

Child Care Services Newsletter

Winter 2004

CCSU Phone #s

Calling from out of town? Please call toll free, 1-800-661-0408 and ask for the extension of the person you wish to speak with.

Brad Bell, Manager	
Early Childhood and Prevention	393-7082
Virginia Kettley, Financial Clerk	393-7123
Wendie Howe, CCSU Clerk	667-3492
Cheryl Buchan, Licencing Officer	633-7992
Carol Oberg, Licencing Officer	667-5091
Tammy Reinhart, Licencing Officer	667-3493
Lesley Gardiner-Falle, Licencing Officer	667-3447
Ann Gedrose, Licencing Officer	667-8851
Fax:	393-6250

You can email us:

bradley.bell@gov.yk.ca
virginia.kettley@gov.yk.ca
wendie.howe@gov.yk.ca
cheryl.buchan@gov.yk.ca
carol.oberg@gov.yk.ca
ann.gedrose@gov.yk.ca
tammy.reinhart@gov.yk.ca
lesley.gardiner-falle@gov.yk.ca

Child Care Services Unit (H-12)
Yukon Territorial Government
Box 2703
Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6

Or drop by the main floor of 9010 Quartz Road

Office Hours: Child Care Services is open Monday through Friday 8:30 – 5:00.

CCSU will be closed for our regular unit meeting Thursdays 9:00 am until noon unless this falls on the last day of a month, in which case the office will be open to distribute cheques.

News from CCSU

We wish you all a very healthy, happy, and prosperous new year. We are starting out 2004 in a new building at 9010 Quartz Road. Here, we share office space on the main floor with the Healthy Families Program and with Public Health and we value the new professional relationships this shared space creates.

2004 will be an interesting time for all those involved in Child Care in the Yukon. We thank all those who contributed to the *Four-Year Plan for Early Childhood Education and Care*. Special thanks go to the members of the working group who devoted their time, energy, and insight to preparing the document.

Dear friends,

I am writing to let you know that I am going to school in January 2004 to complete my training to become a registered massage therapist. I am resigning my position with the government at that time. It has been a privilege to be able to work with childcare professionals across the territory and nation these past three years. I developed a very good working relationship with directors of centers and family day home operators in the communities and in Whitehorse that I will always cherish in my memory.

I have learned so much from the members of the Child Care Services Unit on a daily basis. They are an extraordinary team with wisdom, skill, and an unshakable resolve to enhance quality for the children of the Yukon Territory.

I wish them and you the very best in the future in your continued efforts on behalf of the children.

Cheryl Buchan

Yukon
Health and Social Services

HAZARDOUS PLAYGROUNDS?

Children love to play outdoors. They are attracted to playgrounds where they can be physically active and socially interactive. Ensuring that children play in a safe playground environment is a child care facility operator's responsibility. If the equipment and structures are safe, is there anything else to worry about?

Some playground equipment is constructed with preserved wood, which stands up well against exposure to rain and snow. Up until recently, the preservation method employed consisted of infusing green wood with chromated copper arsenic (CCA). This treatment prevents wood from dry rot, fungi, termites and other pests that threaten the integrity of wood products. Arsenic is a naturally occurring element, which in its elemental form is not considered particularly toxic. However, arsenic compounds are more toxic. If a compound such as CCA is ingested in small amounts over time, skin cancer can result. So, how could children ingest CCA as a result of playing in a playground?

CCA is on the surface of treated wood and in sand that is in contact or near wooden equipment or structures. Children can accumulate CCA on their skin, including the skin on their hands. Oral ingestion of the arsenic compound results after putting their fingers in their mouths or after handling and eating food that they have handled. Fortunately, thorough handwashing after playing in the playground will remove CCA from skin.

In 2001, the Canadian and US governments reached agreement with industry to phase out the use of CCA-treated wood by consumers. Both governments concluded, however, that there is no need for consumers to remove or replace existing CCA-wood structures. Is there a need for alarm at child care facilities that have playgrounds?

Lynn Richards, Manager, Environmental Health Services, reviewed a recent article on the topic and offers these comments. *I have reviewed literature including a very good article in the Environmental Health Review titled, "Risk Evaluation of Arsenic Exposure in Playgrounds" published in 2 parts the Summer and Winter 2003. This study states that from the risk assessment calculation for non-cancer risk, the exposure to arsenic in playgrounds from all oral and dermal routes is below acceptable safety factors by one to three orders of magnitude even taking into account the conservative estimates. Based on values used, the ingestion and dermal absorption of arsenic from CCA-treated wood would not pose a non-cancer health risk.*

The cancer risk factor is 1 in 10,000; which I understand is low.

The study further comments that the total intake from contact with CCA-treated wood in the playground, even with the very conservative assumption is still a very small fraction of the total intake by a preschooler from all sources. The calculated intake level is still below the excepted average Canadian intake.

Environmental Health Services supports the discontinued use of CCA-treated wood in playgrounds and encourages the sharing of information on mitigation measures such as handwashing after playing in the sand and on wooden equipment at these playgrounds.

Prepared by Bob Hanley, Environmental Health Officer, Environmental Health Services

Gender Issues in Children's Literature

Think of all the things that books have ever taught you. Books can teach you to knit, to sew, and how to build a house. They can teach you about animals, dinosaurs and bugs. They can teach you to share, to play nice and to cooperate. Books also teach us how to behave and what roles to take in our culture. Socialization is the process by which we learn our culture and it begins at a very young age. Young children are especially adept at learning through watching adults interact and hearing what adults are, and are not, saying. Children pick up on our smallest clues on how to interact and react to the culture around us. Children learn their parents and caregivers manners, habits, stereotypes, bias', and gender roles. It is no wonder then that children's books provide yet another learning opportunity for children; they can learn about our world's norms and cultural roles.

It is important to remember that, while sex is biologically determined, gender is a social construct – each culture has different behaviours, attitudes, roles and activities that it associates with a particular sex. Sex and gender are not interchangeable terms. Research tells us that by three years of age young children can tell you their sex, but have a lot more difficulty sorting out the concept of gender. In order to reach their full potential, young children need to develop without the constraints of gender role stereotypes. As adults, we need to expose children to a variety of gender roles and help break down the stereotypes that exist.

**“From your parents you learn love and laughter and how to put one foot before the other. But when books are opened you discover you have wings.”
- Helen Hayes**

Let's take a look at the things that language and books can teach young girls and boys. The first and most obvious example is the over use of male characters in books and the overuse of male pronouns. Studies have shown that male-oriented titles appear 55% more often than female ones and that the books used recurrently by kindergarten teachers have twice as many male images than females. Also, it is common practice to refer to a group of children or adults as “guys”, just as it is common to refer to a bird or stuffed animal with unknown anatomy as “he”. These kinds of subtle and pervasive language uses send a message to young children that boys and men are more important than girls and women. By providing balanced children's literature and talking about the stereotypes with children, we can prevent the invincibility of women and girls in our culture.

The Story of Snow White and the 7 Dwarves

In order to examine the socialization messages in books; let us examine a popular children's fairy tale “Snow White and the Seven Dwarves.” In the original version of the fairy tale, Snow White is portrayed as kind, nice and pretty. In fact, these are the words used by a class of grade two students. However, despite these admirable characteristics of Snow White's, her very stereotyped, wicked stepmother tries to kill her three times. In her first attempt, the stepmother sent Snow White into the forest to be killed by the woodcutter. Snow White cries and cries and eventually finds the dwarves' house where she

makes herself right at home. After being warned by the dwarves not to trust strangers and to be careful, Snow White accepts a poisoned

comb from her disguised stepmother. The male dwarves then intercede to save her, which represents the second time her life is saved by a male character. She is then warned not to leave the house, which she does not listen to, and instead accepts an apple from a stranger, who is really the disguised stepmother again. The apple causes her to fall into a deep coma from which is rescued for the third time by the benevolent intervention of a male. She kisses the man, whom she does not know, and then marries him.

The grade two students very quickly decided that Snow White was dumb, why else would you let someone try to kill you three times? The kicker of all this though, was that Snow White married the first boy who kissed her and all because he was handsome. As the girls pointed out, he could have been very mean or stupid. It is important to deconstruct the books you are reading to young children, evaluate them and decide what message you are sending to the children and if it the message that you want them to hear.

Children's books tend to show boys as adventurous, independent and capable and girls as dependent, naïve and passive. Boys are portrayed as active, while girls have domestic roles. Sharing children's books that help to deconstruct or counteract traditional gender roles benefits children by increasing self-esteem and attitudes of gender equality. Young boys and girls need to read about girls that are creative, capable and intelligent and boys that are nurturing, artistic and compassionate.

**"Reading makes immigrants of us all -
It takes us away from home, but more
important, it finds homes for us
everywhere." - Hazel Rochman**

Visit the NAEYC website at:
<http://www.naeyc.org/resources/journal/2003/Books4Children.pdf>
to find a listing of books, suitable for 4 to 6 year olds, that break down gender stereotypes and portray girls as strong and capable and boys as nurturing and artistic.

The Council on Inter-racial Books provides the following checklist for analyzing children's books for sexism.

- Look for stereotypes –**
Such as the wicked step-mother or domestic mother
- Look for tokenism –**
Is there just one female character surrounded by several male characters?
- Examine who is doing what –**
Who is active? Passive? Who is dominant? Subservient? Be sure that boys and girls get a mix of all types of roles and activities.

Next, Check the Story Line:

- Is there a particular problem faced by a female character, that is only resolved through the benevolent intervention of a male?**
- Are the achievements of female characters based on their own initiative and intelligence?**
- Could the same story be told if the gender roles were reversed?**

Teach children to actively examine books.

Ask them questions, like what if the Beast was a girl? What if Belle was kind and intelligent but not pretty? Help the children to think

Programming Ideas

Website Design at Love to Learn

By Alex MacKay

We have recently acquired a computer here at the Love to Learn School-age program. This computer provided us with both the challenge of managing the novelty of a fancy new toy while ensuring that all children had access to it, as well as the opportunity to use technology to harness the children's creative skills.

After spending a little time brainstorming about how to make the most of our new resource, I spent a few hours with an *HTML for DUMMIES* book. (HTML stands for "Hypertext Mark Up Language", computer jargon for the computer code used for designing websites.)

Intimidating as it may seem, it is remarkably simple to learn to use this code and design simple Internet sites. I learned how to build a blank template, which can be easily modified based on the children's ideas. I then challenged the children to design their own Internet sites. They ask me to locate photos of their favourite animals, actors or cartoon characters, which I find on the Internet and then copy onto a disk. The photos are then loaded onto our daycare computer, where the children can choose which photos they will use, as well as the colours, fonts, and of course the words that will appear on the page. My job is merely to enter this information into the template page that I have created.

The results have been outstanding. The children are thrilled to see their creations appear on the computer screen. Though all of the pages are currently hosted on our computer here, after consulting with parents, we will actually post them on the web, where the children can share them with a potentially worldwide audience. The children are very excited about this idea, realizing they can let their voices be heard, reaching out to the world while learning to express themselves creatively.

Please send your innovative programming ideas to us, we'd love to include them in our next newsletter.

