

Maynooth Public School hosts literacy event



Lisa Resmer, Maynooth Public School principal, engaged parents and children at the Hastings Highlands Library on Saturday, as Maynooth and Birds Creek Public Schools delivered a family literacy day, in partnership with Bancroft's Early Years Centre. SARAH VANCE Special to This Week

By Sarah Vance

With 44 sounds and only 26 letters, the pathway towards English language literacy can be challenging for new readers. Area teachers are working to level the playing field by making reading strategies more accessible for children and their parents. Lisa McKenna-Sutherland, principal of Birds Creek Public School, greeted families as they arrived at the Hastings Highlands Centre on Saturday to participate in a literacy event. The day featured learning for the whole family, as well as a free pizza lunch. Children and parents were provided with passports as they moved through several hands-on centres. These were staffed by early childhood specialists, local principals, and teachers, who worked with parents and their children.

Rebecca Clemmer, a teacher at the school, was looking for new ways to share strategies with parents, said Lisa Resmer, Maynooth Public School principal. The day grew out of that idea. Many partners emerged during our planning.

Jessica DeGeer, a teacher at Maynooth Public School, worked to deliver a guided-reading circle, at times stopping the story she was reading to address parents about how she would proceed during the instructional day.

This is when I would stop and ask the children questions about punctuation and word choice, said DeGeer.

At a second learning centre, Susan Ramsay, early literacy specialist for Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington led families on letter walks, where children used magnifying glasses to seek out beginning letters.

Children need to be able to isolate and hear the different sounds inside the words they are decoding, said Ramsay. The Four S Strategy is a tool where children show, say, sound out and stress the different letters to make up the word.

With handheld whiteboards and dry erase markers, children then recorded the letters and brought them back to the group where they linked the letters to sounds.

Early childhood educators from North Hastings Children's Services such as Tasha Graham and Diane Hannah led students through songs that combined actions, sounds and gestures to convey their messages.

Following the mandate of Our Shared Commitment, we are blending nutrition, music, literacy and arts activities into the day, said Sarah Phoenix, program co-ordinator at Bancroft's Early Years Centre.

Jessica Anderson, a member of our parent council, joined us in planning the event and helped allocate funds and resources to enhance our plans today, said Resmer.

From her literacy centre, Resmer encouraged parents to ask open-ended questions.

Inviting children to ask questions is a great strategy, because questioning is something that children do naturally, said Resmer.

We can tailor our questions so children will provide depth in their answers.

It has been a very successful day, with many families travelling from other communities to be a part of it, said Miranda Mitchell,

Hastings Highlands library co-ordinator. ?It would be wonderful to have more events like this more often.?