



Hand
in Hand
From
A to Z!



COMMUNICATION PLAN for Emergent Literacy



COMMISSION SCOLAIRE
MARIE-VICTORIN

Québec 

COMMUNICATION PLAN FOR EMERGENT LITERACY



The original French version of the Hand in Hand From A to Z! project, entitled *De A à Z on s'aide!*, received the "Prix d'excellence 2000" for outstanding achievement from the Fédération des commissions scolaires du Québec.

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COMMUNICATION PLAN FOR EMERGENT LITERACY

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To obtain a set of documents and posters, please contact the Commission scolaire Marie-Victorin, Service de l'imprimerie:

- to obtain information: Richard Viens, (450) 670-0730, extension 403
- to place an order by fax: Richard Viens, (450) 670-0250
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The documents and posters are free, but there is a charge for postage. Additional copies of *From Cradle to Classroom* may also be ordered, but photocopying costs and postage are not covered.

FOREWORD

In 1995, the Commission scolaire Marie-Victorin, in partnership with various organizations, set up a joint action-research project on the prevention of illiteracy in a working-class area of Longueuil. Subsidized by the Ministère de l'Éducation, under the Joint Federal-Provincial Literacy Training Initiatives (JFPLTI) program, and by the Direction de la santé publique de la Montérégie, the project is intended for families with children up to 4 years of age. Its goal is to support working-class families in their efforts to foster the overall development of their children and their emergent literacy skills. The project involves five areas of research: *emergent reading and writing, early family intervention, the ecological approach, primary prevention, and partnership.*

Since the beginning of the project, the team of partners has developed and experimented with various tools and approaches to help families and their children through preventive and long-term action in the area of emergent literacy. The Hand in Hand From A to Z! emergent literacy materials, which include eight documents and five posters, represent the culmination of all the work that went into this project.

| Document | Target Population |
|--|--|
| – <i>Hand in Hand: Emergent Literacy From A to Z</i> | Staff of organizations offering services to children from birth to 4 years of age and their families |
| – <i>Checklist for Parents</i> | Newborns and their families |
| – <i>From Cradle to Classroom</i> | Children from birth to 4 years of age and their families |
| – <i>Sharing Pictures and Words</i> | Children from 12 to 24 months of age and their families |
| – <i>Play Workshops</i> | Children from 2 to 3 years of age and their families |
| – <i>First Steps in Reading and Writing</i> | Children 3 years of age and their families |
| – <i>Emergent Literacy Training</i> | Staff of organizations offering services to children from birth to 4 years of age and their families |
| – <i>Communication Plan for Emergent Literacy</i> | Staff of organizations offering services to children from birth to 4 years of age and their families |

This communication plan suggests a number of means that can be used to set goals, identify a target population and develop communication strategies. It explains different methods for developing messages and slogans, and describes tools for promoting awareness of emergent literacy.

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INTRODUCTION

Given the importance of preventing illiteracy among families with young children, the members of the Hand in Hand From A to Z! project team wish to develop a communication plan in order to analyze the project as a whole and plan communication activities in such a way as to create a synergy among the means and tools selected and thus achieve a maximum impact.

Communication activities should be seen as part of an ongoing management process rather than as a series of isolated actions. It is therefore important to provide a framework for these activities in order to ensure that the image projected, the messages conveyed and the means and actions chosen are all cohesive. If the positioning of the project, the communication goals and the target group are clearly defined, it is possible to ensure the cohesiveness of strategies, messages and means of action.

The following communication plan covers a period of one year and is based on a marketing approach and process. It is not, properly speaking, a marketing plan. It should instead be seen and used as part of a marketing approach geared toward strategic and promotional communications.

The leaders of a project should view a communication plan as a *work tool*. They should *understand its content* and adapt its recommendations in light of the timeline suggested for the different activities. In a certain sense, *it is more important for project leaders to grasp the spirit and broad lines of a communication plan than to know the details of each activity*. They will thus always be able to work in keeping with the spirit of the plan, no matter what actions they are putting in place (and even if conditions change slightly). They will, for example, be able to plan communication activities for a new component project without having to go through the whole process over again.

INTRODUCTION *(Continued)*

The success of a communication plan is in large part contingent on the conviction of those responsible for putting it into operation. Each person must therefore keep in mind that his or her actions should contribute to the success of the plan as a whole. All must therefore convey the same message and impression. *To be convincing, one must be convinced.* This implies ensuring consistency and cohesiveness in all communications: in the messages and attitudes conveyed, in promotional activities or at meetings with participants and partner organizations.

It should be noted that the messages and attitudes conveyed by those involved with the project may have as significant an impact (positive or negative) as the communication strategies designed to promote the project.

The following documents were consulted in the development of this communication plan:

- *De A à Z on s'aide! Une vue globale* (an overview of the A to Z project)
- reference documents and descriptions of the various projects that are part of the Hand in Hand From A to Z! project
- *Ateliers-jeux*, a French-language brochure on the Play Workshops project
- a report presenting the conclusions of the discussion group consisting of participants in the Ateliers-jeux (Play Workshops) project
- literature on emergent literacy
- an exploratory study connected with the Prévention de l'analphabétisme project
- a profile of the community and families in the Lionel-Groulx district
- a working document entitled *Pour prévenir l'analphabétisme — Réflexions et propositions d'actions*

Meetings were also held with the coordinators of the Hand in Hand From A to Z! project and members of the project team.

1 THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

Communication is crucial to success. However, it is neither a cure-all nor an end unto itself.

Communication and all related activities are part of an ongoing management process rather than a series of isolated actions. While adjustments are often needed along the way, foresight and planning are the key to success.

Actions involving face-to-face contact are increasingly favoured for they are the most effective. This is all the more true when the target group consists of people who are anxious or difficult to reach. Another advantage of such actions is that they provide an opportunity to open two-way lines of communication, i.e. they allow those receiving the message to react to the topic at hand and ask questions.

Here are some important principles to remember concerning the communication process:

- The message must be repeated several times and in a number of ways before it is well understood.
- The various communication means must support each other in order to create synergy and maintain momentum.
- Visual aids (such as diagrams or pictures) help get the message across.
- Communication and the associated principles must be considered from a marketing angle, i.e. they must meet a conscious or unconscious need. The first goal must be to create a desire to participate among members of the target group by using an appealing, motivating approach and offering appealing, motivating activities.

1 THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS *(Continued)*

The expression “communication means” refers to the actions, events, meetings and other activities to be planned. “Communication tools” include the elements and materials to be used to actualize the communication means, e.g. the materials to be written or developed and then printed or produced (posters, brochures, media releases, promotional items and so on).

2 BACKGROUND

The Hand in Hand From A to Z! project is a pilot project spearheaded by the Commission scolaire Marie-Victorin and subsidized by the MEQ's adult general education department, the Direction de la formation générale des adultes. It is part of an illiteracy-prevention initiative.

The development of written language begins very early in life, starting right from birth. It is through simple and daily activities involving written language that children enter into the world of writing and construct their learning once they are in school. Children develop emergent literacy skills through social interaction with family members and other children in situations that involve reading and writing and, more specifically, in real-life situations where written language is used for a concrete purpose (to do something). For example, mom or dad follows a recipe in a cookbook to make a cake and explains each step as he or she does it. Parent-child interrelations are of vital importance in literacy development. Four main stages have been identified: observation, experimentation, interaction and reinforcement. Other key factors are a writing-rich environment, enjoyment or pleasure, and the use of books by the parent with the child (mediated reading).

According to researchers, emergent literacy development can be promoted a number of ways. The family and the community may take concrete steps in this respect. Adults and resource persons who are in contact with young parents may support them and help them better equip themselves to exercise their role as educators.

The Hand in Hand From A to Z! project consists of a number of interrelated illiteracy-prevention projects. These projects are intended for families in the Lionel-Groulx district (Sacré-Cœur parish) of Longueuil and for their preschool-age children. One of the goals of the Hand in Hand From A to Z! project is to better equip parents to play their role as educators and to foster the overall development of children from birth to 4 years of age as well as the development of their literacy skills. Another goal is to mobilize families, the school, organizations and the community to implement the project and to carry out written-language-acquisition and illiteracy-prevention activities.

2 BACKGROUND (Continued)

By the same token, it aims to prevent the recurrence of undereducation among families with preschool-age children from disadvantaged areas in Longueuil. The following are some characteristics of the district targeted by the Hand in Hand From A to Z! project: undereducated parents, single-parent families, violence, spouse abuse, poor reading skills, low graduation rates, recurrent poverty and illiteracy.

The Hand in Hand From A to Z! project consists of a number of component projects:

- The Off to a Good Start project is aimed at making parents aware of their newborn child's abilities and serves as an introduction to the Hand in Hand From A to Z! project.
- The Welcoming the Newborn Child project is aimed at providing parents with information on child development, better equipping them for their role as educators and offering them access to resource persons.
- The Sharing Pictures and Words project introduces parents to interaction models and activities to carry out with their child.
- The Play Workshops project allows parents to acquire and consolidate the skills they need to foster their child's development and emergent reading and writing skills.
- The First Steps in Reading and Writing project is a tool used to assess children's awareness of written language and to suggest preventive activities, if necessary.
- The Celebration of Books and Reading in Longueuil project aims to encourage children from birth to 8 years of age and their parents to discover children's literature.

Each organization in the community has a different target population. Unfortunately, there is little consultation and cooperation between the organizations and even, at times, a certain amount of competition.

In addition, some resource persons have admitted that they have trouble identifying individuals with poor reading and writing skills and that they do not know how to deal with these problems.

3 CURRENT SITUATION

The Hand in Hand From A to Z! team wants a communication plan to:

- promote the activities planned as part of the Hand in Hand From A to Z! project, mainly those related to the Welcoming the Newborn Child project
- make sure that it reaches the target population
- stimulate recruitment
- raise public awareness of the joy of reading

Since this is a pilot project, the project team hopes that the broad lines of the communication plan can in future be used to set up similar projects in other regions.

However, the team aims above all to create synergy between the communication means and the activities to be planned as part of the component projects. It is counting on the communication plan to set guidelines in this area. It should be noted that some communication elements have already been developed. These include the project logo and brochures on the Play Workshops project.

The target population is an especially challenging one from a communications point of view. The target population, i.e. the group for whom the project is primarily intended, consists of individuals who exhibit the following characteristics or experience the following situations: undereducation, poor reading skills, low income, spouse abuse, violence, single parenthood and isolation. Since these characteristics and situations may hinder literacy development in their children, these parents need help. Given the poor reading skills and isolation of this population, traditional communication tools will probably not be effective. It will be necessary to find a way to work around this problem.

3 CURRENT SITUATION *(Continued)*

The Hand in Hand From A to Z! project team also wishes to reach another target population in order to recruit participants. It has chosen to broaden its target population given the benefits that a mix of people can bring to a group. Heterogeneity is an important success factor because of the interactions it fosters. Furthermore, since prevention is one of the goals of this project, excluding anyone was out of the question. Nevertheless, the services should be offered first and foremost to those who need them most.

The strategies adopted, the messages conveyed and the activities planned will therefore have to take this complex reality into account.

As indicated previously, the target population is very difficult to reach since it is composed mainly of poor readers. An analysis of living habits is therefore an essential ingredient in the development of strategies and means. Among the habits of those living in the Lionel-Groulx district, the following are noteworthy:

- They seldom go outside the district; few use public transit; many shop at local malls; few accompany their child on his or her first day of school, meet with their child's teacher to get the first report card of the year, or attend school plays or similar events.
- They move often; have no schedule or routine (do not plan ahead); do not take part in activities or events put on by local groups; are regular food bank customers; buy food at the convenience store; seldom take part in physical activity; are avid television viewers; are largely unfamiliar with neighbouring areas.

The Hand in Hand From A to Z! project team has limited financial and human resources to implement communication activities. This point must be kept in mind. The communication plan should therefore bank on the creativity of the project team and focus on targeted actions with long-lasting effects.

4 GOALS AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The Hand in Hand From A to Z! project team set seven goals and identified a performance indicator for each.

1. Promote the Hand in Hand From A to Z! project in the Lionel-Groulx district, particularly the Welcoming the Newborn Child, Play Workshops, Sharing Pictures and Words and Celebration of Books and Reading in Longueuil projects.

Performance indicator: number of registrations, number of word-of-mouth referrals

2. Recruit parents to participate in the project.

Performance indicator by element:

- Welcoming the Newborn Child: families¹
- Play Workshops: parents¹

3. Recruit volunteers.

Performance indicator: number of volunteers recruited, at least 25 per cent of whom must themselves be parents

4. Get parents to participate in all components of the project.

Performance indicator: a dropout rate of under 25 per cent

It should be noted, however, that attainment of this goal does not depend on the communication activities alone.

5. Enlist the cooperation of community groups in Longueuil.

Performance indicator: cooperation of community groups with respect to each of the following aspects:¹

- providing support
- promoting the project
- supplying resources
- integrating emergent reading and writing activities

1. The exact number is to be determined by the project team.

4 GOALS AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES *(Continued)*

6. Make the population of Longueuil and its community groups aware of the importance of literacy development in children from birth to 4 years of age.

Performance indicator: survey, respondents' understanding

7. Make the parents of children from birth to 4 years of age and community groups in the Lionel-Groulx district aware of the importance of literacy development for children in this age group.

Performance indicator: survey, respondents' understanding

5 STRATEGIES

Strategies are the foundations of a communication plan. They are the guiding principles that define the framework for the communication means to be used. The strategies determine the different angles from which the goals are going to be pursued and the spirit in which actions are to be taken. The strategies chosen for the Hand in Hand From A to Z! project are the following:

- focus on field intervention, i.e. go to the parents to present the project and get them involved
- prefer informal actions or communication activities in a casual setting
- play up the fun side of the project (learning through play), highlight the benefits and present the project as an opportunity
- emphasize the benefits for parents by using the comments or feedback of former participants
- involve former participants in a helping capacity to give them a sense of accomplishment and encourage them to stay involved
- enlist volunteers to help recruit parents
- encourage partnership with other organizations by stressing what they will get from participating in the project
- use the grapevine and word of mouth to spread information
- build on what has been accomplished so far
- use plain, simple language
- emphasize face-to-face communications
- organize communication activities in a cohesive manner
- ensure year-round visibility for the project

6 POSITIONING

Positioning is a pivotal element in a communication plan. The communication activities to be planned, the messages to be conveyed and the spirit of the actions to be taken all flow from the positioning statement and the goals and strategies defined.

The Hand in Hand From A to Z! project should therefore be positioned not only in terms of the place it should occupy but also in terms of any opportunities that arise, the image it already has and the progress made so far.

A certain awareness of the Hand in Hand From A to Z! project has been observed among parents who receive information about it after the birth of a child, i.e. after Welcoming the Newborn Child. Parents who took part in the Play Workshops project greatly appreciated the experience, as shown by the results of the discussion group set up for them. The Hand in Hand From A to Z! project is also endorsed by the community groups who are aware of its existence. It can therefore be said that the project currently enjoys a good reputation and meets real needs.

The positioning statement should be more than a simple description of the project. It should define the image to be projected among the target population, translate the spirit and philosophy of the resource persons involved in the project, and provide a glimpse of the atmosphere that participants in the project will enjoy.

6 POSITIONING *(Continued)*

The positioning statement proposed for the Hand in Hand From A to Z! project is the following:

An innovative project for the parents of children 4 years of age and under that:

- **acknowledges their role as their child’s primary educators and builds on their experience and competencies**
- **helps them to help their children develop emergent reading and writing skills so that they will start school better equipped**
- **allows them to forge ties through fun and enriching activities**
- **is based on partnership, collaboration and the joy of learning**

The project team must strive to achieve this positioning by emphasizing the benefits of the component projects, by presenting information in a factual manner and by infusing the desired image into all activities to the point of saturation.

It should be remembered, however, that a positioning statement is much more than an image and must translate into concrete actions. In short, the project must live up to its positioning statement under all circumstances.

7 TARGET POPULATION

The target population of the Hand in Hand From A to Z! project is made up of four groups.

A. The parents of children up to 4 years of age or expecting parents who live in the Lionel-Groulx district of Longueuil

The Hand in Hand From A to Z! project is more specifically intended for parents or expecting parents who fit the following profile:

- low income
- poor reading skills (includes those with no reading skills)
- a feeling of isolation
- a willingness to take part in activities outside the family home²

This population is the *main group* targeted by the communication activities. It is within this group that new project participants will be recruited. An accurate picture of the target population is needed to define appropriate messages and choose appropriate tools. It is therefore relevant to highlight the characteristics observed among members of this group:

- early parenthood (many parents under the age of 20)
- poor self-esteem
- couple relationship problems
- few activities outside the home
- a lack of trust in other adults, even though family and friends are very present
- little solidarity within the district
- frequent fights between neighbours
- little openness to the idea of getting involved
- limited or difficult access to resources
- a feeling of pride with respect to their children
- a desire that their children have the best and succeed in school
- a desire to improve their situation and to help others and receive help from others

2. This description takes into account the considerations discussed in section 3, “Current Situation.”

7 TARGET POPULATION *(Continued)*

B. Population of Longueuil

A broader group, i.e. the population of Longueuil, must be made aware of the importance of emergent literacy, for it is the local people who will provide a source of new volunteers.

C. Non-participating organizations

Organizations not already involved in the project must also be made aware of the importance of emergent literacy development. They must be reached and brought on board to help spread information and recruit new participants and volunteers.

D. Participating and collaborating organizations

Organizations already participating or collaborating in the project must also be considered a target group in order to make sure that they are informed on a regular basis.

8 MESSAGES AND SELLING POINTS

The general message to be disseminated is based on the positioning statement, which will become the broad communication focus. The idea is to repeat the themes and points discussed in the section on the positioning statement at every opportunity, i.e. during activities, at meetings with organizations, parents or the media, in private conversations and so on. These themes and points should become part of the “lingo” of the team project members, like second nature, as it were. In addition to this general message, there are other, more specific messages intended for different groups within the target population. Selling points have been formulated for each of these messages.

A. The parents of children up to 4 years of age or expecting parents who live in the Lionel-Groulx district of Longueuil

Main messages

1. Children discover books and reading through their parents.
2. Children must be exposed very early, i.e. between birth and the age of 4, to words, books and reading. This will help them do better in school.
3. Activities related to books and reading must be part of children’s daily lives and must be fun for both the children and their parents.
4. A new service is offered, free of charge, to the parents of children up to 4 years of age in the Lionel-Groulx district.
5. Give your child the best possible chances to develop and succeed.
6. Get out and meet new people.

Secondary messages

1. To do fun, enriching activities with your child
2. To better understand your child, know how to act with him or her, and feel comfortable in your role as a parent
3. In a relaxed atmosphere and small groups so that everyone can participate in discussions and feel at ease
4. What participants say about their experience (parents’ comments)

8 MESSAGES AND SELLING POINTS *(Continued)*

Facts

1. Unique project open only to local residents.
2. Projects geared to specific age groups ranging from birth to 4 years.
3. Duration, location and registration conditions.
4. No need to have the kids babysat: they are welcome and can participate too.

B. Current and potential volunteers

Main messages

1. Children discover books and reading through their parents or other adults.
2. Children must be exposed very early, i.e. between birth and the age of 4, to words, books and reading. This will help them do better in school.
3. We can help them and have fun doing it.

Secondary message

1. What participants say about their experience (parents' comments)

Facts

1. Details on the project
2. What is expected of volunteers
3. How to sign up

8 MESSAGES AND SELLING POINTS *(Continued)*

C. Non-participating organizations

Main messages

1. A mutual assistance project that makes tools and means of action available for your target population.
2. A project that meets the needs of part of your target population.
3. Possible resource sharing.
4. Several aspects of literacy development may be covered as part of existing activities and by your personnel.

Secondary messages

1. The importance of enhancing the literacy development of young children (from birth to 4 years of age)
2. The effects on the development and learning of children later in life

Facts

1. Support offered
2. Example of possible partnership
3. Duration, location and registration conditions

D. Population of Longueuil

Main messages³

1. The importance of encouraging the literacy development of young children (from birth to 4 years of age)
2. The effects on the development and learning of children later in life

Secondary message

1. What participants say about their experience (parents' comments)

Facts

1. The broad lines of the project: target district, component projects, duration, etc.

3. The theoretical aspects of literacy development can be set out in greater detail for this particular group.

8 MESSAGES AND SELLING POINTS *(Continued)*

E. Participating and partner organizations

Main messages

1. Outcomes and what participants say about their experience (parents' comments)
2. Future projects

Secondary messages

1. New partners

Facts

1. Information on all components of the project

Here are a few parents' comments that may be used:

- "The workshops helped me feel less anxious."
- "I left with ideas and a model to follow."
- "I'm more aware of my child's strengths. I learned to let my child experiment."
- "I have more self-confidence and I've helped my daughter have more self-confidence too."
- "We don't often have time for ourselves."
- "My son brings his book everywhere with him."
- "My children loved the songs; they like to sing them."
- "We take more time to sit with them and read stories."
- "I've noticed that my daughter has more imagination now."
- "I came because some of my friends would be here and I thought it would be fun."
- "The discussions we had with other parents really helped us at home."

9 SLOGANS

The members of the project team held two brainstorming sessions to find slogans for the various component projects. Unfortunately, these sessions did not result in any slogans that could be used. It should be noted that this is not unusual: it is often necessary to repeat the exercise several times before one can find an effective slogan.

The following are suggestions for the two projects that are the focus of this communication plan. They are based on the results of the brainstorming sessions.

“Welcoming the Newborn Child”

- “See me grow!”

Other suggestions:

- “Words to grow by”
- “Learning about words as I grow”
- “Growing up with words”

“Play Workshops”

- “Let’s play together”

Other suggestions:

- “Playing with stories”
- “Sharing and playing with stories”
- “Tell me a story!”

Note: The above slogans can no doubt be improved upon. It would be a good idea to hold another brainstorming session to come up with effective slogans.

10 LOGO

A corporate signature is tied to the idea of corporate identity and image. It is an instant means of communication. The message must be summed up in the project logo, which should convey a sense of permanence and reflect the spirit of the project as well as the attitude of the resource persons toward the target population.

We recommend that the logo of the Hand in Hand From A to Z! project be evaluated by visual communications specialists to make sure that it projects the desired image. The next step will be to standardize all of the communication tools by using the same image and graphic styling.

11 MEDIA

The media that are of interest with respect to this project are those that can be used to make the population of Longueuil aware of the importance of emergent literacy development. The media can also be used to recruit volunteers. Community television and radio, in particular, can be used to recruit participants.

Media to approach:

(Enter a list of the media in your region.)



12 MEANS

Means to raise awareness among the target population and recruit participants

The ideas given below are suggestions as to means that can be used to reach the target population and recruit participants for the different component projects. These means take into account the Hand in Hand From A to Z! project team's capacity to implement them and of existing activities in the district.

Visibility at school

- Have volunteers at school on the first day of class, when parents come to get their child's first kindergarten report card, and for school plays or other performances. These volunteers should be there in an unofficial capacity and simply mingle with the parents. These various events are opportunities to meet parents who may have younger children.
- Visit the local schools (École Lionel-Groulx and École confessionnelle La Sittelle) on a regular basis.
- Hold recruitment activities.

Booth at the shopping mall

- Present and explain the project.
- With the help of former participants who are willing to share their experience with others, simulate some of the project activities.
- Advertise the Halloween party (see next page), the picnic or other activities.
- Hand out brochures.
- Hold awareness and recruitment activities.

12 MEANS (Continued)

Halloween party

- Organize a Halloween party at the community centre. Have costumed recruiters, including former participants, go out on the streets to publicize the party.
- Tell Halloween stories.
- Hold activities from the Play Workshops project.
- Hand out candies to the kids.
- Hold awareness and recruitment activities.
- Entertain those who come to the party.
- Invite the media.

Library

- Remember that the library is a good place to recruit potential volunteers.
- Hand out brochures intended for potential volunteers.
- Put up posters.
- If there is a need and depending on the number of volunteers available, operate an information booth.
- Hold awareness and recruitment activities aimed at volunteers.

Local media

- Send media releases about the project in general and related activities and arrange for media coverage.
- Give interviews on the community television and radio stations.

Vaccination sessions

- Have people on-site at the community centre or the CLSC (i.e. the local community services centre) when vaccination sessions are held. These sessions provide an opportunity to reach parents who are unaware of the Off to a Good Start project. If possible, include parents who are participating in the project.
- Hold awareness and recruitment activities for the different projects.

12 MEANS (Continued)

Religious celebration at school

- Set up an information booth on the Play Workshops project, for example.
- Read a story to the children before or after the celebration.
- Invite people to participate in the activities.
- Hold awareness and recruitment activities.

Food bank and cooking classes

- Have people on-site at the food bank, goodwill counter and cooking classes to talk about the project, distribute information and recruit participants while helping the people who work there, especially at the end of the month.

Picnic (community fiesta)

- Organize a picnic in a local park.
- Ask people to bring their own food or offer a free (sponsored) meal.
- Put on creativity workshops, tell stories, provide information on the project, and plan games, a draw and sports activities.
- Arrange for prizes.
- Hold awareness and recruitment activities.
- Invite the media.

12 MEANS (Continued)

Poster campaign

- Put up posters and distribute brochures in places frequented by the target population:
 - shopping malls
 - convenience stores
 - local police stations
 - the facilities of organizations participating in the project
 - vaccination sessions
 - the library
 - medical clinics and doctors' offices

Survey

- Conduct a survey of the population of Longueuil in general and of the district targeted in particular to assess the extent to which project goals have been achieved.

Means aimed at participants

Peer recruitment offers a most interesting avenue for recruiting participants for the different component projects. Consider the following suggestions:

Discussion groups

- Set up a discussion group to verify outcomes, to make sure the stated goals have been attained and to identify, with parents who have already taken part in the project, the best way of reaching new participants. In addition to providing an opportunity to collect feedback and comments that can be used for communications purposes, this activity acknowledges participants as valuable contributors and may encourage them to stay on.

12 MEANS (Continued)

End-of-year social

- Hold an end-of-year social event at the community centre for all those who took part in the project during the year.
- Arrange daycare services and plan activities. Holding a social event will provide an opportunity to meet new people, stimulate new interest in the project and present its various components. It will also encourage those already participating in the project to stay on.
- Invite the media.

Means aimed at participating organizations and current and potential partner organizations

In a project based on partnership and collaboration, it is essential that current and potential partners be kept informed of any new developments. This encourages them to get involved in the project and give it their support and facilitates the recruitment of participants for its component projects.

Telephone calls to partner organizations

- Call current and potential partner organizations on a regular basis. It is best to leave this job up to members of the project teams who have good contacts within these organizations.
- Inform them, ask for their support, invite them to activities and arrange for follow-up.

12 MEANS (Continued)

Detailed presentation of the project

- Present the project in detail to the board members of current and potential partner organizations and of organizations already involved in the project.
- Submit an official request to be included on the agenda of a board meeting.
- Develop a presentation using transparencies, for example.
- Distribute information documents.
- Approach these organizations with a view to recruiting them as partners.

Cocktail reception

- Hold a cocktail reception for resource persons from current and potential partner organizations who have ties with the target population.
- The goal of this reception is to present the project, stimulate recruitment among their target groups, answer their questions, etc.
- Arrange to meet people one on one, if warranted.
- Hold a similar activity for local doctors.

Information for receptionists

- Send full project details to the receptionists of participating and partner organizations, so that they can provide full and accurate information to callers. This will also make it easier for these organizations to recruit and support participants.

12 MEANS *(Continued)*

Training session

- Put on a training session for the resource persons of the organizations that are active in the district in order to help them identify parents who are poor readers. Suggest a method to approach this target group in order to enable the organizations to collaborate in recruitment efforts.
- Invite local doctors to the training session.

Telephone calls to local doctors

- Briefly present the project to local doctors over the telephone and leave them with contact information.
- Send them literature on the project.
- Invite local doctors to certain activities.
- Raise awareness among local doctors and enlist their cooperation in recruiting participants.

13 TOOLS TO BE PRODUCED

This section provides a partial list of different tools⁴ that can be used to attain awareness-raising and recruitment goals.

- Brochure on the Welcoming the Newborn Child project
- Brochure on the recruitment of volunteers
- Brochure on the Play Workshops project:
 - Revise it and make sure that it has the same graphic styling (design, format and layout) as the other materials.
- Document and transparencies for presenting the project (already available)
- Newsletter on the Hand in Hand From A to Z! project:
 - for distribution to participating organizations and members of the project team
 - features information on the current status of different initiatives, an analysis of the results achieved, a list of new partners, notes on ideas that worked well and others that did not, upcoming activities, future developments, and so on
 - written by project team members and published quarterly
 - also for distribution to the media; the newsletter can be produced at low cost (double-sided photocopies on legal-sized paper).
- Press releases
- Flyer or checklist for potential participants:
 - designed so that potential participants can easily find the telephone number they must call in order to register as well as information on the different projects and the benefits of participating in these projects.
- Posters:
 - design generic posters with a white space at the bottom where details on special activities, the name and number of the person in charge of recruiting volunteers, and other information can be written.

4. The messages to be conveyed through these different tools must be adapted to their intended target group.

13 TOOLS TO BE PRODUCED *(Continued)*

- Promotional items:
 - Try to give potential participants an item they will want to keep, take home with them and use or display. This item will remind them of the project and its message. We suggest fridge magnets, place mats, note pads or calendars with reminders concerning important dates and project activities. Parents already participating in the project should, of course, each get a promotional item as well. A different promotional item intended for activity leaders, volunteers and participating parents could be drawn as a door prize when activities are held. A T-shirt is usually a good choice. However, since promotional T-shirts are rather expensive, they are best reserved for limited distribution.
- Video on the Play Workshops project:
 - Produce a video in-house or call on the services of audiovisual specialists within participating organizations. The video can be used as part of a presentation or at an information booth to show what the Play Workshops project is all about. It should be noted that an assortment of pictures is already available. All that remains to be done is to make an appropriate selection and set them up.
- Support materials for the training sessions intended for resource persons

14 COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The term “emergent literacy” holds little meaning for most people. That is why it would be preferable to use less specialized, more meaningful expressions in any communications intended for the population of Longueuil or parents who are potential participants, e.g. “discovering the world of words, books and reading” or “developing early reading and writing skills.” In communications with resource persons and doctors, “emergent literacy” can be used, but the term should be clearly explained.

Parents can be recruited through word of mouth, i.e. by asking parents who are participating in the project to tell others about it and encouraging them to invite neighbours and friends to activities. Potential participants will likely feel more comfortable about getting involved if they have heard about the project through someone they know than if they are directly approached by strangers.

Regular contacts with participants (through phone calls, visits to their home and so on) between the different stages of the project will encourage them to keep coming and to participate in each of the component projects.

Sponsors could probably be found to finance a large part of the awareness and recruitment activities aimed at the general public (e.g. the Halloween party and the picnic). The more abundant financial resources made available by a major sponsor would make it possible to plan larger-scale events complete with snacks, door prizes and other bonuses, which would no doubt result in a higher participation rate.

15 CALENDAR

The calendar suggested below is based on the school year.

- **September:**
 - Visibility at school
 - Leaflet on the Hand in Hand From A to Z! project
 - Presentation of the project to boards of directors
 - Forwarding of information to receptionists
 - Cocktail reception for resource persons (at the end of the month)

- **October:**
 - Information booth at the shopping mall
 - Calls to local doctors
 - Presentation of the project to boards of directors
 - Halloween party

- **November:**
 - Cocktail reception for local doctors
 - Training session for resource persons
 - Visits to local food banks
 - First report card

- **December:**
 - Leaflet on the Hand in Hand From A to Z! project

- **January:**
 - Religious celebration at school

- **February:**
 - Training session for resource persons
 - Visits to local food banks

15 CALENDAR *(Continued)*

- **March:**
 - Leaflet on the Hand in Hand From A to Z! project
 - Religious celebration at school

- **April:**
 - Information booth at the shopping mall
 - Visits to local food banks

- **May:**
 - Discussion groups
 - End-of-year party

- **June:**
 - Leaflet on the Hand in Hand From A to Z! project
 - Picnic
 - Survey

- **Ongoing activities:**
 - Follow-up telephone calls to organizations
 - Relations with the local media
 - Poster campaign
 - Visibility at vaccination sessions

16 BUDGET

The following table gives an idea of the cost, in 1997 dollars, of the different awareness and recruitment activities and materials suggested in this communication plan.

| Item | Cost (\$) |
|--|---------------|
| Brochure on the Accueil-naissance (Welcoming the Newborn Child) project | 750 |
| Brochure on recruiting volunteers (development and production) | 750 |
| Revision of the brochure on the Ateliers-jeux (Play Workshops) project | 750 |
| Leaflet for organizations on the De A à Z on s'aide! (Hand in Hand From A to Z!) project | 200 |
| Drafting of media releases | 500 |
| Flyers or leaflets for potential participants | 650 |
| Posters | 2 000 |
| Promotional items (two kinds) | 3 500 |
| In-house video on the Ateliers-jeux (Play Workshops) project | 500 |
| Support materials for the training session for resource persons | 250 |
| Halloween party | 500 |
| End-of-year party | 200 |
| Picnic | 500 |
| Cocktail reception | 150 |
| Document envelopes | 50 |
| Survey | 1 000 |
| TOTAL | 12 250 |

