



Spring 2009

Family Learning Newsletter

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Dear All

Welcome to the Family Learning spring newsletter. It is cold and snowing outside, but the 'green shoots of spring' are visible through the thick blanket of snow and it was light tonight until 5ish. Time to turn to acquiring new skills and setting up something new for your families? We hope so! In this newsletter is a taste of the Family Learning we are currently offering. If there is anything else you think would be popular in your school/centre, please let us know. We are particularly keen to develop more numeracy related courses and more arts and crafts - getting creative juices flowing across Leicester!

What goes around comes around ...

This year we developed some attractive branded materials for our learners in Leicester. To make them colourful, and to make sure that they reflect the communities we serve here in Leicester, we looked back through our archive of photographs and picked some of the best. These are now printed on folders, writing pads and mouse mats. A tutor started a course in a new school recently and one of the mothers instantly recognised herself and her son when he had been a baby. She was delighted and so were the school, who rushed off to class to get the child in question. It's lovely to think that this mum is still looking for Family Learning opportunities, as her children grow older.

Catriona Kelly

OfSTED

A grateful 'thank you' to all our partners and all the families who were visited by or spoke to OfSTED inspectors last week. We received some very positive feedback and are looking forward to the official judgements being made public in a few weeks time. Some of the feedback they received from learners was challenging, but the overwhelming response was positive. We have some aspects of our work we will be developing over the coming months, but we also have some successes to share and celebrate.

Thank you to all who contributed to this in any way.



A Maths Menu - some different approaches to learning numeracy

Government analysis tells us that although we are developing our maths skills, we are not doing it as quickly as we should! Here are a range of courses that might be just the right approach for your families:

Magic Maths (Family Numeracy)

This course is now running successfully in more than one venue in the city. Making maths games and sharing ideas about how parents can support their children to develop maths skills is proving very popular. Magic Maths is all about how simple activities and routines in the home can be used to reinforce children's understanding of numeracy. It helps parents to develop their own skills and encourages them to make and play maths games in the home using numeracy vocabulary. Betting odds, the lottery and card games are all good starting points for learning while playing. Magic Maths can involve children learning alongside their parents, making links to children's learning in school and it supports parents to work towards the national tests.



Manage your Money - Financial Capability

As the credit crunch strikes home, now is definitely the time to ensure that families can get the most out of the income they have. Managing debt, understanding loans and interest rates and budgeting can make a big difference to family life. 'Manage your Money' explores ways to help parents and carers cope with their finances. Supermarket shopping (understanding how sales techniques work), bank accounts and debt management are all topics parents can choose to explore. Professional help is available from Leicester's Community Legal Advice Centre who can follow up with individual issues if necessary.



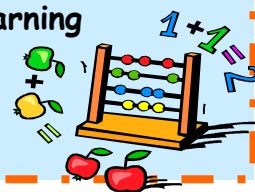
Keeping up with the Children

A traditional approach to learning about what your children are learning in school - how it is taught and how parents can help! This 6-week course tracks what children are learning and makes sure the parents/carers understand. It is also an excellent springboard for getting parents to develop their own numeracy skills.

Workshops

One-off tasters to allow cautious parents/carers to try out a range of numeracy techniques, and give them the confidence to negotiate a follow on course that will be the right approach for their school/centre.

Research proves that when the parents start learning for themselves, the impact it has on their children is profound and lasting. As with all family learning, these courses are highly kinaesthetic in approach. Learning by doing, trying out, discussing and sharing, builds confidence and increases enjoyment. Our parents have a lot of fun and learn while they are doing it. They take this enjoyment of learning home with them to share with their children.



Transforming Leicester's Learning

Last year Family Learning worked in a number of schools delivering two courses that helped parents to help their children achieve the government's target 'score' in their Foundation Stage profile.

Learning Through Play provides opportunities for children and adults to learn and play together to find out about new ideas to try at home. Past sessions have included:

- Messy play - encouraging creativity and links to reading
- Tumble Time - how physical play supports active learning
- Rhyme Time - exploring the value of rhyme and rhythm to language development
- Story Time - including how do Story Sacks help reading.

Playing with Language is a FLLN (Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy) course with an emphasis on speaking and listening for both parents and children through making games, books and having fun together. All of the activities involve speaking and listening together to support children's confidence in communication, reading and early writing. Families are given 'home time activity' packs that build on the activities in that week's session to encourage a learning culture within the home. At the end of the course the parents or carers plan a trip out for the whole group; more everyday learning can take place at the farm park, the museum or at the zoo! This course is for families where the parents have 'Skills for Life' learning needs.

We are offering these two courses to targeted schools again and look forward to seeing great progress with these children. A little more understanding of what schools expect of children can make a very big difference.

Learner Consultation An invitation to take part

We pride ourselves in offering Family Learning that is meaningful and relevant to the lives of the families in Leicester. To make sure that we are getting this right, we will be holding two learner consultation sessions this month. Are you interested in holding one in your school/centre? If you have had a few groups of families taking part in Family Learning, and feel they would like to contribute their views, please get in touch. Ideally we would like to host a lunch for 10 - 15 families where we can gather their views, celebrate their successes and listen to their suggestions. This has proved very useful in the past; it helps us to shape our curriculum.

http://www.familylearning.org.uk/Fun_Math_Games.html

Free downloadable games

<http://www.coolmath4kids.com>

Excellent website for up to age 13, a really good parents section with advice on helping with homework

<http://www.mathsphere.co.uk/resources/MathSphereFreeResourcesMagic.html>

Printable magic maths tricks

<http://www.talent.ac.uk/dsearch.asp>

Free downloadable games



Case Studies - Family Health



Family Health has been a huge success this year. By the middle of January 45 families had taken either a Basic Food Hygiene certificate or a Paediatric First Aid Course. This can have a life saving impact on the lives of the families they look after:

Fire Safety

On a recent course, the tutor invited the local fire brigade in to talk to the families about fire safety in the home. In addition to the children having a great time trying out the fire hoses, the adults enjoyed a talk about fire alarms, safe escape routes and were given a free smoke alarm for their homes. The following week one of the mums was unfortunate enough to put her new smoke alarm to the test. It went off following a cooking mishap. Luckily no one was hurt, but if she had not fitted the smoke alarm, it could have been a very different outcome.

Family Health - A success story

Last year a shy mum attended a Family Health course at her local primary school. As part of this course she took a Paediatric First Aid Certificate.

"Over Christmas I was confident and competent enough to assist in an incident where a man had been stabbed. I stopped the flow of blood and was able to give clear, concise information to the emergency services and the paramedic when he arrived. Before I would never have got involved or been able to help."

Living with Teenagers & Understanding Parent Volunteering

Living with Teenagers - Not all Family Learning is about numeracy and literacy. Some families benefit from support with managing behaviour. Teenagers and older children can be challenging, at a time when parents feel they do not have the support they need from other parents. Just as the 'stay and play' got you through walking, talking, and potty training, a lot of parents would value a support network for staying out late, door slamming, homework and 'sex, drugs and rock and roll'. Living with Teenagers is all about understanding behaviour and setting clear boundaries.

Understanding Parent Volunteering - is about offering something back. Parents who have been the recipients of some support with their own challenging children are trained to offer buddying or peer support to other parents. This has proven to be very successful in supporting parents whose children are not attending school or who are in danger of becoming involved in anti-social behaviour.

For more information about either of these courses, please contact us at the address on the front.