

# 5 NUMBERS

YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN OTTAWA

## Frontline Reflections

**Featured member : the Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est**

The foundational skills that children need to enter Grade 1 are acquired starting from birth. In fact, several family factors greatly contribute to their readiness level for school. Before starting school, children learn during play using all their senses: touch, smell, sight, hearing and taste. The most recent research on learning through play reveals that children who play regularly have stronger language skills, have more imagination, are less aggressive and possess better social skills.



Stories are the gateway to language, imagination and creativity. One of the best ways to play with your child is to read or tell them stories. When a child listens to stories, they can invent imaginary worlds and create their own stories. By listening to stories, a child develops their emotional skills using the experiences of the characters. The child can then imagine being the character, which allows them to use their creativity by exploring different adventures, suggesting other possible endings to the story and even adapting them to create new stories.

Learning a language is first done through listening. When a child listens to stories, not only are they hearing new words and their pronunciations, but they are also listening to the structure of the story. A child can recognize the beginning, middle and end of the story. They can also understand that there are characters, a problem to solve, and that stories end, often happily. A story, either told to the child or told by the child, also allows them to play with words, for example, making up rhymes, singing and finding synonyms. The more a child is exposed to storytelling, the more the child can explore language and play with images that only get richer with time.

An old African proverb reminds us that it takes a village to raise a child. In that vein, learning a rich vocabulary and acquiring different experiences become easier when a child hears stories from different people. When the grandparents, uncles and extended family participate in storytelling, the child develops social skills and becomes exposed to the family's customs and traditions. *Tell me a story!*

*Submitted by :*



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