



News From a Tiny Seed

Seeds Is Growing



“Mighty oaks from tiny acorns grow” according to a Greek proverb. That is certainly true of Seeds of Empathy in British Columbia and Alberta, where the program is more than doubling in the 2008/09 school year. British Columbia will add 24 new programs in September (funded through the Ministry of Children and Family Development), for an approximate 50 child care settings. In Alberta, where the program is supported by the Ministry of Employment and Immigration, 25 new child care centres are on the way, for an approximate 40 (with another 25 centres still to come in 2009/10). With this proliferation of empathy, it will be amazing to see the mighty oaks that these children become...

Baby Kyler Starr, Waglisla Glilas Daycare, Bella Bella, BC, October 2007

Sharing Circle

A Child's Wisdom

Tara Dyck, a Seeds of Empathy Literacy Coach at Red Deer College Child Care Centre in Alberta, shares this story: “*We have a child, Julie, whose father died recently. One day Julie was absent because of the funeral, and her friend Lilly, who is five, came up to me and asked where her friend was. I told Lilly that Julie was having a ‘family day,’ and asked why she was wondering. Lilly’s answer amazed me. I heard about her Dad dying and wanted to ask how I could make her feel better.*” It just goes to show that very young children understand and can handle emotions—even very difficult ones—so much better than we think they can.

Sad in my Body



In the theme *Crying*, children learn what makes their baby cry. They understand very quickly that it is not just physical discomfort (cold, tired, wet, or hungry) that makes a baby cry, but also emotional reasons, such as loneliness, confusion and frustration. In the theme *Who Am I?*, children discuss the range of feelings that make them cry. One of the art activities invites the children to make a picture showing how they are feeling. Little Olivia has captured poignantly a time when she felt sad. Her tears form a veil that covers her whole body, including her feet with three toes per foot. Her ability to capture feelings in her art transcends the need for accuracy of digits. In children’s lived experience their feelings transcend the importance of the facts. Early Childhood Educators respond uniquely to the emotional reality of the child. This validates the child’s feelings, giving them the sense that they are in a supportive environment where people care about how they feel. Seeds of Empathy gives children the emotional literacy to communicate verbally and through art forms.

Never Too Young

Tara Bartlette, the mother of four-year-old Alexis who is in the Seeds program at the Mount Royal College Child Care Centre in Calgary, recently wrote: "I think the Seeds of Empathy program is a great idea, and I feel Alexis is learning a lot about babies. She learned that 'a crying baby is not a bad baby... it's a baby with a problem.' She has also told me never to shake a baby. She is learning about how babies communicate, and she is very excited to learn the new stuff Baby Lucas can do." At Seeds of Empathy, we often hear reports of children who share their newfound knowledge about infant safety and communication with their parents (and occasionally, complete strangers!), showing that the curriculum affects them in profound ways.

Have You Heard?

There's Something About Babies



It's official: babies are special. In a recently published study by researchers at Oxford University, test subjects were asked to look at images of infant and adult faces while having their brain activity monitored. The study found that when most of us look at a baby, a region of our brains associated with emotion lights up almost instantly (within one-seventh of a second), while images of an adult face do not have that same impact. This suggests there is something about babies' faces that tells us they are special and need to be cared for. Researchers tested both parents and non-parents with pictures of infants they didn't know, and found the same results (Kringelbach, M. L. et al., 2008).

Kringelbach, M. L., Lehtonen, A., Squire, S., Harvey, A. G., Craske, M. G., Holliday, I. E., Green, A. L., Aziz, T. Z., Hansen, P. C., Cornelissen, P. L., & Stein, A. (2008). A specific and rapid neural signature for parental instinct. *PLoS One*, 3(2), e1664. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0001664.

"Emotions are the first language of the child and the universal language."

~ Mary Gordon, Founder/President of Roots of Empathy and Creator of Seeds of Empathy

Why is our newsletter called *Lavender Blanket*? In Seeds of Empathy centres, children gather around a lavender blanket where the loving relationship between a parent and baby is the lever for learning. The blanket is where learning and sharing takes place – and that's what we want this newsletter to be, too!

Lavender Blanket is an update on what's happening with Seeds of Empathy.

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