



# Professional Development: Why Bother?

## Carrle Melsom

Week after week I greet members of the early childhood workforce as they arrive at St. Joseph's College for our Tuesday evening workshop series. I'm always impressed as I see them troop in. I know from experience what their days have been like and I know that the majority are here on their own time with children and families on hold until they can get home.

The culture of on-going professional development is strong in some centres. At St. Joseph's College we have well over 800 participants a year attend our evening workshops; add in participation at conferences; professional development offered by other training institutions; evening courses; and centre-based professional development and it is clear that there is a considerable investment of time and resources being made to support professional development activities.

Early Childhood Educators believe in professional development—or do we? It's clear that some do. Standard Eleven and Twelve of the Canadian Child Care Federation's

Standards of Practice deal with professional development. Some centres now require a minimum number of hours of PD each year. The Department of Com-

uncommon to hear, "Why bother?"

On a personal level the answer has always been a simple one; professional responsibility and connections aside, anything that makes my job easier to do is something I want to do. You can't afford to miss out on professional development opportunities if you want to do a better job, especially when doing the job better means less stress!

"Why bother?" is most disturbing when it comes from program administrators.

*"If you don't feed the teachers they eat the children."*

Neila Connors

munity Services offers funding for Continuing Education as well as support through the Stabilization Grant. But still it is not

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## A Message from the Director

Dear ECE Colleagues,

The college is very excited to announce that as of September 2008, we have adopted a new name. We are now the ...

### Nova Scotia College of Early Childhood Education

The rollout of the name, new logo, new website, etc. is a daunting task and will happen over time.

We are planning a 40th Anniversary event in 2010 which will give us the opportunity to celebrate and to share our successes—past and present; and to set goals for the future. We will keep you informed as plans unfold!

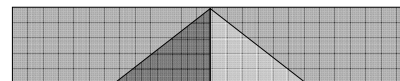
The College is pleased to offer a broad range of programs and services to meet the education and professional development needs of early childhood educators. We are gratified at

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### Inside this issue:

- *Workshops January—April 2009*
- *Evening Course—Program Planning for Children with Special Needs*
- *Reaching In ... Reaching Out Training*
- *Coconuts—A Curriculum Story*

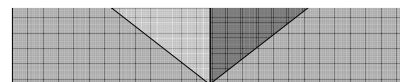
*A publication informing the early childhood education community of events, services and professional development opportunities offered by St. Joseph's College of Early Childhood Education.*



**Please circulate and post this newsletter!**

**E-mail:**

**[ecestjoe@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:ecestjoe@ns.sympatico.ca)  
to be added to our e-mail list.**





# Coconuts: A Curriculum Story

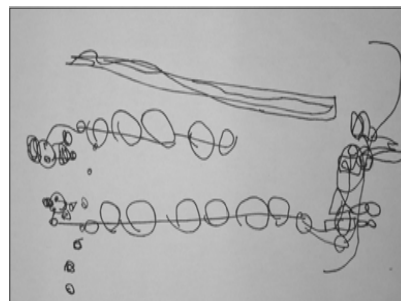
Theresa Jollimore and Lisa Harrietha  
(Jubilee Road Children's Centre)



One day when baking banana chocolate chip muffins using a hand-drawn rebus recipe a child mistook the chocolate chips for coconuts. This sparked a discussion on the nature of coconuts. Later during the same day one of the teachers read a book called *Chimp and Zee* which features mon-

keys in a coconut tree. The children began to discuss what is inside a coconut, where a coconut comes from and what a coconut tastes like.

The next day at circle "*Chicka Chicka Boom Boom*" was introduced. It seemed like an appropriate book not only because of the coconut tree but also because of the love of print in our classroom. A number of the children have begun to write, are asking to spell words and were asking questions about lower case letters. The coconut appeared to be a big interest to the children again after we read the book. The children said, "Milk is in a coconut", "Me and my dad drank out of one and no one liked it", "I think it is round" and "Milk at the store tastes the same as in the coconut". A teacher asked where they could find a coconut. One child said, "In California" and another said "At the Superstore" so we walked to Su-



"This is Lisa and another person bowling. The ball goes fast. Lisa knocked them all down." Oliver

perstore and explored the produce section. We discussed various fruits and vegetables and finally found a coconut.

To allow for further exploration, we offered an invitation consisting of paper, pencils, a printed picture of coconuts, "*Chicka Chicka Boom Boom*" and a coconut. The children began to draw coconuts from the inside out, coconut trees and coconuts falling from trees...and one child even noticed the coconut was "hairy" and asked for scissors to give the coconut a haircut!

Some children then took the coconut into the playroom. One of the children noticed the coconut rolling and set up blocks as bowling pins. Other children shook the coconut and heard the liquid on the inside...this lead to breaking the coconut.

Everyone had a turn hammering a nail into the coconut until it broke. We tasted some of the liquid and pieces of coconut but not very much because it was rotten! Since we no longer had a coconut the children started to bowl by using magnet balls and blocks.

The next day we brought in a plastic bowling set to see what the children would do with that. The children appeared to enjoy this new addition to the playroom and rolled over and set up pins all during free play. The children continued to choose this activity over a period of a few days which lead to bowling being discussed in circle and playing bowling games in small group. The children learned the rules of bowling, practiced counting from one to ten and practiced taking turns. Finally we had a field trip to bowling alley.

It's amazing to consider how a mistaken drawing could lead to the children being able to explore a coconut using all five senses, practice counting, moving with objects, exploring the community (going to the store and bowling alley), practice drawing and take part in collaborative and gross motor activities.

## Director's Message

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the number of participants already taking advantage of these services.

The two new government initiatives to support students in studying for the ECE Diploma are generating some enthusiasm and many questions from the community. On November 28th we hosted a student for the day program. Sixteen high school students, a guidance counselor, and a teacher visited for a day of activities designed to give potential students a taste of early childhood education. This is the highest level of interest we've ever seen on student for a day—in fact four of our visitors have already filled out applications. We think there is a link to the initiatives.

**1. ECE Assistance Program**—for full time studies; Applicants are eligible for a reimburse-

ment of up to \$5000 per year (maximum \$10,000) to pay back their student loan

**2. Continuing Education Program**—for part time studies; includes funding to reimburse for tuition, textbooks, and substitute staff

If you have any questions or concerns about how we might meet your needs please don't hesitate to call.

**Jane Cawley (423-7114)**



**Clarification**—The Prime Ministers Award for Excellence in Early Childhood Education has two levels. The 2008 Certificate of Excellence winner for Nova Scotia was Bobbi-Lynn Keating. She had an amazing trip to Ottawa; met the Prime Minister and had the opportunity to connect with other award recipients from across the country. For more information on the awards visit [www.pma.gc.ca](http://www.pma.gc.ca)



## Reaching IN...Reaching OUT

Promoting Resilience in Young Children

### Carrie Melsom

After you've worked for a number of years as an early childhood educator, refined your practice and feel confident about your approach to curriculum, there is a period of time when heading off to another circle workshop just doesn't excite you anymore. This is the time in your career when you need something more.

The Reaching In ... Reaching Out (RIRO) training program is designed for educators like you. RIRO is a demonstration and research project developed in Ontario to promote resilience in young children. It is based on the Penn Resilience Program (PRP) which is a cognitive/behavioural and social problem solving program designed to promote resilience in people eight years and older.

The RIRO program offers two full days of training separated by a month or two. The first day is devoted to the Adult Skills Training and the second day to the Child Applications Training. After being taught the adult resiliency thinking skills, participants are encouraged to model the

skills for children and use them in their own lives. In the Child Applications Training participants are given guidelines for introducing the skills directly to children in a child friendly way.

The research done by the RIRO team demonstrates that many people who take the training begin to use the skills on a daily basis. Teachers report that the thinking skills taught by RIRO help them to assess, understand and change child behaviour. They also report that the children's behaviour changes. They say the children calm down more quickly after being upset; are less upset about making mistakes; and can follow guidelines for expected behaviour more consistently.

Participants also find that their relationships and communication with other adults improves, personally and professionally. The skills help them calm down and get to the root of problems. This helps them to be more proactive and less reactive in conflict situations, and enhances team work and workplace morale.

RIRO participants report that they find the resiliency training user-friendly and useful. Virtually all participants would recommend the training to colleagues.

Respondents identified the top five ways the resiliency skills have helped them:

1. *Putting things in perspective*
2. *Assessing children's behaviour and thinking*
3. *Being understanding/supportive with families*
4. *Understanding, being more empathic with children*
5. *Being more compassionate with myself and reducing my stress*

Names are being collected for a possible spring session of the RIRO training for the Halifax/Dartmouth area. Centres are also encouraged to call to arrange training.

*The information about RIRO contained in this article comes from the RIRO trainer manual, information session. You can find out more about RIRO by visiting:*

*www.reachinginreachingout.com or by contacting Carrie Melsom (RIRO trainer) at 420-1492; resourcecentre@ns.sympatico.ca*

## Resource Centre Professional Development Opportunities for Centres or 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 or 3 sessions)
- What are we doing here? Reconnecting with your vision (documentation visit + workshop)
- Tumble Bugs Active Play (1/2 day leader training)
- The Affective Curriculum (five, 3-hour workshops focused on cultural competence, self-esteem, optimism, problem solving, etc.)
- Hold a Staff Meeting or Work Bee in the Resource Centre

**Have a professional development need you don't see listed here? Call Carrie Melsom, SJC Resource Centre Coordinator at 420-1492 to discuss the possibility of a workshop designed for your centre or group.**

### Resource Centre Books Relating to Resiliency

- The Optimistic Classroom
- RIRO Resiliency Guidebook
- Best Day of the Week
- I Can't Wait
- Beyond Behaviour Management
- Supporting Children in Resolving Conflicts information package
- What the Kids Said Today
- Keeping the Peace
- A Boy and a Bear
- Tear Soup



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**Students experience different forms of low vision when APSEA visits their class.**

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	



consultation

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

## Why bother with professional development?

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In their article, *Moving Away From a Quick-Fix Mentality to Systematic Professional Development* (YC July, 2007), Kay Albrecht and Bev Engel describe early childhood program administrators as the leaders of our field and the gatekeepers of professionalization. These are the people who set the bar for their centre, who can educate boards, owners, and staff about the importance of professional development to program quality. Administrators are also the people best positioned to offer tangible supports to their staff.

The article goes on to highlight a number of ways that early childhood program administrators can facilitate a culture where professional development is the norm, among them:

- *Expect all early childhood educators to be lifelong learners*

- *Partner with teachers to persevere toward credentialing*
- *Walk alongside teachers as learners*
- *Integrate individual and program wide professional development programming*

***“Among those incentives that are recommended highly are those that promote and prioritize professional development, an essential component of ensuring quality childcare.”***

(Staffing Your Childcare Center, 2003)

According to Paula Jorde-Bloom (1988), investing in professional development provides two important benefits; early childhood staff improve their skills and qualifications and their involvement in

professional activities increases their satisfaction with the work itself.

In a study done by the New York City Childhood Professional Development Institute one major theme identified was that “Training mattered to the study informants. Both home—and center—based providers who took part ... defined training as an important part of their professional identities and work. And ... they considered good training opportunities almost as strong a reason to stay in the field as better salaries, benefits, and incentives.” (Learning About the Workforce, 2007).

It turns out that access to professional development opportunities is actually an excellent employee incentive. For a sector that is struggling with retention and recruitment this is important information. For a centre director who is trying to keep or attract staff this is yet another answer to the question, “Why bother?”