



**hounsfield heights-briar hill**  
community kindergarten

1233 - 21 Street NW Calgary, AB T2N 2L8

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# **Hounsfield Heights – Briar Hill Community Kindergarten**

## **Annual Education Report 2010 – 2011**

## **BACKGROUND**

The Hounsfield Heights – Briar Hill Community Kindergarten has a long history with Briar Hill School and with the Hounsfield Heights – Briar Hill (HHBH) community. In fact, in 2011, HHBH Community Kindergarten will celebrate their 55th year anniversary. The Kindergarten is an ancillary group of the HHBH Community Association and benefits from this relationship. The Kindergarten moved to its location within the Community Association to Briar Hill School in 1972. The HHBH Community Kindergarten leases one classroom in the Briar Hill School and offers both a morning and an afternoon class. Together with the other lease groups (i.e. HHBH Parent-Child Cooperative Playschool and the Briar Hill Children’s Programs), the Kindergarten adds to the education experience of the children of the families in Hounsfield Heights – Briar Hill and other surrounding communities. These three lease groups have helped to maintain and enhance the school’s viability.

## **PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY**

The focus of the HHBH Community Kindergarten is to provide an educational environment that fosters children’s natural curiosity and learning. This type of environment contributes to the development of the children’s positive self-image through enhancing their emotional, physical, social, creative and intellectual growth.

As a Community Kindergarten, our program is enriched by several groups: Briar Hill School, our local neighborhood and larger community, and the parents and families of the students. Our students have access to the Briar Hill School library, the gymnasium facilities and equipment, the playground and the community park across the street. We utilize resources available to us, both professional (public health nurses, police, firemen, etc.) and non-professional (parents or staff with special skills or interests). Physical resources in the community consistent with our program’s goals are also used, such as the local fire station and library.

We are very fortunate to have an excellent working relationship with Briar Hill School. The kindergarten children enjoy being included in many of the school’s activities and assemblies. The children also participate in a “buddy reading program” with students in a Grade 4/5 class. The children are welcome to attend and many participate in School Council events such as Halloween Hey Day, Family Dance and the Read-a-thon. The children are made to feel part of the school community and most will continue on to Grade One in Briar Hill School. Many children have siblings in the higher grades, in the playschool or in the daycare and enjoy seeing familiar faces in the hallways and in the playground.

The Kindergarten takes full advantage of the parent involvement by scheduling a number of interesting and educational field trips and speakers. One of the field trips that the children enjoyed included a trip on the Calgary Transit C-train to see a First Nations exhibit at the Glencoe Museum. Another field trip saw the children board a school bus to go to the Calgary Zoo to learn more about their Dinosaur Park which complemented in their in-class learning on dinosaurs. The field trips are always a highlight for both the students and the parents. Several speakers, including parent speakers, visit the classroom and enrich the children's learning. A parent, who is a Chiropractor, gave a talk to the children on bones and their skeletal system, which made a big impression on the children as they got to see a life sized skeleton model in their own classroom! Another parent graciously volunteered her time to teach the children Kodaly music and the list carries on – the enrichment provided by many of the families are so engaging for all of the children and parents too!

### **LOCAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (LAC)**

The Local Advisory Committee (volunteer parent-run Kindergarten Board) helps guide the program each year, offers administrative support for the teacher, and monitors the disbursement of funds during the year. The Committee also defines and refines policies for the program as they become relevant over the course of the year. The commitment of the parents and the excellent working relationship between the teacher and the LAC ensures that the children receive a creative, inspiring, well-organized program.

### **2010 – 2011 SYNOPSIS**

Thirty-four children were enrolled in the program as of September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2010. The program offered both a morning and afternoon class taught by Mrs. Barbara Scratch. Both morning and afternoon classes also benefited from Mrs. Pauline Stafford, who has assisted in both classes for the last several years, as a full-time Teacher's Aide (TA).

Mrs. Scratch continues to be the foundation for the success of the HHBH Community Kindergarten. Her dedication to the children, the program and to teaching excellence continues to enhance the program, engage the students and to impress the parents. Mrs. Scratch is an excellent role model to the children and is constantly looking for ways to improve the program and her approach to teaching. Her classroom is open to all parents, and she welcomes and appreciates the work that volunteers put in to make this a successful experience for everyone involved.

Mrs. Scratch extended the Alberta curriculum for ECS students through on-and-off-site activities with other professionals. In addition to the aforementioned field trips, the children also enjoyed swimming lessons at the Foothills Pool and a day at Fish Creek Provincial Park. She

also ensures a successful transition from kindergarten to grade one by collaborating with teachers in the school as mentioned above, and also utilizing recess breaks to give the children the opportunity to become comfortable with the routine of the school and exposure to the grade school age children.

Mrs. Scratch plans on returning to teach for our September 2011 school year. There are a total of 31 children presently enrolled for the fall.

## **TEACHER'S REPORT**

This year we will not be submitting an annual year-end report to the Government of Alberta but instead, they have suggested that we make the report available to our parents instead. This means that the viewers reading it will be totally different so that the informational slant of the report can change too. I have decided to write about how our program in the classroom is decided upon for your children and hopefully clarify the reasons for doing things the way it is done.

Our program is skill-based rather than just theme directed. This is especially true of Early Literacy learning. The children are exposed to beginning reading and writing and they work on the skills that lead to their success in this learning strand. They are required to know at least 20 each of the upper and lower case letters of the alphabet and their sounds before being introduced to short text in beginning reading books. If they already know their letters and sounds, then they have a head start on what is to come during the first four months of this type of kindergarten program. They are also learning to print the upper and lower case letters of the alphabet so that letter recognition is a skill that is important for printing as well as reading. We have one and later two letter days per week where the children bring something to share that begins with the letter and its sound. The children are working on producing an alphabet book from these sharing days and it helps to reinforce letter-sound recognition/printing skills for their reading and writing development in kindergarten. Included with all this learning comes the way in which the teacher uses various methods that will help the children to develop these skills - for instance, the clap, stretch and print method for writing their own words. We do journal writing, theme-based writing, field trip writing and many more things throughout the year that help the children to write about things they know or have experienced. This is where attending professional development days or special conferences like the E.C.E.C. conference or Teacher's Convention are so important and advantageous to the teacher; and in turn, your children.

We did do the theme Nursery Rhymes and Fairy Tales to promote rhyming and story structure – beginning, middle and end, characters, scenes, and the children did their own stories using the

puppets in their own plays. This increases such skills as storytelling, art detail and drama. We had a puppeteer in to do some of the Fairy Tales that we had used in the classroom.

In Early Numeracy for counting, the children use the first 100 days of school to become skilled counters by ones, fives and tens. This is usually done as a large group learning experience so that everyone is doing it together on a daily basis and their practice time is consistent to each other. Number recognition and quantity are done in small group centres or even on a one-to-one basis and this usually goes to 30. For children with more advanced counting skills, we will take them to 100 or further. Children are taught how numbers are patterned and this helps them with their ability to print their numbers with greater success. We teach and show that all numbers are derived from learning to print only ten and then the rest are combinations of these and are patterned in a very logical and clever way. We have other little tips and strategies to help them learn to write their numbers more accurately to wherever they want to go with it. They also learn to sort, pattern, compare, add, subtract and measure. We do shapes which also promotes geometric learning for their future math development as well as writing skills and art work. Our whole year is continually exposing the children to Early Literacy and Early Numeracy skills and this is mainly done through skill-based teaching in these two learning strands.

Theme-based learning, in our kindergarten, is applied to learning strands such as Citizenship and Identity (Social Studies) and Environment and Community Awareness (Science and some Social Studies themes too). This year and for many past, we have done a First Nation Theme (cultural learning). One of the reasons it has been used for so many years, in this program, is that we have access to the Glenbow Museum for its field trip and as an excellent resource for complimenting the learning that takes place on First Nation People. A very important aspect of field trips is to either give children an experience that substantiates the learning that has taken place or will take place in the classroom on a theme or add to their learning experience with additional information. The First Nation Theme also shows how a culture can change with time and circumstances especially when it must combine with the mosaics of so many other cultures (which include everyone in our class) into our very own country – Canada. It shows how we can all come together to be Canadians. The art work we do for this theme is advantageous to promoting fine motor skill development such as sewing canoes, beading necklaces and dream catchers, making tipis and creating a First Nation Book. The children end this unit by making and presenting posters of their families which show grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, family reunions, holidays, special cultural and religious celebrations, new and old generations of their family units and we post them in our room to celebrate ourselves and our country.

Our science themes this year were on Space, Dinosaurs and Creepy Crawlers. These have been developed because the children are so interested in them and because they are also able to

bring so much background knowledge to these units. This builds more self-confidence, self-esteem and interest and contributes to their Personal and Social Development skills.

For space, we developed our own Space Station, played with space Lego and made old and new constellation using our light bright screens. A great way to develop imagination and fine motor skill development. We read and discussed planets and the life of an astronaut. Our field trip to the Space Port at the Calgary International Airport was a great success. We saw and learned how astronauts lived and worked in space (ate, slept, drank, walked, showered, how often they were able to change their wearing apparel and even how they went to the bathroom). The children got to ride on shuttles, rockets and other space rides. They were able to make and launch rocket ships, much to their delight, and the trip concluded with a D.Q. ice-cream.

For dinosaurs, the children created their own "Jurassic Park", did a dinosaur dig in the sand box, played with water dinosaurs in the water table, created new and interesting dinosaurs with Lego, did a dinosaur dance and sang songs about some of the giant dinosaurs. They learned vocabulary words such as fossils, palaeontologists, carnivores, omnivores and many more pertaining to this time in the development of our planet. Our visit to the Dinosaur Park and the classroom at the Calgary Zoo only reinforced their learning.

The Creepy Crawlers Theme helped the children discover information on bugs – insects and spiders as well as a little information on snakes. They were able to observe and write about the "Life of a Butterfly" and were so excited about being able to view the last three stages of a butterfly's development in the classroom. Our field trip to Fish Creek Park was a hands-on experience and a great success and again reinforced the learning that took place in the classroom.

We also did a short unit on health which promoted better understanding of their bodies and what is needed to keep them healthy and fit. They had great fun playing in their hospital centre which had an area for their sick dolls and a laboratory where they examined pretend blood, urine and bile samples. We also have the use of the gymnasium in the school two days of the week as we are obliged to share our other two day with the Parent-Co-op Operated Playschool in the school. Weather permitting, we use the outdoor equipment too.

Our AISI Grant covered a music program and an artist in residence. We celebrated our art program with an "Art Walk" that displayed the children's art work that they had done for the week that it was in session.

The parents were kept well-informed about their children's progress throughout the year with two interview opportunities and three report cards.

Hounsfield Heights- Briar Hill Community Kindergarten continues to be a great program that promotes excellent skill building and wonderful opportunities to learn.

Barbara Scratch

## **BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS**

After a worry surrounding low enrolment figures in June of 2010, a number of students enrolled in the HHBH Community Kindergarten program over the summer and the Kindergarten started the year in September with a healthy enrolment, and therefore sufficient funding. This allowed the Kindergarten to continue to have a full time Teaching Assistant in the classroom for both our morning and afternoon classes and still project a small budgeted surplus. The HHBH Community Association continued to support the Kindergarten through contributions to cover field trip busing and capital expenditures for the Kindergarten. Overall, expenses in 2010-11 have been lower than budgeted. This, along with additional unbudgeted funding for students, has led the Kindergarten to have a larger than budgeted surplus for the 2010-11 school year.

In June 2011 there are again worries surrounding low enrolment for the 2011-2012 school year, and a serious budget shortfall is predicted using current enrolment figures. There have been many discussions and solutions proposed to manage operating expenses without sacrificing the integrity of the program. There have also been many discussions regarding policies that would help direct spending (particularly with respect to staff salaries, our biggest budget expenditure) and appropriate use of the Accumulated Surplus in the Kindergarten to ensure the long-term viability of the Kindergarten program.

## **CONCLUSION**

The 2010 – 2011 school year was an excellent year and we look forward to many future successful Kindergarten years for our community and surrounding areas. It was a pleasure both serving on the LAC and seeing my child grow and learn throughout this last school year.

Sincerely,

Lea Price, LAC Chair 2010-2011

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