

Today's busy bees are tomorrow's active adults

Alphabet Ball, Let it Snow, even tossing a rubber chicken—for kids, these are just fun, fast-paced games. Little do they know that they are also developing key motor skills and learning to love physical activity.

It is these hidden benefits that KFL&A Public Health and Motiv8 hope to instil in young children through a program called Busy Bees.

“The program is designed for 3-to-5-year-olds (though it can be adapted to other ages as well),” said Mary Jane Gordon, the Public Health Nurse who coordinated the Busy Bees program. “From an early age, we want children to feel the confidence and enjoyment that comes from engaging in physical activity. And we want to encourage the development of early movement skills. We knew that an effective way to do this was by supporting child care providers in their roles in helping children learn those skills.”

The Family Health Team at KFL&A Public Health developed the Busy Bees program. It was launched last spring with workshops for early childhood educators (and a follow-up workshop in the fall). About 50 childcare centres throughout KFL&A attended.

Participating childcare centres also received Busy Bee Activity Kits filled with items to help inspire active games—such as balls, pylons, frog mats, dice, a mini-parachute, and even a rubber chicken. The accompanying booklet offers lots of game ideas based on items in the kit (including Let it Snow, where children take turns tossing cotton balls on a child-sized parachute and then lifting and dropping the parachute to ‘make it snow.’)

Most games address motor control, balance—even the ability to follow instructions.

Lancaster Childcare Centre has been using the Busy Bees approach and activity kit with its preschool and junior/senior kindergarten children.

“The workshop was entertaining and fun—and very useful,” said Sandra Lopes, Registered Early Childhood Educator and Supervisor of Lancaster Child Care Centre. “Our early childhood educators even had the opportunity to play some of the games themselves, which was very motivating. In fact, all of the material presented was of great value to us.

“Because physical education is part of our daily programming, we like to keep the children active so we are always looking for new ideas. The staff use the activity kit all the time and the children love it.”

Loughborough Childcare Centre is also keeping their little bees busy. “We use the items in the Busy Bees activity kit quite a bit—it’s portable and we use it both inside and outside,” said Pennie Hilliard, Registered Early Childhood Educator and Supervisor at Loughborough Child Care Centre. (Children there also go for daily walks along the nearby Cataraqui Trail.) “We’ve had nothing but positive feedback from the staff and the children.”

Which is encouraging, said Pennie, since “our job is to help the whole child develop and an important part of that development is to enjoy being physically active.”

For more information call KFL&A Public Health’s Child & Babytalk Line at 613-549-1154 or 1-800-267-7875, ext. 1555.



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