



# CONNECTION

RESEARCH-PRACTICE PARTNERSHIP (RPP) NEWSLETTER

## NOV 20 IS NATIONAL DAY OF THE CHILD!

It is important for us to observe the National Day of the Child on November 20th. This day is a reminder of children's rights and their voices. The National Day of the Child has been recognized in Canada since 1993. It was initiated to commemorate two documents from the United Nations that outline children's rights - the UN's Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959) and the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC; 1989).

Given our research focus on children's social, emotional and cognitive wellbeing, we are especially cognizant of **Article 12 of the CRC**, namely, assuring that children who are capable of forming their own views have the "right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child," with "the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child" (p. 4).

We extend our gratitude to the children, as well as the school leaders, teachers and parents who permit us to hear children's voices. Whether with surveys or with interviews, we strive to improve children's learning and wellbeing from what they tell us.



## SUMMARY OF UPCOMING YEAR 4 RESEARCH

Year 4 marks the final year of data collection for us. After this year, we will focus on data analysis and share the final picture of what we have learned with SSHRC, scholars, parents, teachers and school leaders.

Year 4 research activities build on past activities. In particular, Vicky and I will be interviewing participating children for their thoughts and feelings about the things they enjoy learning, the feelings they have when they encounter obstacles in learning activities, and what they think and feel about feedback about their experiences. We will be spending an hour with children to ensure that we can have conversations that are not hurried but thoughtful. The goal of these in-depth discussions is to acquire richer details about how children view their learning experiences. This evidence will help us put the survey responses (from previous years) in context and also attach details to our model of children's learning and feedback.

Also in Year 4, participating teachers are helping us by piloting a learning intervention - Fiona's Feedback Adventure - designed to generate discussion about feedback. The story can be viewed as a "catalyst" for generating thoughts and feelings in students about what they love about learning, what might scare them a little about mistakes and feedback. Teachers have the freedom to modify the story or even choose a new story. However, whatever they choose, we are asking them to document their experiences on secure online forms. This way, we can gauge how the intervention - Fiona's Feedback Adventure - can be modified to help spark teachable moments about mistakes, feedback, and learning. We look forward to learning from teachers and hearing children's voices through their teachers! Details are outlined in the next section.

## TEACHERS TALKING TO STUDENTS ABOUT FEEDBACK, LEARNING, & MAKING MISTAKES

Participating teachers at both partner schools have now received instructions to use Fiona's Feedback Adventure with their students. They also have the opportunity to modify or replace the storybook, or use another creative idea to spark conversations about feedback, learning, and making mistakes.

We look forward to reading feedback from teachers as they complete the intervention questionnaire with each iteration.



## MEETING THE NEEDS OF OUR PARTNER SCHOOLS

Calgary Arts Academy and Suzuki Charter School are members of The Association of Alberta Public Charter Schools (TAAPCS). One of the goals of TAAPCS is to promote research activities at Alberta's charter schools.

Superintendents at the October 10, 2019 Advisory Board meeting requested a description of the research project to share on TAAPCS website. In response, we updated the project description on leighton4learning.com. Click on the photo below to read this update.



We also heard from school superintendents that they would like to publicly share this newsletter via leighton4learning.com without password-protected access. Jacqueline agreed to submit an amendment to the University of Alberta Research Ethics Office, requesting permission to name the schools participating in the study via public distribution of Connection newsletters. Research staff will keep schools apprised of the outcomes of this request.

## THE BRAIN STORY

The Alberta Family Wellness Initiative (AFWI) developed an online resource for parents and practitioners to understand healthy brain development in children. This initiative is called The Brain Story and includes an online course in both English and French!

The premise of this work is that "lifelong health is determined by more than just our genes: experiences early in life and at other sensitive periods of development change our brains in ways that make us more or less vulnerable to health problems across the lifespan" (AFWI, 2019).

To learn more about The Brain Story, please click on the link below. You will find two buttons at the top of the page, one for 'resources' and one for the 'online course'.

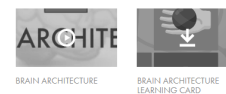


### BRAIN ARCHITECTURE

BRAINS AREN'T JUST BORN, THEY'RE ALSO BUILT.

Although genes play a role in how our brains develop, recent science shows how life experiences, in the first years of our lives and at other sensitive periods of development, change the architecture of the developing brain—for better or for worse.

[LEARN MORE ABOUT BRAIN ARCHITECTURE >](#)



## RESEARCHERS AT SUZUKI CHARTER SCHOOL

Thank you to the parents and students who provided consent to participate in the in-depth interviews where we will explore students' feelings about feedback, learning, and making mistakes.

We have randomly selected two students from each class, with consideration for gender representation. Jacqueline is busy preparing the protocol for these semi-structured interviews. This means that we will have a general list of questions to guide our discussions, and the opportunity to ask deeper questions when the student has more to say.

In accordance with ethical standards, we always offer participants the right to not answer any question and the right to withdraw consent at any time.

## REFERENCES

Alberta Family Wellness Initiative. (2019). The foundations of lifelong health: The brain story. Retrieved from <https://www.albertafamilywellness.org/who-we-are>

The United Nations. (1989). Convention on the Rights of the Child. *Treaty Series, 1577*, 3. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>