

big PLANS in print

Connecting Big Plans' Parents to their Communities

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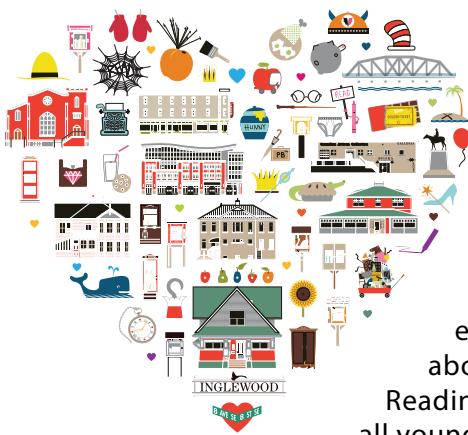
Building a Community One Reader at a Time

The Children's Reading Place is about spreading the joy of reading throughout our community. It's based on the simple idea that if you create a comfortable, fun space for children to read, they will. And when that happens, their imaginations are ignited and their confidence grows.

On July 1st, Calgary Reads opened their door to The Children's Reading Place, a welcoming, artistically redesigned heritage house in Inglewood dedicated to providing free books and literacy experiences to Calgary children. The launch of this initiative offers families exciting new ways to stay engaged with reading and literacy. School groups and families can come to experience the pleasure of curling up with a good book. Children can read on their own or enjoy a story read aloud by a parent, caregiver, Reader in Residence or House Mother.

"We are excited to share this initiative with Calgary families and we will be working with community partners to facilitate access to children farthest from opportunity," says Steacy Collyer, Executive Director at Calgary Reads. "This magical reading place will give children an opportunity to experience and celebrate an inspiring reading environment, and to bring home a book of their own each visit," says Collyer. "Parents, our hope is, will really see this as an opportunity to talk about reading, to share books, to find their favourite cozy space and then to build this is as a routine experience."

Children's Reading Place by Calgary Reads



Carmen Souster, Director and Principal of Big PLANS, had the opportunity to visit the Children's Reading Place in July and found it cozy, welcoming and fun! "The individually characterized rooms of the house beckon the guests to be entranced in the pleasures of reading," comments Souster. "Every room has something special, whether it is snuggling into a deep pillow to read your favorite Dr. Suess or sitting in the maker-room to artfully express something you will never forget about your reading experience, the Children's Reading Place offers an amazing opportunity for all young readers!"

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"I have never experienced such a unique space where the rooms literally come to life with stories," says Lori Nielsen, Director of Communications for Big PLANS, who also had the opportunity to visit with her four children. "All of my kids loved the house and have been asking when we can visit again. From browsing cookbooks to novels and finding special spots to read, to creating homemade bookmarks in the maker-space and visiting the whale tail in the bathtub, it was such an relaxing way to spend a summer afternoon."

The Children's Reading Place is open Thursday to Saturday by appointment only.

Initially conceived and launched as an early-literacy initiative, Calgary Reads is a vibrant multifaceted reading movement committed to building the joy of reading at home, school and community. Children need access to books to become great readers and this is a new way for Calgary Reads to get books into the hands of those who need them. The Children's Reading Place has had over 277 visits by families, schools and community groups since July 2017.



Children's Reading Place by Calgary Reads

Once there was a house with a family and a dog and many, many books.

Then, there was an idea to invite many children and many more books to one place that could feel like home.

So a community came together to reimagine this special space.

There were hands and minds, paint and nails, builders and artists, and many, many helpers.

After months of work, design, labour and love, it was finished.

And so it came – The House that Calgary Built, and the biggest Little Free Library ever!

Because, we all know..."It takes a community to raise a reader".



~~The End~~

The Beginning...

The Children's Reading Place will be dedicated to supporting childhood literacy by providing interactive literacy experiences, support, resources and free books to children in the Calgary area.

10 Things we really want you to know!

1. It's located in a heritage house in Inglewood.
2. It's not a library – it promotes book access and OWNERSHIP! Children get to keep the books.
3. It's located across from the Alexandra Centre Society, which houses a daycare, a health clinic, and a writers' society.
4. It's only one block away from public transit and easy to walk to.
5. It has the support of community and Ward 9 Office.
6. A homebuilder, tradespeople, designers, and artists are donating their talents to reimagine this special space.
7. It's backed by research on the need for children to grow up surrounded by books.
8. There will be a Reader-in-Residence and House Hosts to welcome visitors!
9. It will be a community hub for reading and books.
10. The Calgary Reads Book Bank operates in the basement where busy volunteers will sort and shelf books to distribute to Calgary children.



calgary reads

TRY THIS AT HOME

- Take a walk around town and look for numbers on vehicles, houses, signs, store windows etc. Point to and say the numbers together.
- Have your child help you to infuse water. Place sliced lemons or cucumber slices or berries in to a pitcher full of water. Let sit in fridge and then taste.
- Have your child run around your house outside. Make sure it is safe, and count how many times they can do it, before they are tired. Give them a cool drink after.
- Give your child "butterfly" kisses by leaning in close so that your eyelashes brush their cheeks.

For more great parenting tips and activities, visit the preschool activity calendar at www.albertahealthservices.ca

Rake some leaves together and jump into the piles. Roll and throw and scoop.

Share Rhymes & Songs
With Your Child Every Day!

**Twinkle, Twinkle
Little Star
(a variation)**

(Child's name, child's name)
you're my star

How I wonder who you are

How I wonder how you'll grow
What you'll be and who you will
know

(Child's name, child's name)
you're my star

Oh my girl/boy you'll go far!

For more great parenting tips and activities, visit the preschool activity calendar at www.albertahealthservices.ca

Looking for Support in Your Community?

Did you know that there are eight neighborhood groups in Calgary and area called Early Childhood Coalitions working to help improve the lives of young children and their families in their communities? Coalitions are open to anyone, they share research results with their communities, and they plan local events that focus on early development initiatives. Strong, caring communities help to create the supports all young children deserve and need to thrive and do well in their lives. Find out more about what is going on in your area and how you can get involved. Visit this link to find your local contact or ask your Big PLANS Educational Coordinator to help connect you.

<http://www.2000days.ca/s/F2KD-ECD-Coalitions-Contact-Info.pdf>

PARENTING... you are not alone!

Are you interested in learning how to raise strong children and build healthy relationships with your kids?

Would you like to get together with other parents to share ideas, make new friends and more?



Parents, educators and caregivers want the best opportunities for their children to lead healthy, happy lives. Currently, we know that over half the children in Alberta are struggling in at least one area of their development prior to kindergarten. This healthy development forms the critical foundation for success in literacy and learning.

When families, schools and the broader community truly come together we optimize environments for creating future foundations for children to have healthy and happy lives. In doing so, we can also learn together about building strong and healthy communities.

This year, Big PLANS for Little Kids is excited to participate in a unique co-learning experience with your preschool by offering Parent Café Conversations: The Early Years! Together, participants of these conversations will learn how meaningful conversation can strengthen families, grow leadership, and develop community partnerships with families. Not only will we explore this incredible role caring adults play in supporting children, but we will cover themes such as:

- Building a Strong Foundation
- Relationships: Serve and Return
- A Supportive Environment for Development
- Skills for Life and Learning
- Supporting Early Literacy and more!

There is no cost to attend a "Parent Café Conversation Event". We will be getting together for refreshments and conversations at various times during the year.

Please talk to your Educational Coordinator for more details or contact Tracy at 403-685-4229 or administrator@bigplans.org if you would like to be included in our communication about upcoming events.

Kids in the Kitchen Healthy Snacks

Apple Grape Salad

Mix together 1 chopped apple, 3/4 cup of halved seedless grapes and 1/2 cup of chopped celery with a cup of plain yogurt and 1/4 cup of sunflower seeds (optional). Stir until coated. Serve as a delicious snack or in a whole grain pita for a delicious quick and easy lunch. Enjoy!



Make Book Reading a Time for Conversations!

Brittany Da Silva, Clinical Program Assistant, The Hanen Centre. www.hanen.org

In your child's favorite book, what does he like to talk about? When you talk about topics that have captured your child's interest in books, it helps develop his language and literacy skills.

Why is it important to make book reading interactive?

Research has shown that when children are engaged in conversations while reading books, we see: growth in their understanding of what's read; language skills, including the number of words they know and say; and reading abilities when they're older [1,2].

Children benefit from interactive book reading because they:

- are more engaged when they play an active role and talk about their interests
- are introduced to new ideas and more advanced language that they don't hear in everyday conversations, such as new and interesting words (which has a great impact on reading skills later on!) and complex sentences.
- can connect new information to what they already know
- are exposed to the building blocks of literacy. These building blocks are the knowledge and skills that children learn before they start to read and write, like understanding and using new words, story structure, and what the writer means but hasn't specifically stated [2].



What does reading with vs. without interacting look like?

When Jill, a mom, interacts with her son Liam while reading the book titled "Room on a Broom", she makes comments and ask questions about Liam's interests. She also waits before turning a page. When Jill talks to Liam about his interests and waits, it gives Liam the chance to make comments and ask questions too. Jill also talks about ideas that go beyond what is in the pictures or directly stated in the book. For example, Jill and Liam use language to explain "why the witch had such a tall hat (so all of her hair would fit inside!)". They also use problem-solving skills to discuss what might happen if the witch wore a smaller hat (it might stay on and not be blown away in the wind!). When having conversations about the book, Liam benefits because he understands the story better. This also exposes him to more advanced language that involves explaining and problem-solving. *To watch video demonstrating interacting vs. not interacting, please visit hanen.org or <http://hanen.org/Article/book-reading-for-conversations>.*

Hanen strategies that will help you make book reading interactive!

Observe, Wait and Listen (OWL)

Observing, Waiting and Listening to your child's messages is a powerful strategy because it gives you information about what your child is interested in, lets him start and lead the interaction and makes him feel heard. When you're reading together, here's how you can OWL:

Observe	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What your child reacts to• What interests him	It can be helpful to plan when you're going to OWL. Here are some good options for when you can OWL: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Before or after you turn the page• After you make a comment about something in the story• After you point to and comment on a picture• When something exciting happens in the book• After you ask a question [2]
Wait	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stop speaking• Look expectantly at your child	
Listen	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pay close attention to what your child is telling you	In your child's favorite book, when might you try OWLing?

Follow Your Child's Lead

After your child starts an interaction with you, respond immediately! You can respond by saying something that relates to what your child has just said or done. Just like Jill explained an idea or talked about solving a problem, you can go beyond what is written or illustrated in the book. It can be fun and even surprising to see where your conversations go!

Here are some tips for how you can follow your child's lead in books:

- Respond warmly and enthusiastically to what he says or does. Make a comment or ask question about what he said or did.
- Let him set the pace.
- Point to what he is pointing to and talk about it.
- Spend more time on pages he really likes. [2]

Can you think of a page that your child may want to spend more time on? What might he do to show you that he's interested in staying on that page? Book reading is a great time to have conversations that build your child's language and literacy skills. To turn book reading into a time for conversation, let your child lead the interaction by OWLing and then follow your child's lead by responding to his messages. We hope you have fun interacting with your child while reading books together! Please visit www.hanen.org for more information.

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References: 1. National Early Literacy Panel (2008). *Developing Early Literacy: Report of the National Early Literacy Panel*. Washington, DC: National Institute for Literacy/ 2. Greenberg, J. & Weitzman, E. (2014). *I'm Ready!™ How to Prepare Your Child for Reading Success*. Toronto: The Hanen Centre.