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A Unified Vision

Thank-you for giving us the privilege of working with your child throughout this year! Children in our program work hard, and we are very proud of them for all they have accomplished throughout the year so far.

We are so grateful for the strong team of people that supports each child's growth and development: the CDF, therapy team members, Team Liaison Leader, preschool or daycare staff, and YOU as parents and caregivers. Amazing things happen when people come together with a unified vision: to help children develop to their own unique maximum potential.



We want to acknowledge the following organizations for making generous donations in support of Cause and Effect's projects this year:

MusiCounts TD Community Music Grant Program: for the donation of a variety of quality musical instruments. These are now part of our CDF and Purposeful Playgroup resources.

Kinsmen Club of Calgary: for a generous donation in support of our Purposeful Playgroups.

We are grateful to all of the individuals who donated to Cause and Effect Foundation this year. All donations help support children and families in our program! Thank-you!

The Importance of Outdoor Free Play

"The outdoors awakens and rejuvenates the mind and engages all the senses at once."

- Angela Hanscom

Did you know that it is recommended that preschool-aged children get 5 to 8 hours of active play every day? Preschoolers learn about life and gain vital skills when they engage in outdoor free play. Recent scientific studies show outdoor play helps young children in a variety of ways: it helps them develop independence, social skills, problem solving skills and resiliency.

Free play in a natural outdoor settings:

- Helps children strengthen their large muscle groups, which increases balance and agility
- Leads to better looking and listening skills
- Engages all five senses
- Develops a child's fine motor skills
- Helps develop stronger "executive functioning" skills in a child's early years
- Is a key factor in helping children becoming self-directed and inventive later in life



Getting outdoors is beneficial for ALL! Being in nature is also linked to reducing people's levels of stress, anxiety and depression; this includes adults AND children!



Outdoor Play Ideas

Pack a snack and fill your water bottles... Now you're ready to EXPLORE! This area is rich with natural outdoor spaces, regardless of whether you live in the Bow Valley, in a rural setting, or live right in the middle of the city of Calgary.

Here are a few ideas of what you can do once you find a "just-right" nature space for you and your family:

- Go on a nature scavenger hunt
- Climb trees and listen for birds
- Find as many different types of bugs or flowers as possible (we recommend that you not collect/pick them, but just observe what you see)
- Make shapes with sticks or do "rubblings" with different shaped leaves
- Engage your senses: talk about what you see, hear, smell, and feel
- Lie on the ground and explore the world from that perspective: What do you notice that is different?



HAVE FUN EXPLORING our BEAUTIFUL outdoor spaces!



Next Steps: Parent Advocacy

As powerful advocates, we recognize the love, determination, and follow-through it takes to represent and communicate your child's needs. For those parents whose children are heading into Kindergarten, here are some tidbits that may help you in the process:

- ⇒ **Get to know your child's teacher,** principal, resource teacher and the school staff, including the school receptionist. Make an appointment early on in the year to go in and introduce yourself and your child. Take time to build a strong relationship right away.
- ⇒ **Educate yourself about your child's specific challenges** or disability. Pay attention to strategies that help them learn and what motivates them. Perhaps do up a "fast facts" sheet about your child, or a "My Child Learns Best When..." information sheet and give it to your teacher on your first meeting. If things change throughout the year, let your child's teacher know.
- ⇒ **Be open.** Good communication helps you share key information to support your child's needs, and will help your child's new team make informed decisions about your child and their program. In addition to sharing your ideas, be a partner in listening to their new information and ideas as well.
- ⇒ **Ask for help if you need it.** If English is not your first language and you feel an interpreter or a translator would benefit you in advocating for your child at their new school, ask if one can be provided for your meetings.
- ⇒ **Be a good record keeper.** If you have a phone conversation or talk in person, make notes. Write down the main points of your conversations, including names and dates. If you need to refer back to a past conversation, this will help immensely.
- ⇒ **Be prepared.** If you request a meeting with your school staff, come prepared with a plan. An ideal time-frame for a meeting is 20 minutes. Come with a list of issues you want to discuss so that the time is well spent. If you have specific desired outcomes for this meeting, be polite but clear about what you want. Send a thank-you note to the staff the next day, expressing appreciation for their time and for their involvement in your child's learning journey.
- ⇒ **Understand your specific school system.** Individual school board websites have sections for parents to get information on their special needs' programs and philosophies. Alberta Education's website also has great resources for parents of children with special needs.
- ⇒ **Get connected.** Intentionally connecting with other parent advocates may be a big help along the way. ● ● ●

*Parents will always
be their child's
GREATEST
advocate.*





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Partnering with CEF

Thanks to many of you who partnered with us in response to our December mailing. We invite you to join us as we continue to work to help children and families in our community. There are three easy ways to give to Cause and Effect Foundation:

1. Donations can be mailed directly to the office.
2. Donate on your MC or Visa: call the office to make arrangements.
3. Contribute through the United Way campaign by specifically designating your donation to us when you give. Just look for the "Donor's Choice" option. Receipts will be sent to you by the United Way.

Our charitable registration number is #867016610RR0001. Donations over \$10.00 will be issued a tax receipt.

THANK-YOU!

Learning Along the Way

As we all know, children's needs are continually changing as they develop and grow, which often results in parents and caregivers wondering what to do. Here is a great, long-term resource for parents and caregivers.

FREE Parenting and Education Classes: Alberta Health Services' Community Education Services offers FREE in-person and online learning sessions on a variety of topics relating to child and youth health and mental health. Some topics that are upcoming include "Temper and Tantrums in Toddlers and Preschoolers" and "Connecting Before Correcting" which focuses on the art of relationships when working with children with emotional, social, and behavioural challenges.

For information on upcoming topics, go to <http://frc.albertahealthservices.ca/ces.php> and click on "Current Sessions". Follow the website's instructions to register for a specific class.

TIP: You can also sign up to receive their weekly email newsletter, which will keep you up-to-date and informed about their ongoing seminars.

To sign up, click on <http://community.hmhc.ca/>, and then click on "Create Account".

