



It's
fun
to read as
a family
every day

L'Hôpital de Montréal pour enfants
The Montreal Children's Hospital
l'enfant avant tout | where kids come first
Centre universitaire de santé McGill
McGill University Health Centre

Report on the
Lire/Imagine/ Read
*project at the Montreal Children's Hospital
of the McGill University Health Centre
Montreal, Quebec, Canada
January, 2009*

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Current Reading programs at MCH



1. *Books for Babies NICU* (2006)
2. *Books for Babies PICU* (Oct 2008)
3. *Imagine: Lire/Read* (Outpatient clinics 2007)
 - a. Family Literacy Day (2006-2009)
 - b. Storytime (2008)
 - c. Adolescent Obstetric Clinic (2008)
4. *Books on Wheels* for inpatients- starting in 2009



Word from the *Imagine* Project Champion (Jan Lariviere)

A Multidisciplinary Team Project



This project arose from the wealth of information available about the successful U.S. pediatric health care program "*Reach Out & Read*", and the Canadian Pediatric Society initiative "*Read Speak, Sing to your Baby*". There is overwhelming evidence that the promotion of reading by health care professionals. (See rationale and references.)

Literacy is strongly linked to health. Therefore just as we promote the use of cars seats, advocate for breastfeeding, and tell parents about the correct sleeping position for infants, we need to encourage parents to start a habit of reading to their baby when the baby is young. **"The best start you can give a child in life is a book and the time to read it with them."** The National Literacy Trust (UK)

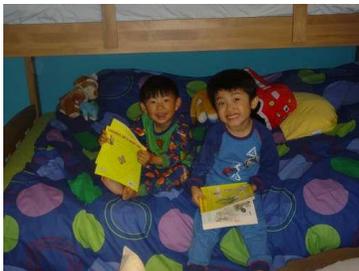
There is a secondary benefit of a hospital-based reading program. Families who have a child admitted to the hospital or who come to the emergency room and clinic areas face waiting times for treatment or for a response to treatment. An intervention that promotes the pleasure of reading and occupies some of this waiting time could help to decrease the stress associated with this experience.

This project involves the collaboration of the child life department, family resource library, volunteer department, quality management, pediatric medical staff and all staff of the hospital. A partnership with The Centre for Literacy of Quebec has been formalized.



The advisory committee grew at the Montreal Children's Hospital and has come together because of a commitment to the health and well-being of our families.

Each member brings expertise to the group. Retired librarians are committed to procuring and sorting appropriate and quality books. The child life workers and volunteer department will assure that the clinic area is stocked for staff to use. Supervising pediatricians have been oriented to the project and ensure that the trainees integrate literacy promotion into their practice. We have sought out the best literature to support this initiative and enjoy the expertise of the professionals at the Centre for Literacy of Quebec.



“My son received a book from the pediatrician (Imagine program) and he insists that we read it every night”

Word from the Coordinator

Developing the structural aspects of the Imagine program has allowed us to measure success by estimating the number of children seen in 4 clinics and the number of books that have been given to children and families. In the past year the percentage of visits resulting in a child being given a book has increased from 14% to 52%. This represents over one thousand books being distributed. Parents have commented that their children insist on having the book they were given read to them. Physicians have commented that giving a book can calm a distressed child.

Families and schools who have had a positive relationship with the MCH have donated books to the program as part of celebrations of birthdays or other significant events. These books have been a great addition to our inventory and have benefited many children.

The development of Story Hour in the waiting room has been a great success. Volunteers read, in English and French to children in a busy waiting room. The shy ones will hover at the edges but eventually the enthusiastic story readers soon have them sitting in the circle. Parents have said that they wished we could have this Story Hour in more clinics. (Linda Stephens)

Emily (4 years old) joins the Story Hour and announces ‘I will listen for awhile but I might want to go and play’. After 55 minutes, all the books have been read twice or three times, she says “now I will go and play’. This is the power of the story.

Goals of the Montreal Children’s Hospital Literacy promotion project

Lire/Imagine/Read

The goals of the Montreal Children’s Hospital Literacy promotion project *Lire/Imagine/Read* are to provide books to families of all young children 0 to 5 years of age who visit or stay at the Montreal Children’s Hospital, and to integrate literacy promotion seamlessly into health care practice. It includes education for caregivers about the importance of literacy and how to promote it.

1. The health care professional screens families for literacy orientation (i.e. is reading an important activity; are there reading difficulties for parents) and refers the parent to adult literacy services when appropriate.
2. Volunteers read to waiting children to model reading for parents, and to help decrease the stress of waiting for the appointment. All wards would have a similar program where volunteers would be available to read to individual children if necessary/ desired.

Principles of the Program

Location: In the MCH ‘s four primary pediatric clinics:

- Neonatal Clinic (which follows children at risk for developmental delays, usually after an admission to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.)
- Pediatric consultation clinic
- Residents’ continuity clinic
- Multicultural clinic

- And the Adolescent Obstetric Clinic

Parents and children visiting these clinics receive a book in their mother tongue, plus:

- A Literacy Promotion bookmark (see appendix 1)
- Information about age-appropriate reading and libraries as resources, as well as information about adult literacy programs, if appropriate.
- Information about multi-cultural libraries/ book stores/community groups
- Volunteer readers are available in the waiting rooms at specified times

- Information/training sessions for staff are offered to ensure routine and accurate literacy promotion
- Hospital-wide literacy promotion is attained through participation in activities such as Family Literacy Day
- The books are offered to the families at “well child” visits times: 2-4 months, 6, 9, 12, 18, and 24 months, and then annually until the child is 5 years old.
- Siblings are also offered books

Rationale



According to the Canadian Pediatric Society statement on promoting literacy (2002, 2006) *“literacy starts in early childhood. Research shows a strong relationship between early positive experiences and improved brain development. Books are powerful promoters of optimal childhood development. The economic and social costs of illiteracy make literacy promotion an important part of preventive medicine.”* It is also evident from the literature that the foundations for reading must be in place before children start school. School success is linked with literacy, as well as with self-esteem, productivity and future success.

- The November 2006 issue of the Canadian Pediatric Society (CPS) was devoted entirely to informing pediatric health care professionals of the importance of giving families information about the value of reading to and with their children on a daily basis. This issue coincides with the launch of a new CPS literacy promotion initiative called *“Read, Speak, Sing”* and a statement with suggestions for how to promote reading in the pediatrician’s office.

- Many families do not have pediatric primary care for their children because it is difficult to find a pediatrician, or because they need linguistic translation services or complex care coordination, and therefore receive their primary care services from the hospital. A significant percentage of these families are disadvantaged financially and educationally, and are therefore at risk to have lower literacy skills and engage in fewer literacy activities. Some families do not have a tradition of reading books; some cannot afford to buy books.

- Early child and brain development is affected by the quality of caregiving and support in the first years of life. Parents play a crucial role in offering experiences, including reading to their children, which lay the foundation for later reading skills. There have been more than a dozen peer-reviewed studies of clinic-based literacy interventions, in the US and UK in particular, using a model which includes anticipatory guidance from the physician regarding literacy development, provision of a new, developmentally appropriate book at each visit, and literacy-rich waiting rooms, including volunteers who demonstrate book sharing to families. While these studies were mainly done with low-income families, they clearly demonstrate the benefits of health care professionals advocating reading, and suggest that literacy promotion by physicians has positive results that may be linked with school success. The CPS summarizes the reports as follows:

- Parents want information from physicians about reading and literacy, and believe that it would be helpful for physicians to discuss literacy with them.
- Parents receiving the literacy intervention are 4-10 times more likely to routinely read to their children than those who do not.
- Programs that include the distribution of books to families are more successful than anticipatory guidance about the benefits of reading alone.
- Preschoolers who received the intervention had higher perceptive and expressive scores on standardized tests.
- There is a dose-related response to the intervention.
- Parents rate physicians who demonstrate reading aloud and giving books as more helpful.

The past years have produced many new communication technologies: satellite and high definition television, video games, cell phones, and computers. Parents and children are busy with work, school and activities. The ability to read critically is more important than ever. Yet fewer children and adults say that reading is a regular activity.

Some facts:

- **22%** of adult Canadians have serious problems dealing with any printed materials, & another 24% can deal only with **simple** reading tasks.
- Newfoundland, New Brunswick, & **Quebec** have the lowest levels of literacy in Canada. ***Francophones** throughout Canada scored lower than anglophones, because fewer francophones complete secondary education. **Aboriginal** (Indian & Inuit) youth have the lowest scores and only 41 % have completed high school)
- Only 12.6% of **Quebecers** scored at the highest level of literacy. In Canada as a whole: 17% scored high. More **immigrants** are at the lowest level of literacy than those born in Canada,
- Only 74% of **young (16 –25 years old) Canadian high school graduates** have strong literacy skills. The remaining 25% can handle only simple reading and writing tasks. Those who leave school before graduation usually have lower literacy skills.
- Canadians with the lowest literacy skills have higher rates of **unemployment** (26 %) and have lower incomes than those with higher skills. Over 80 % of Canadians at the lowest literacy level and over 60% in the second lowest literacy level have **no** income, or incomes of less than \$27,000. Only 60% of Canadians on **welfare** have graduated from high-school.
- 80% of **jail inmates** have literacy problems.
- **Teen pregnancies, substance abuse, poor health and delinquency** are all associated with poor literacy skills.
- People with low literacy skills are more likely to have difficulty accessing medical care, understanding instructions, reading prescriptions.
- People with low literacy are often more **isolated**.

Literacy Statistics

The literacy statistics in Canada are alarming. Results were released in May 2005 of the 2003 International Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey.

Average proficiency score and percent of population at each proficiency level, Canada, provinces and territories, population aged 16 and over, 2003					
	Average proficiency score	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4/5
		%			
Prose literacy					
Quebec	266	22.3	32.3	32.8	12.6
Canada	272	19.9	27.8	35.4	17.0
Document					
Quebec	263	25.1	31.5	30.4	12.9
Canada	271	21.5	27.1	33.5	17.9
Numeracy					
Quebec	263	27.6	31.3	28.6	12.5
Canada	259	25.5	29.6	30.1	14.7
Problem solving					
Quebec	262	39.8	36.4	19.8	4.0
Canada	266	35.9	36.3	23.1	4.6

Source: *International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey, 2003. The Daily*, November 9, 2005 (<http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/051109/d051109a.htm>) Downloaded January 17, 2006.

Special programs/ Accomplishments in the last year:

1. Resource Management

- Inventory control system developed
- Statistics tabulated indicating usage by clinic, by age, by language by week
- Storage facility organized for books either purchased or donated
- Volunteers or staff replenish book shelves in 2B clinic area
- Books purchased for Story Time
- Volunteers identify books to be ordered

2. Development of Story Time



provides training for the other volunteers

- Eight volunteers recruited to read in French and English one to two hours on each of four days
- Log book is kept by the volunteers detailing impressions and numbers of children at story time
- Article written for the McGill School of Nursing Alumnae Newsletter
- A volunteer who is a retired Children's Librarian

A young deaf child also participated with them (in Story Hour) and enjoyed the experience. Hearing is not essential to enjoying reading

3. Creation of hospital literacy orientation

- Distribution of books has been the strongest in the Neonatal clinic. PCC and RCC have shown an increase.
- Family Literacy Day celebrations, presentations at pediatric Grand Rounds, Nursing Grand Rounds have all contributed to this orientation.

This program is a gift to the families at the hospital and the staff. It is so special to see the eyes of a child light up when I give him a book, and the parent tells me that the book we gave him at his last visit is his favorite book. Thank you (a health care professional)

4. Family Literacy Day



Every year since 1999, this day has been celebrated in Canada to promote the importance of reading and learning together as a family. At the MCH we have had annual celebrations since 2006. Activities include book giveaways to patients, information for parents and hospital personnel, and readings by authors.

The 2009 FLD celebration started with a presentation at Pediatric Medical Grand Rounds, attended by approximately 100 hospital staff. The highlight was a presentation by Roch Carrier, author, who spoke movingly about the importance of reading in children's lives. He then read to patients in the Oncology/ Hematology Clinic waiting room, and in the renal dialysis unit, while volunteers and staff distributed books to all inpatients and children waiting in the lab testing waiting area.

Future Plans

1. Expand *Story Time* to include other clinics and Emergency Department
2. Involve (with the co-operation of the coordinator of the Volunteer Department) the volunteers on the in-patient units to establish a Story Hour
3. Develop a job description and training programme for volunteers
4. Establish specific time periods to order books – August, January, May

5. Identify suppliers other than Scholastic to provide variety
6. Complete program evaluation : families & staff

Presentations in 2008

Many different groups have asked for information about this program. Some presentations:

- MCH Pediatric Medical Grand Rounds: **Family Literacy Day 2009: Literacy, Reading & Children's Health**, January 28, 2009 (Roch Carrier, author, RSC fellow, & OC; Linda Shohet, PHD, executive Director Centre for Literacy; Jan Lariviere, RN, MCH)
- McGill University Women's club (JL) **A Literacy promotion Project at MCH**, January 14, 2008
- MCH RUIS journée colloque des partenaires, **Une programme d'alphabétisation à L'Hôpital de Montréal pour enfants: L'alphabétisation et la santé**, October 7, 2008
- 9C Lunch & Learn, **Update**, October 21, 2008
- Bermuda: King Edward Hospital, Child Development Program, and Health Visitors program, **A Literacy promotion Project at MCH**, May 9, 11,12, 2009

Interviews:

- CTV News, January 28, 2009
- CBC Radio One, January 28, 2009

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<http://www.centreforliteracy.qc.ca/projects/children.htm>
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9. Report on the pilot of the *Read to Me! Reading Program* at the IWK Health Centre, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 2005

Projected Annual Budget:

Cost of books	\$15,000.00
Coordinator of the program, part-time salary for 8 hours per week	\$10,000.00
Teaching/orienting staff: production of a DVD	\$2,500.00
Printing	\$1,000.00
Total (1 year)	\$28,500.00

Thank you to our Donors & Supporters Present & Past

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- Giant Book Sale 2006, 2007
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