

## Communicator Article

### Alphabet Soup – Whining and Dining

I occasionally write reviews for an on-line resource called CM: Canadian Review of Materials out of the University of Manitoba. This site is a treasure trove of book reviews of all sorts; picture books for babies, fiction, non-fiction, craft books, all the way to resource materials for high schoolers. This is a great site for families to check out if they want to let Grandma know exactly what book to buy Junior for his birthday or Christmas, or if students need some background material on a Canadian author for a school project. Each review is followed by a grade/age recommendation and a designation of recommended, highly recommended, not recommended or recommended with reservations. The site can be found at [www.umanitoba.ca/cm](http://www.umanitoba.ca/cm).

The last review I wrote was for a book I absolutely loved called: **Whining and Dining – Mealtime Survival for Picky Eaters and the Families who love them**. It was written by Emma Waverman and Eshun Mott. The authors of this part-cookbook, part-parenting book, dish up loads of insightful information and advice in a very conversational manner. Some of their anecdotes are hilarious and it almost feels like you're talking to your sister or best friend. The authors have both been in the food business for years, as food writers, stylists and trained chefs. They are parents of small children and know that feeding your family, especially if it includes a picky eater, can be a daunting chore. They believe "the secret lies in the attitude and the parenting skills you bring to the table, and of course what you serve".

This book was a very timely one for me. I have developed a literacy/cooking program for parents/caregivers and their 4 and 5 year olds. The program is called Alphabet Soup and teaches parents and children to cook different dishes based on a literacy theme. We might "read" a picture recipes for blueberry pancakes, learn a rhyme about cooking pancakes and then read a couple of stories such as Eric Carle's "Pancakes, pancakes, pancakes" or "If you give a pig a pancake" by Laura Numeroff. One session we made Cinnamon Pancake mix-in-a-jar to take home and cook on Mother's Day. Each session ends with time to work on our Alphabet Scrapbooks, an oversized alphabet book we fill with pictures and words culled from food magazines and recipes we have cooked. Parents often have questions about how to deal with their picky-eaters. After reading this book I feel like I can offer some advice, or at least a recipe or two, or even just recommend the book itself.

Your home kitchen can contain a wealth of literacy activities including looking at cook books, measuring ingredients, describing the uses of different appliances or utensils. Discussing kitchen safety rules or simply talking about our favourite foods or the unfamiliar and different foods from other cultures can all be valuable lessons in vocabulary building or storytelling skills.

**Whining and Dining**, besides containing over 100 wonderful recipes for families, also contains a list of storybooks about food for picky-eaters, including my favourite – Bread and Jam for Francis. I have a large collection of cookbooks for children and their parents that are on display at all of our Alphabet Soup sessions, and parents can borrow them and copy out recipes that appeal to their family. If you are interested in attending Alphabet Soup in the fall of 2007, please contact me to pre-register. In fact, if you want

information about any of our up-coming literacy programs and events, or would like to take or donate free books to the Sharing Books box, please contact me.  
Lizanne Eastwood – Family Literacy Coordinator for Grand Forks and the West Boundary @ 442-2533 or leastwood@thehub.literacy.bc.ca.