

ALI – St. Remi EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Program Description

The primary program used in the TLC3 project in St. Remi was the ALI Program. This is an interactive reading program for young children aged 0-5 years developed at the Laboratory for the Newborn Infant (Laboratoire D'Etude du Nourrisson) at the University Quebec at Montreal. The program is divided into three sub-programs each with their own very specific steps to follow. *ALI-Bebe*, is for children 0-15 months; *ALI-Bambin* is for children 15-36 months; *ALI-Explorateur* is for 3-5 years. Each program has several stages and each has its own objectives.

The program facilitates parent (or significant adult)-child interactive "reading and being read to". The ALI program provides the opportunity to promote the activities of linguistic and cognitive development of the child and this can be done from birth onwards. This is one of the innovative and distinctive features of this program because it demystifies and sensitises parents to the importance of early language stimulation of their newborn.

In the earliest period, the interactions take place through facial expressions, babbling and little melodies that evolve towards different intonations of the voice, games, and other exercises. By awakening the children in this way, the adults help to develop their language, curiosity, ability to listen, concentration, creativity, and interests in reading - with books being the tool in this work.

With respect to the actual application of this program, it can be done either in the home or in a daycare centre. Training is given to adults for each stage and the trained individuals are followed up in order to ascertain whether ALI is being applied appropriately. The beauty of this program is the ease of application and its simplicity; if you don't have a book at hand you can, nevertheless, apply ALI through the use of pamphlets or photographs in a setting such as a grocery store, at the dentist, or on a bus. The pictures in the books that we offer children often make reference to the things that children experience in their daily life. Through these different techniques we can foster the child's speech and later verbal exchanges.

Other activities offered through the TLC3 project were: 1) ALI- DAC – a screening program for children with developmental delays, 2) ALI-Tells a Story – community group reading activities, and 3) ALI- Kindergarten – an evaluation of the global development of children starting kindergarten.

Evaluation Findings

In order to evaluate progress in cognitive development among children enrolled in the ALI program, the Bayley Scales of Infant Development, and for older children the

Stanford-Binet Intelligence Test, were administered upon enrollment in the program and at 6-month intervals thereafter. The largest sample, 112 infants/children were evaluated in this way at the beginning of the program and after 6 months. In this period, significant gains were made in cognitive development when children from all of the ALI programs were combined. When the three ALI programs for children of different ages were examined separately, significant gains were observed only for the younger groups (ALI Bebe and ALI- Bambin) and not for ALI Explorateur, used for the older children. The investigators from the Laboratory for the Newborn Infant at the University Quebec at Montreal felt that this was because the ALI – Explorateur program was not as well developed as the other ALI programs and have since developed a more enriched program for the older children.

Data were also analyzed for children who had a full year of programming and were assessed at three points (pre-program and 6 and 12 months later). When the children in all of the ALI programs were considered together, most of the gain was made from pre-program to the 6-month follow-up. Again, when programs were examined separately the gains were most striking for children in ALI-Bebe and ALI- Bambin.

Taken together, the results confirm positive effects of the ALI program on young children's cognitive development and suggest that it's effects on older preschool children needs to be re-tested now that the program has been revised.

Impact

Based on our observations, there were impacts on:

- **The Children:** Since it's inception in 1997, more that 477 children have benefited from the ALI program. The program is well recognized in the community and the families using it are satisfied with it. The program considerably helps to develop language in the children who are part of it.
- **The Parents And Families:** We have, by our intervention, succeeded in sensitising numerous parents to the importance of language stimulation and to do so starting from a very young age. By the parents themselves using the program with their children, the parents gain confidence and are, in this way, validated in their parental role. Moreover, some parents, decide to follow the development of their children by involving themselves in the day-care or, later, at the point when the child is in school.
- **Parent Child Relations:** The families that benefited from our programs up until today are aware that time spent reading with their children is a very rich and pleasant experience. We have succeeded in integrating the concept that the parent should feel important and validated with respect to the linguistic and cognitive development of their child since they are the principle actors with

respect to this objective. Moreover, we are very happy to observe that certain user-parents became more self-confident, since by training them to use the program with their children themselves, their parental competencies were subsequently reinforced.

- **The Setting:** One positive outcome is that we have formed an organization around the ALI pilot project and, thanks to the expertise that we have developed, we receive many requests from parents and from workers in the community regarding the programs or workshops to be developed.
- **The Community:** We have succeeded in creating a solid partnership at the heart of the community. In fact, numerous partners, such as business owners, enterprises, organizations, take part in our successes by supporting us via their resources.
- **The Personnel Of The Organization:** The people who have worked towards the realization of the ALI program have had a rich experience in the process of collaboration. Their great satisfaction was to see the positive impacts of the program on the children and to observe that a community, which mobilizes itself, can achieve great goals.

Sustainability - Survival of the organization

What aspects of the program are we to follow and in what manner?

Efforts are currently concentrated on researching ways to finance the program in order to ensure the viability of the organization. We would like to be able to continue to offer the ALI program to all families of St. Remi and Ste. Clotilde, as well as to make it accessible to families in des Jardin de Napierville. We already have a long waiting list of families wishing to receive the ALI program in their municipality. Thanks to a very tight and controlled management, we have available to us the necessary funds to continue our work until the summer of 2003. Steps have been taken to obtain financial support from that date and we are awaiting a response. We wish, as well, to promote volunteer involvement from the community at the heart of our organization to help with the development and maintenance of our services. The coordinator is currently working on getting viability projects at different levels of government. These projects would serve to ensure the training in the ALI program for families. In this way, numerous expenses for training and application of the program could be avoided. It would also be easier to ensure better quality control with user families.

Future Perspectives

During the course of the summer 2002, the administrative council of ALI St. Remi reflected on the direction and the mission of the organization. It was decided to offer more workshops and programs to stimulate the global and harmonious development of young children from 0-5 years living in the des Jardins de Napierville region. To do this, the council noted the fact that the organization should change its social denomination to be more representative of its mission. The new name, which was chosen, was "To Learn in Chorus/Heart" (in French the name of the new program is a play on words using the word "chorus" and "heart"). During the course of the upcoming year, the organization hopes to develop or offer the following workshops or programs:

1. **STORY TIME WITH HISTORINE AND MANZÉORE** - An activity promoting learning, through interactive means, classic tales told to children with the goal to help them develop their language
2. **THE HEY I'M TALKING TO YOU WORKSHOPS** – Workshops on the development of speech and language.
3. **THE MOUSE WHO MOVES WORKSHOPS** - Workshops introducing the computer with entertaining and educational software.
4. **CREATIVITY AND SELF-ESTEEM WORKSHOPS** - The creativity and self-esteem workshops promote the imagination of very young children as well as their creativity and self-esteem through stimulating and validating activities.

The following activities remain part of the perspective of the activities of the organization:

1. **ALI PROGRAM** - Linguistic and cognitive development of young children through inter-active reading activities (ALI).
2. **ALI TELLS A STORY** - The cognitive and linguistic development of young children through interactive reading activities in groups.

Summary and Conclusions

For those involved at the heart of the TLC3 project in St. Remi, this has been a very enriching experience.

Moreover, we are convinced that the children in our community have a tremendous advantage over those who have not experienced the ALI program. Indeed, the research done by the Laboratory for the Study of the Newborn from the University of Quebec at Montreal has demonstrated that the children benefited from the ALI

program. They show acquisition of new knowledge in the first 6 months of application of the program. This finding is interesting and motivating for our families.

During the TLC3 experience, the people involved learned that certain personal qualities are essential to bring to fruition such a project:

- ◆ an openness of spirit;
- ◆ respect and validation the ideas of others;
- ◆ having a positive vision of the project and to work towards moving ahead;
- ◆ considering and validating the work of others
- ◆ working in the spirit of collaboration and cooperation;
- ◆ believing in the project and having a positive attitude;
- ◆ facing problems that can be overcome and collaborating to try to find effective solutions.

It has also been learned that the work of developing a project should be done with respect for the strengths and weaknesses of all participating parties. Each person involved should find his or her place working with his or her own experience in a collaborative manner. In addition, an awareness of the precise and current needs of the community need to be considered for optimal success of the program.

It is equally essential to be able to count on the support and encouragement of the institution that coordinates the project. For our working group, it was very reassuring to feel that the Hincks-Dellcrest Institute supported the steps towards the development of our project.

Summary Of Key Elements And Success Of Our Program

The success of our program resides in several important points such as:

Scientific partners

The ALI program was developed thanks to an important collaboration with the Laboratory for the Study of the Newborn. Their involvement at the conception of the program allowed us to count on the University expertise for the development of the project, research and analyses of data collected. Their presence gave credibility to the project since the program was developed and supported by experts in the area of language development.

Coordination of the Current TLC3 Project

The project was made possible thanks to the support and collaboration of the Hincks-Dellcrest Institute. The working group of the ALI program always felt support on the part of the people from Toronto. In the most difficult moments, the encouragement

received from the Hincks-Dellcrest Institute permitted us to have a second wind in the project and, especially, motivation to continue.

Important Partnership

Another element of our success is the presence of a community who believed in our project and wanted to see it develop. Indeed, an important partnership developed around the project. People involved were not afraid to invest time and energy to get to what we know today.

Ease of Application

The success of our program rests in large part on the ease of application. The program can be done in the home or in other places such as the bus or the dentist's office. It can also be done at different times throughout the day. It is a very flexible program.