

This summer Mosaic ran a fun-filled, high energy Wiggle, Giggle and Munch/HIPPY summer program. Every Tuesday and Thursday throughout July and August, families met at Knox gym for an afternoon of nutritious food, high energy games, songs and rhymes, crafts and learning new skills. Throughout the summer, 48 different families attended the program, with an average attendance of 18 parents and 31 children. It was a very busy program!



We began each session with a nutritious lunch followed by free play time. We then moved into circle time where we would sing songs and recite rhymes together. Favourites included “Zoom, zoom, zoom”, “Head and Shoulders, Knees and Toes”, and “Row, row, row your boat”. It was a pleasure to see all the parents and children participating with such joy and enthusiasm. After circle time we would divide into groups and move through different stations, which included a literacy and imaginative play area, a craft station and a skills station. At the literacy station the families got to explore the book “Caramba”, a story about a

cat who couldn't fly like all the other cats in this book, but who eventually learned that he could swim. Many of our crafts were based on this book and at the end of the tenth session the children wore the cat masks they had created and acted out the Caramba story with their ocean wall mural as their backdrop.



At the craft station, families also created butterflies and paper bag kites (things that fly), frogs (things that jump), musical shakers, and a variety of other crafts. Parents and children all enjoyed the opportunity to be creative. At the skills station children participated in a variety of games and activities to build their skills in running, skipping, galloping, jumping, throwing, catching, balance, tracking and striking. While the children participated in the skills session, their parents were engaged in parent time. During this time parents were taught activities to do with their children on the days when they weren't at the program. Every family was given the book Caramba to take home and they were given guidance on how to explore the book with their children. Additionally, families were encouraged to plan together with their child and go on a picnic, explore their neighbourhood with a treasure hunt, go on an ant exploration walk, and explore making shadows together. The key message of these activities was to spend quality time together

in child-led, explorative and imaginative play. Parents were also given “Talking Tools” each session, where they heard simple messages about how to develop good communication with their children. Parents received a fridge magnet with the Talking Tool message each session. Parents were also given information on nutrition and resources in their community.

The summer program was very successful in a number of ways. First of all, the program succeeded in helping to strengthen the bond between parents and their children. At any point in the program, one could look around and see parents fully engaged in play with their children. There was lots of laughter and lots of physical touch between parents and their children. We know from research how important physical touch is for healthy brain development for children. For example, when a parent and child are participating in ‘Row, row, row your boat’, they are facing each other, so there is eye contact, they are smiling at each other, there is skin to skin contact as they hold hands and rock, and there is singing and laughter. We know from research that through this simple interaction the child’s body releases the hormone oxytocin, the love hormone. This hormone helps the child to feel deeply connected to their parent. It gives the child a sense of well-being and develops a pathway in their brain that says relationships are pleasurable. It can also help the child grow up to be kind and compassionate. Such a simple child’s game yet there is so much going on! Over the course of the program, parents were given both practical experience and information on how to continue to strengthen their bond with their child.

Secondly, parents and children were given the opportunity to strengthen their English language skills. Learning songs and rhymes together is a powerful and non-threatening way to learn new words. The repetition of the Caramba book, coupled with the crafts and activities that accompanied the book helped to deepen the learning for both children and their parents.

Thirdly, children learned and strengthened their physical literacy skills. Through a series of games and activities they learned the skills which are important first steps in learning sports such as soccer, hockey, volleyball, basketball and tennis. As children practice these skills in a non-competitive and fun learning

environment, they have a sense of accomplishment and their bodies are flooded with endorphins and dopamine. These hormones develop pathways in the brain that give the children a sense of confidence and competence, which can lead to a life-long love of sport and an active lifestyle.





Finally, families had the opportunity to connect with other newcomer families in their community and they learned about resources they can access in their

neighbourhood, thus reducing isolation.



The WGM/HIPPY summer program was led by an incredible team of energetic facilitators and volunteers who worked hard to create a welcoming, fun, and safe learning environment for all the families. Thank you Eh Wah, Saadia Abudullahi, Melissa Crittin (HIPPY staff), Mimi Saha, Mounira Ajenkar, Alimatou Soro , and Sabreen Al Hassan (WGM facilitators) and Wah Wah, Mary Rose Orac and Neveen Basilious (volunteers) for all the time and energy you put into making this a wonderful summer program. A huge thank you as well to Communities 4 Families for the generous grant provided to run this program.

