



Atlantic Summer  
Institute on  
Healthy and Safe  
Communities

l'Institut d'été  
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Canada atlantique

## Posterboard Presentation

### ***Eating Between the Lines: Creating a Successful Early Literacy and Healthy Eating Program for Kindergarten Children***

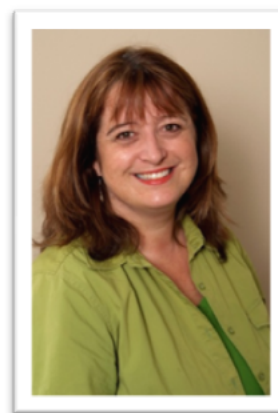
#### **Presenters**

Jennifer Taylor, Ray Doiron,  
and Alaina Roach O'Keefe

#### ***Description of Presentation***

The "Eating Between the Lines" (EBTL), an early literacy healthy eating program for kindergarten children, began in 2006 with funding from UPEI. Researchers Dr. Ray Doiron from the UPEI Faculty of Education and Dr. Jennifer Taylor from UPEI Department of Family & Nutritional Sciences worked with Campus Kids kindergarten and Faculty of Education students to develop an exciting intensive five week program for kindergarten children which integrates literacy and healthy eating. The program included three units: Eating the Rainbow, Breakfast Matters and the Salad. The impact of EBTL on vocabulary, reading, writing and drawing skills and basic nutrition knowledge was assessed in 25 children aged 4-6 years. A Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach was utilized, with researchers and early childhood educators collaborating on program design, implementation, data analysis and knowledge transfer. A series of technology-based activities was embedded within the program (e.g., scanners, drawing, creating a powerpoint "big book"). Questionnaires and interviews with eight parents were used to assess their perception of the program and identify the extent to which knowledge exchange took place.

Results suggest that the program was highly successful in enabling students to make meaningful connections with each other and with new nutrition concepts (e.g., "Sometimes" foods, food group names, balance). Educators, researchers and parents identified a clear increase in childrens' oral language and vocabulary development over the course of the program. Children practiced many early literacy skills and



Dr. Jennifer Taylor is an associate professor in the Department of Family & Nutritional Sciences at UPEI where she teaches courses in the determinants of food choice, community nutrition and research methods. She is co-chair of the PEI Healthy Eating Alliance, which is working to improve children's eating habits and reduce childhood overweight on PEI, and co-director of CHART, the Children's Health Allied Research Team at UPEI, which promotes and support scholarly research on the health behaviours, health determinants and social, cognitive and physical development of infants, children and youth in PEI. Her research interests include school nutrition policy development and evaluation, dietary assessment in children and health perceptions in aboriginal children.



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applied new nutrition knowledge using technology as a literacy tool. Parents were very enthusiastic about the program and indicated that there was uptake and meaningful transfer in the home environment. Results of a program pilot in two kindergartens in the Fall of 2007 and plans to develop a web version of the program and a parent component (EBTL@home) will be discussed.

### **How you will benefit**

Participants will:

- Learn about an example of a participatory action research project which brings together literacy and nutrition within a naturalistic kindergarten environment;
- Learn about the challenges and benefits in using a collaborative approach; and
- Discover how EBTL acted as a powerful metaphor for an innovative approach to health literacy throughout the development of this innovative program.

### **Handouts**

Available during the presentation

### **Resources**

Available during the presentation

### **Contact Information**

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Ray Doiron, PhD is currently Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Prince Edward Island, Canada, where he teaches courses in early literacy, school librarianship, integrated curriculum and children's literature. He is also currently serving as Director of the UPEI Centre for Education Research where he facilitates research in language and literacy, arts-based education, indigenous education and leadership in learning. His research interests coalesce around literacy and libraries, new literacies and new learners, and the challenges facing school libraries.

Alaina Roach O'Keefe has recently completed her Master of Applied Health Services Research through the Atlantic Regional Training Centre from the University of Prince Edward Island. She also has her Bachelor of Education (2005) and her Bachelor of Science with Honours in Psychology (2003) from UPEI. She decided to become a teacher so she could make a difference in children's lives in a positive way.