on seeing tremendous growth within their parent and the child. Examples of this would be in the parents' ability to bring their own ideas into the room and share them in front of the group as well as the confidence they portray when dealing with their children, with in the room. The environment is very positive in that the facilitators focus on the strengths each child possesses. These strategies make the room at ease and allow individuals to feel comfortable, which in turn promotes active participation.

One of the main facilitators had suggested that many of the families who consistently partake in the program are the families who need the program the least because they are less at risk; where the families who need the support and experience tend to participate in only half of the sessions. For many of the families, it is extremely

positive when they are attending half of the program sessions because every day is a struggle and being able to show some initiative builds confidence which in turn points them in a positive direction. Most of the participants in Parent-Child Mother Goose program are mothers or female caregivers of the children but in some circumstances a father will bring his child which changes the dynamics of the group tremendously in a constructive way. The facilitators promote both parents involvement in Parent-Child Mother Goose because it allows both parents to learn how to interact and build strong healthy relationships with their children.

Throughout the session the facilitators use a variety of songs, stories and rhymes to meet the needs of the group who are attending the class that specific day. If the participants are mostly babies then less movement around the room is relevant and the stories are shorter and more repetitious; if the group is older then they share longer more advanced stories with more group interactions. The parents in the room are encouraged to practice the activities at home and bring their own ideas to the program and in many cases the older children are able to teach the facilitators. This teaches children to build confidence in their abilities to work in large groups but it also encourages the importance of sharing new ideas which again build strong communities.

Early Literacy

The purpose of this section is to provide information about the importance and benefits of early literacy in young children. Over the years the definition of literacy has been changing. At one point literacy meant having the ability to read enough to get by

in life and work. Today, society's demands have drastically changed. "Literacy has come to mean reading, writing, listening, speaking, gaining meaning from pictures by viewing, and communicating ideas by visually representing them" (Bennett-Armistead, 2007, p. 10).

The current concept of literacy involves knowing more than the alphabet and being able to pronounce the words; in fact there are many children who can do those things but cannot understand what they are reading, communicate effectively through writing, or use language to meet their needs. It is believed that children start to learn and acquire new skills right at birth. Even when babies babble and coo that is their way of communicating and expressing themselves. When children are exposed to a literacy-rich environment, such as day cares, homes and preschools the opportunity for learning is much greater. "When an infant shows excitement over pictures in a storybook, when a two-year-old scribbles with a crayon, when a four-year-old points out letters in a street sign-all of these actions signal a child's growing literacy development" (Burns, Griffins & Snow, 1999, p. 15). The more children are familiar about their environment and the purpose of reading, the more prepared and advantaged they are when starting kindergarten.

"Research reveals that the children most at risk for reading difficulties in the primary grades are those who began school with less verbal skill, less phonological awareness, less letter knowledge, and less familiarity with the basic purposes and mechanisms of reading" (Burns, Griffins & Snow, 1999, p. 5). To help children succeed in their older years, educational intervention starts at the time of birth with the parents in the home. There are many things parents can do to promote early literature in children.

It has been said that “Learning starts at home, and no matter what kind of schooling option you choose, you are your child’s first and most important educator” (Fuller, 2004, p.12).

There are many things parents can do with their children at home; parents can read books with their children, read letters from family members, have their child to label objects in books, comment on characters in book, point at pictures in books and give it a meaning, listen to the child’s stories and read aloud (Bennett-Armistead, 2007). When parents are involved in their child’s life from a younger age, research proves that children have a better outcome educationally and economically. “More than fifty research studies show that when parents get involved in their child’s learning their kids are more motivated, get their needs met more effectively, and score significantly higher on achievement tests than kids whose parents are not involved” (Fuller, 2004, p. 12).

Educators and society want to prepare children so they are able to succeed in the future, not just get by. “Research consistently demonstrates that the more children know about language and literacy before they arrive at school the better equipped they are to succeed in reading” (Burns, Griffins & Snow, 1999, p. 6). It is said the best time to share books with children is during babyhood, even when they are as young as six weeks; this way when they are old enough to start preschool they have acquired or even gone beyond the basic literacy and language skills. Reading to young children at a young age builds on their vocabulary, language skills and it gives them an opportunity to learn about the world around them. They understand the concept of the book, and even though they may not be able to read the entire book, they learn something from pointing at the pictures, sounding out the words, being read to, and they

learn about letters and words. Young children are very enthusiastic when it comes to reading, writing and talking. The more parents read with their children, the more children will gain in life and the world. Early literacy is being emphasized in society today, professionals, educators and parents understand the benefits of early literacy. Early literacy is an attempt by families, teachers, schools and organizations to improve child health and development, educational attainment and economic well being (Investing in our Children, 1997). It has been said that there are many children in America who cannot read; they do not have the basic skills when they enter preschool or kindergarten. Children coming from one of the richest countries in the world should not be suffering educationally. To survive in today's world, young children need to acquire and be taught the basic fundamental skills to get ahead in life.

There are five reasons why parents should start so early with literacy:

“Literacy can enrich your child’s daily life” (Bennett-Armistead, 2007, p. 15). Without knowing words, names, labels and pictures, it is impossible to communicate, one would not know a great deal about their child if they were not able to express themselves with words.

“Literacy can be a source of great joy for your child” (Bennett-Armistead, 2007, p. 15). Imagine living a life without all the fairy tale books children have read and grown up on. As a society we want children to experience the same feeling, act out scenarios through imaginative play and being able to tell one about their favourite books.

“Literacy provides a way for your child to learn about the world” (Bennett-Armistead, 2007, p. 16). Books teach children more than parents and teachers can

provide during the younger years, children learn about the moon, animals, colors, farm- they get a better understanding of the world around them, both mentally and verbally.

“Literacy knowledge is an excellent predictor of a child’s later school achievement” (Bennett-Armistead, 2007, p. 16), Research reveals that children who start early have a better outcome in life, economically and educationally. Children who know the alphabet and sounds have developed skills for kindergarten and preschool, they are far more likely to be better readers and have richer vocabulary.

Oral language cannot provide the same experience for young children, children gain much more language, vocabulary and understanding through printed materials, it also provides a fun and entertaining way of learning.

Promoting early literacy has proved to be beneficial for young children. They develop many skills, such as, language, letters, words, understanding of the world and what is going on around them. They develop a genuine interest in books and learning. It has also been proven that children who acquire these skills earlier have a better chance of succeeding in the future. It is important to do as much as possible to prepare children before they start preschool or kindergarten. Helping to build the basic literacy is a fundamental area of development; all young children require that skill to be able to make it in today’s society.

Family Literacy

Parent- Child Mother Goose is an organization that promotes early child literacy as well as family literacy. The program operated through the Montgomery, Bowness, and Greenwood Village communities emphasizes the importance of a guardian sharing

literacy practices with their child. This section explores the importance of family literacy throughout Alberta communities.

Promoting literacy within a family structure is highly recommended for numerous reasons that benefit both the child as well as the parent. According to the Center for Family Literacy located in Edmonton, Alberta, programs surrounding engagement in reading with a child has lifelong benefits that “strengthens family structure, assists parents with their ability to support their child’s early development, supports positive parenting skills, assists in building family relationships, acts as a connecting tool linking parents who are facing similar issues and promotes links to available community resources including libraries and family centers” (Center for Family Literacy, 2007). The Center for Family Literacy was the first of its kind in Canada and operates several programs and projects regarding the importance to “build, develop, and improve literacy with families and communities” (Center for Family Literacy, 2007). The Center for Family Literacy is an example of a community organization taking action toward enhancing a child’s learning and encouraging education, with a long term goal of avoiding poverty.

A longitudinal study conducted in Calgary, Alberta in 2006 called *Family Literacy Matters: a Longitudinal Parent-Child Literacy Intervention Study* sought to understand the “effects of child literacy development, parents’ literacy development and parents’ ability to assist in the development of their children’s literacy” (Philips, 2006, p.1) through participation in the *Learning Together Program*. For the children involved, the program had a positive effect in their literacy development by improving the majority of children’s literacy from their pre-test stage. It had become apparent that a parent’s

ethnicity, native language, and education level affected their child's literacy level. "The results suggest that increasing the educational levels of parents with less than a high school education is the most effective means of increasing their literacy levels and a powerful means of increasing their children's" (Philips, 2006 p.2). Because the parent plays a role in scaffolding the child's language, assisting the parent through literacy programs indirectly affects the next generation of children. Regarding the parents' ability to assist their child in literacy driven assignments, it was discovered that by taking part in the *Learning Together Program* "parents acquired and implemented more frequent and varied literacy activities in the home" (Philips, 2006, p.3). The demonstrated parental enthusiasm and the additional improvement of literacy levels within the children, proves the need and desire for family literacy programs within Alberta. Through the study, parents felt empowered and encouraged to engage in various literature activities with their children; seventy-five percent of the parents involved requested a continuing program based around assisting and supporting their children through their ongoing learning at school. The program had not only created an increase in literacy levels but also confidence in each individual involved and only displayed positive outcomes.

"The results support ongoing family literacy programs to assist and instruct parents to maintain their significant role in the literacy development of their children" (Philips, 2006, p.3). Parent-Child Mother Goose promotes early development through their programs offered, with an emphasis on parental involvement.

It has been proven that the higher level of education can be linked to the higher level of literacy within an individual; another study analyzed family literacy in the

workplace. *From Books as Coasters to Bedtime Stories: Family Literacy in Alberta's Next Generation* was conducted in 2005 in order to gather information surrounding the measurement of "family attitudes toward literacy and to understand the effect of parents' expectations and behaviour on their children" (Pivotal Research, 2006, p.1). The research explored various parents with children under the age of eighteen, and their "literacy levels at work and at home and family literacy experiences, achievement and expectations" (Pivotal Research, 2006, p.1). Most of the participants have required job training and engaged in professional development activities such as seminars, workshops, courses, and so on. This ran parallel to the findings that most of the participants had said their parents modeled frequent reading, singing, and rhyming behaviours. It was discovered that the parents involved have "higher educational expectations for their children than their parents had of themselves" (Pivotal Research, 2006, p.4) proving that by parents increasing their child's literacy levels it is a generational benefit because their literacy expectations are passed on from generation to generation. It was also found that the respondents engaged in reading material regularly to their children more than they had received childhood reading.

In the Parent-Child Mother Goose Program, parents are interacting with their children and reciting rhymes and stories. By engaging in these activities with their children, the parents and guardians are promoting the importance of family literacy to their children that will hopefully be passed on to the next generation as well.

The importance of Family Literacy has been promoted in Alberta for a number of years. The Alberta government has implemented and funded various family literacy programs throughout the province. A few to recognize in Calgary and surrounding area

are, Family Literacy- Airdrie, Bowmont Family Literacy Project, Cross-Cultural Parent-Child Literacy Program, Pebbles in the Sand: ESL Literacy for Woman and Children, and the Magic Carpet Ride. All of these programs vary from interactive play activities and rhyme time to writing activities and parental workshops; however, all have the educational curriculums to benefit both the child and the parents. With numerous family literacy resources and parent-link centers within our city, we have adopted the concept that it takes a village to raise a child; engaging the whole community in order to support a child's development. Family Literacy programs do not only assist isolated, multi-cultural or a child with disabilities families. These programs are beneficial to the child's development as well as enhancing the relationship between parent and child.

In conclusion, the research studies explored within the literature review had expressed the importance of early literacy and family literacy on the child. Promoting literacy within the family structure has numerous benefits that were uncovered within this review. Parent-Child Mother Goose program is following these actions in hopes to create positive long-term effects. Calgary had made a goal of reducing poverty within the city and by implementing family and early literacy programs such as Parent-Child Mother Goose, a child's education is increased creating a better job expectation and thus creating the ability to reduce poverty. Parent-Child Mother Goose is a valuable program within our community.

Methods

Research Question

The main issue being targeted was to research the impact on Early Childcare Practitioners practice with young children who have participated in community Parent-Child Mother Goose Programs? Through feedback from early childcare practitioners we were able to determine the positive effects the program has on the community as a whole.

Methodology

Our research methodology consists of qualitative research collected through surveys. Our intension was to create a focus group to gather more detailed information but time prevented this from happening.

We distributed nine surveys to Early Childcare Practitioners who participated in the Parent-Child Mother Goose program, through our program coordinator. The results of the survey have been combined into a report, and will be used to establish what future research needs to be completed in order to advance the initiative within the community.

Data Collection Tools

The design for our circulated survey is a qualitative research design, where only open-ended questions are requested. The questions we have selected provided us with feedback about the Parent-Child Mother Goose program, how the program has impacted the practitioners, impact on families, impact on early literacy and how it effects the community. "The goal of qualitative research is to study a problem in depth and in detail" (Westerfelt and Dietz, 2005, p.93). When conducting our qualitative research, we acquired information that answers our presented research question and allows us to draw conclusions. This type of study was able to provide us with information about how people believe and feel about the Parent-Child Mother Goose program.

Ethical Considerations

One of the ethical considerations we acknowledged in our research project was the importance of the awareness of our audience. As a group, we became aware of the various ethical, cultural and religious minorities within our study through displaying respect for all participants. The questions were carefully designed with the intension of respecting human dignity by displaying cultural and ethical consideration to all participants. Our group guaranteed confidentiality and receive informed consent from the various participants within our research. In order to protect privacy and the confidentiality of the individual we promise to not publish names of the participants in our written report. All data that we received is securely protected to ensure confidentiality of the participants. In order to inform our participants about the study

being conducted we created an introduction page with a description of the significance of the survey. Participants in our survey received a Starbucks gift card and coverage of position. Since our research was done as a program evaluation, approval from an ethics committee was not required to conduct our research.

Sample

Our sample group is Early Childcare Practitioners who have participated in Bowness Montgomery Early literacy programs. The purpose of the study was to see the impact of the Parent-Child Mother Goose program and skills that the Early Childcare Practitioner learned and implemented within their childcare setting. In order to be part of our study population, the Early Childcare Practitioner had to be currently working in a day home or childcare setting.

Findings

The survey conducted was to assist in the evaluation of the Parent-Child Mother Goose program within Bowness Montgomery and the effect on Early Childcare Practitioners.

The professional feedback received will be used to enhance and benefit the future development of the Parent-Child Mother Goose program. With the return rate of about 55%, which was five out of nine surveys returned, it created a shortage of data for us to analyse. The feedback collected was organized into four main topics including feedback about the Parent-Child Mother Goose program, impact of PCMGP on the practitioner, the impact on early literacy and the impact on the community.

Parent- Child Mother Goose Program

A common theme for the question “What did you enjoy most about the program?” was that the Early Childcare Practitioners enjoyed learning new songs and meeting new people.

My favourite part of the program was to watch the children from the first time they came, to the last session. The growth emotionally and socially is amazing.

A very significant finding to the questions about what Early Childcare Practitioners learned from the Parent-Child Mother Goose program was the continuous learning of new songs and actions to stories.

I found that participating in this program I was able to improve my program skills, to help re-affirm that practice makes for confident children.

Impact of Parent-Child Mother Goose program on Practitioner

Impact on the practitioner feedback suggests that using songs, body movements, and stories that are appropriate for the child's developmental level as well as helping in times of transition aided them in their professional practices.

I learned a lot of songs, rhymes, and stories. This helps me with my interactions with the toddlers I care for. Toddlers love to sing and participate in the rhymes and stories.

The children are becoming more engaged in the circle times and are using the new songs and stories throughout the day during their own time. Not only does the PCMGP enhance your experience as a professional but it helps develop other co-workers around you.

All of the surveys collected suggest that they would encourage other Early Childcare Practitioners to participate in the Parent-Child Mother Goose Program to enhance their skills, learn techniques to assist in getting parents involved, and to continue to grow as an individual to have a positive impact on the children.

I think all persons stepping into the childcare profession should take this course perhaps, even incorporate it into the course for ECE. It lets you see how young children respond to becoming more socially and emotionally confident.

There were a few suggestions to make the program stronger which included:

- Broadening the selection of songs

- More groups available, due to many full classes
- Available handouts of songs and rhymes for parents to take home and learn to encourage involvement

Impact of Families

Feedback provided indicated that the professionals running the programs offered plenty of support for the parents by providing an open environment, keeping parents updated with other community programs available, and sharing? resources in the community.

The survey results indicate that the Parent-Child Mother Goose Program allows parents to build social networks which can be utilized outside of the program. The program indirectly teaches parents techniques to provide positive interactions as well as the importance of early childhood literacy.

It offers a safe environment for parents to participate without them feeling silly about singing with their children. It supported building literacy, building vocabulary with parents and children, it supported having fun, being silly, singing silly songs, but it also brought parents and children closer, and it provides a fun way and safe way for parents to interact with their children and showed them literacy isn't always about reading and neither is learning.

The survey results indicated that the Parent-Child Mother Goose program allows practitioners to get to know families on a more personal level which builds positive relationships and connects with people within the community to build a social network for support. Building stronger bonds between practitioner and parents allows the

caregiver to give advice to the family. Because of the positive relationship, the families are more likely to accept the advice without causing friction.

The participants suggested that the program facilitators and program passed on the resources that were available in the community.

I have never realized how many programs are offered at the library, and how easy it is for families to access these programs. The staff is also very aware of other programs offered in different places as well, the same with the PCMG co-ordinators.

Impact on Early Literacy

Through research conducted, we have discovered the importance of children practicing early literacy skills on a daily basis. Teaching children early literacy skills at a young age helps develop creative children and learn new strategies and ideas. When asked “How does the Parent-Child Mother Goose philosophy compare to your attitudes and beliefs about early literacy?” One strong response received was:

To a tee! I believe that a child needs to be socially and emotionally ready for preschool/ kindergarten, thus is an excellent head start for these young children. It is a pre cursor for the children to achieve a good sense of oneself.

Impact on the Community

Overall the surveys suggest that as early childhood practitioners feel more connected to the community, due to the created relationships, their ability to access many programs and ability to share knowledge with fellow practitioners increased.

I do, the early literacy programs have definitely helped me become a more integral part of the community. As you join one program you find another of interest, you get to know the children and parents as you see them in the different groups. I feel very connected to this community.

This program helps you learn about other programs and resources within the community.

The common feedback that was suggested to enhance the community connections and reach out to the community to increase awareness of the program included:

- Offering information about upcoming programs within the area
- Providing families with pamphlets to spread the word
- Offering more class times of Parent-Child Mother Goose Program for more families and children to join
- Using networking skills such as, emails and postings of the program.

There was some positive feedback when asked “How can the community programs work together more collaboratively to involve daycare/ family day home early childcare practitioners?”

I believe at this point we are meeting that challenge. More daycare workers and day home practitioners are seeing the benefits of working as a team, as they explore and attend the different community programs and functions.

In conclusion, although there were minimal surveys returned for data analysis, the information collected was extremely positive. The practitioners seemed to have a strong

understanding of the program and its impact on themselves, their community, and the development of the child. The Parent-Child Mother Goose Program of Bowness Montgomery was viewed as providing a successful and educational effect on Early Childcare Practitioners and their daily practices.

Discussion

Interpretations

The findings of our surveys have provided us with knowledgeable feedback from the early childcare practitioners regarding their experience of the program contributing to their personal practice. Our interpretations of our findings are that the program offers educational strategies that benefit both the child and the early childcare practitioner. Due to the numerous positive outcomes the level of participants should increase, benefiting the families in the community. The importance of early literacy needs to be acknowledged because it is present that even childcare professional struggle with the true significances of early childhood learning. Through our analysis of the program we have come to conclude that Parent-Child Mother Goose is a great learning tool providing resources to enhance the learning of professionals and families.

Recommendations

The surveys provide us with a variety of differing information surrounding Parent-Child Mother Goose; although the findings supported many positives within the program we have suggestions for further research and study. The following are our personal recommendations to strengthen the core of the program.

1. To provide more opportunities for many Early Childcare Practitioners to participate in Mother Goose Programs to develop skills to take back to their professional practices. This would be beneficial because the general feedback that was provided suggests that the practitioners enjoyed taking part in the program, it supported them during their practices and they recommend it for staff

with in their centers. The information we received provides us with reason to believe that the program is beneficial; it would just be more effective if more practitioners were influenced by the program.

2. A more basic survey with questions that are more precise and direct. It seemed as though the participants were unclear of what we were asking in the survey, which resulted in an extreme variety of answers, making it difficult to draw conclusions. Instead of asking questions such as “How does the Parent Child Mother Goose philosophy compare to your attitudes and beliefs about early literacy?” it is recommended to ask a more basic questions such as “What is early literacy?”
3. Provide a focus group to follow up the survey. Due to the poor feedback provided by some of the participants, it would be beneficial to see if it was a lack of understanding of the survey questions, a lack of interest in participating in the survey or if the program is having little affect on the Early Childcare Practitioners in the field. A focus group would allow the facilitators to elaborate on the questions and discussion surrounding the topics of interest and would allow people to bounce ideas off of each other which could create great discussion surrounding the research topics.

Suggestions for Further Research

Our research provided us with indirect information about the Bowness Montgomery Parent-Child Mother Goose program such as a need for further education for

parents and professionals surrounding early literacy and that some of the professionals who have taken part in the program may need to participate in more sessions to really benefit in their own practices. One suggestion is to survey a different group of people who have been influenced by the program. The parents of the children whose caregiver have participated in Parent-Child Mother Goose would be beneficial to see if it has had any affects on the child. It would be beneficial to survey other staff members who are working with the caregiver who participated in the program to see their experience has influenced others in the childcare setting. This provides evidence from an indirect source of the effectiveness of the implementation of skills learned in the childcare setting. Another suggestion which would be beneficial in the development of early literacy would be to research the parents and professional's basic knowledge of what early literacy is and how it affects children.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it would appear that the Bowness Montgomery Parent-Child Mother Goose program has a significant role in the early literacy development of children and families in the community. The program is a great initiative to enhance the community through education and networking. Although the program exists in the Bowness Montgomery area, we see a need to expand the program to other low income, high risk areas in the city. A key element of breaking the cycle of poverty for children and families involves focusing on early childhood development as an effective long-term *poverty prevention* strategy (Ripples of Change, 2008, p. 6). In order to break the cycle of poverty it is essential that as a community we provide families and children with the necessary tools and resources to succeed in society. The Bowness Montgomery Early Initiative project is an important step in the direction to help provide positive futures for the children and families in the community.

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Appendix A

Participants,

We are three students from Mount Royal Collage completing our Bachelor of Applied Child Studies Degree. Currently we are participating in a community research project regarding Bowness Early Literacy Programs: Parent-Child Mother Goose program.

The survey being conducted is to assist in the evaluation of the Parent-Child Mother Goose program and the effect on Early Childcare Practitioners. Your professional feedback will greatly benefit the future development of Parent Child Mother Goose programs.

We greatly appreciate your participation and time, thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Kiran Sangha, Chelsea McLean, Katy Spark

Appendix B

Parent-Child Mother Goose Program Survey

Please answer the questions below based on your personal experience with Parent-Child Mother Goose Programs in the spaces provided.

Parent-Child Mother Goose Program

- 1) What was your favourite part of Parent-Child Mother Goose program?

- 2) What are some specific skills or ideas you learned from participating in a Parent-Child Mother Goose program?

Impact of Parent-Child Mother Goose Program on practitioner

- 3) How has the Parent-Child Mother Goose program impacted your every day practices as an Early Childcare Practitioner?

4) What benefits has your participation in the program had on your childcare center?

5) Would you recommend participation in the Parent-Child Mother Goose program to other Early Childcare Practitioners? Why? Why not?

6) Do you have any suggestions/comments/concerns to strengthen the Parent-Child Mother Goose Program to ensure we are meeting the needs of all participating families and professionals?

Impact on Families

7) What kind of support did you observe that the Parent-Child Mother Goose provides for parents?

8) How has the participation in the Parent-Child Mother Goose program influenced your relationships with families?

9) Did participation in Parent-Child Mother Goose increase your awareness of community programming and supports for families? What did you learn?

Impact on Early Literacy

10) How does the Parent-Child Mother Goose philosophy compare to your attitudes and beliefs about early literacy?

11) Did Parent-Child Mother Goose program change or influence your views about the importance of early literacy for children?

Impact on Community

12) As an early childcare practitioners working in daycare or in a family day home do you feel a part of the community? Do you feel you have the opportunity to work in collaboration with other community programs? How? Examples?

13) How has the participation in the Parent-Child Mother Goose program influenced your relationships with the bigger community?

14) How can the community programs work together more collaboratively to involve daycare/family day home early childcare practitioners?

15) Do you see a need for partnerships such as this with Parent-Child Mother Goose for early childcare practitioners? Why?

16) Would you participate in other similar community partnerships?

Thank you for your time and participation in our study.