



**HOLD THE DATE!**  
**Next Stakeholder Symposium**  
**Wednesday March 4, 2009**  
**McMaster University, Hamilton**

## Stakeholder Newsletter

January, 2009

Happy New Year! The *Partnering for Change* Pilot Project that began in 2008 is now well underway. This is the first in a series of newsletters that will keep you and those whom you represent updated on the progress of this exciting study.

Following the very successful Symposium on July 2<sup>nd</sup> 2008, the team proceeded with all of the tasks needed for the pilot study to begin in the 2008-09 school year. A meeting was held with representatives from the Halton District School Board (HDSB) who confirmed that they were eager to participate in the pilot stage of this project. In collaboration with the board, we developed procedures for the pilot study and subsequently received ethical approval from both the McMaster Research Ethics Board and the HDSB Research Advisory Board.

The school board identified two schools with quite different populations of children. Both have embraced the project and are enthusiastic about the early results!

**Hawthorne Village Public School in Milton.** This very large and quite new school is experiencing the rapid growth typical of schools in Mississauga-Halton. With over 1,150 students and 16 kindergarten classrooms, it is ideal for a pilot study focusing on *early identification* of children with developmental coordination disorder and enhancing teacher capacity to manage these children!

**Oakwood Elementary School in Oakville.** Oakwood is a smaller, neighbourhood school that serves primarily children and families who have high social needs, some of whom may be transient. Many of the children have not had early experiences that would prepare them for school so they are struggling to develop the motor skills necessary for participation in academic settings. This school provides us with an opportunity to enhance teacher capacity to help children *develop necessary pre-requisite motor skills* and to distinguish, among children who are delayed, those children who have an ongoing health condition such as DCD.

We are fortunate to have been able to hire two occupational therapists (OTs), each with over 25 years of experience working with children and youth in the school system, to determine what might be needed in this novel role. Due to the large size of the school, Sandra Sahagian-Whalen has been providing OT services two days per week at Hawthorne Village since the beginning of October. Nancy Pollock began one day per week at Oakwood in early November. In each school, presentations were made first to administration and special education staff, then to all teachers and also to the respective

Parent Councils. A letter to all parents let them know about the availability of an OT in their school. Children and families who are participating in the actual study are invited to do so by their teachers. Both Nancy and Sandi work with teachers right in the classroom and provide additional education on topics of interest to the teachers.

Our team has been collecting existing educational resources (e.g., books, webcasts, websites, DVDs) related to motor development and the teaching of skills (such as printing, scissors, putting on outdoor clothing) and have been trialing their use with teachers. We have also developed some new materials, based upon needs identified by teachers in each of the pilot schools. Professional videoclips depicting children with DCD and typically-developing children in classroom settings were produced and are now being used in the pilot schools.

As many of you will have seen in late August, Daniel Radcliffe (Harry Potter) brought increased attention to the frustrations experienced by children with DCD each day. Our team was pleased to be able to share some of the research evidence in reports on CTV and the Globe and Mail. We have attached a copy of *CanChild Today* to this newsletter as it highlights a number of studies that are currently underway.

### **Symposium # 2: Save the date!**

We look forward to sharing the preliminary findings with you at our second Symposium on March 4, 2009. This will be a working meeting from 10:00am-2:30pm (lunch provided) in which we hope you will contribute your thoughts about the findings and will help us identify the steps needed to prepare for the demonstration project in 2009-10. We will pre-circulate materials two weeks in advance.

Please do not hesitate to contact Cindy DeCola, Project Coordinator, at [decolac@mcmaster.ca](mailto:decolac@mcmaster.ca) or at (905) 525-9140 ext. 26074 for further information or with any comments or questions.

Thank you again for contributing your time to this exciting initiative. We look forward to continuing our partnership as we move forward with this project!



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