



# SJC Winter Newsletter

## THE PRACTICUM JOURNEY

# A story in three voices

*Practicum can be one of the most rewarding times in an early childhood educator's training. It is a time to take learning and put it into action; it is a time for forming relationships and learning about yourself; and it is a time to be challenged and grow. Students don't take this journey alone. They are mentored along the way by a practicum advisor and a contact teacher. This is the story of a recent practicum.*

**Raquel Nahas (2nd year student)**

Upon receiving my placement at the beginning of the semester I was excited and nervous about what this experience would hold. Would I fit in the classroom I was placed in? Would I get along with my contact teacher and my practicum advisor?

I was aware from past practicum experiences that entering a new centre as a student is not a simple task. Within the first few days you must become acquainted with the children, teachers, parents and perhaps most importantly, the daily routines and philosophy of the classroom. This task is impossible without the help of the contact teacher.

My contact teacher was a supportive, encouraging, caring, patient, and an informed role model. From the beginning I was not

seen as a student, but as a co-worker which gave me confidence to put the theory I have learned into practice.

My contact teacher encouraged my ideas and allowed me to take on responsibilities which assisted in my inclusion in the classroom. She served not only as a support but also modeled professional behaviours in the classroom with both children and families. I gained new knowledge about infants and saw qualities such as patience and encouragement modeled daily by my contact

teacher.

I gained skills in this practicum not just in the classroom but also through interactions with my practicum advisor. It was with my practicum advisor that I was able to reflect on my experience in the classroom and my accomplishments. This reflection is a vital process in the growth of an early childhood educator. I have new confidence in my ability to work as an early childhood educator as a result of my hands-on experience with children, the planning and implementation of activities, interac-

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## Message from the Director

Dear Colleagues,

It has been a busy and satisfying Fall 2007.

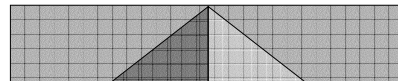
- A new course, Emergent Literacy was added to the program of studies for 3rd semester. We have explored literacy in the media, created story sacks, and designed, implemented and analyzed language experiences and books for all ages. In addition to the full time students the course was enjoyed by nine evening students.
- We were very pleased with the overwhelming response to the workshop series—never before have we had such significant waiting lists. Thank you for your support.
- The grand opening for our new Lab School was held in October. We would be delighted to “show off” this extraordinary child care centre to any of you who are interested.

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### Inside this issue:

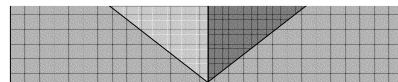
- Workshops Jan—April 2008
- A curriculum story from Edward Jost Children's Centre
- Students take Tumble Bugs Training
- Understanding the Early Years

*A publication informing the early childhood education community of events, services and professional development opportunities offered by St. Joseph's College of Early Childhood Education.*



**Please circulate and post this newsletter!**

**E-mail:  
ecestjoe@ns.sympatico.ca  
to be added to our e-mail list.**



# How a wet nose inspired our classroom

**Kelly Arsenault, Kelly Richards, Amy Zink-Taylor—Edward Jost Children's Centre**

The **Roots of Empathy** program created by Mary Gordon is typically done in a classroom setting with children from primary through grade eight. It is an award winning evidence-based program that has been proven to dramatically reduce levels of aggression as well as lower violence among children in the classroom. This program usually involves an expectant mother and later her newborn. The mother visits the children before giving birth and then the infant is brought for up to 29 visits or until the child's first birthday.

We, as early childhood educators, recognized the value of this program and we wanted to include the **Roots of Empathy** program in our junior preschool room. We are a classroom that follows emergent curriculum and our children were interested in learning about animals, mainly family pets as most of the children had dogs. During this time one of our teachers was getting ready to bring home a new puppy, we decided to follow the children's lead and chose the puppy for our **Roots of Empathy** program.

The program focuses mainly on empathy and encouraging the children to express emotions that are hard to teach. Puppies

though not human, do express emotions. We know when a dog is happy, scared, sad, even angry. These emotions take a bit of extra attention to notice, but the children watched the puppy (Kya) as she grew and become very keen on spotting the cues that told them what she was feeling.



We also wanted to provide the children with an opportunity to be responsible. Young children are often underestimated in their abilities and are very capable of taking on what might seem to be a difficult challenge. Our children were wonderful at alerting us that Kya might be in danger. Meeting Kya's needs such as feeding her, bathing her, and walking her were all duties that the children became involved in when Kya visited. Children learned to be gentle. Some children who were prone to physical aggressive were soon gently patting the puppy and encouraging others to

be gentle or careful.

Other educational benefits of this program included an opportunity to use math. Each week Kya was weighed and measured; the children learned weight and height concepts and practiced estimation. The children also created visual charts to record how the puppy grew. The children celebrated Kya's first birthday to mark the end of the program.

There was no end to the learning that occurred from this one program. Of all the topics we've covered in our classroom this continues to be a favorite of the children. As a final note, we as early childhood educators are here to do just that, educate and we do it in many different ways. Looking in from the outside you may see children playing with a puppy, however we as educators see them learning and developing life skills that will benefit them as adults.

*This is one of countless exciting curriculum stories happening in Nova Scotia. We'd like to share yours too.*

## Director's Message

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- This winter we will be offering **ECE 306 — Children with Special Needs**. This is a sixty hour course offered on Monday and Thursday evenings from 6:30 PM to 9:30 PM. This course will be of interest to those working toward their Diploma in Early Childhood Education and those who are interested in learning more about working with children with special needs.
- We will be hosting a Job Fair on Wednesday, February 20th from 4-6 PM. Centres who are interested in participating should contact Carole Trainor, our Student Success Counselor at 420-9972 or student support@ns.sympatico.ca. Remember, this is an opportunity to meet our first and second year students and share information about your centre.

On behalf of the students, staff and faculty of St. Joseph's College I would like to wish you all a very happy and safe holiday season.

*Jane Cawley*

## Tumble Bugs Training

**Carrie Melsom**

It's not unusual to hear laughter coming from the classrooms at St. Joseph's College but this fall there were some particularly raucous moments. Students in both the first and second year classes were being trained as Tumble Bugs Leaders.

Tumble Bugs is a modified gymnastics and basic movement program designed for 3 to 5 year old children. The program was developed by Mary Kikuchi and Jan Chipman of Gymnastics Nova Scotia with the support of the Nova Scotia Departments of Health Promotion and Protection, and Education. St. Joseph's College became involved because we recognize the impor-

tance of having early childhood educators who are comfortable and confident in offering a variety of movement and active play opportunities to young children. Tumble Bugs Training offers adults who work with young children a framework, and a skill set for supporting physical activity in their classrooms.

Among other things, the Tumble Bugs program is designed to develop or introduce children to basic body management skills and the enjoyment of an active lifestyle. The bonus for our students and early childhood educators is that our physical well-being and stress are also improved by the opportunity to be active in the classroom.

# Practicum—a story in three voices

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tions with families, and professionalism.

## Shauna Muger (Contact Teacher)

*The following is based on a phone conversation.*

When a student comes in ready to form a professional relationship, asks questions, and is interested in wanting to know how and why you do things, the practicum experience can be wonderful and is beneficial for everyone. That's what it was like with Raquel.

Having a student can be challenging. It can be stressful having someone unknown come into your room. Students don't know the children or routines and sometimes they don't recognize that the classroom is your workplace. Accepting a student means that you are accepting a challenge and taking on extra work and responsibility. Raquel asked questions and as a second year student had many skills to offer our infant room. She came in wanting to learn how we do things. It felt good that she recognized that we had been doing this work for many years. She was there to help out and became actively involved in learning what this work is like.

## Trish Mertins (Practicum Advisor)

Raquel was my first visit this practicum term. When Shauna (her contact teacher) shared how well she was doing, my heart did a little leap! Even though I had only met Raquel two weeks before, I was actually proud!

For me the relationship between advisor and student is like that of a parent and child. There is a sense of protection and a desire to see the student succeed. Likewise, the relationship with the contact teacher is like that of a parent and caregiver. There is a desire to be reassured that the environment will be a safe and nurturing one for the student. Shauna was quick to reassure me that this was the type of environment Raquel would

be part of.

During this first visit I watched Raquel introduce the infants in high chairs to finger paint on canvas. As some explored the texture, colour and even taste, others were tentative to get messy. Raquel quickly adjusted and offered bingo dabbers as an alternative. It was gratifying to see her applying an alternate strategy to meet the needs of individual children. Staff in the room supported her initiative and offered encouraging advice. When I returned for a second visit the canvas prints were proudly displayed in the room.



I enjoy the one-on-one aspect of practicum advising—sharing successes and working through challenges. The growth that a student can achieve in just one placement

is a testimony to the value of the practicum experience. Raquel grew from uncertainty over the developmental challenge offered in her infant activities to learning to read the infants' unique cues and appreciating the valuable contribution that infant teachers make in early childhood classrooms. There is a sense of responsibility and pride in helping this process unfold. The practicum experience is a time when the student will be influenced to become a mediocre or an outstanding early childhood educator. When there has been growth from uncertainty to excitement about the future, you know the placement has been a good one.

*As Piaget so clearly points out learning occurs when people are in a state of disequilibrium. The vulnerability and challenges experienced by all the players during the practicum journey are part of that learning process. Learning how to support each other in practice is one of many ways we sustain quality in the field. Everyone has something to share and something to learn on this journey.*

## Resource Centre

### Professional Development Opportunities for Groups

- Reaching In ... Reaching Out Promoting Resiliency in Young Children in Child Care (2 day training)
- The Encouraging Classroom: social problem solving for preschoolers (full day workshop)
- Magical Environments (1/2 day workshop)
- Meeting the Challenge: effective strategies for challenging behaviours (full day workshop)
- What are we doing here? Reconnecting with our vision (documentation visit + workshop)
- Tumble Bugs Active Play (1/2 day training)
- Hold a Staff Meeting or work bee in the Resource Centre



Catherine MacLean, Principal of the NSCC Waterfront Campus enjoys the fish tank.



Visitors enjoy the Mawio'mi Family Fun Day as families gather together to celebrate the Grand Opening of the centre.

**ST. JOSEPH'S COLLEGE OF  
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

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Fax: 902-423-3346  
ecestjoe@ns.sympatico.ca

**www.stjosephsece.ns.ca**



A new selection of parent resources for early childhood practitioners that is available in the resource centre.

At St. Joseph's College of Early Childhood Education, we provide an opportunity for students to study and gain experience in Early Childhood Education through a diverse range of courses and practical settings.

We are proud to lay the foundation for the personal and professional growth and development of our students. It is our hope and goal that SJC graduates continue to learn, practice and reflect throughout their years in early childhood education.



**Join the crowd—become a member today**

Take advantage of the many services provided with a St. Joseph's Resource Centre membership

**Resources for the early childhood community**



Organization members	\$100
Individual members	\$25

Tel: 420-1492 E-mail: resourcecentre@ns.sympatico.ca



## UEY: Helping children have the best possible start in life

**Rachel Boehm**

It is often said that knowledge comes before action. Understanding the Early Years (UEY) is a project that puts knowledge first. UEY is a national initiative to enable communities to better understand the needs of young children and families so that they can determine the best programs and services to meet those needs. UEY dates back to 1999, when it began as a pilot project in five communities. It became a national initiative in 2004 and today has been implemented in 36 sites across Canada.

Currently, UEY is active in three sites in Nova Scotia, including Halifax, Western Nova Scotia and Cumberland County. Two new sites will soon be active. Research carried out through the UEY sites in Nova Scotia will provide a snapshot of how ready primary children are when they enter school, how community and family factors help shape healthy devel-

opment, and what resources exist in communities to support young children and their families.

Information gathered through UEY will support government departments and agencies, local organizations, families, schools, child care centres and other partners in working together to strengthen our ap-

***“Understanding human needs is half the job of meeting them.” (Adlai Stevenson)***

proach to early child development, contributing to healthy families and healthy communities.

Evaluating the school readiness of primary children is central to UEY research. Information about school readiness is gathered using the Early Development Instrument (EDI) and Parent Interviews and Direct Assessments of Children Survey (PIDACS), with the support of school boards and local schools, principals, pri-

mary teachers and families throughout the province. Results of these two studies are then analyzed and interpreted with the goal of transferring the knowledge gained through UEY research initiatives to partners, schools and families so that it can be transformed into community action.

**UEY Cumberland**

- www.cumberlanduey.ca
- Joan Beswick, Ph.D.: 902-667-1129
- Carol Oram, M.Ed.: 902-667-1261

**UEY Halifax**

- www.ueyhalifax.com
- Rachel Boehm, Sackville Bedford Early Intervention Society: 902-864-8744

**UEY Western Nova Scotia**

- Jeff Kelly, Nova Scotia Community College—Kingstec Campus: 902-679-7482