2014 Annual Report

Greetings from the ASCY Board of Directors

This has been an exciting year of change in the early learning and child care sector. The much anticipated release of the Ontario Ministry of Education’s Pedagogy for the Early Years, “How Does Learning Happen?” has sparked thoughtful dialogue across the Hamilton community and province to view the roles of the child, parent and educator with a new lens. The foundational concepts of “Belonging, Well-Being, Engagement and Expression” are ones we have ascribed to philosophically for years, however, with the pedagogy it provides us with the opportunity to pause, reflect and critically think how we are embedding and living these principles day-to-day in our programs and organizations.

The Ontario Special Needs Strategy for Children and Youth spearheaded by the four ministries - Children and Youth Services, Community and Social Services, Education, and Health and Long-Term Care began in the fall of 2014. ASCY, as part of the Hamilton community, is engaged in a process to review and re-design the system of coordinated service planning for children and youth with complex/multiple needs that builds on existing practices locally. In addition, through this initiative, the community is looking at implementing a new approach to the delivery of specialized services of speech and language, occupational, and physiotherapy for children and youth from birth through to the end of school. Both initiatives are being implemented so that children/youth and their families can get the services they need, where and when they need them with emphasis on ensuring the families’ service experiences and outcomes are improved.

We would like to extend our congratulations to Early Words, a program of ASCY, the recipient of the Agency Early Literacy Education Award from the Adult Basic Education Association (ABEA) and Evette Sauriol, Early Literacy Specialist who received the Kim Brooks Memorial Lifelong Learners Award at their Annual Leaders in Literacy Breakfast in Hamilton in June 2014.

The programs and services at ASCY continue to evolve and change in response to local and provincial directions and the needs of the Hamilton community. The Board of Directors would like to thank Wanda St. Francois, Executive Director, for her strong leadership and collaborative community spirit alongside all ASCY staff for their hard work and dedication to “making Hamilton the best place to raise a child.”
A Message from the Executive Director

In 2014, in collaboration with the Community Action Research-Community Integration Leaders (CAR-CIL) Project, we hosted a series of leadership events with guest speakers Drew Dudley, Goranka Vukelich, Nadia Bello, Lorrie Baird and Anne-Marie Coughlin that re-energized, inspired and helped participants to think in new and different ways, taking their learning and integrating it into their own programs and organizations. ASCY is truly blessed to be able to support and be a part of a vibrant, supportive, engaged, learning community.

As we look to the year ahead, we anticipate the completion and beginning stages of implementation of the Ontario Special Needs Strategy for Children and Youth Initiative. As an agency and in conjunction with the early learning and child care community, we will continue to reflect, explore and move forward in bringing Ontario’s Pedagogy, “How Does Learning Happen?” to life. We feel honoured to continue to work together with all our community partners as we learn and journey together.

Professional Learning

Upon the release of the Ontario Ministry of Education’s document, “How Does Learning Happen?”, ASCY’s team of Professional Learning Consultants met to consider possible strategies to support Hamilton’s ECEs. To guide our thinking and planning, we focused on the document’s introduction and considered how, we as Professional Learning Consultants, might build, strengthen and deepen relationships among Hamilton’s early years’ practitioners.

As part of our process, we considered our current approaches to professional learning and “goodness of fit” with the Ministry document.

Following the May 2014 release of “How Does Learning Happen?”, ASCY offered an open invitation to take part in study groups to support our understanding of Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years. Together with their colleagues and ASCY facilitators, 412 educators took part in one of 25 three-or-four-part Study groups to think more deeply about foundations for learning in the early years. Together we familiarized ourselves with pedagogy and explored the notions of “belonging”, “well-being”, “engagement” and “expression”. As study group facilitators, ASCY mentors brought forward relevant resources to support the groups in co-constructing practice thinking and their “ways of being” with very young children and their families.

“There is little doubt that Registered Early Childhood Educators left this evening (ECE & Leadership Recognition Evening) feeling empowered and appreciated, ready to greet tomorrow with the firm understanding that they are having a profound influence in creating promising futures for our youngest learners. They were left with an important message: they play a critical role in making Hamilton the best place to raise a child.”

Rose Wegiel & Dean Younger
Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board
Reflect, Remove, Reframe, Revise

In 2014, following the introduction of “How Does Learning Happen”, ASCY began a critical reflection of the approaches taken with long-term initiatives, “Raising the Bar” and “Save the Day for Play” viewing these initiatives through the lens of the pedagogy.

Raising the Bar on Quality (RTB)

Raising the Bar has been valued as a strategy for mentorship and has been effective in promoting and supporting best practices including ongoing strategies to monitor quality, access consultation, plan for improvements, engage in professional learning and recognition. In 2013/14, 162 programs or 76% of those providing early learning and care in Hamilton took part in Raising the Bar. As we entered the 2014/15 year, we began to rethink approaches taken to Raising the Bar and envisioned re-framing it around relationships and reflective practice, with less emphasis on extrinsic measures. We also aimed to respond to feedback from longer-term participants and their interest in a more time-efficient and meaningful way to demonstrate their support of the community standards.

Save the Day for Play (SDP) Resources for the Intentional, Responsive Educator, and SDP training for Trainers and Mentors

Recognizing the importance of “How Does Learning Happen?”, in 2014, ASCY devoted its time and resources to guiding our community in deepening their understanding of Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years. While our consultants continue to follow the mentoring process which evolved through Save the Day for Play, SDP Training for Trainers and Mentors was discontinued. As has been the case for Hamilton’s Supervisors who trained in the SDP process, we expect that others across the province will have built capacity for curriculum change, or have already guided their communities in a transformation to play-based and emergent curriculum, and will embrace “How Does Learning Happen?” to extend learning among the sites they mentor.

Over the past years, products such as Doc-it have emerged, satisfying interest in technology to support pedagogical documentation. ASCY has every confidence that the software publishers will continue to respond to the needs of early years’ practitioners and, therefore, no longer distribute Save the Day for Play Software.

Note: Recognizing that similar products have not been released in the French language, ASCY will continue to support those using “Place au jeu” resources for the year ahead.
Professional Resource Library

Our Library renovation of 2013 fostered a path of continued learning and growth for the Library team. Throughout 2014, the Library staff engaged in reading and learning opportunities to become familiar with and support the new Ontario Pedagogy for the Early Years as outlined in the Ministry of Education document, “How Does Learning Happen?” and its companion documents, “Think, Feel, Act” and “Excerpts from ELECT”.

We have explored and reflected on emergent curriculum with the Professional Learning team and have embarked on revamping, relabelling and purchasing resources to further support emergent learning. Our former Mini-Kits have been overhauled and relabelled as Interest Kits. One of our most mindful changes has been to create bins with Loose Parts; parts that are open-ended and can be used in countless ways.

The Library staff have noticed that the Mohawk College Early Childhood Education students seem to be using the Library more actively. There seems to be a greater exchange of information sharing and discussion between the Library staff and the students as well as student-to-student. In 2014, there were 126 student memberships and students accessed the outreach location at Mohawk College 150 times.

There also seems to be a greater number of Full Day Kindergarten teachers visiting the Library with their Designated ECE. Some of these teachers are becoming Library members; others are becoming more aware of the services available at ASCY. There were 649 organizational members and 416 individual members using the library in 2014. Of those, 678 were from child care centres and 117 were working within the Boards of Education locally, among others.

As always, our Library members remain our greatest resource and we value the chance to see them as capable and competent and to support them in enhancing the lives of children living in our community.
Early Literacy Program

There were many opportunities for professional learning in the area of literacy in 2014. Since we offered a variety of literacy workshops in 2014, we decided it would be fun to tie in a playful element when highlighting the events of the past year. Looking to the literacy props we had used, we found these story rocks as provocation to tell our story.

The Early Literacy Learning Community and the «Réseau en littératie emergent» explored the Expression foundation of “How Does Learning Happen?” Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years document this past season. Through linking the document with several children’s books we were able to take a closer look and explore expression through a literacy reflective lens.

This past year we wanted to try something different in terms of professional learning opportunities so we held two different Book Clubs. They were both well attended and we had some very rich discussions. The Digital Decisions Book Club ran in the fall, over five sessions and Linguistically Appropriate Practice ran twice, once for Best Start Literacy Liaisons and again in the evening during our Winter Professional Learning. This book club culminated in a one-on-one interview with the author at the Early Literacy Forum.

As the need for quality interactions between RECE’s and children continue to grow, we have seen an increase in demand for Hanen’s Learning Language and Loving It and Apprendre à parler avec plaisir programs recently. This past year we have had participants from 7 child care centres complete the program.

Under the auspices of ASCY, Read To Your Baby (RTYB) received $20,000 from the Hamilton Community Foundation to continue to expand the project, seek sustainable funding and provide education to family physicians on the importance of early literacy and the impact they can have in educating their patients. Read To Your Baby was also the recipient of another generous donation of $4000 from Telling Tales in 2014, to continue to put books into the hands of children and families at the 18-Month Enhanced Well-Baby Visit.

At February Flurry we presented Let’s Look for a Story, Every Child Has a Tale to Tell which looked at how we can support children in the telling of stories, making their stories and thinking visible through documentation.
Central South Blind-Low Vision Early Intervention Program

The Central South Blind-Low Vision Early Intervention Program serves children and their families in Hamilton, Brant, Haldimand-Norfolk and Niagara. **Last year the Central South Blind-Low Vision Program served 53 children and their families. A total of 933 children and their families were served across the province.**

Three types of services are offered:

**Family support**

Our Family Support Worker provides support to parents when their child has been diagnosed with blindness or low vision. She helps the family understand and cope with the implications of the diagnosis and help them make informed decisions about support services.

**Intervention services**

For a child with a visual impairment, touch, hearing and the use of remaining or residual vision are critically important for learning and development. Our Early Childhood Vision Consultants help the child develop these senses to the best of his or her ability and work in close partnership with the families.

**Consultation services**

Our Early Childhood Vision Consultants provide support within early learning and child care programs for the children and the families they serve.
Central South Infant Hearing Program

Early identification gives children the best start in life and the Universal Newborn Hearing Screen is an important first step. Through new technology and accurate screening protocols, the process of identifying these babies can begin as early as a few hours post-partum. The sooner hearing loss is identified, the better. Finding out early means that they can get the help they need right away and this gives them the same chance to develop language skills as hearing children.

The Central South Infant Hearing Program serves children in Hamilton, Brant, Haldimand-Norfolk and Niagara. Services for young children with a significant hearing loss and their families include:

- the infant hearing screening
- audiological services
- family support
- communication intervention

In 2014, a total of 10,823 infants received the Universal Newborn Hearing Screen within the Central South Region.
Early Words/1ers mots Preschool Speech and Language

Early Words is our community-wide, integrated system of preschool speech and language services in Hamilton under the auspices of Affiliated Services for Children and Youth (ASCY). We work closely together with our partners – Hamilton Health Sciences – McMaster Children’s Hospital and St. Joseph’s Healthcare. Our vision is to provide the highest quality service for children with communication needs by committed professionals in respectful partnerships with families and caregivers.

In 2014, a total of 1004 children and their families were seen for an initial assessment; 918 children and their families received their first intervention and at the end of the calendar year, 5021 children were registered in the Early Words System.
ASCY STAFF

Wanda St. Francois, Executive Director
Ruth Doherty, Co-ordinator of Early Words PSL, IHP & B-LV
Joyce Minten, Director of Organizational Effectiveness
Liz Soyka, Manager of Professional Learning
Lois Saunders, Project Manager

Program & Administrative Support
Joyce Blunt, Reception/Administrative Support
Lori Parcells, Administrative Support of Early Words PSL, IHP & B-LV
Tavane Baker, Administrative Support Assistant of Early Words PSL, IHP & B-LV
Lorrie Cheevers, Administrative Support Assistant of Early Words PSL, IHP & B-LV
Martine Fisler, Technical Support/Database Co-ordinator
Anna Ivanova, Clerk, Technical Records
Anne Lee, Bookkeeper/Accounting
Irene Zulps, Administrative Support of Early Words

Professional Learning Team
Angela Curto, Administrative Support
Lisa Bellardini, Professional Learning Consultant
Kim Burns, Professional Learning Consultant/Early Literacy Specialist
Christine DiBussolo, Professional Learning Consultant
Melanie Graham, Professional Learning Consultant*
Cathy Robb, Professional Learning Consultant
Evette Sauriol, Early Literacy Specialist – Spécialiste en alphabétisation auprès de la petite enfance, Hamilton
Andrea Topic, Professional Learning Consultant
Tracey Webster, Professional Learning Consultant
Antonella Zezza, Professional Learning Consultant

Project Staff
Brandon Braithwaite, Community Development Worker
Nancy Harrower, Early Years’ Community Advisor
Natalie Huizinga, Early Years’ Community Liaison

Professional Resource Library & Program Support
Melanie Bulbrook, Resource Librarian & Program Support
Jeanette Day, Resource Librarian & Program Support
Jan Smith, Resource Librarian & Program Support

Early Words Preschool Speech & Language (PSL)
Elaine Hache, Intake
Sharon Skingley, Administrative Support
Diana Paprica, Senior Speech-Language Pathologist
Danielle Bailey, Speech-Language Pathologist
Danielle Boaden, Speech-Language Pathologist
Karen Orphe, Speech-Language Pathologist
Amy Steele, Speech-Language Pathologist
Jacqueline Vignanello, Speech-Language Pathologist
Shayna Wolfman, Speech-Language Pathologist

Infant Hearing Program (IHP)
Rita Dugas, Regional Administrative Co-ordination Support
Karen Orphe, Speech-Language Pathologist
Jennifer Dunlop, Family Support Worker
Rosanne Berdusco, Community Screener
Heather Hawdon, Community Screener
Tamara Pitirri, Community Screener
Alissa Shuker, Community Screener

Blind-Low Vision Program (B-LV)
Sharon Skingley, Administrative Support/Intake
Jennifer Dunlop, Family Support Worker
Rachel Brown, Early Childhood Vision Consultant
Anna Nguyen-Sgro, Early Childhood Vision Consultant*
Wendy Veldman, Early Childhood Vision Consultant

*resigned in 2014
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