

Summary of CPEF Contribution to Intercultural Early Learning Project

In September 2007, CPEF contributed to the creation of a pre-Kindergarten class for 4 and 5 year olds from the Sudanese, Somali and Kurdish Communities, and who were learning English as a second language. Many partners were involved in the formation of this classroom including: Edmonton Public Schools, ABC Headstart, Region 6 Child and Family Services, Alberta Education, Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, Capital Health and researchers from the University of Alberta.

CPEF funds were used to:

1. Document the unique aspects of the development of this classroom and the contributions of community partners;
2. Support family members (through Multi-Cultural Health Brokers) to support their child's learning both at school and at home;
3. facilitate meetings for parents on:
 - supporting their child's learning at home and school,
 - the importance of maintaining their language and cultural / heritage traditions at home,
 - health services available to them in the community; and
 - parenting in two-cultures, including an overview of the supportive services offered through Child and Family Services.

The classroom was structured in a unique way, in that only the essential equipment for an early childhood program was in the class, allowing for the additions of art, toys, books and supplies from the Kurdish, Somali and Sudanese cultures. Three cultural interpreters were in the room, each spoke English as well as one of the home languages of the children in the program.

Edmonton Public Schools contributed a great deal of support including transportation arrangements and an openness to innovation that was exceptional. Parents indicated their relief and deep appreciation for having a class that supported their language and culture both at home and at school. Through the dedication and leadership at Edmonton Public Schools, the involvement of the community and the support of CPEF this truly unique program gained prominence locally and internationally.

Cathy Martin