

# Your Gift At Work

Families and Schools Together (F&ST)

March 2016



F&ST Family and Teachers

**Families and Schools Together** strengthens children by building relationships between the people who care about them. Strong bonds with their parents, teachers, school staff and other members of their community are important protective factors for children to grow up happy and healthy.

Child development can be thought of as a teeter-totter that can be tipped one way or another. Positive experiences get placed on one side; negative experiences on the other. Weight can be added to or taken from a child's teeter-totter at any time, and every adult in a child's life influences the direction teeter-totter tips.

**Families and Schools Together** tips the teeter-totter towards the positive side by heaping on strong family bonds, healthy family interactions, and frequent, positive communication between parents and teachers. The program also relieves some of the weight on the negative side, such as parent stress and isolation.

There are times in all children's lives when they encounter bumps that can leave them – and their parents – feeling vulnerable. **Families and Schools Together** ensures children have the protective factors they need to navigate life's challenges and grow up happy, healthy and resilient.

*Thanks to your generous support, the Families and Schools Together (F&ST) Program continues to make a measurable impact in the lives of vulnerable children and their families.*

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

Jessica Williams, Development Officer  
403.205.5222 or  
jessica.williams@unlockingpotential.ca

## By The Numbers: 2014-2015 School Year

- *Families and Schools Together* was offered at **7 elementary schools**
- **101 families** attended, and **73 families** graduated from the program (**72% graduation rate**).
- **27% of families** reported their yearly income to be **less than \$30,000**
- **66% of families** were from ethnically diverse backgrounds

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## What's New:

### *Families and Schools Together for Kindergarten*

Catholic Family Service is the first in Canada to offer Families and Schools Together for Kindergarten. We are excited for the families of kindergarten students who will grow stronger because of this innovation. A good transition to school and a positive relationship between a child's parents and teachers is a positive weight on the teeter-totter, and the earlier the weight is added, the heavier it is.

The first Families and Schools Together for Kindergarten was offered at Ranchlands School in the fall of 2015. The program was a great success and served 28 families. Families and Schools Together for Kindergarten will run again in April at Father Scollen Elementary School in Temple.



F&ST Activity: Feeling Charades

## The benefits of Families and Schools Together:

- Improved family relationships and stronger bonds

*Activities like Feeling Charades help families learn to express emotion and communicate well together. Not only does talking about feelings create closeness within families, it is a key protective factor against substance abuse and addiction.*

- Increased success for children at school

*Children are more likely to be successful in school when their parents and teachers communicate positively and frequently. At graduation, each family is celebrated by program staff, the school principal, and teachers.*

- Reduced stress parents experience in daily life

*During Parent Time, parents gather together (without kids!) for validation, encouragement and support. The friendships formed at Parent Time continue beyond the program and parents have people in their lives who can be there for them – so they can be there for their kids.*

## From A Father's Perspective

*I came to Families and Schools Together because I was extremely worried about my three kids. We had just come through a messy divorce and it was hard on all of us. Probably the hardest on all three of them, each in different ways. I really needed to spend quality time with my kids. What I wanted more than anything was to be there for them as we all got used to our new life.*

*Families and Schools Together helped us have fun again. We finally connected, and honestly, it was through the program activities that my kids loved. When we played together, my children were able to express feelings and worries that they hadn't been able to before. Words cannot describe how good it felt to be in a position to be able to listen and offer my own kids comfort.*

*It is lonely being a parent by myself, and what really helped me was getting to know the other parents and school staff. They truly lightened my load. I don't think I ever truly appreciated the "it takes a village to raise a child" idea, but I do now. I am less alone. Because of this, I have taken on a volunteer role with the program, and I keep in touch with the families I met through the program. One thing I will be doing for sure, is staying involved with the program activities to keep the conversations going with my children.*

*What I want to say is thank you for your support of Families and Schools Together! I know donors do a lot. I can tell you your donation is going to a good place. It is truly kind of you. Families like mine can move forward from tough, messy situations and create good lives. We found that at Families and Schools Together.*



F&ST Parent Time Up Close