

A.5 Thames Valley Neighbourhood Early Learning Program: Ready for School



Thames Valley Neighbourhood Early Learning Program

Ready for School

2004 - 2005

The "Thames Valley Neighbourhood Early Learning Program" (TVNELP) was developed to facilitate the transition to Junior Kindergarten for 3-year-olds and their parents. This project is specifically aimed at connecting preschool children and their families with community partners. It allows parents the opportunity to meet and connect with the community agencies prior to enrolment in Junior Kindergarten as a proactive measure to increase development of literacy, numeracy, health, and social skills. It also provides parents and children a positive connection with the educational system. The project was initiated through a collaboration of community partners and two school boards - the London District Catholic School Board and the Thames Valley District School Board. Funding is provided by the Thames Valley District School Board, the London Catholic District School Board, and the City of London.

Participants of the program are children who are eligible to enter Junior Kindergarten the following year, and their parents/guardians. This program will give 3-year-olds and their parents an opportunity to visit the school in their neighbourhood 4 times before they enter Junior Kindergarten. Workshops are also offered to community agencies that provide support for children with special needs to highlight *Ready for School* and encourage children with special needs to attend. The program involves four separate sessions in which the preschooler and parent or caregiver attend and take part in activities. The four session days include an orientation/healthy active living/music day, literacy/numeracy/art days and a classroom visit for the children and a parenting skills component for the adults. A multicultural component also encompasses these sessions. These sessions take place between January and June. They are usually 1½ hours in length and are at times during the day that are convenient for the individual school community.

The following Community Partners are integral to making *Ready for School* a success. These agencies provide important information on child development, activities that parents can do at home, and programs offered that children and parents can attend prior to the start of Junior Kindergarten.

All Kids Belong	Childreach
Investing in Children	Libraries
London Children's Connection	Merrymount
Ontario Early Years Centres	Oxford Community Child Care Centres
Public Health Units	Thames Valley Children's Centre
Tyke TALK	YMCA
The University of Western Ontario School of Communication Sciences and Disorders	

The following goals are central to the TVNELP philosophy:

- To develop links between Ontario Early Years Centres, Community Agencies and School Boards to optimize the available resources for parents and children
- To build quality family literacy, numeracy, healthy active living, arts, and music programs for parents/caregivers from diverse cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds
- To provide opportunities for children to participate in activities that enhance their potential for academic success and improved social/emotional outcomes
- To provide guided observation and learning opportunities for parents that are relevant to the developmental stages and needs of their children
- To provide learning opportunities for children and their parents to engage in structured, shared activities with the schools

A project outcome/evaluation component is also an important aspect of the program. It includes a tracking of school registration and attendance, comparison with a control group regarding school entry, collecting anecdotal data from parents about the program, and tracking data related to early identification and future academic achievement.

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