



Your Gift At Work



Families and Schools Together (F&ST)

November 2016



Families and Schools Together (F&ST) is celebrating 20 years in Calgary – and we could never have done it without you!

Over 7,200 children and parents have benefited from this internationally-renowned family skills program since it was introduced in Calgary – and Canada – by Catholic Family Service in 1996.

In collaboration with the Calgary Board of Education and the Calgary Catholic School District – and with the unwavering support of our funders and donors – F&ST has improved school engagement, family relationships and community belonging for approximately 1,800 Calgary families.

F&ST founder Dr. Lynn McDonald designed the program based on the latest research in child brain development and family systems theory. Each year, we evaluate the program to ensure that this research is still translating to positive change for families. Year after year, the results show that F&ST is making a difference in the lives of the families we serve.

This fall, the program is running in Ranchlands Elementary School and St. Monica School, with about 35 families experiencing F&ST for the first time. We're gearing up to offer the program in St. Damien and St. Isabella Schools in January, and Bowcroft Elementary and Sacred Heart Schools in April.

Thank you for your confidence in F&ST! We are ready for 20 more amazing years.



F&ST FULL CIRCLE

St. Monica School was the first to offer F&ST in 1996 – and we're back there just in time to celebrate our 20th anniversary.

Calgary Catholic School District Superintendent Mike Ross, who was the principal at St. Monica School in 1996, is currently a member of Catholic Family Service's Board of Directors and a big F&ST supporter.

Years ago, Kathleen Murphy was a F&ST volunteer. The experience convinced her to become a teacher and she is currently Assistant Principal at St. Monica School.



The Unlocking Potential (UP) Foundation is the fundraising arm of Catholic Family Service of Calgary. UP connects the giving hearts in our community with high-impact programs that are building strong families.

THE F&ST EFFECT: Notes from the 2015-16 Evaluation Report

- Over the 2015-16 school year, the program was offered at six different schools.
- 99 families attended and 67 families graduated from the program (68% graduation rate). 34 children were registered in the Kindergarten F&ST and 65 children in the Elementary F&ST.
- Of the families that provided income information, 22% reported their yearly income to be less than \$30,000.
- Approximately 49% of participants were from ethnically diverse backgrounds including African, Caribbean, East Indian, Filipino, Latin American, East Asian, Chinese and Arabic. 31% spoke first languages other than English.
- F&ST evaluates the impact of the program annually for children and their families. One measure we use is the Family Cohesion scale which measures the improvement in family relationships over the course of the program. In 2015-16, 82% of families who participated in F&ST increased their scores on this scale. We are proud knowing that family interactions, communication, and problem solving were improved due to their participation in the F&ST program.



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LOOKING BACK AT THE F&ST EXPERIENCE

Seven-year-old David Pham was among the first participants when F&ST was launched at St. Monica School in 1996. Today he is studying to become a teacher. Here are some of his thoughts as he looks back at the experience.

"When I was seven, I didn't really understand why there was a F&ST program or the purpose it served. Sure, I saw my friends from school with their families participating. I remember the potlucks, the raffles and fun activities. I was oblivious to notice that in the other room Patricia Jones and Superintendent Mike Ross, along with a handful of families, were working hard and discovering an innovative way of building a community.

Now that I am older, I am better able to reflect on what the F&ST program provided. It helped families with various strengths and challenges, while incorporating better communication strategies between families and the school. Sometimes, there's dissonance between families and schools. Neither party can see what the other one is doing at school or at home, but both have the children's welfare, belonging and growth as a top priority. F&ST became the



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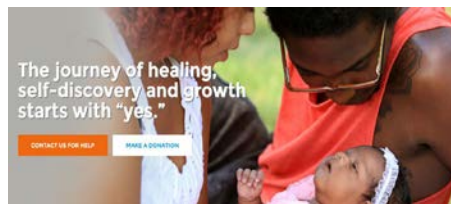
The Pham family graduated from the F&ST program in 1996.

ambassador between schools and families.

The F&ST program almost operated like a meeting of the United Nations – every family represented a different country. It was a collaborative effort where families of different backgrounds contributed ideas that benefited each other. The school was not only an institution of learning; it played a significant role in each child's life, just as much as their families did. The program introduced the concept that parents and schools were on the same team. This was about everyone being held accountable for contributing to the children and their success."

F&ST FACTS

- Created in 1988 and now operating in 20 countries, the Families and Schools Together program was rated 11th out of 150 top family skills programs in the world by the United Nations.
- This year in Calgary, Catholic Family Service will offer five F&ST programs in Catholic elementary schools and three in public elementary schools.
- F&ST saves society over \$900,000 a year by diverting families from costly mental health, justice or intervention services. (*Alberta Government Social Return on Investment Case Study 2013*)
- Catholic Family Service has played a leadership role in the delivery of F&ST programs in Canada, initiating a network of F&ST practitioners and providing a base for national training.
- CFS launched the first K-F&ST program in Canada last year. We are currently offering the program, which focuses on kindergarten students and their families, at Ranchlands Elementary School.
- Over 500 families who have completed the F&ST program meet monthly in locations across Calgary to maintain their connections and continue to develop parenting and community-building skills.



F&ST Friends

F&ST Supervisor Claire Hanlon met F&ST founder Dr. Lynn McDonald recently at the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect Congress in Calgary. Dr. McDonald and Sherry Hiebert-Keck, Managing Director, Louise Dean Centre co-presented a session at the Congress entitled *Nothing About Us Without Us – Parent Engagement in Families and Schools Together Programming*.

CFS Launches New Website

We have a new website at cfs-ab.org! It reflects the latest in design trends and will look great on your smart phone.

We have combined all of our program and fundraising information into one website to make it easy for our clients and supporters to connect with us. Look for #CFSBlogs, a new feature highlighting the expertise of our professional staff.

For more information or to arrange a visit to the F&ST program, please contact:

Jessica Williams
Stakeholder Relations Manager
Unlocking Potential Foundation

403.205.5222
jessica.williams@unlockingpotential.ca