

TLC³: Enhancing Language and Cognitive Development Within the Context of Early Relationships: A Community-Based National Project

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TLC³

- **Thinking, Listening and Communicating (Tandem: Langage et Cognition)**
- **Tender Loving Care in the learning environment (Tendresse, Lien et Communication)**
- **The Learning Centres (Théorie en Liaison avec la Communauté)**

TLC³



Growing a TLC³ Knowledge Tree

- The Roots: Who are we?
- The Base: What did we try to achieve?
- The Trunk: What did we do?
- The Branches: How did we do it?
- The Leaves: What did we find?
- The Fruit: What did we learn?

TLC³



We learned that managing a project like TLC³ is like good parenting. The factors that support optimal growth of children support organizations and adults:

- appropriate stimulation**
- supportive structures**
- secure reflective non-intrusive but reliably present relationships**

TLC³ : Who are we? (1)

Seven community-based organizations across Canada:

- **located in Vancouver, Calgary, Regina, Meadow Lake, Toronto, Saint-Remi, and Dartmouth**
- **identified through recommendations from people involved in early childhood development policy or research in the various provinces**

TLC³ Who are we? (2)

- **Sites were selected to participate in TLC³ on the basis that:**
 - **the organization and the people involved had a track record of establishing and operating community-based programs**
 - **they had demonstrated the ability to work with others in their communities and were well placed to act as resource centres for the sharing of learning**
 - **they operated in diverse contexts (urban/rural, low/moderate income, at risk/healthy populations, including a Francophone community site and an Aboriginal community site) and served different age groups (infants, toddlers, preschoolers)**

What did we try to achieve? (1)

- **Enhance the cognitive and language development of children aged 0 to 5 years in the context of important relationships**
- **Provide practical tools for parents and professionals to enhance children's language and cognitive development**
- **Create collaborative links between interested partners, including programs, academics, educators, policy-makers, parents and other community members**

What did we try to achieve? (2)

- **Illustrate the value of evaluation as a way of demonstrating the effectiveness of programs**
- **Share information and key learnings with communities, government, professional groups, and the general public in a variety of formats**
- **Transfer knowledge and build community capacity that can be sustained over the longer term**

What did we do? (1)

- **Embedded strategies to promote language and cognitive development among children 0-5 years in a variety of settings—child care centres, preschools, family resource centres, neighbourhood or community centres and children’s homes**
- **Supported development of positive parent-child relationships and involved parents and children in shared activities**
- **Delivered programs through professionals with different types of training (speech-language pathologists, early childhood educators, home visitors, psychologists, teachers) and in some cases through parents trained to facilitate a program**

What did we do? (2)

- **Evaluated outcomes through structured observation, testing, feedback forms, questionnaires, and interviews**
- **Built on existing strengths and structures in communities to meet the needs of young children and their families, and developed and sustained the new capacity beyond the life of this project in many different ways**
- **Created a small but strong interdisciplinary network of people across Canada committed to improving early childhood development and sharing practical and theoretical learnings**

How did we do it? – Sites (1)

- **Each local organization was challenged to develop the best way to serve the parents and children in its community and to justify its approach based on current research and best practice. The TLC³ goals provided the terms of reference within which each site developed its own approach.**

How did we do it? – Sites (2)

- **At nearly all the sites, TLC³ was embedded in an existing community-based organization. Where it was not, a community organization was involved as a partner. Sites could use off-the-shelf programs, adapt or enhance an existing program, or develop a new one. Between them, they did all of the above.**

How did we do it? - Sites (3)

The people involved at sites shared some important values including:

- **Parents are the most important influence in the lives of children, especially in the early years, and often have capacities that are unrecognized (even by themselves) that require support and encouragement**
- **The earlier that children's language and cognitive development is stimulated and nurtured, and emerging problems are assessed and addressed, the better**
- **Programs should focus on the strengths of families, not on deficits**
- **Relationships matter – with families, with partners, with staff and colleagues, with funders, and with the wider community**
- **Cultural and community sensitivity must be embedded in any effort to reach out to families**
- **Practice must be aligned with fundamental values**

How did we do it? – Sites (4)

- **All the sites developed a variety of collaborative partnerships with community, professional, and other organizations. They actively engaged in outreach - giving presentations, writing articles, joining organizations, liaising with government officials and elected representatives, providing training within and outside their own organizations, and distributing informative materials.**

How did we do it? – Sites (5)

- **Sites wrestled with a variety of challenges unique to the circumstances of their own site, and developed their own solutions. One of the more difficult challenges for all the sites was designing and conducting an evaluation, a process with which they had little or no prior experience. Another shared challenge was developing plans for sustaining what they had created.**

Programs used by the TLC³ Sites

- Parent Child Mother Goose Program
- Come Read with Me
- You Make the Difference
- Child as Scientist
- Story Crafting
- ALI (Interactive Reading Program)
- PRINTS (Parents' Roles Interacting with Teachers)
- Learning Language and Loving It
- Parents As Teachers
- Keys to Caregiving
- Baby Talk – based on Keys to Caregiving
- It takes Two to Talk
- Bright Start Cognitive Curriculum
- Let's be Social
- Reggio Emilia approach
- High Scope strategies

VANCOUVER

CHILD & FAMILY POPULATION SERVED	BASE PROGRAM & TLC³ ACTIVITIES
<p>AGE: 0-2 years</p> <p>Multicultural, Urban</p> <p>Low to Middle Income, Moderate Risk</p>	<p>Base: Parent-Infant Program</p> <p>TLC³ ACTIVITIES:</p> <p>Parent-Child Interactional Programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ <i>Parent-Child Mother Goose</i>■ <i>You Make the Difference</i> <p>Language Screening and Follow-Up</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ <i>First Look at Talking</i>■ <i>Further Look at Talking</i>■ <i>Keeping in Touch</i> <p>Professional Training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ <i>Parent-Child Mother Goose</i>

CALGARY

CHILD & FAMILY POPULATION SERVED	BASE PROGRAM & TLC³ ACTIVITIES
<p>AGE: 6 months – 5 years</p> <p>English Canadian</p> <p>Middle to Upper Middle Income, Low Risk</p> <p>Urban</p>	<p>Base: University of Calgary Child Care Centre</p> <p>TLC³ ACTIVITIES:</p> <p>Parent-Child Interactional Program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ <i>Parent-Child Mother Goose</i> <p>Toy and Resource Lending Library</p> <p>Home Visiting and Parent Education Program</p> <p>Parent as Teachers</p> <p>Community Outreach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ <i>Parent-Child Mother Goose Training</i>■ <i>Knowing and Growing Together Lecture Series</i>■ <i>Child as a Scientist</i>■ <i>Story Crafting and Story Telling</i>

MEADOW LAKE

CHILD & FAMILY POPULATION SERVED	BASE PROGRAM & TLC³ ACTIVITIES
<p>AGE: 0-5 years</p> <p>First Nations</p> <p>Low Income, High Risk</p> <p>Rural</p>	<p>Base: Meadow Lake Tribal Council – First Nations’ Child Care Program</p> <p>TLC³ ACTIVITIES:</p> <p>Developmental Screening</p> <p>Parent-Child Programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ <i>You make the Difference</i>■ <i>It Takes Two to Talk</i>■ <i>Come Read With Me</i>■ <i>Parent –Child Mother Goose</i> <p>Parent Education Program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ <i>Nobody’s Perfect</i>■ <i>Second Step</i> (violence prevention) <p>Parent Education Meetings</p> <p>Child and Parent Components</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ <i>Bright Start</i> <p>Resources: Toy and book library; Book and toy resource fairs</p>

REGINA

CHILD & FAMILY POPULATION SERVED	BASE PROGRAM & TLC³ ACTIVITIES
<p>AGE: 0-5 years</p> <p>First Nations (largely Metis)</p> <p>English Canadian</p> <p>Low Income, High Risk</p> <p>Urban</p>	<p>Base: Regina Early Learning Centre</p> <p>TLC³ ACTIVITIES:</p> <p>Enhance Preschool Program With Strategies From <i>High/Scope Curriculum</i></p> <p>Family Literacy Programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ <i>Parents' Role Interacting with Teacher Support (PRINTS)</i>■ <i>Come Read With Me</i> <p>Home visiting Parent Education Program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ <i>Parents as Teachers</i>

TORONTO

CHILD & FAMILY POPULATION SERVED	BASE PROGRAM & TLC³ ACTIVITIES
<p>AGE: 0-4 years</p> <p>Immigrant (largely from Sri Lanka, Philippines and India)</p> <p>Low Income, High Risk, with Identified Delays</p> <p>Urban</p>	<p>Base: Growing Together (Community-based and health promotion)</p> <p>TLC³ ACTIVITIES:</p> <p>Developmental Assessment Preschool Program Parent-Child Interactional Program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ <i>Parent-Child Mother Goose</i> <p>Parent Education Programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ <i>You Make the Difference</i> <p>Home visits Community Day Care Consultation</p>

ST. REMI

CHILD & FAMILY POPULATION SERVED	BASE PROGRAM & TLC³ ACTIVITIES
<p>AGE: 0–5 years</p> <p>French Canadian</p> <p>Low Income</p> <p>Rural</p>	<p>Base: 1,2,3 GO: St. Remi (community-based, early intervention program)</p> <p>TLC³ ACTIVITIES:</p> <p>Parent-Child Interactional Programs (Didactic Interactive Reading Programs)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ ALI - Bébé (0-15 months)■ ALI - Bambin (15–36 months)■ ALI - Explorateur (3-5 years) <p>Developmental Assessments and Corrective Action Program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ ALI - DAC (Detection-Action Corrective) <p>Community Action Program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Resource Library■ Training for intervention

DARTMOUTH

CHILD & FAMILY POPULATION SERVED	BASE PROGRAM & TLC³ ACTIVITIES
<p>AGE: 4–5 years (Preschool)</p> <p>AGE: 0-5 years (Family Resource Centre)</p> <p>Low Income, High Risk</p> <p>Semi-Urban</p>	<p>Base: Dartmouth Boys & Girls Club Preschool and Dartmouth Family Resource Centre</p> <p>TLC³ ACTIVITIES:</p> <p>Enhance Preschool Programs</p> <p>Parent-child Interactive Programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ <i>Parent/Tot interactive Rhyming Program</i>■ <i>Baby Talk (based on Keys to Caregiving)</i> <p>Parent Education Programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ <i>You Make the Difference</i> <p>Speech-Pathology Consultations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ <i>Learning Language and Loving it</i>■ <i>Involving teachers as language facilitators</i>

How did we do it? – The Funder (1)

- **Was willing to invest in the capacity of community organizations to design and deliver solutions best suited to local needs, and committed sufficient funding up-front for 5 years to enable local organizations to make a real difference in what they could offer young children and parents.**
- **Took the risk of allowing the project to evolve rather than requiring that pre-defined targets or strict program/budget specifications be locked in at the beginning.**

How did we do it? – The Funder (2)

- **Provided additional, designated funding for design and implementation of project evaluation to understand the processes that contributed to project outcomes.**
- **Supported creation of a national project infrastructure, including resources for central administration, annual site visits by project managers, establishment of a National Advisory Committee, communications, and an annual symposium for participants.**

How did we do it? – The Funder (3)

- **Recognized the importance of a shared vision and shared learning among all project participants, and took part in every symposium.**
- **Approached the whole project as a learning partner and collaborator and used the TLC experience to inform its vision to be a source of support for sustainable community-based programs that positively influence quality of life for Canadian families.**

How did we do it? – The Project Management Team (1)

Members of the Hincks-Dellcrest (Gail Appel) Institute team:

- **Provided direction and monitored the community sites in a way that allowed them the flexibility to be creative within defined terms of reference (TLC³ goals) and with advice and support as needed**
- **Encouraged the sites to be open about problems and to solve them locally, which is mostly what happened, but intervened on occasion to facilitate solutions**
- **Visited each site once a year to see first-hand how things were going, to discuss challenges and successes, and provide advice if needed**

How did we do it? – The Project Management Team (2)

- **Assembled a group of TLC³ national advisors with a special interest in early childhood development from academic research, government, and public affairs**
- **Organized an annual national symposium attended by representatives from the program sites, the national advisors and the funder. These 3-day events provided opportunities to share experiences from across the country and to learn from each other. They served to build morale and create a common vision. They fostered a sense of being part of a larger collective**

How did we do it? – The Project Management Team (3)

- **Actively supervised and guided the evaluation. Most sites were paired with a university-based researchers (some of whom were also national advisors) to help them design and conduct an evaluation of their programs. The others used a consultant or relied on the management team.**

How did we do it? – The Project Management Team (4)

- **Program Monitoring (interviews & site visits)**
- **Management Information System (demographics & program participation)**
- **Site specific evaluation – testing logic model**
- **Networking symposium**

What did we find? – Outcomes for Children

Because of the diversity in site programs and age groups of children served, different developmental measures were used at each site. Taken together, however, on standardized measures children at 4 of 6 sites showed:

- **improvements on direct tests of language and cognition**

What did we find? – Outcomes for Children

On qualitative measures parents reported that their children showed:

- **increased social skills (e.g. cooperation, respect)**
- **increased knowledge and language skills**
- **improved self-esteem and confidence**

What did we find? – Outcomes for Children

On qualitative measures staff/teachers reported that the children showed:

- **more initiative for learning and literacy activities**
- **improved problems solving skills**
- **increased social connectedness and social skills**

What did we find? – Outcomes for Parents

Parents reported they learned about:

- **how they can help their child develop**
- **how to engage in a more responsive parent-child interactional style**

What did we find? – Outcomes for Parents

Parents also:

- **gained confidence in parenting**
- **established positive relationships with other parents**
- **sought and received training to become program leaders and homevisitors**
- **gained more respect for their child**
- **experienced pleasure in parenting**
- **shared more experiences with their child**

What did we find when children were ready to enter school?

Children who had participated in TLC³ had better vocabulary and phonological processing skills than children in the same community who had not participated.

What did we learn about funding?

- **Developmental investment to young children's language and cognitive development and in parental capacity and confidence pays off in modest early improvements. Longer term impacts may be traceable over time.**
- **Community-based organizations are a source of innovation and excellence in development and delivery of programs for young children and families. They flourish with support that includes stable, multi-year funding and allows them the flexibility to be creative and to evolve.**
- **Introduction of new approaches or program requires time and money for planning, training staff, customizing programs to local needs, reviewing outcomes and making ongoing improvements.**

What did we learn about sustainability?

- **Sustainability may be achieved in different ways. It does not always have to mean that another funder must be found to keep a new program afloat. Building on existing strengths and structures in communities can produce lasting effects. For example, new knowledge and practices may be adopted by staff and incorporated into the organizational culture or the learning may be transferred to other organizations through training or other forms of outreach.**

What did we learn about management of community projects? (1)

- **The same factors that support optimal growth for children - appropriate stimulation, supportive structures, and a secure reflective, non-intrusive but reliably present relationship - can also support practitioners, organizations and communities.**
- **As long as the goals are clear, community-based organizations with experienced leadership should be given as much autonomy and flexibility as possible to tailor programs to local needs. They will respond to the challenge. New and growing organizations may need more support to build capacity. Once greater capacity is developed, it should be reflected in increased autonomy.**

What did we learn about management of community projects? (2)

- **Support should include sharing problems as well as successes and, above all, sharing learning. Community-based organizations can use new knowledge to enhance programs and practices, and they have knowledge to share with others, based on their experience working with families.**
- **Creating dynamic networks that involve academic research, grassroots community projects, government and other organizations and funders requires more than passive links. It requires relationship-building. Mutual understanding and trust take time, personal contact, a common vision and respect for everyone's contribution to the collaborative process.**
- **Local community organizations should be encouraged to plan early for ways to sustain what they have achieved.**

What did we learn about strategies to improve language and cognitive development?

- **There are many different paths that can lead to the same end. Diversity of approaches to enhance children's early language and cognitive development should be encouraged.**
- **A good way to enhance language and cognitive development among children from birth to five years is to embed strategies in everyday activities in a variety of settings including home, child care centres, family resource centres, and preschools. Local community organizations should be encouraged to plan early for ways to sustain what they have achieved.**

What did we learn about project implementation? (1)

- **Getting a quality, funded project off the ground in communities across the country takes a lot of hard work and commitment. However, by selecting sites with an existing administrative structure and capacity for community development, programs can be implemented relatively quickly.**
- **Be clear about the goals. Then give communities as much flexibility as possible. It will generate tremendous energy and creativity.**
- **Recognize that giving freedom can be more demanding than making strict rules. Do it anyway.**

What did we learn about project implementation? (2)

- **Being part of a larger project has many benefits in terms of energy, validation, risk taking, education, and pride.**