CANADIAN CHILDREN

JOURNAL OF THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

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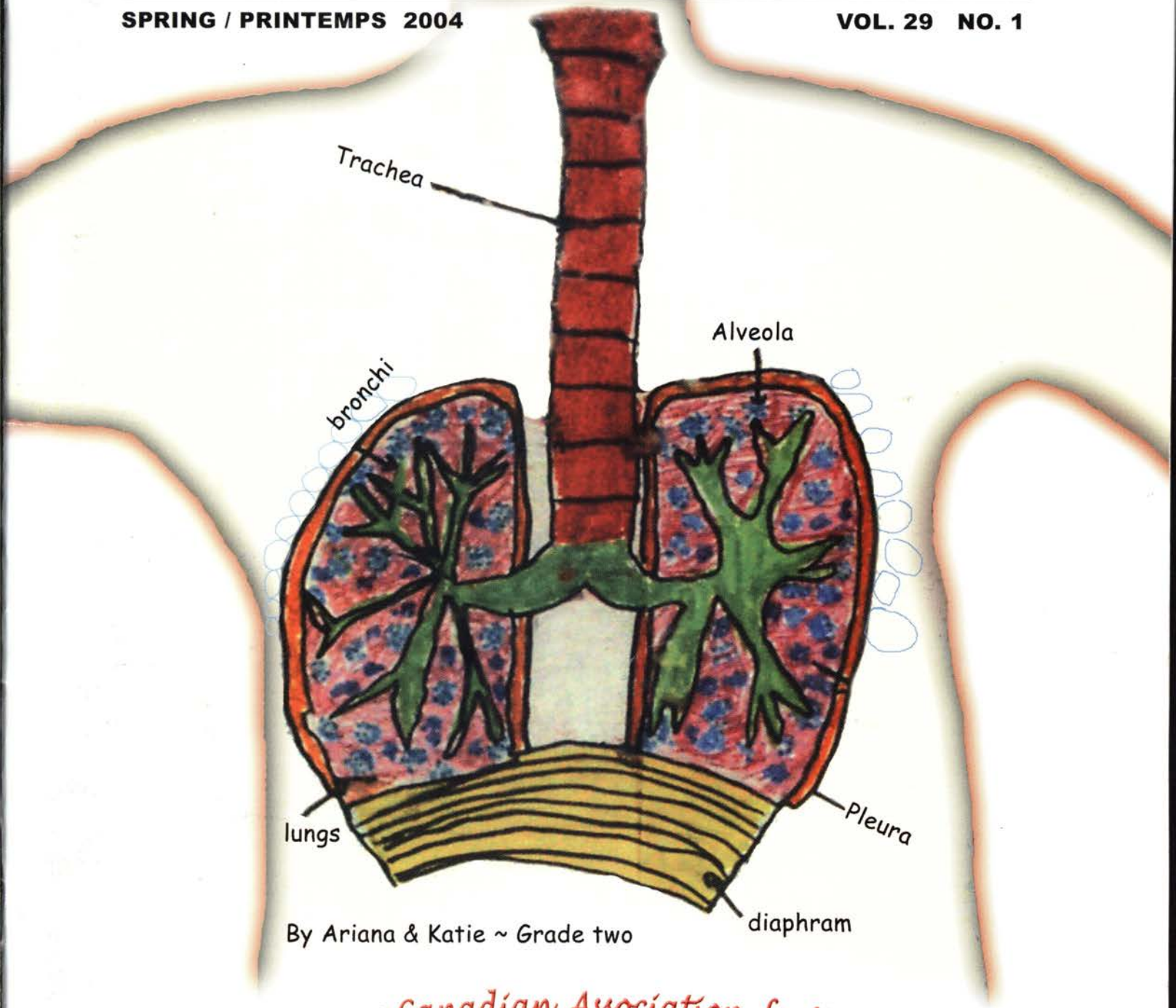

Happy Anniversary Canadian Association for Young Children

The Canadian Association for Young Children 30th L'Association Canadienne Pour Les Jeunes Enfants

www.cayc.ca

THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

WHAT IS THE CAYC

The Canadian Association for Young Children (CAYC) grew out of Council for Childhood Education and was officially recognized in 1974 by the granting of a Federal Charter. It is the only national association specifically concerned with the well-being of children, birth through age nine at home, in preschool settings and at school. Members of the multidisciplinary association include parents, teachers, caregivers ,administrators, students and all those wishing to share ideas and participate in activities related to the education and welfare of young children.

MISSION STATEMENT

CAYC exists to provide a Canadian voice on critical issues related to the quality of life of all young children and their families.

THE AIMS OF THE CAYC

1. To influence the direction and quality of policies and programs that affect the development and well-being of young children in Canada.
2. To provide a forum for the members of Canada's early childhood community to support one another in providing developmentally appropriate programs for young children.
3. To promote and provide opportunities for professional development for those charged with the care and education of young children.
4. To promote opportunities for effective liaison and collaboration with all those responsible for young children.
5. To recognize outstanding contributions to the well-being of young children.

IMPLEMENTING THE AIMS OF THE CAYC

1. **The National Conference:**
   The National Conference is a highlight of the CAYC. The program includes lectures by internationally renowned authorities on children, workshops, discussion groups, displays, demonstrations, school visits and tours.
2. **Provincial and Regional Events:**
   The organization of members at the local and provincial level is encouraged to plan events to deal with the issues and concerns pertaining to young children. These events may take the form of lectures, seminars or a local conference.
3. **The Journal:**
   An outstanding multidisciplinary journal is published twice yearly. Articles by nationally and internationally known experts in early childhood education and child rearing are presented in the Journal of the CAYC. Inside CAYC provides information on Association activities.

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND MEMBERSHIP

Membership fees are payable on application and renewable annually on an evergreen basis. To be considered a voting member, fees must be paid no later than 60 days prior to the Annual General Meeting.

Members of the CAYC receive newsletters and special rates for national and regional conferences

Per annum: $40 General, $25 Student, $75 Associations.

Please direct all subscription and membership correspondance to:

CAYC
612 W, 23rd Street
North Vancouver, BC V7M 2C3
CANADA

ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE POUR LES JEUNES ENFANTS

QU'EST CE QUE L'ACJE

L'Association Canadienne pour les Jeunes Enfants, issue du *Council for Childhood Education,* a reçu sa charte fédérale en 1974. Elle demeure la seule association nationale vouée exclusivement au bien-être des enfants, de la naissance jusqu'à l'âge de neuf ans, dans leur foyer, à la garderie et à l'école primaire. L'ACJE est composée de parents, d'enseignants, de professionnels de la petite enfance, d'administrateurs et d'étudiants, ainsi que de tous ceux et celles qui sont intéressés à partager leurs idées en participant à des activités liées au bien-être et à l'éducation des jeunes enfants.

SA MISSION

L'ACJE s'est donné comme mandat de faire entendre une voix canadienne sur les questions essentielles ayant trait à la qualité de vie de tous les jeunes enfants et de leur famille.

SES OBJECTIFS

1. Jouer un rôle sur le plan des orientations et sur la qualité des politiques et des programmes touchant au développement et au bien-être des jeunes enfants canadiens.
2. Créer un forum pour les membres de la communauté canadienne oeuvrant dans le domaine de la petite enfance afin de susciter une collaboration active dans l'élaboration de programmes appropriés au développement des jeunes enfants.
3. Encourager et offrir des possibilités de perfectionnement professionnel au personnel responsable du bien-être et de l'éducation des jeunes enfants.
4. Promouvoir des occasions pour une meilleure coordination et collaboration entre tous les responsables des jeunes enfants.
5. Récompenser et souligner les contributions exceptionnelles faites en faveur des jeunes enfants.

EXÉCUTION DES OBJECTIFS DE L'ACJE

1. **Le congrès national:**
   Il constitue le grand évènement de l'ACJE. Des sommités de renommée internationale en matière de petite enfance y prononcent des conférences et on y participe à des ateliers, des débats, des expositions, des démonstrations, et à des visites guidées d'écoles.
2. **Les évènements provinciaux et locaux:**
   L'ACJE encourage ses membres à organiser des conférences, des séminaires ou des congrès au niveau local et régional afin de débattre des problèmes relatifs aux jeunes enfants.
3. **La revue :**
   Publication bisannuelle et multidisciplinaire de premier ordre, la revue regroupe des articles traitant de questions d'éducation et de formation des jeunes enfants. On y retrouve également des articles écrits par des experts de renommée nationale et internationale. La rubrique *Inside CAYC* renseigne les lecteurs sur les activités de l'Association.

ABONNEMENT ET COTISATION DES MEMBRES

Les cotisations doivent être réglées au moment de l'adhésion et celle-ci doit être renouvelée chaque année. Pour se prévaloir de son droit de vote, tout membre doit acquitter sa cotisation au moins 60 jours avant l'Assemblée Générale annuelle.

Les membres de l'ACJE reçoivent le bulletin périodique et bénéficient de tarifs spéciaux pour participer au congrès national et aux évènements régionaux:

Tarif des cotisations annuelles: général : 40 $; étudiants: 25 $; associations: 75 $

Veuillez faire parvenir toute demande de souscription ou d'adhésion à l'ACJE à l'adresse suivante :

ACJE
612 W 23e Rue
Vancouver Nord, CB V7M 2C3
CANADA

CANADIAN
CHILDREN

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Cover Photo: Contributed by Mabel Higgins. Created by Ariana, daughter of Dr. Richard & Margaret Malthaner, along with classmate, Katie, daughter of Al and Lisa Koivu.

GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS

Canadian Children is the journal of the Canadian Association for Young Children (CAYC), the only national association specifically concerned with the well-being of children of preschool and elementary age in Canada. The journal is published twice yearly and contains articles, book reviews and announcements of professional conferences .

Canadian Children is a multidisciplinary journal concerned with child development and early childhood education. Authors from across Canada, and elsewhere, are invited to submit articles and book reviews which reflect the variety and extent of both research and practice in early childhood education and child rearing.

CONTENT:

Submissions should appeal to an audience that includes parents, professionals in the field of childhood education and child services, as well as teachers and researchers. Most issues are multi-theme in nature and the editor will attempt to balance articles that are research-related with articles of a practical nature relating to programming, curriculum, classroom practice or child rearing.

FORM, LENGTH AND STYLE:

ARTICLES may be of varying length, written in a readable style. Style should be consistent with an acceptable professional manual such as the **Publication Manual** (3rd Edition) of the American Psychological Association. Articles should be sent as an email attachment to the email address below or sent to the postal address, on a 3.5" IBM or IBM compatible diskette or a CD in Microsoft Word with three (3) printed copies on 21.5 x 28 cm. (standard 8 _ x 11") paper directly to the editor at the address listed below. Type should be double spaced. If appropriate, authors should send accompanying black and white glossy print photographs, tables, figures or illustrations with complete captions, each on separate pages. Authors are to obtain releases for use of photographs prior to mailing. Please include a brief biographical sketch including the author(s) full name, title, professional affiliation, and other relevant information, such as acknowledgements, grant support or funding agency . It is expected that authors will not submit articles to more than one publisher at a time.

ACCEPTANCE AND PUBLICATION:

The editor will acknowledge receipt of, and review all solicited and unsolicited manuscripts received. The final publication decision rests with the editor, and will be communicated within three months. Manuscripts not accepted for publication will be returned only if a stamped self-addressed envelope is included.

DEADLINES:

Submission Deadlines are as follows:
FALL Issue : August 1
SPRING Issue: February 1

GUIDE A L'INTENTIION DES AUTEURS

Canadian Children est la revue de l'Association pour les Jeunes Enfants (ACJE). Elle demeure la seule association vouée exclusivement au bien-être des enfants de niveau préscolaire et primaire au Canada. Cette revue bisannuelle regroupe des articles, des comptes rendus de livres et des avis de conférences professionnelles.

Canadian Children est une publication multidisciplinaire qui traite du développement de l'enfant et de son éducation durant la petite enfance. Les auteurs du Canada et d'ailleurs sont invités à soumettre des articles et des comptes rendus de livres qui mettent en évidence la variété et l'étendue de la recherche et de la pratique dans le domaine de l'éducation au cours de la petite enfance.

CONTENU:

Les articles doivent s'adresser à un public composé de parents, de professionnels de l'éducation et de services à l'enfance, ainsi que d'enseignants et de chercheurs. Chaque numéro traite de divers thèmes et le rédacteur en chef tentera d'y inclure tant des articles portant sur la recherche que des articles portant sur des aspects pratiques de l'éducation comme la gestion et la mise œuvre de programmes d'études, les méthodes d'enseignement en salle de classe et les techniques utilisées pour élever les enfants.

FORME, LONGUEUR ET STYLE :

LES ARTICLES peuvent être de longueur variée et doivent être rédigés dans un style accessible à tous les lecteurs. La présentation doit être conforme aux normes du ***Publication Manual*** (3e édition) de l'*American Psychological Association*. Les articles devront être en Microsoft Word ou Word Perfect (format IBM PC), attachés à un courrier électronique ou enregistrés sur une disquette 3.5" ou sur un CD et envoyés au rédacteur en chef à l'adresse indiquée ci-dessous. Les trois (3) copies doivent être dactylographiées en double interligne. Les auteurs devront fournir, s'il y a lieu, les photographies accompagnant les articles, tirées en noir et blanc sur papier glacé, ainsi que les tableaux, figures ou illustrations avec leurs légendes, imprimés chacun sur une feuille. Ils devront obtenir le permis de reproduction des photographies avant de les faire parvenir au rédacteur. Il est recommandé d'inclure une brève notice biographique contenant le nom complet de l'auteur, ses titres, affiliations professionnelles et autres informations pertinentes telles que remerciements, supports financiers ou organismes de subvention. Il est entendu que les auteurs ne soumettront leurs articles qu'à une seule revue à la fois.

RÉVISION, ACCEPTATION, ET PUBLICATION :

Le rédacteur en chef accusera réception et tiendra compte de tous les manuscrits reçus, qu'ils aient été sollicités ou non, et soumettra les textes qu'il aura retenus à au moins trois lecteurs externes au comité de rédaction. La décision de publier est sous la responsabilité du rédacteur en chef et sera communiquée à l'auteur dans un délai de trois mois. Les manuscrits non retenus pour publication seront retournés à leurs auteurs seulement s'ils sont accompagnés d'une enveloppe pré-adressée et affranchie.

ÉCHÉANCIER :

Publication d'automne : 1er août
Publication du printemps : 1er février

Please send all publication correspondence for consideration to:

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Preferably email as an attachment to: **ece@mdirect.net**

MABEL. F. HIGGINS
EDITOR

Happy 30th Anniversary to all Members of The Canadian Association for Young Children . . . past and present . . .

The illustration on our cover spoke to me. Let me explain. This winter found our family visiting the office of Dr. Richard Malthaner, a thoracic surgeon. We were confronted with the usual medical charts on the wall. He arrived, directing our attention to them and - without hesitation and much to our surprise, pointed to a prominently placed children's drawing - Unlike artwork that most often makes it to the refrigerator door, its prominence in this office, paid immense respect to its young creators. It found a place among scientific charts, becoming a useful tool in this physician's daily practice. Reggio Emilia's *"image of the child, as competent and powerful "* at once came to mind, as I observed this doctor/father. This portrayal of the human lungs was a collaboration of two young children (his daughter and her classmate) motivated by a grade-two project. Dr. Malthaner proudly echoed the grade that was earned for this project (an Ontario Ministry of Education Level 4 range). The esteem paid to the children, and their capacity to represent their knowledge is made visible here … I could not miss this opportunity to acknowledge the moment. I think you too will find that children's voices worthy of our regard, are visible everywhere.

Throughout this issue of Canadian Children we celebrate the CHILD on the occasion of this *Thirtieth Anniversary of The Canadian Association for Young Children.* You will find in these pages, regard paid to children at many levels. The authors provoke us to consider how we will spend our time with and for them. Writings about: Initiating Experiences with Clay and Drawing, Administrative Impacts on Teachers and their Classrooms ~ Where to Go with Standardized Testing? ~ Pedagogical Documentation, as a Catalyst for Teacher Change ~ Creating Outdoor Environments for the Soul ~ A Newly Formed North American Coalition for Children ~ and ~ The Journey of an Ontario Early Years Centre, are presented by authors eager to enrich the lives of children.

Our Anniversary is celebrated by a message found in this issue from Canada's Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Paul Martin. He reminds us that our thirty years of activity have contributed to "*improving the quality of life for many children and their families*". I encourage the federal government's acceleration of its commitment to early learning and childcare in this country, not for Canada's future but for Canada's children today!

As we continue to cultivate our journal publications, I welcome Dr. Wayne Eastman to his new post as Publications Chair for the journal and Carol Jonas to her new position on the Editorial Review Board. Both join professionals on our editorial team in making an immense contribution to Canadian Children…

We welcome your article submissions. The author guidelines can be found at our website www.cayc.ca. While there be sure to browse through the site and our newly published, Journal Index which celebrates a decade of publication. Look to the fall 2004 issue to bring you an article of the late Dr. Otto Weininger from our Inaugural 1975 Journal. In closing, I echo the words of our first CAYC president, Doris Paton, from this issue of the journal, *"I am proud to introduce you to "The Journal" with the sincere hope that it will speak to you, for you, and for the well-being of children everywhere."*

30th Anniversary of The Canadian Association for Young Children

Incorporated 24th October, 1974

Founding Board Members

Thomas R.M. Davis, Brian J. Johnson, C.J. Michael Flavell, Nan Baird, Micheline Gosselin, Yvonne Baldocchi, Monique Rousseau, Nancy St-Cyr, Lynn Sweeney, Evelyn Ross, Ginette Schulze, Diane Laganiere and Mary Lennon will be the first directors of the Corporation

signed: L. Mc Carn
Deputy Registrar General of Canada

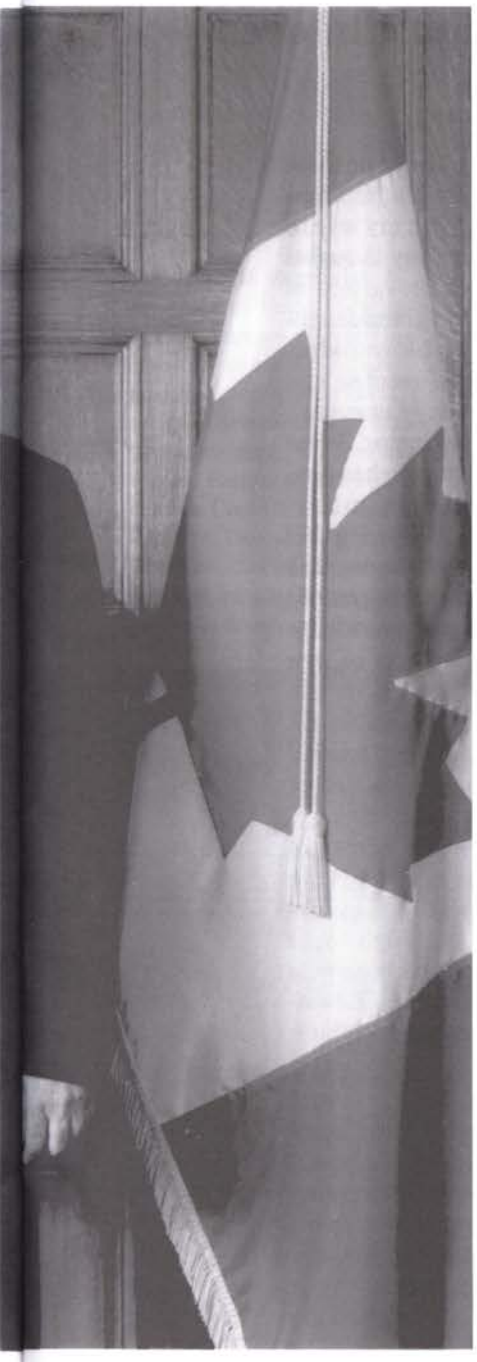
PRIME MINISTER · PREMIER MINISTRE

I am pleased to extend my warmest greetings to everyone marking the 30th anniversary of the Canadian Association for Young Children.

This special milestone offers you an opportunity to reflect upon your organization's many accomplishments, while looking to the future with anticipation. By increasing public awareness of policies and programs affecting the development and well-being of young Canadians, and promoting research and education initiatives, your organization has contributed to improving the quality of life of many children and their families. You may take great pride in knowing that, with your efforts, you are helping to fulfil the promise of the future.

Please accept my best wishes for a most memorable anniversary celebration, as well as every success in meeting the challenges of the years ahead.

OTTAWA
2004



PRIME MINISTER · PREMIER MINISTRE

Je suis très heureux d'adresser mes plus cordiales salutations à tous ceux et celles qui soulignent le 30e anniversaire de l'Association canadienne pour jeunes enfants.

Cet anniversaire vous offre une merveilleuse occasion de rappeler la riche histoire et de souligner les nombreuses réalisations de votre organisme. En sensibilisant davantage le public aux politiques et aux programmes qui favorisent le développement et le bien-être des jeunes Canadiens et Canadiennes, et en faisant la promotion des initiatives en recherche et en éducation, votre organisme a contribué à améliorer la qualité de vie de nombreux enfants, et celle de leur famille. Vous pouvez être très fiers de savoir que par votre engagement vous tracez les voies de l'avenir.

Je vous souhaite des célébrations mémorables et beaucoup de succès pour les années qui viennent.

OTTAWA
2004

Reprinted from the Inaugural Issue of Canadian Children November 1975

From The President

Doris Paton is presently Co-ordinator of Primary/Junior Education with The Peel Board of Education, Ontario. She has enjoyed a wide association of experiences with children, teachers, parents, and administrators. Involvement over the past few years has included Ministry courses, workshops in centres in Ontario and Quebec, sessions for Parent Volunteers, and the co-ordination of a dynamic Teachers' Centre in Peel County.

Her association with the Council for Childhood Education, Ontario, Quebec dates back to 1966. She was conference chairman in 1969 and, most recently, chairman of the Advisory Board, whose dedicated and determined efforts have resulted in the incorporation of the present Canadian Association for Young Children.

A delightful spring morning brings promise of hazy summer days and fruitful fall harvest as I travel country roads on my way to work. Two reflections occupy my thoughts — the arrival a few hours previously of a healthy, happily-anticipated granddaughter, and the writing of a suitable introduction to launch this also long-awaited and exciting publication. An analogy emerges.

A new baby — a new beginning. What joy, what responsibility, what apprehension, what delight, what an opportunity to nurture, and sustain, and prepare a young life! A young mother, full of high hopes and questions, myriads of questions, is grateful for the answers founded in past knowledge and experience, and seeks answers to new questions as the future unfolds.

So with the Canadian Association for Young Children, and this, the first Journal publication — a new beginning — a first of its kind in Canada. It represents some apprehension, certainly a great sense of responsibility, but much joy and delight in bringing to fruition the plans and aspirations of many dedicated people. High hopes abound, and the fervent wish to become a bilingual voice in Early Childhood Education may be realised through this vehicle and this organization.

Questions too! Many have answers that can be probed and discussed and acted upon with surety because of the ever-expanding field of knowledge concerning the world of the young child. Other questions are as yet not answered but are probed and discussed and shared. Your questions, your concerns, your interests are shared with many, to become a reality, a focus, an articulation in the service of children's needs. We count on you to voice them.

I am honoured to have been elected the first President of the Canadian Association for Young Children, and speaking for myself and the Board of Directors, thank you for the privilege of service. I am proud to introduce you to "The Journal" with the sincere hope that it will speak to you, for you, and for the well-being of children everywhere.

Initiating Experiences With Clay and Drawing As Dynamic Conversations

Jane Tingle Broderick

Jane Tingle Broderick is an assistant professor of Early Childhood Education at East Tennessee State University. Her research interests include, the role of materials and environment on learning, creative development, planning inquiry-based learning, documentation, and the Reggio Emilia Approach. Currently, she teaches Creative Development of Young Children, Observing and Assessing Young Children, Social Development, Family and Community Relations and an online course in documentation.

The key is for teachers to present their suggestions in an open-ended manner that encourages children to respond with their own ideas.

Introduction

Educators have long recognized the importance of visual arts experiences in early childhood (Gardner, 1993; Smith, 1983, Wright, 1997). Still, many teachers wonder about how to introduce these early arts experiences in constructivist settings where teachers have varying degrees of the following beliefs:

- Materials should be available for children to create with meaningfully in their own ways.
- Teachers should not set out prescribed art activities.
- The curriculum should emerge from the interests of the children.

Additionally many teachers worry about messes, depletion of materials, and a general concern about how children will build skills with materials if teachers are to leave children on their own to explore.

This article introduces two examples of an approach to materials where the teacher is as keenly aware of the children's interests as she is of the need for teacher provocation. In this way the teacher's carefully planned interventions become part of a dialogue where learning is negotiated with the children (Forman and Fyfe, 1998; Forman et al, 1998). The first example is a group session with clay and the second is a child - teacher dialogue centered on drawing. An important distinction must be made about the examples that will be presented in this article. Both situations use the arts as a means of furthering the children's already developing thinking in a conceptual domain that is separate from the conceptual domain that includes the properties of arts materials. In this way the materials function as tools for expressing ideas about something else. They follow a tradition of multi-symbolization that encourages children to develop a deeper understanding of their ideas by representing them in a variety of materials (Forman and Fyfe, 1998; Forman et al, 1998). In addition to this approach the author strongly believes that all early childhood classrooms need to have ample sized art centers where children have easy access to a host of materials that they can explore on their own at any given time and there are numerous resources for materials exploration (Topal, 1992; Topal, 1983; Smith, 1983).

The two examples cited in this article are grounded in a socio-constructivist belief that children learn socially through imitation when the ideas being presented are suited to children's already developing knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978). The teachers in this discussion know that while children will explore available materials on their own, they also benefit from suggestions, particularly about materials they don't use frequently. Knowledge they gain about the properties and possibilities of materials will lead children to think of working with them in future situations. In this manner the teacher's suggestions serve as the social conduit through which the children learn. The key is for teachers to present their suggestions in an open-ended manner that encourages children to respond with their own ideas. The introduction of materials then becomes a first step in a dynamic dialogue with the children where ideas with materials are explored and discussed throughout the creative process.

This takes us to another feature of socially constructed learning environments where teachers rely on the *"whole class" circle times* to extend the thinking of a small group through the sharing of ideas. The clay presentation is an example of this approach that can be broken down into an eight-step process:

1) Teachers document the observations of children.

2) Teachers note that a number of children are developing play that is organized around certain lines of thought (ideas in first example: fencing in farm animals, exhausting the set of animals by trying to fit them all inside the fence, categorizing animals by size, color, number and kind)

3) Teachers choose a material that they believe will help the children explore the many ideas as a means of learning which ideas seem most significant to the children.

4) One teacher presents ideas with materials using dialogue related to the material use and the ideas of the children's play with farm animals and fences.

5) Children respond in the circle with verbal ideas.

6) A team teacher writes the ensuing teacher-child dialogue on a large easel that is visible to the children, letting the children know that their ideas are being translated into valued records.

7) The children are then invited to work with the materials at small group tables where they talk out their ideas as they work.

8) Teachers interact with the children as they work, responding to their ideas and documenting the process.

The second example illustrates how drawing is the basis for a dialogue between an individual child and her teacher, and how their interaction draws others into the conversation.

THE CLAY DEMONSTRATION: BACKGROUND

This journey with clay has a lot of children's play and teacher planning behind it. It took place early in the school year after numerous teacher observations revealed that children (3.5 – 4.5) were creating small enclosures for animals in the block area as well as in the art area. It seemed as if children were interested in fitting as many animals as they could into an enclosed structure and categorizing these animals according to size, color, number, and kind. As one enclosure became filled another fenced in area would emerge for children to fill with the rest of the animals, and this would continue until the set of available animals was exhausted.

The organization of animals was usually attached to a farm theme and the fences were built with blocks in the block area or some of the many collage materials (beads, corn kernels, wood pieces) that children glued onto paper in the art area. There were many plastic animals to work with in the block area and a number of foam animal shapes in the art area that were inevitably glued inside the fences children created.

The farm theme and the child's knowledge that farms have fenced in animals made the teachers wonder if the children were most interested in thinking about farms or thinking about sets of animals and enclosures. They wondered if children might share more information about their interests if these ideas were presented in relation to explorations with a new material. Clay seemed a good choice because it provided the three-dimensional properties of the materials children were already using and the flexibility for children to adapt the material to suit new ideas that might emerge.

The children had previous experiences with play dough where the preference seemed to evolve into a desire manipulate the play dough with the many tools available in the art area that included a garlic press, a rolling pin, clay knives and cookie cutter shapes. Teachers rarely saw children opt to manipulate play dough with their hands as the primary tool and they wondered if children had enough examples of how to do this. Thus, the teachers' plan to introduce clay had two purposes:

- to explore the ideas children had been thinking about
- to reintroduce the idea of using hands as clay tools by presenting some possibilities.

One teacher was designated to present the materials to the children at a "whole class" circle meeting and another was responsible for documenting the discussion. The presenter was careful to use language specifically related to the materials that allowed the children to insert their own terms for the things she was possibly creating. This sets up a provocative dynamic that relies on children to wonder and make predictions.

The Demonstration

Picture 1: The teacher demonstrates how to make a clay coil by rolling it between her hands.

The teacher is demonstrating how to make a clay coil by rolling it between her hands.

Teacher: I'm making coils.

Child: You could call it a worm!

The child is thinking of a living thing. It is not farm related but it may be associated with animals in the child's developing schema. The teacher forms a circle with the coil, rolls another coil into a circle and layers one on top of the other.

Teacher: I'm building something a little bit high.

Ellie: Like a wall.

Lisa: Or maybe something where the animals go.

Teacher: I was thinking of that too.

Nathan: I was thinking maybe it could be a necklace.

Teacher: It's so wet and sticky.

Clara: Maybe if it dries.

Teacher: If it dries it could be a necklace.

Clara: Or a pot.

Teacher: A pot with food in it?

She remembers this pot idea for later in the demonstration. Meanwhile she sticks to her plan to build a small animal out of clay using a pinching method. She holds the clay up high so all the children can see her pinching the clay to form little protrusions.

Teacher: What does it look like?

Karl: A small animal

Picture 2: The Teacher builds a small animal by pinching the clay.

The teacher places the animal inside the circular coil enclosure and makes a second animal.

Picture 3: The teacher asks the children, "How many animals will fit in?

Teacher: I wonder how many animals will fit in?
Lisa: I think three.

Children: So many children chime in with answers that it is impossible to clearly understand them on the video documentation. It is clear that they are actively engaged in the dialogue.

Her estimates reflect an understanding of the relation between the size of the animals and the available space. This line of thinking is a possible new direction for future curriculum development with other materials.

Picture 4: The teacher pushes the clay in with her thumbs to make a small pot.

The teacher pinches the clay in another manner, pushing in with her thumbs to form a small pot. She is revisiting Claire's thinking from earlier in the dialogue. Claire picks up on this immediately.

Claire: Maybe that could be its food!
Nathan: Maybe it could be a water place!
Teacher: I wonder how much food will fit in.

She is inserting language based on her classroom observations of children "fitting animals into" enclosures and combining that with the children's developing language.

Lisa: Maybe broccoli.
Teacher: I'll make little stems with the tree like tops that broccoli have.

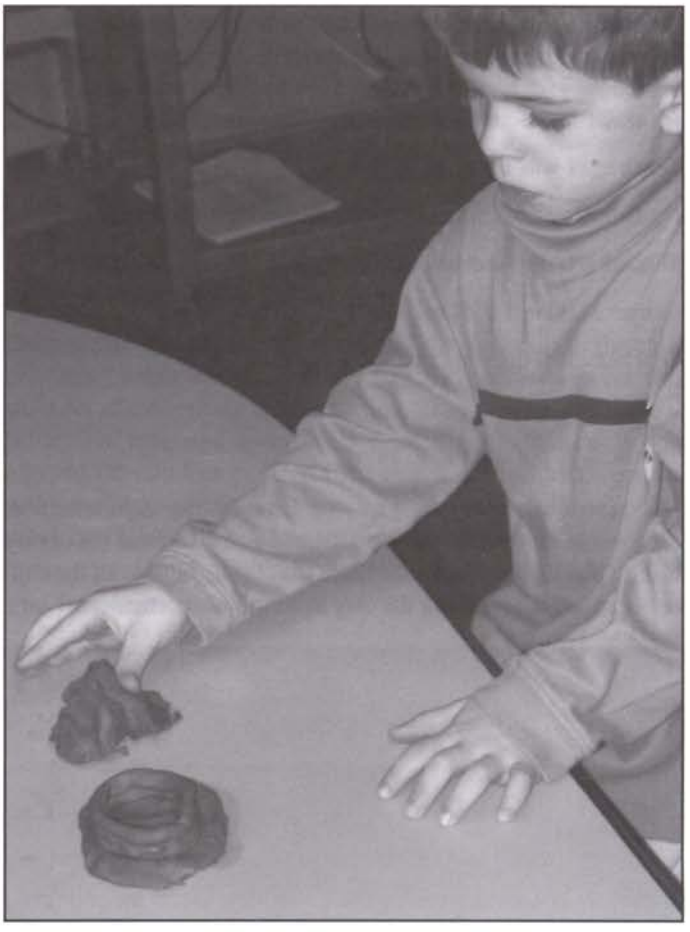
At this point the teacher tells the children that they can each work with the clay at the many tables in the classroom where there is plenty of clay set up for each child. She says that she and her co-teacher will be visiting all the tables because they are interested in seeing and hearing about what the children will be making with clay. The tables are set up with a ball of clay at each seat. The tables provide a good clay surface so no boards are set out. The teachers decided that trays might constrict the children's ability to spread clay out or collaborate if they choose to do so. Clay tools and a bag of extra clay are set in baskets in the center of each table. You will note that the teacher did not use clay tools in her demonstration but she also did not talk about using hands. She merely modeled the process of using hands to manipulate the clay and then presented the option of using tools that children were already familiar with by placing them at the tables. In this way she is adding to the children's existing repertoire.

The Children's Responses

Picture 5: Lisa leans over the driveway she is making.

Lisa: I'm makin' a driveway.

The notion of a driveway is evident in the linear, flat, quality of Lisa's clay structure. She understands the squishing and flattening properties of clay, yet she cannot manipulate the material without the support of an attached surface. Is her content limited and guided by her physical knowledge of the material? It seems valuable to offer her the opportunity to expand her knowledge through her own interactions and what she observes others doing with clay.



Picture 6: Randy says he is going to make a door for his barn.

Randy: I'm gonna make a door so the animals can go out.

Randy's imagination leads him to create a barn enclosure that is an imitation of his teacher's with an important new feature. He has added a clay base, which reveals a number of possible theories. One might be that barns have floors. Another might be that it is easier to support and carry a clay object that has a bottom. A third might be that the coil structures will be more secure if they are attached to a clay base. His door idea reveals more physical knowledge about barns.

Picture 7: Mark is rolling more coils for a fence to go around his seal.

Mark: I'm gonna make a fence with a little seal.

Mark is motivated to make things that use the coil technique he observed in the teacher's demonstration. He transfers his ideas onto his creations adapting the material to suit his own interests.

Picture 8: Mary makes all the cat's legs an equal length.

Missy has asked for help in making a cat. The teacher says that she will make one while Missy makes one. She rolled a coil leg of a different length than the one her teacher rolls and she stops working to watch her teacher.

Teacher: Should the legs be the same or different lengths?

Missy responds by pointing to the shorter coils. She is carefully watching her teacher handle the clay so that she may mirror her use in order to learn the physical properties of clay while successfully constructing a cat. Her teacher inserts dialogue to reflect what she thinks she might be questioning about the process.

Missy reworks hers to make them all the same length. The process of constructing an animal with clay is providing her a map of her abilities with clay to contrast with her thoughts about the structure of a cat. When she finished the cat she was able to make another one by herself while explaining the process to some interested peers.

Thoughts On The Clay Interactions

The data shows that the clay supports the children's thinking about animals and the features of their homes (barns or fences) or needs (food or physical attributes). The idea of *fitting it in* did not carry over into this exercise. You can see that the demonstration and the material encouraged children to merge their developing understanding of the properties of clay with a diverse body of ideas about animals attributes (seals columnar proportions, cats leg lengths) and structures (flat driveways, barns with floors and doors). With more clay opportunities and ongoing dialogue of emerging ideas we can generate more in-depth dialogues that may lead to investigations with other materials. In this classroom the children continued to build farms as well as zoos. As their structures expanded they began to discuss the organization of these environments, how they functioned for the animals and the roles of the caretakers. These details go beyond the scope of this article, which focus on introducing and initiating interactions with materials as discourse. The next example of a one-on-one teacher-child interaction reveals the way that a dialogue can help the teacher understand what the child is thinking.

DRAWING A HERMIT CRAB: BACKGROUND

Initially the children in this 2 / 3 year-old classroom were talking a lot about their pet hermit crab during a number of circle time discussions. The teachers wanted to learn more about what the children knew about hermit crabs so they invited the children to draw what they saw when looking at the hermit crab in his large fish tank. It is important to note that these teachers, who I will refer to as teacher apprentices, were new to the idea of using drawing as a means of learning what children think. They didn't really think that these young children had the skill to draw a hermit crab successfully and were entering this experience based on their trust in my suggestion that it would help them. In the dialogue I will refer to myself as "Teacher."

The teacher apprentices set up the fish tank on a low table where children could have a surface to draw on while looking at the hermit crab. I was visiting the classroom on this particular

morning and heard the invitation of the teacher apprentices, "Can you draw the hermit crab and tell us what you know about him?" A number of children went to the table and talked a bit about the hermit crab. Here they seemed to be responding to the request to "tell what they know."

Cathy: He's not crawling.

Pat: Sometimes he goes so fast.

Liam: He's hiding. He likes to hide in here (points to a log)

Mary: Sometimes he is prickly.

Cathy: And scary.

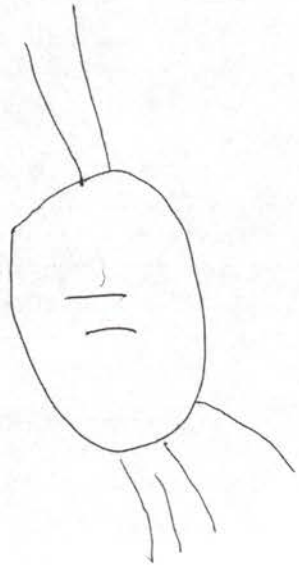
Teacher Apprentice: Can you draw him?

The children begin to draw but they seem to be making random marks unrelated to ideas about the hermit crab. The teacher apprentices really think that the children don't have the ability to draw something so complex. I disagree. I think that in this instance, their question is not related to what the children are talking about and it seems a complex idea for the children when the hermit crab isn't visible. A child eventually asks if he can take the hermit crab out. This makes a lot of sense. He wants to see it in order to draw it.

The Drawing Dialogue

Still, the children seem to be making random marks on their papers. I think it is time to insert an idea that can serve as a catalyst. I take a piece of paper and put it near another child's paper and I take a pencil in my hand. I am joining into the activity as a cohort.

Teacher: If I were going to draw a hermit crab I think I'd start by drawing the body. I draw a circle on my paper. Mary imitates me. This tells me that she is already learning about drawing. I place my pencil at the edge of this circle and say the following.



Picture 9: The teacher says, "If I were going to draw a hermit crab, I think I'd start by drawing the body."

Teacher: I may want to draw the legs next.

Picture 10: Mary draws four legs on her hermit crab and two eye ringers.

Before I can say, "legs next" Mary has drawn a complete leg on her paper that extends out from the circle she has made. She continues to make four more lines that almost touch the circular body. I draw four lines imitating her lines. Liam and Mason are now looking on.

Liam: What about the eye ringers? When you crawl you have eye ringers.

Mason squints and Mary draws two more lines that extend vertically up from the body. These are placed in relation to the crab's extending antennae that the children are confusing with eyes. I draw two lines opposite the four legs on my crab to imitate Mary's process and Liam gets a book on hermit crabs, opens to a page and points to the antanae.

Liam: See, eye ringers.

Teacher: They help him to cry?

She heard him talk about crawling and associating the antennae with the crawling and seeing functions so she added a word specific to eyes to challenge his thinking.

Liam: Crawl.

He is clearly associating the antennae with crawling, perhaps as a support. This is an idea that can be further explored in many ways with many possible materials. Wondering how a crawling support can also see is intriguing. While sitting here drawing I think about another drawing session in the future to revisit Mary's pictures and encourage other children to tell us how the eye ringers work. They may need to draw and act out a lot of thinking to discuss that idea. They may even choose other types of materials to support their thinking. Meanwhile, Mary has continued to draw. She made a second picture and tells me about it.

Picture 11: The lines representing legs on Mary's second drawing of a hermit crab do not touch the circle, which represents the body.

Mary: These are the legs.

The lines she points to are not attached to the circle she drew.

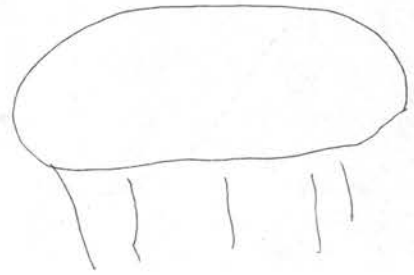
Mary: This is the house.

She is pointing to the smaller circle. (see picture 10). I wonder if she is thinking about the crab shell as a house or the aquarium.

Teacher: Can you make the legs touch the body?

Mary scribbles over the picture. I clearly asked the wrong question. I take a new piece of paper and I draw an oblong shape and as I attach the leg lines to its bottom I talk to Mary. She appears highly motivated as she continues to watch my next step.

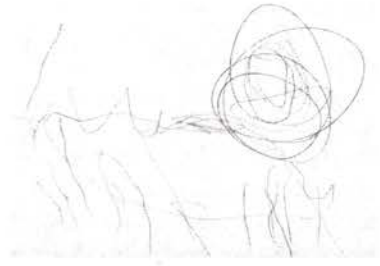
Teacher: In the other picture your legs touched the body.



Picture 12: The teacher draws hermit crab with legs touching the body.

Mary draws a new picture with legs touching the body.

Teacher: Does the crab live in its house?



Picture 13: Mary redraws the hermit crab so her legs touch its body along the bottom.

Mary: Yes.

I point to the small circle in the previous drawing.

Teacher: I see that this house is over here and it doesn't show me that the crab lives in it. Can you show me how the crab lives in its house?

Mary draws a circle around the first crab she drew (see picture 10). It is clear that she is thinking about a house that is more along the lines of the fish tank than the crab shell.

Thoughts On The Drawing Dialogue

The data reveals that Mary does have drawing skills and that directed dialogue can serve as a provocation for her to develop those skills. In the process the dialogue functions as a vehicle for developing other children's ideas, which are related to the purpose of the antennae in this situation. The whole experience portrays children as researchers who know the importance of investigating real data ("bring the real crab out for us to see it") and researching new sources of information (seeking out a book on hermit crabs) in the process of trying to communicate what they know. We see that their knowledge is not static, but developing along a continuum.

Conclusion

These two examples represent the beginnings of conversations that may lead children and teachers in a number of possible directions over time. The goal of this article was to provide information about initiating conversations with children involving the presentation of materials or skills with materials in the context of discourse. This discussion reflects the importance of treating interactions with materials as extended dialogues where spoken thoughts can influence the manipulation of the material and vice versa. When considering children's material explorations as dynamic conversations, teachers can begin to discover ways to enter into the dialogue as a cohort. In this way they share information that may lead to skill building and idea development.

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Does Administrative Organization Affect Teachers' Classroom Practice? An Observation of Two Preschool Classrooms.[1]

Chanel Kit-Ho Fung

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Abstract

This article describes an exploration of two preschool classrooms. The author uses pseudonyms for the centres, children and teachers involved. It suggests that not every early childhood program provides teachers with the working conditions and children with the learning environment in which child-centred and playful learning was respected and valued. Systemic constraints (requirements imposed by the organizational system) were the focus of the teachers' attention. Only in cases where the administration was supportive and the teacher adhered to a principle of "flexibility" that systemic constraints could be overcome so that a child-centred and developmentally appropriate program could be sustained.

Introduction

It is 9:40 a.m.

Nothing is on the three round tables. ***Dora*** *(a preschool teacher) is on her break. Cindy (another teacher) is stapling children's work on the bulletin board at the back of the classroom. Nancy (the third teacher), who came in early, is reorganizing the document file at the children's "free creative" table. A light blue vinyl tablecloth and a green vinyl tablecloth are covering the "free creative" trolley, burying the materials underneath. The glue and painting table is not set up. The puzzle table is empty as well.*

I realized that certain policies and administrative arrangements provided the teachers with an informal and invisible script, which determined how they ran their programs.

Linda *(a preschool teacher) and six children are rolling and moulding plasticine at the table. As children are busy rolling, Linda gives them scissors to develop their fine-motor and eye-hand co-ordination. Children love snipping their string of plasticine. Andrew (a three-year-old boy) cuts his up into small pieces. Feeling proud of himself, he shows Linda his pieces.*

Andrew*: Look, Linda! I did it.*

Linda: You did it! Do you want to cut a piece of paper?

Andrew nods his head.

Linda takes out a piece of scrap paper from the colouring shelf and hands it to Andrew. Andrew starts cutting it.

These are two of the many situations I observed in two preschool classrooms. Dora is a preschool teacher in the Advanced Child Care Centre, whereas Linda works in the nursery/preschool of the Marvelous Child Care Program. The above observations reveal interesting but contrasting pictures of the learning environment and atmosphere in the two classrooms. Dora and her two co-workers appeared very busy with various classroom duties. They were so occupied with classroom business that they did not seem to have noticed the classroom was not properly set up for their children. Linda, in contrast, was able to engage in children's activities, interacting with them, as well as observing, supplying, enhancing and extending their play.

In my discussions with the two teachers, I realized that certain policies and administrative arrangements provided the teachers with an informal and invisible script, which determined how they ran their programs. Differences in working conditions accounted for the systemic constraints imposed on Dora's daily work and the structural support provided for Linda's teaching practice.

[1] The research on which this article is based was conducted as part of a Masters of Education research project under the supervision of Professor Carol Anne Wien, Faculty of Education, York University, Toronto. Visits to the classrooms and interviews with teacher participants were the principal data-gathering strategies. Observations were noted and interviews were transcribed. Each participant was then given a copy of the field notes on her classroom and her own interview transcripts. Subsequent discussion meetings were held to elicit the teachers' responses, feedback, comments, reflections, and clarification, and to control observational bias.

DORA - THE ADVANCED CHILD CARE CENTRE

Dora is a qualified early childhood educator, who possesses a bachelor degree in English and a diploma in Early Childhood Education. For the past twelve years, she has been working as a preschool teacher at the Advanced Child Care Centre. The centre is housed in a church building and runs programs for children from eighteen months to 8 years. Most of the children in the centre come from middle and lower-middle-class families, and the Advanced Child Care Centre is their first child care centre.

While Dora herself is a Caucasian with English as her first language, the twenty-four preschoolers in her class are, for the most part, ESL students (English is their second language). They come from a variety of racial groups and have diverse ethnic backgrounds. A large proportion of the class came from Hong Kong and China; Cantonese or Mandarin is their first language.

Dora is very creative, resourceful, and economical. She has the ability to convert environmental "junk" into educational "treasures" (props and materials for the children). She is very fond of music too. She enjoys composing simple songs with catchy words to encourage a playful learning climate in her room and to facilitate both her teaching and the children's learning. Dora and her co-workers are a team. They share tasks and take turns designing activities for each learning centre. The learning centres in her classroom include arts and crafts, the dramatic centre, the cognitive play table, floor construction, the sensory area (with water, sand and playdough), and a reading corner. Activities for each learning centre change daily. Dora appreciates the support of her team members, noting that their combined efforts guarantee a rich coverage of every developmental area in the curriculum:

There are so many different areas of development to address, ... when you work as a team and take turn, ... it makes it easier for you.

Working Conditions in Dora's Program

Dora and her two co-workers take shifts. Dora works the earlier shift, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., and is thus responsible for the general set-up of her classroom in the morning. Arranging her room means more than simply putting toys on tables. Since every piece of furniture, large and small, has been pushed against the walls by the caretaker the previous night, getting the room ready for the morning involves moving all the furniture into place, as well as setting up the learning centres. This major task often takes more than the fifteen minutes assigned to the job. Before Dora can finish this "first classroom duty", she must hurry to the gymnasium to supervise the morning family grouping. As a result, the classroom set-up is usually incomplete. For two of my three visits, all three big, round tables in the classroom were left empty and the dramatic centre was only partly ready for the children.

Gestwicki (1995), stresses that a large uninterrupted block of time should be assigned to free play if developmentally appropriate practice is the goal.

Sharing Playground

As the day progresses, Dora must confront another situational barrier: *"working with other classes, ... sharing the outdoor time."* The Advanced Child Care Centre has three full-day classes — toddler, preschool, and JK/SK — and one half-day class for grade school children, but there is just one small playground. The playground is not big enough to hold more than one class at a time. Each class has access to the playground only for the specific period assigned to it. If children are five minutes late reaching the playground, they lose five minutes of playground time. These constraints worry Dora. She noted, during our second discussion, that she wanted *"to promote outdoor play to compensate for children's lack of outdoor activities owing to the weather and parents' doubts about outdoor safety."*

To make the most of the playground time that was reserved for her class, Dora has to conclude the preceding free play on time or even earlier to get the children ready for the outdoors. Free play becomes dispensable. The time for children's self-chosen and self-initiated activities is shortened. The time remaining for play is only thirty minutes, which is not enough for children to plan and carry out their play, become thoroughly engrossed in it, and then reflect on their activities. Gestwicki (1995), stresses that a large uninterrupted block of time should be assigned to free play if developmentally appropriate practice is the goal.

Small Group

The situation is further complicated by the centre's policy, that "*small group*" teaching is compulsory in the morning program. The centre's supervisor values the teacher-directed learning that takes place during *small group* time. *Small group* is a program priority. It further limits Dora's flexibility in terms of scheduling.

Dora's class is divided into three small groups according to the children's age, with one teacher in charge of each group of eight children. Dora admitted in our discussion that she enjoys *small group* because the "intimacy" with children in a small group allows her to learn more about them cognitively and socially. The pressure of conducting *small group* at a specific time, however, hampers her freedom to run a developmentally appropriate program that is responsive to each child's unique developmental needs and interests. Wien (1996) states " time as a rigid production schedule was taken for granted by teachers, opportunities for developmentally appropriate practice were obstructed" (p.377).

When asked whether there would be a suitable time slot for *small group*, Dora did not see any possibilities. She indicated clearly the difficulties in finding an alternative time block for *small group*:

...there are times during the day when the centre is understaffed. ... In the morning, not all teachers come to work at the same time, some come after 9:30 a.m., ...in the afternoon, some teachers leave at 3:30 p.m.. To sustain the teacher-child ratio in each class during these periods, teachers will be pulled out from one class to cover the other, especially the class that is having outdoor time in the playground. Without sufficient teachers to handle small groups, Small Group becomes impossible in any other time blocks in the schedule.

The Teacher's Working Shift

In addition to the fact that the centre is understaffed during certain periods, there are incompatibilities between the teacher's working shift and the program schedule. Provision of a well-prepared learning environment for the children, thus, is very difficult to achieve.

Dora's classroom has well-defined learning centres, which the teachers take turns setting up. Dora works the earlier shift and is responsible for the basic set-up in the room, that is, she moves out the furniture that is pushed against the wall by the caretaker the night before. Her co-workers, who come to work at 9:30 a.m. and 9:45 a.m., set up most of the other learning centres. No one seems to have realized that the teachers' staggered hours have serious repercussions for the children.

I observed that, even when the 9:30-shift teacher was on time, she was not always able to set up the learning centre(s) right away. She was usually occupied by other classroom duties or borrowed to ensure the teacher-child ratio in the playground. The set-up was then unfinished. Both tables of the art and craft centre (the one for gluing and painting and the one for free creative work) and the sensory area were empty. On one of my three visits, the gluing and painting table was not set up until half-way through free play time, and on two visits, the free creative table was not open to children at all, and a table cloth covered the art trolley. As a result, art and creative activities were entirely absent for the morning. Although Dora stressed that the children were not prohibited from taking things from the trolley even when it was buried under a table cloth, there were hardly any suggestions of this possibility. Instead, the children were told by their senses that the area was closed.

Teachers may mistakenly think that self-reliant play and self-chosen activities allow children to play freely and require less adult supervision, but, by not participating in the children's play and activities, they miss many opportunities to teach.

Without a complete set up at activity time or sufficient play objects and learning activities to choose from, the children are limited to the few choices available. Fighting over toys and materials becomes more likely and learning less likely. Catron and Allen (1993) suggest, "*a classroom that is well-designed and well-organized can eliminate or reduce management problems and suggest to children appropriate behaviours and use of the environment*" (p.67).

The Teachers' Involvement in Children's Activities

During my visits, teachers in the classroom appeared occupied by another agenda most of the time - checking attendance, finishing paper work, and answering phone calls. I also noticed that the teachers kept walking in and out of the classroom, looking very busy. On one occasion, Dora and her two co-workers walked out of the classroom without noticing that they had left the children unattended. They were seldom seen engaged in the children's activities. Without a teacher's encouragement to behave in a socially desirable fashion and reinforcement of such behaviour, children followed their inclinations, not realizing that they were hurting their peers emotionally and physically (Hendrick, 1990, 1994; Marion, 1991; Wood & Attfield, 1996). Under these circumstances, mediation and conflict resolution were urgently required. It is no wonder that mediation was observed to be the dominant form of teacher interaction between Dora and the children.

The lack of teacher involvement in children's activities is a consequence of the lack of administrative support for teachers' daily work. I was told in the final discussion that teachers at the centre are given merely two hours preparation time once a month for program planning. No extra time is given to teachers to handle other classroom matters. Teachers use every spare moment during their working day to deal with all the miscellaneous classroom duties. When children are engaged in self-reliant play and self-chosen activities, the teachers view the time as "a spare period in which to accomplish teacher tasks" (Wien, 1995, p.37). Teachers may mistakenly think that self-reliant play and self-chosen activities allow children to play freely and require less adult supervision, but, by not participating in the children's play and activities, they miss many opportunities to teach. The developmental appropriateness of the program was profoundly weakened by the neglect of the children's learning activities. There is an urgent need for the administrative board of the centre to review and revise the overall structure of the program in order to grant teachers enough support to fulfil their commitments to their children, their program, and their profession.

Brainstorming

Dora's preoccupations do not only limit her involvement in the children's activities, they also restrict her opportunities to observe the children's activities. Observation of children's activities is a widely accepted means of documenting children's learning processes and progress (NAEYC, 1990; Williams, 1997). With developmental clues gained from ongoing observations, teachers know what materials to select, what activities to program, and what extensions to make on existing play provisions so as to match children's current developmental characteristics and to scaffold their learning of the next-step.

In one of our discussions, Dora admitted that she rarely observes the children during activities. When planning activities for her children, Dora said she *"brainstorms"*.

I sit down to plan. I often make what I call "a flow chart". We have the theme, and then you make different columns, you have your creative, your science, sensory, cooking, whatever, and then you brainstorm what children should learn, and often what I like about that is that ... when I come to plan, then I can take these ideas, and they each expand upon one another a lot of times.

Dora has an awareness of the need to nurture the "whole child". She plans activities to encourage her children's creativity, sensory stimulation, scientific exploration and cooking experiences. The term "brainstorm" Dora used, however, suggests that her plans for learning activities were designed on the basis of her views on what children should learn rather than on the basis of regular observations. Shipley (1993) cautions that unplanned, randomly selected activities that are not based on observations of children's ability levels and needs, merely keep children busy and do not stimulate learning possibilities for a higher level of growth.

Observation of children's activities is a widely accepted means of documenting children's learning processes and progress (NAEYC, 1990; Williams, 1997).

Observation is recognized as an effective tool to inform teachers of children's development, interests, learning processes and progress, and to supply direction for the program and the curriculum goals (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; Gestwicki, 1995; Kostelnik, Soderman & Whiren, 1993). Bennet, Wood and Rogers (1996) remark that observation is especially important in children's activities:

"Observation is a central aspect of the teachers' role ... which allows them to interpret children's play behaviour, continuously adding to and building upon their picture of the "whole child". It provides a "window into the child's mind" and allows teachers to try to understand "what is going on inside the heads"" (p.38).

Time, policy and administrative arrangements appear to be the main systemic constraints on Dora's program. They complicate the teaching and learning environment in Dora's class, adversely influencing her classroom practice.

Shipley (1993) cautions that unplanned, randomly selected activities that are not based on observations of children's ability levels and needs, merely keep children busy and do not stimulate learning possibilities for a higher level of growth.

These pressing systemic constraints divert Dora's attention and compromise her ability to provide a developmentally appropriate program by making the first priority, the maintenance of the routine. These constraints discourage her from acting on her theoretical beliefs regarding the way in which learning activities should be offered for the well-being of her preschoolers. The necessity to keep to the rigid schedule and to implement certain compulsory events seems to have left Dora, as well as her colleagues, without much room to manoeuvre. Working conditions, rather than the children's interests, needs, or well-being, are the influential factors that shape Dora's classroom experience.

Wien (1995, 1996) notes that multiple constraints force teachers to function as *"time-keepers"*, organizing their time as if it were a production schedule, which undermines the construction of developmentally appropriate programs. Systemic constraints certainly seem to have determined the course of Dora's program. Structural limitations and rigidity kept Dora from questioning the developmental appropriateness of her role as *"time-keeper"*. She took it for granted. Her belief in and commitment to a child-based program was lost.

In contrast to Dora's preschool program, Linda's nursery/preschool program takes place in the environment that is created when a teacher is given freedom and flexibility.

LINDA - THE MARVELOUS CHILD CARE CENTRE

Linda received her Early Childhood Education Diploma nine years ago and has been working as an early childhood educator ever since. She came to the Marvelous Child Care Program in 1996. The Marvelous Child Care Program is located inside an elementary school. It offers four types of programs – nursery, preschool, JK/SK, and school-age - on either a full-day or a half-day basis. Most of the children enrolled in the pro-

grams come from middle-class to lower-middle-class families, and about 10% of the children receive subsidies. Most had never been to a child-care program before they came to Marvelous.

In the Marvelous Child Care Program, Linda works full-time with nursery and preschool children. There are eighteen children in her class. While Linda is a Caucasian with an Eastern-European background and English as her first language, twelve of her eighteen preschoolers have a Chinese background, with either Cantonese or Mandarin as their first language. In order to communicate with the children and their families, Linda attended Cantonese classes to learn the language.

Linda is very affectionate and approachable. She loves working with young children, and children love to be with her and to have her around when they are playing. Linda always comes to work early and stays late to spend time with the children. She works in close collaboration with another preschool teacher. They jointly plan activities for each week, share information about their children, and consult each other when purchasing teaching resources and learning materials.

Working Conditions in Linda's Program

Linda is better situated than Dora because she enjoys structural conveniences in her program that support her construction of a child-centred and developmentally appropriate program. Housed in a school building, Linda's class has a spacious classroom with learning centres of different kinds, including a book corner, a house centre, a toy table, a block centre, a sensory play area, two cognitive tables, and an art and creative play centre. A child's washroom was installed across the hallway several years ago to facilitate washroom supervision. Linda is able to supervise children in the washroom without leaving the classroom. Linda is assisted by another teacher, whenever additional adult assistance is needed in the washroom, This teacher also works as a "floater" (Tracey, 1991) in the morning and runs a part-time, after-school program. This teacher is the "walker" for other teachers, getting them additional supplies. She also supervises the preschool classroom when Linda needs to answer phone calls from parents or make photocopies for the program. Adjacent to Linda's class is the kitchen, where Linda is able to prepare snacks and lunch before the food is moved into the classroom. In addition to these facilities, Linda has access to an indoor gymnasium and two outdoor playgrounds: the big playground is for children in the nursery, preschool and JK/SK programs, and the small one is for school-age children. Two classes can play in the big playground without any crowding. Thus, Linda need not rush her children to go outside for playground time or worry about losing precious minutes of outdoor play if the children are late. She lets the children take their time getting ready. In addition, Linda and the other teaching staff in the centre, unlike Dora, are given two hours of preparation time every week. During these two hours, Linda can leave her classroom and focus exclusively on designing daily learning activities for the days ahead and completing her program-related work. This arrangement allows Linda to participate in children's activities during classroom time without being distracted by paper work. Wood and Attfield (1996) recognize that the more contact a teacher has with children in their activities, the more likely she will get to know her children, and the more capable she will become of tailoring a child-centred program for her class's developmental level and growth.

Due to their contrasting working conditions, Dora and Linda handle their program schedule differently. While Dora tends to follow the schedule strictly, Linda accommodates the children's engagement in learning activities. These two approaches to scheduling have an impact on the quality of children's learning and their learning experience.

The Principle of Flexibility

Like Dora, Linda has a program schedule for her class, which organizes the morning and assigns a time frame for each activity. Apart from certain fixed events, such as the music program on Thursdays (a music teacher was hired exclusively to design music lessons for children once a week), Linda lets the children determine the free play time frame according to their involvement and participation in activities. During my visits, she never attempted to rush children through their activities, nor did she start and stop each activity in strict accordance with the schedule. However, she did try not to deviate too widely from the schedule. Linda asserted that schedules and routines are important because they give children a sense of how their day is organized, but that too much structure can have the detrimental effect of limiting the children's activities. In our first discussion, she noted:

... Children need a bit structure. ... Schedule gives them a sense of what's going to happen. ... Schedule should not dominate how daily events flow, but guide ... Sometimes, we change the schedule in order to make a comfortable, not stressful environment for children. We don't want to rush children. ... We change it according to what happens on that day, but not the overall organization.

... [We] are quite flexible. We don't keep rigid time, and we try to work in the same routines around the same time. But if it doesn't work out,... we are not strict, we would rather not make it an army type, ... very rigid.

Throughout my visits, Linda demonstrated, in different circumstances, her principle of flexibility, which worked to the benefit of her children. An example is her rearrangement of the timing of the morning circle. Morning circle used to be the first activity of the day. It is the

time when Linda greets children, sings songs with them, reads stories, introduces vital concepts related to the weekly theme, initiates simple discussions on the topic they are currently exploring, and explains the morning set-ups. Linda believes that this time, when teachers and children are gathered in a circle, is so valuable and beneficial that all of the children should be included. To accommodate the needs of children who arrived late and consequently missed circle time, Linda modified the schedule and shifted the morning circle to a later time – a fifteen-minute time period between snack time and outdoor play:

We normally like to have the circle before the activities, but we find that lots of kids come in later, ... I find they would miss the whole idea ... so we rearrange our circle time to be later so those children can take advantage of it as opposed to having it as the first thing in the morning and half the children aren't there, so we try, ... and ... we feel that the group time is important, too. ...because it gets them to know each other, to work together.

Flexibility seems to be Linda's rule of thumb when working with a schedule. Hendrick (1990) maintains that:

Schedule[s] can be a blessing if they are used to help children and teachers know what comes next and to contribute to the feeling of security that such knowledge produces. Or they can be a burden if they are allowed to dominate the day in a rigid, minute-by-minute fashion that ignores children's needs and prevents teachers from exercising good judgement. A well-designed schedule not only provides for orderly planning, but it also allows for flexibility so that time periods can be extended or contracted depending on whether the children are deeply occupied or particularly restless. (p.44)

The support Linda receives from the administration of the centre and the freedom she enjoys to make minor adjustments to the schedule allows her to run a child-centred and developmentally appropriate program in her class. Administrative support for the daily program operation elicits a different type of teacher involvement in children's activities, as seen in Linda's classroom.

Teacher Participation and Continuous Enrichment of Activities

Situated in a more supportive working environment, Linda was able to become involved in the children's activities as a playmate and a facilitator. She has found that involvement in children's activities benefits her program planning.

Linda did not only observe, she also responded to her observation.

When Linda plans activities to build upon the children's current strengths and abilities, she always anticipates the next stage in their development. Her involvement in the children's activities provides her with the opportunity to know her children's readiness, so she is able to design an activity extension to scaffold the children's learning. Linda is determined to help children reap the maximum benefit from learning experiences; she is aware that:

... with extensions ... children are not just taking in one thing, ... they are learning a lot [of] different things because you have expanded on the activity.

The interaction between Linda and Andrew observed during one of my visits (and reproduced at the beginning of the article) was the result of an activity extension that Linda initiated one morning. It occurred during a sensory activity. Catching Andrew's excitement working with scissors, Linda made a suggestion, which added to the complexity of the activity – cutting paper with scissors. In another discussion, Linda remarked that cutting paper is an extension of cutting plasticine and advances children's fine motor skills:

... that's just enhancing the program, ...like adding to it, ... extending it... May be it's a bit more difficult cutting with paper because it is more flimsy ...

The activity extensions Linda suggests to her children do not exceed the children's current capabilities or lie outside the children's zone of proximal development. They include elements of skills that are familiar to them; while, at the same time, present challenges intended to help the children refine their fine motor skills. Kostelnik, Soderman, and Whiren (1993) caution that children feel secure and confident with the known rather than the unknown. Too much challenge may lead to distress and inhibit learning.

Johnson, Christie, and Yawkey (1987), Berk and Winsler (1995) and Bredekamp and Copple (1997) also maintain that appropriate intervention in children's learning activities is crucial to stimulate overall development, promote learning, consolidate skills, and integrate new skills. Such intervention can only be achieved as a result of a certain degree of teacher involvement in children's activities. Teachers must have a reliable source of information to determine the levels of skill exhibited in different learning centres. The information thus gathered inspires activity extensions and future planning, scaffolding the children's progression.

Teacher Involvement: Inviting The Children's Participation

Besides extending children's activity to enrich their learning, Linda uses her involvement in activities to encourage participation. She regards this as another learning opportunity. The following example demonstrates how Linda used her position as a central figure to introduce a child to activities and bring him into group play experiences.

Calvin was enrolled in Linda's morning

program as a part time student and attended three mornings a week. He had difficulty playing in a group. He repeatedly asked for his grandmother and played by himself most of the time. Yet he liked to be with Linda and was very attached to her. Linda realized that she needed to divert his attention from his grandmother to the activities in the room. She constantly redirected his attention by offering him suggestions and inviting him to join activities:

Calvin, would you like to draw a picture? ... Would you like to do a puzzle?

Making suggestions was an intervention strategy Linda used to redirect Calvin's attention from his grandmother. She was aware that Calvin became so focused on waiting for his grandmother to come to pick him up that he overlooked the alternatives that were open to him. Suggesting activities that would replace idleness and unproductive waiting for grandmother encouraged Calvin to play. Linda noted that a teacher should:

... let children know ... give them opportunities ... tell them what's available there or what they can do with ...

Linda also tactfully exposed Calvin to group play experiences. She did not push Calvin to be with other children; instead, she skilfully drew other children into her play with Calvin. She described her strategy in one of our discussions:

Calvin is not a child who would go towards a large group of children. So sometimes, if he plays with me, I would use myself as a magnet to attract others to come and join in, ... and then if other children come, then that's one way of getting Calvin to go into the group. Because he knows I am there, and it starts out with just him, and me and then the other children come to him as opposed to him going to a group ... he might be more willing. Otherwise, I think that's very difficult for him.

Linda knows her children very well. Through her involvement in their play and activities, she has learned how to direct a child into a play context and how to be supportive, but not intrusive, with a child who has not yet mastered play with his peers.

Developmentally appropriate activity extension and fruitful intervention strategies put teachers in the position of a facilitating guide rather than a domineering disciplinarian (Jones & Reynolds, 1992). These practices emerge when teachers are given the time and support to participate in and observe children in their learning activities.

Observation and Responsiveness

Linda's active involvement in her children's activities allowed her to observe them closely. The insights she gathered informed her activity programming. In sum, Linda did not only observe, she also responded to her observation. Both the initial activities she set up and the carefully considered activity extensions she introduced illustrate the effects of her observations.

Observation is an ongoing event in Linda's class. Linda sees observation as her closest partner in programming. In our second meeting, she noted that observation is important for authentic assessment. It gives her focus and direction for future planning:

Though she writes up a program plan every week outlining future learning experiences, her plan functions only as a reference for adults – teachers and parents. It does not dictate how the program will, in fact, run.

Observation gets you more focused on each child's need. It helps you learn their needs, and their skills, and it helps you to program better. It also helps you when you are relating to the parents.

For Linda, observation is particularly satisfying when it leads her to introduce changes that work out promisingly for children and for the program. Linda practises two kinds of observation – formal and informal – in her class. Formal observation is the basis of written documents given to parents annually in the format of checklists. Informal observation is the daily observation of the children, which occurs as she walks around the classroom, paying attention to children's interaction, listening to their conversations, collecting developmental cues, and envisaging possible changes to better the curriculum.

The following example is evidence of Linda's continuous observation and the modifications and extensions it engenders. When she picks up something, Linda tries to respond without delay.

During my first visit, I made the following observation:

The cognitive table is set up with puzzles, teddy bear sorting games, and wooden pegs with a red vinyl peg board ... Tommy puts the wooden pegs into see-through containers. He has two containers filled up with pegs, and both have their lids on. He looks very proud of his containers of pegs, carries them wherever he goes, and shows them to Mrs. Kelly (another teacher).

This observation is very similar to one I made in the second visit a week later:

Linda sets up one of the tables with a bin of colourful plastic cubes, plastic see-through containers with lids of different sizes and shapes, and various scooping utensils, including slotted spoons, tablespoons, and Chinese soup spoons. Emily, Tommy, Kevin, Eunice, Candice, and Wilson are standing around the bin, busily scooping and filling up their containers with the plastic cubes.

... systemic constraints and structural considerations play a significant part in determining the quality of children's learning in the classroom.

Curious to know whether this was specially designed for some children (such as Tommy), I mentioned it during our discussion later that day. Linda told me that the idea for the activity was sparked by a scene she observed when she walked in the classroom that morning:

Yesterday, we had the water table, with plastic cubes, jars and cups. ... Last night, teachers washed them and put them on top of the sand table to dry. When I came in this morning, I saw a whole group of kids gathered around the sand table; ... they were pouring the plastic cubes from one cup to the other. So I thought, "Why don't I just put them on the table?" ... So instead of putting out the construction materials on the table, as was initially planned for the morning, I put out the bucket of plastic cubes and cups, ...which is something spontaneous that I just did this morning.

Linda is not bound by a prescribed curriculum, so she is able to respond instantly to the children's emergent interests. Though she writes up a program plan every week outlining future learning experiences, her plan functions only as a reference for adults – teachers and parents. It does not dictate how the program will, in fact, run. The activities that were planned and prepared may be replaced by activities emerging from, and in response to, the children's interests, ideas and curiosities. Linda planned and then "*let go*".

Observation is the guiding force of Linda's programming. The children's play and learning experiences govern the content of her program. Gestwicki (1995) states that teachers plan but should know "*when to depart from the plan for spur-of-the-moment teaching to respond to the direction of the children's activities*" (p.25).

My observation of Dora's and Linda's programs has led me to conclude that systemic constraints and structural considerations play a significant part in determining the quality of children's learning in the classroom. Children engaged in a variety of learning activities in both programs, but because of differences in outside circumstances, their learning experiences were dissimilar.

Final Thoughts

Time as a Major Constraint Controlling Classroom Practice

Time is a fundamental feature of a program based on a sequence of daily activities, routines, transitions, fixed events, free play, and learning time (Hendrick, 1990). A schedule is the teacher's guide to the organization of the children's day. A stable and predictable schedule communicates a sense of order and security to children.

However, this predictability was overrated in Dora's program. She was directed to follow the schedule strictly, even at the expense of the children's play and meaningful learning experiences. The schedule dictated her program, and nobody inquired whether this would be to the children's disadvantage. This situation is very similar to the one Wien (1995) encountered with her teacher participant Sonia; Wien commented that "*in face of the multiple agenda competing for her attention, play, in spite of its apparent value to her, was simply the least prioritized*" (Wien, 1995, p.41).

Time is the most precious resource in a program. Often, too many activities are scheduled for a period of a few hours. Adults try very hard to organize the children's time neatly, hoping that every minute will be fully utilized to promote learning and growth. This state of affairs leads, however, to the over-organization of children's time. The schedule becomes very rigid, giving teachers no flexibility in order to respond to children's emergent needs. Rather than promoting the well-being of children, the schedule can work against it. A much-needed examination of the developmental appropriateness of Dora's schedule should be undertaken. A more flexible schedule could enhance the quality of the children's play and learning in classroom, and make teachers' jobs less stressful.

Wien commented that "in face of the multiple agenda competing for her attention, play, in spite of its apparent value to her, was simply the least prioritized"

A Supportive Teaching and Learning Environment: A Promise for Children, Teachers & Program

Linda is lucky: she works in a very supportive teaching and learning environment, which eliminates many of the systemic constraints which might, otherwise, diminish the quality of children's play. Linda's program illustrates how a supportive environment encourages a teacher to implement a developmentally appropriate program, even though Linda's personal commitment to a developmentally appropriate program was also very evident during my visits.

Instead of being forced to adhere rigidly to the prescribed program schedule, Linda was authorized to modify the flow of activity when necessary – lengthening the duration for free play according to the children's involvement and shifting

Rather than promoting the well-being of children, the schedule can work against it.

activity blocks to accommodate the children's needs. Due to a supportive administration that arranged surplus staffing to give teachers extra help and ensured generous preparation time, Linda was encouraged to join in the children's activities. Thus, Linda had invaluable opportunities to observe her children, search for insights into their interests and needs, and enrich her knowledge of the children in her class. She could, therefore, create activity extensions that consolidate children's skills, advance their developmental growth, scaffold their learning, and offer useful suggestions.

Linda knows very well when to step in and when to refrain from interfering in order to encourage children to take the lead in their play. Linda's commitment to a child-centred, developmentally appropriate program is significant, and she possesses the right attitudes and practical experience to realize her commitment. The broader environmental circumstances (such as the centre's policies and the teaching/learning context) that supported her and her teaching were no less important. It is extremely rewarding to see how the children in Linda's program enjoy playing and learning – activities that they feel are wholly within their control.

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The Disposition to Document: Portraits of Practice

Laurie Kocher

Laurie Kocher has been a kindergarten teacher in British Columbia for over twenty years. Her doctoral research takes a close look at the process of change experienced by a cluster of teachers, profoundly influenced by the principles of the Reggio Emilia Approach, particularly in the area of documentation. Ms. Kocher will join the Institute for Early Childhood Education and Research team at UBC (Vancouver) in September, 2004.

Abstract

With inspiration from the early childhood institutions in Reggio Emilia, in northern Italy, many educators around the world have begun to use pedagogical documentation as a tool for reflecting on their pedagogical practice. This article briefly summarizes a research project that has explored the process of change experienced by three teacher-researchers. Each teacher is a master at the art of documentation, which they have developed in a way that is culturally relevant for their own community. The systematic documentation process has allowed each teacher to become a producer of research, and one who exams her own development as a reflective teacher. A form of descriptive narrative, known as *portraiture*, has been used as the framework for this study. Parallels are drawn between phenomenology, as described by Max van Manen, and the experience of these teachers as documenters.

Introduction

This study, undertaken as a PhD research project at the University of Southern Queensland (Australia), has explored the process of change experienced by three teacher-researchers who have employed the practice of *pedagogical documentation*, inspired by the Reggio Emilia Approach to early childhood education.

Pedagogical documentation is a way of making visible the otherwise invisible learning processes by which children and teachers work in early childhood centres and schools. It may include anecdotal observations, children's works, photographs that illustrate a process, audio and video tape recordings, and children's voiced ideas. A significant component is the teachers' reflective text, which is an integral part of the documentation. Most importantly, documentation provides a focus for concrete and meaningful adult and child reflection on children's learning processes.

... the very act of documenting changes teachers' understanding of what goes on in the classroom, causing them to slow down and encouraging them to reflect on and understand the deeper meaning and value of a learning experience.

Dahlberg, Moss, and Pence (1999) capture the essence of what it is to be a reflective practitioner when they write:

Practicing a reflective and communicative pedagogy presupposes a reflective practitioner who, together with his or her colleagues, can create a space for a vivid and critical discussion about pedagogical practice and the conditions it needs...With inspiration from the early childhood institutions in Reggio Emilia, in northern Italy, many pedagogues around the world have begun to use pedagogical documentation as a tool for reflecting on pedagogical practice (pp. 144-145).

Giudici, Krechevsky, and Rinaldi (2001) suggest that the very act of documenting changes teachers' understanding of what goes on in the classroom, causing them to slow down and encouraging them to reflect on and understand the deeper meaning and value of a learning experience. This reflection informs their decisions about where to go next. Rather than trying to tell the whole story of an experience or putting up the work of every child, teachers become selective about what to document, continually making decisions about the moments and experiences that are most meaningful to record. Often, these may be the "ordinary moments" that occur spontaneously, in addition to thoughtful exchanges that take place during complex project work. "Instead of simply describing the experience of the learning group, this view of documentation involves a deeper analysis of the purposes behind it and behind the related learning processes and products" (p. 289).

The Reggio Emilia Approach

Reggio Emilia is one of several small wealthy cities in Emilia Romagna, a region in northern Italy with a history of collaboration and political activism. Shortly after World War II, the ground-

work for what is now regarded as "the Reggio Emilia Approach" was laid when working parents built new schools for their young children. Following upon the devastation of the war, parents did not want ordinary schools. Rather, they wanted schools where children could acquire skills of critical thinking and collaboration essential to rebuilding and ensuring a democratic society. This strong sense of purpose inspired the late Loris Malaguzzi to join in this collaborative effort. In 1963, well in advance of the national system, Reggio Emilia opened its first municipal preschool. By the late 1970s, a system of municipally funded preschools and infant-toddler centers was in place; it has since served about half of the city's young children.

International interest in Reggio Emilia has grown at a remarkable pace, inspired in large part by the traveling exhibition "The Hundred Languages of Children." Delegations of educators and other interested parties have visited the city to see firsthand its early childhood classrooms. On December 2, 1991, Newsweek magazine proclaimed the preschools of Reggio Emilia to be the "best in the world." The three tenets of communication, exploration, and problem solving complement one another and are paramount in these schools. Together, they form the underpinnings of a robust and collaborative early childhood education paradigm. Reggio Emilia's *image of the child* as "rich, strong, and powerful" (Rinaldi, 1998, p. 114) has become a dominant theme in discussions on early care and educational policies and practices at the local and national levels. It is this influence - to promote not only change, but reflection, debate, and conversation - that may well be Reggio Emilia's greatest legacy.

Pedagogical Documentation As Communication

Early in their history, the Reggio educators realized that systematically documenting the process and results of their work with children would simultaneously serve three key functions. It provides:

- ***children*** with a concrete and visible memory of what they had said and done in order to serve as a jumping-off point for ensuing steps to learning (Bredekamp, 1993);
- ***teachers*** with a tool for research and a key to continuous improvement and renewal; and
- ***parents*** and the public with detailed information about what happens in the schools and serves as means of eliciting their reactions and support (Kocher, 1999).

These insights led the development of documentation into a professional art form in Reggio Emilia, involving the use of slide shows, posters, and increasingly, videotapes to record children's project experiences (Cadwell, 1997).

Pedagogical documentation, however, is not about creating beautiful panels or displays, but about following and shaping the knowledge-building process.

Often, selections are taken from ongoing documentation and organized in panels and displays of children's work to reveal the ongoing unfolding of a project, or even an "ordinary moment" during a single day. The documentation panels cover the walls throughout the school as if they were a second skin (Giudici, Krechevsky, & Rinaldi, 2001). These panels might include photographs that tell about the process, a description of the various steps and the evolution of the project activity. These descriptions are carefully composed to include the transcriptions of the children's own remarks and conversations that accompanied their particular experience (which is often tape-recorded). The documentation panels tell stories about specific activities, the educational approach, and the steps of the learning process. Additionally, the documentation contributes to the generally pleasing aesthetic atmosphere of the space.

Pedagogical documentation, however, is not about creating beautiful panels or displays, but about following and shaping the knowledge-building process. It allows teachers to deepen their understanding of children's strengths and interests, different languages or domains of knowledge, their own actions and pedagogical decisions, and the processes of learning.

This process of documentation clearly makes evident to parents, colleagues, and visitors the high regard that adults have for children's work. Children receive the message that their work is important and valued. Through viewing the panels (and other forms of documentation), parents may become more aware of curriculum objectives and appreciate teachers' efforts. Many parents become more involved in the school experience. For teachers, reviewing the transcripts and photographs helps them to consider children's learning processes and to clarify their own objectives.

Documentation is an important kind of teacher research, sharpening and focusing teachers' attention on children's plans and understandings and on their own role in children's experiences. As teachers examine the children's work and prepare the documentation of it, their own understanding of children's development and insight into their learning is deepened. On the basis of the rich data made available through documentation, teachers are able to make informed decisions about appropriate ways to support each child's development and learning (Beneke, Harris-Helm, & Steinheimer, 1998). Documentation makes visible traces of the child's experience and learning, and makes possible a public sharing and testing of ideas (Freeman, 1998). The systematic documentation process allows each teacher to

become a producer of research and to examine his/her own development as a reflective teacher.

Educators in Reggio Emilia view documentation as an instrument of exchange and communication of ideas. Especially, they try to communicate that children are rich, competent, and powerful. The documentation of young children's work highlights their capabilities, often surprising viewers with its complexity (Kocher, 1999). It is through the unity of thinking and feeling that young children can explore their world, represent their ideas, and communicate with others at their highest level. Recognizing that exploration, representation, and communication feed one another, teachers can best help children to achieve this potential.

Methodological Approach

In this study, I sought to learn more about the personal qualities that enable some teachers to embrace pedagogical documentation with enthusiasm, and the development and evolution of pedagogical practice that arises out of reflecting upon the process of documenting children's learning. My own experience with documenting and making visible the complex learning of young children has caused me to wonder if the documentation process acts as a catalyst for dispositional change. *Does this change happen because of a disposition to embrace Reggio or does embracing Reggio precipitate the desire to change?*

The approach taken in this qualitative case study has been characterized by a design that is emergent, flexible, and responsive to the changing conditions of the study in progress. The sample selection was non-random, purposeful, and small; as a researcher, I spent considerable time in the natural setting of the study, often in intense contact with the participants. Desiring to limit this study to a reasonable scope, and particularly to focus on information richness (Patton, 2002), three teachers and their work were chosen for in-depth study and analysis. These three, Ann, Sarah, and Margie, are primary sources of knowledge in examining and understanding pedagogical documentation, as inspired by the schools of Reggio Emilia, interpreted for a North American context. Each woman was selected based upon input from others, and a desire to provide distinct voices reflecting different experiences.

The site of research, Hilltop Children's Centre, is a private preschool/day-care programme, which serves children of approximately 3-6 years of age. Three teachers in particular at Hilltop have been incorporating elements of the Reggio Emilia Approach into their teaching practice for nearly ten years. These teachers have participated in study tours to Reggio Emilia, as well as engaging in independent study on this approach. They have adapted a method of pedagogical documentation that is culturally relevant to their own community. These teachers are MASTER documenters. Documentation panels consisting of photographs, transcribed conversations, and teacher reflections, cover the school walls. During their years of documenting children's work, they have amassed a collection of project history books detailing various investigations and experiences (Field notes, 2002).

Three primary kinds of data gathering were included in this research project: (1) in-depth, open-ended interviews; (2) direct observation; and (3) written documents, including such sources as personal diaries, archived documented project stories, and programme records (Creswell, 1998; Goodwin & Goodwin, 1996). The data from lengthy open-ended interviews consisted of direct quotations from individuals about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The data from observations included detailed descriptions of programme activities, participants' behaviours, and staff actions. Document analysis yielded excerpts, quotations, and entire passages from records, correspondence, and official reports (Merriam, 2001).

Descriptive information about programmes and people provided initial evaluation data. Content analysis involved identifying coherent and important examples, themes, and patterns in the data, looking for quotations or observations that seem to go together or are examples of the same underlying idea, issue, or concept. Patterns, themes, and categories of analysis emerge out of the data rather than being decided prior to data collection and analysis. Organizing and simplifying the complexity of data into some meaningful and manageable themes or categories has been the basic purpose of content analysis.

Portraiture

The final written form of the project has taken on the framework of a descriptive narrative known as "portraiture," a term used to define a method of inquiry and documentation in the social sciences developed by Sarah Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997). Portraiture seeks to combine systematic, empirical description with aesthetic expression, blending art and science, humanistic sensibilities and scientific rigor. The portraits are designed to capture the richness, complexity, and dimensionality of human experience in social and cultural experiences. These portraits are shaped through dialogue between portraitist and the subject, each one participating in the drawing of the image. The encounter between the two is rich with meaning and resonance and is crucial to the success and authenticity of the rendered piece, a text that comes as close as possible to "painting with words" (p. 4).

Portraiture is framed by the phenomenological lens. Van Manen (1990) suggests that in phenomenology, one studies the obvious: a phenomenon that is right before us but that is not well documented or described. He also writes that the

aim of phenomenology is to *"transform lived experience into a text that expresses something essential in re-living and a reflective appropriation of something meaningful"* (p. 36).

As portraitist, I am interested not only in producing complex, subtle description in context but also in searching for the central story, developing a convincing and authentic narrative. This requires careful, systematic, and detailed description developed through watching, listening to, and interacting with the protagonists over a sustained period of time, the tracing and interpretation of emergent themes, and the piecing together of these themes into an aesthetic whole. The process of creating a whole often feels like: *"weaving a tapestry or piecing together a quilt. Looking for points of thematic convergence is like searching for the patterns of texture and colour in a weaving. In creating the text, the portraitist is alert to the aesthetic principles of composition and form, rhythm, sequence, and metaphor. The portraitist's standard, then, of authenticity, capturing the essence and resonance of the actors' experience and perspective through the details of action and thought revealed in context"* (Davis & Lightfoot, 1997, p. 12).

Portraiture, with its focus on narrative, intends to address an audience beyond the walls of the academy. The attempt is to move beyond the academy's inner circle, to speak in a language that is not coded or exclusive, and to develop texts that will seduce the readers into thinking more deeply about issues that concern them. The interpretations of protagonist and portraitist contribute to the co-construction of the story, but the final contributor is the reader – who brings yet another interpretation into the discourse. The reader is *"an active force in the co-construction of story, applying available data to the elaboration of his or her interpretation of the narrative"* (Davis & Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997, p. 118).

Discussion

Dozens of salient themes have emerged from the data. The limitations of this brief article obviously preclude detailing them all here, so I highlighted only a few. Karen Gallas (1998) uses the imagery of a beachcomber to describe her research. The analogy seems apt. Taken with texture, colour, and shape of sea glass, the novice beachcomber picks up every piece. The collection process is almost indiscriminate because the delight in finding treasure scattered along the sands is so captivating. Over time, blue glass becomes the prize because it is so rare, and in the process of looking for the blue glass, the beachcomber's focus narrows. Let me offer some of those cobalt blue gems here.

Resonance with "What Could Be"

In our interview conversations, each of the three participants identified a powerful sense of connection upon her initial exposure to the work of Reggio Emilia educators. Referring to their viewing of the video, "To Make A Portrait of a Lion," which portrays one project undertaken by Reggio educators with young children, I noted the following comments:

~ What I was seeing was all my yearnings for how to be with children right there, in images and words, and being lived out in front of me…

~ Seeing people living with the kind of heart and spirit that I wanted to live with in my days with children, and had something to strive towards without really knowing what I was striving towards.

~It's hard to even find words for it because it was such a heart-level experience…

~ I think that's what brought me to tears. Some place is doing all these things that I dream about and they're not just doing it in some alternative, backwards place. They're not just doing it by removing themselves from the world, they're out in 'the marketplace.' That's just such a beacon of hope. I mean, it sounds trite, but it really is, it's such a beacon of hope for that…

~ The heart and soul piece, the way of being with children in the world, the pedagogy that grows out of the image of the child, the image of the teacher, the image of the family, is so deeply resonant for me.

~ This experience of weeping, just weeping, weeping both from being so deeply moved with this joy at what children and families and teachers were experiencing together, in Reggio, and weeping with this yearning for my own work, to continue to deepen in those sorts of ways of building relationships with children and families, and supporting children's thoughtful collaborations. Weeping out of the sense that I am so excited about it, and so overwhelmed by the 'bigness' of it.

Karen Gallas (1998) uses the imagery of a beachcomber to describe her research. The analogy seems apt. Taken with texture, colour, and shape of sea glass, the novice beachcomber picks up every piece. The collection process is almost indiscriminate because the delight in finding treasure scattered along the sands is so captivating. Over time, blue glass becomes the prize because it is so rare, and in the process of looking for the blue glass, the beachcomber's focus narrows.

Clearly, there was a sense of resonance, a heart-felt connection with this portrayal of living with children in an authentic, intentional way. It was almost as if each woman was articulating an experience of coming home, of arriving, metaphorically, in a place where the lived experience meshed with the dream of what could be possible. Van Manen's seminal work, *Researching Lived Experience* (1990) comes to mind as he describes phenomenological research:

From a phenomenological point of view, to do research is always to question the way we experience the world, to want to know the world in which we live as human beings. And since to know the world is to profoundly be in the world in a certain way, the act of researching – questioning – theorizing is the intentional act of attaching ourselves to the world, to become fully part of it, or better, to become the world. Phenomenology calls this inseparable connection to the world the principle of "intentionality" (van Manen, 1990, p. 5).

The vehicle of pedagogical documentation is what makes these experiences in the schools of Reggio Emilia, this principle of intentionality, visible and shareable.

Pedagogical Documentation is the Cornerstone

Reflecting on their individual experiences of developing a personal style of pedagogical documentation over a number of years, each described the practice as becoming the cornerstone of her pedagogical work with children. As van Manen (1990) writes, "*when we raise questions, gather data, describe a phenomenon, we do so as researchers who stand in the world in a pedagogic way* (p. 1)" – this way of standing in the world is reflected in the following selected quotes:

~ Yeah, exactly, the process or way of being in the world, is really what it is, a way of understanding our work, or understanding our relationships with children and with each other that is about mindful presence and authentic engagement and curiosity and delight. How that all gets lived out or made tangible is the form of this thing we call documentation, this paper we put up on the wall, this document we send out to the web-page, whatever form it takes, but that in fact documentation is an expression of a way of being with children.

~ I think of documentation as growing out of deep listening and close observation, so that's not anything that necessarily shows, it's not any tangible piece. I'd say that's a core piece of documentation, really being present to what the children are experiencing, doing, saying, playing about, arguing about, collaborating about, feeling about. So, that is a central component of documentation, that mindful presence.

~ I felt that as this moment where, of recognition that this practice had become, like I'd absorbed it into my bones, into my understanding, in an utterly powerful way.

~ I feel the way it feeds me, it's energizing. I love the way in which I pay attention to children as I'm writing, as I'm taking a photo... I feel the contact of it.

~ It sure has been an anchor in, an anchor that's allowed me step into this very open-ended, in many ways, open-ended way of being with children. Most of the teacher scripts that we're taught are really heavy on planning and agendas. To let go of that way of teaching, and step into this other planful, intentional way that is looked at as much more open - I think documentation can be something to hold onto in that process. I know myself as a teacher, I am radically different, because of just having lived these years of documentation in so many ways. That's what's been pivotal in my growth.

~ Personally, one thing, one way that I experience the power of this little being called documentation is finding myself invited to be nourished, to be challenged to be a close observer, and to be really present in the world.

~ It just feeds me so deeply, and is for me the thing that gives meaning to any of this.

Documentation, such as that collected and collated by Ann, Sarah, and Margie, is focused on what Giudici et al. (2001) describe as the "stuff" of understanding – ideas, theories, hypotheses, feelings, experiments, deductions, notions of cause and effect, imagination, intuitions, "performances," and the relationship of experience, skill, knowledge, and insight – cognitive processes involved in coming to know something. Recording and presenting children's actions and interactions can reveal the genesis of ideas and then, in being shared, can lead to new thoughts, questions, and discoveries (p. 307).

Intellectual Engagement

A particularly salient theme that has emerged from the data is that, having incorporated pedagogical documentation into a nearly daily practice, there is a very high level of intellectual engagement for the teacher, which is made manifest in the process of interpretive writing. Read their comments:

~ So, is that the key, or a key, to the intellectual engagement? Is the documentation what keeps you intellectually linked in to this daily work? How big a component is that? Here we are, smart, thinking, intellectually curious people who are attracted to work with young children, and is documentation part of what lets you be both of those things at the same time?

~ That's a message that belongs in the work, because, you know, I'm smart, and I'm a thinker, and a writer, and..., you know, you don't have to engage intellectually, it's not what's perceived as what's needed for this work. It's not the expectation of most people when they come to this work, and I think that's partly why I think I was so attracted, initially, to these lab schools that were connected to universities, because it felt like, "Oh, well, the work with children isn't, you know, intellectually stimulating, but I could be working with undergraduates or doing research, or working with these researchers, or..." I was trying to be the intellectual part of myself in that way, and that's kind of what changed in the living it full days here at Hilltop, was just realizing that it's all here. I'm really smart, I'm really well educated, and I use every ounce of it every day. Sure,

there are moments, you know, there are the moments of living with kids that aren't, sort of, intellectually rewarding or fulfilling, except that, if you really come at, "Who is this kid?" with curiosity, or, "How do I know this family?" or, "What is the interaction?" If you take in the message that you can be really curious about everything that happens, then yeah...it's a totally, completely, completely intellectually fulfilling work, which so many people just don't get.

~ I'm so engaged by the intellectual piece, and so engaged by the professional development, I mean, all of that is definitely there...

Practicing the art of documentation while living school days with children fosters a culture of research at Hilltop. Gandini and Goldhaber (2001), believe that the process of documentation can be an agent of change. Pedagogical documentation *...has the potential to change how early childhood educators see ourselves as professionals. It certainly requires that we expand our identity from nurturer and caregiver to include theoretician and researcher. We have found that documentation demands a high level of intellectual commitment and curiosity and a passionate engagement in our work (pp. 143-144).*

Writing as a Native Language

A particular personal quality that each participant independently identified was that of being a comfortable writer. A significant component of sophisticated pedagogical documentation is the teacher's reflective commentary, and so it's not surprising that someone who is a competent writer would be drawn to this practice. Quoting again from van Manen (1990):

In writing the author puts in symbolic form what he or she is capable of seeing. And so practice, in the lifeworld with children, can never be the same again. My writing as a practice prepared me for an insightful praxis in the lifeworld (I can now see things I could not see before). Although I may try to close my eyes, to ignore what I have seen, in some way my existence is now mediated by my knowledge. And because we are what we can 'see" (know, feel, understand), seeing is already a form of praxis – seeing the significance in a situation places us in the event, makes us part of the event (p. 130).

~ Writing...it's my native language, really. So there's that personal piece for me, too, of feeling sustained by documentation, because it is going to this native language place. And feeling like it's a place where I really practice and deepen my writing skills, and become a better a writer – that can only be a good thing.

~ To really sink into the experience, or a moment that I'm watching unfold, and to write about it. I mean, writing is something that I do anyways, so it's this way of being, that we call documentation, it's a really great fit.

~ When I write, I feel able to do more nuanced thinking about children and learning and able to dig deeply as well as to see broadly what's the heart and soul of learning and play...

~It IS research and writing, and I'm living it all day every day...

~It helps a lot that I write...that's shaped the form, that shapes what my documentation looks like.

~ I think the fact that I'm a good writer pushes me towards documentation that looks like a lot of writing...

The writing process itself helps to deepen one's own thinking, or, as Richardson (2000) says, *"writing is a way of 'knowing,' – a method of discovery and analysis"* (p. 923). Ann, Sarah, and Margie are able to think out loud, in their documentation, to be transparent in their thinking, thereby inviting the reader into the reflective process.

Infinite Attention to Another

Well-known Reggio pedagogue, Carlina Rinaldi, has put forth the challenge that *"the best environment for children is one in which you can find the highest possible quantity and quality of relationships"* (Cadwell, 2003, p. 136). Bill Readings (1996) says: *"I want to insist that pedagogy is a relation, a network of obligation...(in which) the condition of pedagogical practice is an infinite attention to the other"* (p. 16). The primacy of relationships is a strong theme that was referred to by the three participants in this study, as well by many of the parents of children who attend Hilltop.

~ That's sort of the heart of the whole relationship piece, is the whole heart of the beginning and sustaining piece for me of this work. Documentation is the practice that cultivates relationships, that reflects and cultivates relationships.

~ It's being in relationship with children and families, and that's what it's about for me, the deep and intimate and meaningful relationships that are there.

~ Certainly I'm so engaged by the intellectual piece, and so engaged by the professional development, I mean, all of that is definitely there, but the living, breathing meaning of it for me is being in relationship, being in community.

My observation, as an outside researcher, is that these educators have worked hard to effectively develop systems where collegiality and collaboration support relationships among the children, educators, parents, and community, opportunities for learning and the co-construction of knowledge. Working with an emergent or responsive curriculum, negotiated with all the stakeholders, is a dynamic process that generates documentation and is re-generated by documentation. Building and maintaining relationships is the guiding thread. Giudici et al. (2001) make the observation that schools *"too often dedicate their energies primarily to curriculum and didactics, neglecting the broad network of relationships and communication that are an integral part of the educational process,*

and consequently placing little emphasis on the organization of these relationships" (p. 53). Clearly, these teachers have overcome that hurdle.

Reflective Commentary

Earlier I described Ann, Sarah, and Margie as master documeters. Many in North America have been intrigued by the process of pedagogical documentation developed by the educators in Reggio Emilia. What makes the work of these three teachers at Hilltop particularly inspiring is the insightful reflective commentary that is paired with their observations of the children's experiences. For example, during an investigation launched by play around Disney's "Lion King," Sarah wrote:

Thinking back on this first gathering, I'm struck by two things. First, it seems that one of the main jobs for this group will be grappling with and working on the interpersonal dynamics of how decisions get made in their play. These girls have been learning all year about the power struggles of inclusion and exclusion, and this work team may be an opportunity for them to think through these issues. Second, I heard some ideas emerge in this first conversation about good lions and bad lions, light lions and dark lions. I will be curious to see how these distinctions and classifications play out in our next meetings...Though my primary intention for the Lion Work Team is that they have a chance to explore the Lion King story in a wide range of symbolic languages, it seems this work may also be a rich opportunity for them to play about issues of race and bias...My role as a teacher continues to be that of watcher, listener, documenter. I don't plan to do much overt provocation around issues of racial difference until I better understand what internal questions and wonderings these girls really have.

During another investigation, Ann wrote: *In their play, children work actively, explore and understand themselves, their friends, their world. They are asking questions, constructing knowledge, extending and deepening their understandings. When we observe their play, listening carefully, we can see "underneath" the topical content of their play to the development themes at its roots. Our note-taking about and transcribing of children's play helps us uncover these themes. Our sense of these developmental themes guides our work with children, as we seek to support, enrich, and extend their work around these themes. It's tempting for adults to stick with kids' topical themes, and certainly easier than digging deep for the themes underneath. When we notice the themes under kids' play, though, we honour their authentic work, and we can meet them there. Our curriculum, then becomes driven by the children- a respectful, engaging, fascinating approach to curriculum for us adults and for the children. Here is a sketch, or "web," of our thinking about some of the developmental themes and their manifestations we see in the Tricks, Treasure, and Titanic play.*

Reflective practice is a dynamic, inquiry-oriented process that connects classroom experiences, including children's learning, to a teacher's construction of knowledge. Through self-reflection, one learns to listen to oneself, a skill that is essential to listening to others and developing awareness, which leads to mindfulness (Rud, 1995; Van Manen, 1991). These teachers are masters at this, as is clearly evidenced in the reflective, interpretive text that is a significant component of their documentation. Freeman (1998) contends that teaching, and the notion of a teacher's work, must be thought of as a process of doing research, defined as speculation, wondering, and questioning what we do. Reflective teachers move toward a deeper engagement with the burning and authentic issues of teaching that allow for soul transformation and increased understanding, or, following Socrates, a "*turning of the soul*" (Haroutunian-Gordon, 1995).

Three Voices, Three Perspectives

Each of the protagonists in this story, names the practice of documentation as the centre of the work she does with children.

Sarah describes documentation as a really close description of what teaching an emergent curriculum looks like: "*It's the main activity, if you take documentation in its biggest description that includes the reflective part, and the use of what you've collected to be thoughtful and playful about what you might want to do next. To me, documentation is that something to hang onto...the anchoring structure in a very organic curriculum.*" She considers her collection of documented projects incredibly treasured items. They provide really solid evidence or traces of doing rich, important work with children. "*There's something about the concreteness of that and the process of documentation takes this organic, experiential, fluid curriculum, life, and ... groups it into meaningful stories in some way. The stories give you little pieces to hold on to that can represent that time lived. It's partly this relief that this moment is at least captured to some degree, so it's not lost... it's in the history. Partly it's the sense of, 'I've something to show for what we've been doing.' That's still a huge reassurance, for me, and my biggest defence against anybody who might say, 'What do you do here all day? You don't do anything, you don't have a lesson plan.' And I can say, 'Well, no, but I can show you what we did every day this week, and how rich it was. So that looks like money in the bank, knowing that those stories are there.*"

Ann considers doing peace and justice work with kids as "*my core, my spine to my work, that's been the sort of deepest anchor. That's what drew me to working with young children in the first place.*" For her, the practice of documentation, coupled with the principles of emergent curriculum, fit "hand in glove" with social justice work. By studying her documentation notes, she can see under-

neath the words of the children to the themes and issues under-girding them. With that understanding, she responds in meaningful ways, taking an active role in shaping an activism project. She says, "*If, in fact, we're paying such intimate and close attention to children and building deep relationships with them that deeply respect who they are individually and culturally, we can't help but do anti-bias and diversity work.... There's no way to do that work without paying close attention to children, and hearing from them what their passions and pursuits are, and meeting them in that place, and letting that be the curriculum that we live with children. Bringing those two pieces together...feels really important to me.*"

What has always been at the heart of **Margie's work** has been ideas about close observation of children, and thinking about what can grow out of those observations. In her role as *pedagogista* (or self-described "community elder"), she encourages observers to slow down, to be mindful of the ordinary moments that are, in fact, extraordinary. Thinking about fostering a culture of documentation, she believes that "*creating the disposition to notice and delight and be curious about what you're seeing*" is key. "*Valuing children for who they are, not just what we want them to be, causes a shift in the way we think about learning and teaching. We also begin to envision a larger purpose for the teaching profession – making childhood visible and valued for the ways in which it can enrich our humanity and contribute to our collective identity. To bring this transformation about, we need a pedagogy (a way of thinking about learning and teaching) that mirrors our vision for children, not the existing one of the popular culture. Teachers who subscribe to a pedagogy of this nature come from a place of curiosity, believe in children's capabilities, and know that they are engaging in a process that is unfolding, not static...There's a lot of ways you can use your observations, and, because I'm straddling a bunch of different worlds, advocacy being a big one, it took me a while to find a good balance between documenting for advocacy purposes.*"

The Phenomenological Connection

I find a strong parallel between phenomenology, particularly Max van Manen's description of human science research, and the experience of Ann, Sarah, and Margie, as documenters. What these particular teachers are doing in their everyday practice appears to be, indeed, un-named phenomenological research of the lived experience of these teachers and children. The way in which each of them stands in pedagogical relation to the world, and their abilities to write reflectively on the meanings of phenomena of daily life lived in this community, are reflected in these words of van Manen's (1990):

...pedagogy requires a phenomenological sensitivity to lived experience (children's realities and lifeworlds). Pedagogy requires a hermeneutic ability to make interpretive sense of the phenomena of the lifeworld in order to see the pedagogic significance of situations and relations of living with children. And pedagogy requires a way with language in order to allow the research process of textual reflection to one's pedagogic thoughtfulness and tact (p. 2).

Each participant was asked if her experience of embracing the practice of pedagogical documentation has acted as a catalyst for personal growth or change. Ann's response was a resounding:

~ Ah...I think that's exactly the right question to be asking. My own personal experience is that profoundly, YES. It was life changing, it set me on this journey that I'm still on...

And again, this is mirrored in van Manen's (1990) belief that phenomenological research can be a transforming process:

Phenomenological projects and their methods often have a deep transformative effect on the researcher himself or herself. Indeed, phenomenological research is often itself a form of deep learning, leading to a transformation of consciousness, heightened perceptiveness, increased thoughtfulness and tact, and so on (p. 163).

It seems fitting to conclude with the words of Loris Malaguzzi (1993), founder of the Reggio Emilia preschools, written shortly before his death.

This work has strongly informed – little by little – our way of being with the children. It has also, in a rather beautiful way, obliged us to refine our methods of observation and recording so that the process of children's learning becomes the basis of our dialogue with parents. Stand aside for a while and leave room for learning, observe carefully what children do, and then, if you have understood well, perhaps teaching will be different than before (p. 77).

Whether or not there is a disposition to document seems to be the proverbial "chicken and egg" question. Which comes first? Ann, Margie, and Sarah have each had a remarkable, intuitive response to the work of educators in Reggio Emilia, a response that resonates with a vision of great possibilities. Having keen observational skills, delight in and curiosity about children, the ability to articulate and put into text their reflections, a commitment to nurturing relationships, and intellectual engagement that is fostered by the active role of researcher are all dispositions that these teachers bring to their work. It is also the description of the phenomenological researcher. It may be that it is a relationship of reciprocity – that perhaps initially Ann, Margie, and Sarah were drawn to the Reggio Emilia Approach because it resonated within each of them in an intuitive way, and that their subsequent work with pedagogical documentation has fostered dispositions that each already had. In a reciprocal manner, the personal disposition enables the practice of documentation, which nurtures the innate disposition...

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Grading the Assessment Problem

Gregory Bryan

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Abstract

The assessment of children's literacy skills is one of the most controversial of all educational topics. Standardized and high-stakes literacy test use has increased to such an extent that North American children are tested like never before and like nowhere else in the world. This article explores some of the current issues in school literacy assessment, including the impact the testing frenzy is having on learning and teaching. Consideration is also given to the employment of alternative assessment techniques.

Introduction

One of today's most energetically debated and controversial educational topics is the issue of assessment, especially with regard to children's acquisition of literacy skills (Salinger, 1998). Educators and the general public alike argue about who should be responsible for developing tests, the role of testing, and how best to use test results (Robinson, McKenna, & Wedman, 2000). Assessment is driven by nothing less than a "*complex mix of social, political, educational, and intellectual forces*" (Adkison & Tchudi, 2001, p. 43). The uncertainty and heated debate over assessment contribute just some of the many pieces of what is a complex assessment puzzle (Farr,1995). The primary purpose of assessment should be to gather information that educators can use to inform and guide their instruction, and by so doing, best facilitate further student learning. Current literacy assessment techniques, however, seem far removed from such an ideal.

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Having conceded that this is a topic that garners diverse opinion, educators must still recognize that one of the biggest challenges currently facing the profession concerns this issue of assessment. Yet, rather than proceeding cautiously while we search for answers to the assessment problem, the number, significance and frequency of testing seems to be skyrocketing. As McVarish and Solloway (2002) so succinctly state, "*We live in a national educational frenzy—test! test! test!*" (p. 253).

In this article, I will explore some of the current issues in school literacy assessment, focusing particularly upon the increasing use of standardized and high-stakes tests. In order to explain my position, I will detail my own teaching experiences with standardized literacy testing in Ontario. Looking at the current education climate, I will focus on the impact that this testing frenzy is having on learning and teaching. Finally, I will outline assessment alternatives and consider the way forward.

Why the Assessment Problem is so Hard

MacGinitie (1995) believes that literacy assessment is poorly conducted in schools. He suggests that the very things we assess, and the unavoidable shortcomings of human nature, limit the accuracy and effectiveness of school assessment. Human judgment is prone to error and is subject to certain biases. Human judgment plays an obviously important, unavoidable role in the classroom teacher's assessment of a student's literacy performance. According to MacGinitie, however, standardized test scores are less obviously, but equally, subject to errors of human judgment. A test score alone bears little meaning until someone infers the strength or weakness that score supposedly reflects. Like MacGinitie, I question what a score really tells us. How is a 75 different from (and presumably better than) a 70? A score alone is nothing, until someone interprets it. One might subjectively interpret a score of 75 in a way that is very different to the way someone else subjectively interprets what is reputedly an objective score. Perhaps these numbers serve as little more than a tattered comfort blanket that we turn to in times of uncertainty. "*The numbers [take] us from the unknown to the known*," Wassermann (2001) argues. Numbers provide us with a sense of comfort, relief and certainty. Armed with our numbers - with the definitive truth that a score supposedly represents - we hope to demonstrate to irate parents and distressed students that we know what we are doing. Our numbers endow us with the preci-

sion that allows us to feel secure in our position (Wassermann, 2001).

Compounding our dilemma is the measurement selection problem - choosing what to assess and how to go about assessing it. Reading is such a complex process that there exists any number of what might be termed as significant aspects of reading. MacGinitie (1995) poses the rhetorical question of whether there might be fifty or fifty thousand significant aspects. Educators cannot reasonably be expected to assess them all. But if this is the case, a decision must be made as to what aspects of reading will be assessed, and which ones will be ignored. Different methods of assessment serve different purposes and address different aspects of reading. Educators are left with the conundrum of deciding what to assess, and what tools to employ to make those assessments. These limitations result in the improvement of literacy assessment being *"arguably the most difficult task facing those interested in educational reform"* (Winograd, Paris, & Bridge, 1995, p. 172).

The whole question of literacy assessment is clearly a problematic one. Literacy assessment is, however, not only one of the most contentious and controversial of educational topics, and an area in which improvement is most difficult, but it is also one of the most important of all educational issues (Collins & Moss, 1996).

Speaking from Experience

When discussing standardized literacy assessment, I do so from a perspective shaped by my own classroom experience with grade three students facing end-of-year Ontario Provincial exams. I speak from a position of having pondered how a passage detailing a technical plan to use traffic lights to restrict traffic congestion would impact the performance of my students; many lived in what were little more than hovels on dirt roads outside a town with no traffic lights.

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I speak from a position of having fought to suppress unfair feelings of resentment toward children who I knew would perform poorly on the test, bringing the class scores down and, somehow, reflecting badly upon me. The low scores would not reflect nearly so badly upon me as did those feelings of resentment.

I have invested a year in teaching my students that reading is a fun, interesting and relevant pursuit over which they had the right to exercise self-determination. In one week, however, I had to sit back and watch much of my work undone as the students were compelled to write a test of their reading that for many seemed anything but fun, interesting and relevant. When I recall the tear-streaked faces of some of my students, it is little wonder that Gould (2003) deems such tests developmentally inappropriate.

Standardized Testing

In an attempt to overcome the foibles of human nature and the partiality of teachers, standardized tests are being employed in greater numbers than ever before. Put simply, standardized tests are those that are *"administered, scored, and interpreted in a standard, predetermined manner"* (Popham, 2002, p. 19) and are often "norm-referenced, multiple-choice and machine scorable" (Barootchi & Keshavarz, 2002, p. 280). Standardized tests have traditionally been considered to be the most objective means of measuring a child's academic growth (Salinger, 1998).

Standardized testing is based upon the presumption that *"assessing all students in the same format creates a fair situation"* (Neill, 2000, p. 138) and that it provides a precision that teachers cannot match with their subjective assessments (Eisner, 2003). While the attempt for equity is worthy of applause, it also reflects a naiveté. If it did not have the potential for such serious harm to children, it would be laughable. Standardized tests unavoidably contain built-in cultural and educational biases (Neill, 2000). Tierney (2000a) even argues that literacy is *"inextricably connected to cultural background and life experiences"* and, therefore, *"culture-free assessments afford, at best, a partial and perhaps distorted understanding of the student"* (p. 123). Adding further to the built-in biases, the successful completion of many standardized tests requires knowledge and ability that is more likely to be possessed by students with privileged upbringings (Kohn, 2002).

Another criticism of standardized literacy testing is that it is limited in terms of the types of educational objectives it can be used to assess. For ease of administration and scoring, standardized tests tend to employ a multiple-choice format. Such a format restricts what can be tested. The tests tend to be limited to fact recall and literal questions. Such information is hardly indicative of a deep understanding of, and engagement with, a written text. In a society that values people who can think critically and creatively, such tests reflect only a small sample of what is considered to be most important (Burley, 2002). We also need to ask whether a successful performance on a standardized test necessarily equates to what society ideally defines as a successful student. Does not society value more than fact recall, the conventions of writing, and the ability to master test-taking strategies? Is possession of the necessary skills and knowledge to pass a test enough to define a student as successful? (Steeves, Hodgson, & Peterson, 2002).

High-Stakes

Literacy assessment should mainly be about gathering information that teachers can use to inform their teaching. As such, assessment of students has traditionally been employed as a means of gathering data. These data were used primarily to make instructional decisions, but also to measure the effectiveness of programs, and to track students' progress over time. Literacy assessment, however, is changing. Administrators and legislators are now using standardized assessment results to support school reforms, including the area of accountability (Robinson, McKenna, & Wedman, 2000). Standardized test use has increased to such an extent that North American children are now tested like nowhere else in the world and more often than ever before (Eisner, 2003; Kohn, 2000a, 2000b).

Literacy assessment has also moved toward using standardized tests for high-stakes testing. Defined briefly, high-stakes testing refers to any tests that carry severe consequences for failure, such as failing a whole class because one did not successfully complete a given test. At best, however, tests of any kind provide only a limited picture that may well provide "*inexact, rough measures of what students know and can do*" (McBee, 2002, p. 240). This being the case, making important decisions regarding the diplomas, advancement, or tracking of students upon the evidence of a single test is a questionable practice (Heubert & Hauser, 1999). This is especially so when we acknowledge that each time a child is held back, the likelihood that child will eventually graduate is greatly reduced. It is staggering to consider that if a child is held back twice, the likelihood of their eventual graduation tumbles to less than one percent (Meier, 2002). High-stakes, indeed! Little wonder that high-stakes testing has generated considerable legal activity and that the expectation is that litigation will increase (Zirkel, 2003).

As well as being used to determine student promotion, the high-stakes contest extends beyond individual students. Schools that produce high test scores are honored in the media (Vaughan, 2002) while several locales are using test scores as the basis for determining rewards and punishments to teachers, principals and schools (Cala, 2003; Klein, Hamilton, McCaffrey, & Stecher, 2000). With so much at stake, some teachers and administrators have succumbed to the temptation to engage in ethically questionable behavior (Hoffman, Assaf & Paris, 2001) while others have been guilty of tampering with tests and outright cheating (Goldberg, 2004; Haladyna, Nolen & Haas, 1991). With increasing frequency low achieving students are also being forced out of schools lest their attendance contribute to bringing down the overall school results (Goldberg, 2004).

The Texas Problem

As much as we here in Canada may like to deny it, there is little doubt that the practices of our cousins to the south greatly influence educational practices in Canada, including the move toward standardized literacy testing. Given that "*the accountability system and the standards-based reform effort [of Texas] have been recognized as 'a model' for others to follow*," Hoffman, Assaf and Paris (2001) conducted a study to determine the impact of the Texas educational system (p. 482). The study was designed to gain insights into teachers' perceptions of high-stakes testing, with particular regard to the way it affects teachers, students and instruction. Additionally, the study was intended to reveal ways in which the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) may provide barriers to good teaching.

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The study was conducted through means of a survey. This survey was sent to members of the Texas State Reading Association, an affiliate of the International Reading Association. The study sample was sent a questionnaire. Study participants were asked to complete a 113-item survey. The majority of the questions required respondents to select the most appropriate response from a choice of five possible answers.

Findings from the survey responses include data to suggest that, generally, Texas teachers have severe reservations about high-stakes testing procedures such as the TAAS. It was found that teachers disagree with the underlying intentions of the TAAS, teachers challenge the validity of the TAAS, and teachers believe administrators and parents feel differently about the TAAS than the teachers do. The study also revealed that high-stakes testing is having a negative impact upon teachers and students in Texas.

In presenting their results, the study researchers provide *six* recommendations. Each of these recommendations is worthy of our careful consideration as language and literacy educators here in Canada.

- There is a need for independent research to be conducted regarding the effectiveness of high-stakes testing.
- Alternatives to high-stakes testing need to be examined to provide comparison data.
- Educators need to advocate individually and collectively for what Hoffman, Assaf and Paris term "*reasonable assessment*" of students (p. 491).
- Challenges to the legality of high-stakes testing should be pursued.
- Teachers are encouraged to explore alternatives with a view toward demonstrating that accountability can still be

achieved through alternate assessment practices.

- Educators are implored not to succumb and accept high-stakes testing as a trade for other desirables.

The Impact on Learning

The whole matter of increasing TAAS test scores is a contentious issue generating considerable debate on its own (e.g. see Dunne, 2000; Haney, 2000; Klein, Hamilton, McCaffrey, & Stecher, 2000; RAND, n.d.; Toenjes & Dworkin, 2002; Vaughan, 2002). One of the many interesting findings in Hoffman, Assaf and Paris' study concerns the impact of high-stakes testing upon learning. While the test scores in Texas may be increasing, teachers were reluctant to make an association between test scores and learning. Indeed, it was found that half of the sample population believed that increases in TAAS scores did not reflect increased student learning.

One impact of standardized testing emerges through Steele's (1997, 1999) "*stereotype threat.*" Steele demonstrated that when students are told that they are about to take a test upon which certain groups are likely to return low scores, those certain groups generally do so. Steele's groups of female and minority students were informed that history suggested they would struggle on the test they faced. In the control groups, however, where students were not notified of any expected differences in performance, no such differences occurred. These results are similar to the classic Pygmalion study of the 1960s (Rosenthal & Jacobsen, 1968) in which it was shown that the expectations of others lead one to behave accordingly. It is not reasonable to suggest that we simply do not inform our students that there is good reason to expect they will struggle. Our students cannot be so easily fooled. Many of our minority students go into tests knowing full well that they are about to be confronted by a culturally biased test (Kohn, 2000; Neill, 2000). When they live up to expectations and perform badly, they are informed that they are low achievers and, as such, their perceptions of their own abilities and potential fall further, thus condemning them to an on-going downward spiral from which they might never emerge (Boaler, 2003).

Fu and Lamme (2002) present the disparity between two students' standardized test scores and the picture presented through discussions about their literacy portfolios. One of the children, Kaya,

Literacy assessment, however, is changing. Administrators and legislators are now using standardized assessment results to support school reforms, including the area of accountability

achieved an average score on a state writing test. Martin failed the test. Discussion around both students' portfolios, however, revealed a far more complete picture of each child's literacy growth. The standardized test had the power to render Martin a failure, yet could do nothing about evaluating or even considering his positive attitude toward learning, his strong efforts, and the encouraging improvement he demonstrated. Little wonder that Martin's mother reported that the test stressed her son. One might conclude that Martin's mother was in an even more stressful position, *"wondering how to help her son prepare for tests and face failure"* (p. 247). It comes as no surprise that the testing frenzy is creating its own trail of tears (e.g. see Gould, 2003; Ohanian, 2003; Wassermann, 2001).

With regards to impeding student learning, one of the most noticeable impacts that the standardization movement has exerted actually concerns the impact it has had upon teaching—the narrowing of the curriculum. With so much attention focussed upon test results, teachers feel the need to prepare their students thoroughly to succeed on the tests. Standardized testing, however, is largely limited to language and mathematics. The extra time, resources and effort teachers invest into these core disciplines is often coming at the expense of subjects such as music, art, drama, dance and physical education (Meier, 2002; Ogawa, Sandholtz, Martinez-Flores & Scribner, 2003). Students have little hope of learning subjects they are not even being taught!

According to an old curriculum axiom, assessment drives pedagogy. What and how the schools test will affect what and how students get taught (Burley, 2002). Burley (2002) concludes that "*the results can be pretty horrific*" (p. 26). According to Burley, these horrific results are the inevitable culmination of a six-part spiral that begins with teachers teaching to the test. Second, the curriculum is narrowed to address only those things on the test. Third, teachers only go beyond the curriculum to teach test-taking skills. Fourth, "cheating rears its ugly head" (Burley, 2002, p. 26). Fifth, as a result, test scores are rendered meaningless. Finally, as a result of all of the above, schools prefer not to employ standardized tests, but are compelled to administer them.

The Impact on Teaching

It has been suggested that teachers' ability to do their jobs successfully is being undermined by the standardized testing craze (McCracken & McCracken, 2001). Teachers feel compelled to dedicate considerable instructional time to test preparation, even though they do not think it will necessarily increase their students' knowledge or understanding (Boaler, 2003).

Except for teachers, almost everyone is celebrating what they perceive as gains derived from increased testing

(McCracken & McCracken, 2001). Many fear, however, that the increasing public interest in issues of assessment may drive young teachers from the profession. "*The pain of failing in the classroom is intensified by the prospect of public exposure*" (Kauffman, Johnson, Kardos, Liu, & Peske, 2002, p. 292).

McCracken and McCracken (2001) surveyed teachers with whom they worked and asked, "*What have you lost from your teaching or your classroom since the growth of mandated, standardized testing?* " (p. 30). A common response related to the lost instructional time. Time in the classroom must be given to test-taking drills to help prepare students to successfully negotiate the tests. A teacher also bemoaned the loss of creativity in themselves and the students. Children are instructed not to take risks, not to be too creative, but to "*only give them [the testers] what they want*" (p. 30).

Above all, McCracken and McCracken discuss the potential loss of teachers and the loss of potential teachers. The potential loss of teachers concerns the disgruntled educators, who have lost, among other things, their voice, time, faith, opportunity, and desire. Teachers have lost the voice and ownership of their own teaching, which must be tempered to accommodate the requirements of the test; the time to reflect upon their practice and to build relationships with students; their faith in their ability to succeed in the face of intense public scrutiny; the opportunity to team and teach with colleagues, who are scrambling for their own survival; and the desire "to even be a teacher" (p. 31). The increased attention toward standards, standardization, and assessment is having a numbing influence upon teachers, often leaving them in a seeming administrative daze that blunts their creativity and expertise (Ogawa et al., 2003). Those classic "teaching moments" we all strive for must suddenly be ignored or given short shrift. The necessity to focus upon test preparation denies teachers the freedom to seize upon spontaneous teaching opportunities that might suddenly appear in relation to current affairs, traveling exhibits or movie releases (Meier, 2002).

The loss of teachers includes not only those who abandon teaching careers because of the testing frenzy, but also those who choose not even to enter the profession. Potential teachers are being lost who might otherwise have selected education as their occupation. McCracken and McCracken ask, "*Will talented college students continue to seek teaching as a career, when the most appealing features of the teaching profession are being steadily eroded in the Time of Testing?*" (p. 31). The potential losses may be irreparable and McCracken and McCracken question how schools can even survive, let alone improve, in the face of such a drain.

One way to reverse the external assessment trend in the future, however, is for teachers to become more skilled at interpreting assessment data (Adkison & Tchudi, 2001). Rather than fearing for new teachers, Adkison and Tchudi (2001) look forward to a future in which teachers are more skilled at reading and making use of assessment data. They caution that such skills develop over time, with experience. Teachers who reflect on their practice can, however, develop these skills. Such reflective thinking leads to discourse in which teachers are more fully able to assert valid claims and inform others.

Considering the Alternatives

Unfortunately, the public (and the frenzied media) is so intensely scrutinizing school test scores that educators are caught between a rock and a very hard place. Teachers know how much value others are putting on test scores, but recognize that test scores are an imprecise reflection of ability. Johnston (1998) is of the opinion that current literacy evaluation practices are inefficient and ineffective. Hoffman, Assaf and Paris (2001) even go so far as to recommend that teachers be "*creatively compliant and selectively defiant*" with regard to following administrators' and legislators' directives on standardized, high-stakes testing (p. 492). After all, it is "*simply unconscionable...to allow major decisions to be made on the basis of one-time exams*" (Neill, 2000, p. 142).

Such reflective thinking leads to discourse in which teachers are more fully able to assert valid claims and inform others.

In 2000, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) passed a resolution urging reconsideration of high-stakes testing. The background to the resolution includes the claim that high-stakes testing is causing "*evident measurable damage to teaching and learning* (NCTE, 2000, Background section, para. 1)." The resolution criticizes high-stakes testing for often failing to provide an accurate assessment of students' knowledge and ability. The NCTE concludes the resolution by inviting other organizations to join with them in advocating a reconsideration of the use of high-stakes testing.

Johnston (1997, 1998) believes that self-evaluation should be a key component in literacy assessment. He identifies four reasons for valuing self-evaluation. Firstly, it helps children develop independence in literacy. Second, it provides more immediate feedback. Third, self-discovery has a greater likelihood of prompting a response. Finally, self-evaluation promotes literary conversational ability.

Johnston says that one way for teachers to promote self-evaluation is by having students develop literacy portfolios. Students are required to reflect upon their work as they determine what to include in, and exclude from, their port-

folios. Students should be involved in selecting what artifacts to include in their portfolios, after all "*readers and writers know more about their own abilities and progress*" than anyone else (Hansen, 1995, p. 67). The use of student portfolios as a means of assessment gains widespread support in the literature (Bergeron, Wermuth, & Hammar, 1997; Calfee & Perfumo, 1995; Collins & Moss, 1996; Courtney & Abodeeb, 1999; Hansen, 1995; Valencia & Place, 1995). Portfolios seem, for a time, to have "*captured the imaginations of educators*" across North America (Valencia & Place, 1995, p. 151).

Standardized testing needs to be complemented by other methods that can provide indications of students' literacy needs, abilities and progress. Alternative or non-traditional assessment "*has become the umbrella term for anything other than standardized, multiple-choice tests*" (Barootchi & Keshavarz, 2002). In light of reluctance to embrace standardized testing, and in an attempt to find ways to assess student literacy learning in ways more closely aligned to their teaching practices, educators today employ a variety of alternative formal and informal assessment practices within their classrooms (see Rhodes,1993,for a collection of various instruments). All across North America, teachers are investigating and constructing alternative methods of evaluating their students' literacy performance and progress (Winograd, 1995). Such alternatives include running records (Clay, 2000), anecdotal records (Rhodes & Nathenson-Mejia, 1992), retrospective miscue analysis (Goodman, 1996), the motivation to read profile (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996), informal reading inventories (see McKenna, 1983; Pikulski, 1974; 1990) and kidwatching (Goodman,1978; 1985). While different methods of testing serve different purposes, many of these alternate practices focus more on the *processes* of reading and writing, than the traditional focus upon product (Johnston, 1998; Robinson, McKenna & Wedman,2000). In advocating literacy assessment reform, Tierney (2000a) suggests thirteen guiding principles. Outlined briefly, the principles are:

1. Assessment needs to be conducted with an "inside-out" approach, rather than an "outside-in" approach. Learning and assessing are to emerge from the classroom, rather than be imposed from an outside source.
2. Teachers need to be seen, and to see themselves, as a community of learners dedicated to their profession. As such, teachers should be given the responsibility of being in control of their own assessment.
3. Assessment needs to be client-centered. This requires a shift in the whole orientation of assessment.
4. Assessment should be conducted judiciously and fairly.
5. Assessment involves far more than test taking and reporting.
6. Diversity in assessment and in students should be encouraged.
7. Despite its objective, standardized testing should not necessarily be seen to be fair.
8. The complex nature of assessing literacy development necessitates a deeper exploration than merely comparing test scores.
9. Inter-and intra-rater reliability are important elements of assessment reform.
10. Long-term assessment techniques provide a more developmentally appropriate and accurate depiction of a student.
11. Assessment data need to be viewed tentatively. Interpretation of results is not a straightforward thing.
12. Learning and assessment need to be negotiated with those who are most involved in an individual's progress, including the individual student, rather than imposed by outside sources.
13. Assessment should be evaluated in terms of its relationship with teaching and learning.

The Way Forward

Although alternative literacy assessment techniques are "tolerable" the public still believes that the bottom line in assessment rests with standardized tests generated by commercial, and supposedly independent, testing companies (Adkison & Tchudi, 2001). Despite considerable opposition from educators, it seems certain that the assessment scene will continue to be dominated by high-stakes testing (Valencia, 2000). Legislators continue to introduce and promote practices contrary to the opinions of educational experts. In fact, "*one of the truly puzzling aspects of reading assessment...is that the amount of testing appears to increase at the same time that criticism of it intensifies*" (Farr, 1995, p. 31). Some fear that the future of literacy assessment is as much about what best serves the interests of politicians as it is about finding practices that are in the best interests of children (Tierney, 2000b; Valencia, 2000).

Tierney (2000b) optimistically foresees a future in which literacy evaluation is used as "*a process for sharing accountability rather than assigning it*" (p. 244). He also believes the future will be one in which there is a shift toward learner-centered assessment, within which diversity is respected more than standardization. Such a shift in focus "*entails a shift from something you do to students to something you do with them or help them do for themselves*" (Tierney, 2000a, p. 120, italics in original).

At the moment there appears to be no easy solution to what is becoming an increasingly difficult problem. Cala (2003) sees a bleak picture in which "*no end to the damage is in sight*" (p. 520). What educators seem to agree upon is the fact that current practices are far from perfect. Change needs to take place in how we assess reading and writing. Johnston (1997) reminds us that change takes time, and that it is necessary to start small and work from there. We have a long way to go before we can claim that evaluation practices are as they should be. We must remember, however, that true tests do take time and invariably involve occasional setbacks and failures. In the meantime, Kohn (2001) suggests teachers do what must be done to prepare our students for the tests they face, but then immediately return to what he terms the real learning. Kohn believes teachers should spend no more time on test preparation than is utterly necessary but that even this time should be used creatively and in a manner that is designed to minimize traditional drilling of skills. These are but short-term solutions to an ongoing problem, but they suggest an approach that teachers can employ right now, without waiting for an overhaul of the system. As we educators prepare to confront the tests awaiting us in the future, may we take with us as a compass the guiding vision of Tierney (2000a) who counsels, *"Assessment must address making futures possible and pursuable rather than impossible or improbable"* (p. 134).

Where To Go From Here?

In order to gain a more accurate picture of our students' literacy achievement, we should seek triangulation through the use of multiple measures (Barootchi & Keshavarz, 2002). There are many ways to measure performance other than standardized test scores, including the informed judgment of professional teachers (Jones & Ongtooguk, 2002; Wassermann, 2001). Evidence can be collected in a variety of forms and settings, formal and informal, to evaluate the teaching and learning, taking place within our schools (Meier, 2002).

Even though improving literacy assessment may seem a monumental task, I don't believe we should give up on it as a lost cause. The time we invest into trying to improve literacy assessment will not be time wasted. I do not claim to have a perfect alternative to standardized testing. However, I do believe that more attention must be paid to the opinions of teachers and researchers and the alternatives they advocate. The idea behind standardization in testing is to make it objective, and therefore, supposedly... to make it fair. This then begs the question of whether an objective group of questions is fairer than a group that is made with subjectivity. Shouldn't a teacher take all sorts of things into consideration when assessing a student's performance? How much emphasis is given to product? How much is given to effort and improvement? How much for obstacles overcome? Do not all of these factors deserve some consideration when assessing a child's work? What balance is fair?

Given my premise that standardized testing is not fair, it is important to ask if the alternative literacy assessment techniques *are* fair. I must concede that I am not sure what fair literacy assessment is. I know only what FAIRER assessment looks like. Perhaps, however, this knowledge is a sufficient *starting point* from which to advocate literacy assessment reform.

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Investing in Future Possibilities: The North American Reggio Emilia Alliance

By Barbara Acton, Margie Cooper and Bonnie Neugebauer

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"Leave no child behind . . . " These trademarked words have long captured the mission of the Children's Defense Fund and, more recently, have been appropriated by the Bush Administration to identify legislative efforts focused on early learning. Whether spoken or read, they evoke images, emotions, experiences, hopes and dreams within each of us.

What does a community, a nation, a continent, a world that "leaves no child behind" look like?

What kind of future is possible if we unite to honour, nurture, respect and defend each unique child? What might we learn from children, men and women that might ensure a future rich with humanity, peace and prosperity for all?

We, like many generations before us, live in a time of great uncertainty. Fear and isolation are feelings that hang heavy, making it difficult at times to see or perhaps, even more disconcerting, to *trust* in the future. Those of us in education, particularly, in the field of early childhood education have great sources of "light" within our reach. Children are naturally luminous, rich with potential, stimulated by curiosity and filled with wonder. As educators, we share the conviction that *to educate is to believe in the future, to have hope.*

NAREA Board Members deep in collaboration at a recent meeting: Angela Ferrario, Pat Tarr, Simonetta Cittadini-Medina

What does a community, a nation, a continent, a world that "leaves no child behind" look like?

Many readers of Canadian Children share a special kind of hope, sustained by the work of children, families and educators in the small town of Reggio Emilia, Italy. Inspired by the accomplishments of their decades-long struggle for the rights of children, we can imagine a world that values relationships, invites exchange, and promotes creativity, solidarity and peace. Central to the Reggio Emilia philosophy is dialogue . . . a willingness and desire to listen, to observe and to connect. The North American Reggio Emilia Alliance (NAREA) was conceptualized and founded by a group of educators who are committed to living and promoting these same tenets.

We are united together, guiding board, members and international colleagues, in the belief that all children, wherever they live and learn, have a right to educational experiences that are respectful of their uniqueness and potential . . . experiences that celebrate their questions, knowledge and creativity . . . experiences in which relationships are integral to learning. We share a common passion and vision focused on the richness of human potential and dedicated to a quality early childhood for all.

The educators of Reggio have been generous in bringing individuals into discussions of their work and have dedicated valuable resources to extend the possibilities for inspiration internationally. We

are enriched through our exchanges and the opportunities for children, for the present and future, are multiplied. Sergio Spaggiari, Director of the Department of Education and Culture, Municipality of Reggio, once said:

"*Imagine that you and I each have a gift. If you give me your gift and I give you my gift, then still we each have one gift. If, however, I have an idea and you have an idea, and we exchange our ideas, then we each have two ideas.*"

We look forward to growing and strengthening networks throughout North America. We envision networks becoming forums for sharing experiences and building lasting relationships. It is our dream that together, NAREA becomes one very loud voice advocating for the rights of all children. As it was, and is, the people of Reggio who created that which so inspires us; it is we who are called to take up the struggle in our towns, provinces, states, regions and countries. NAREA, we hope, can become a vessel or a vehicle to support this call.

NAREA, as an organization, will probably make many stumbles as it pursues its mission. It is difficult to predict the right step, to notice every possibility and to become that which every individual imagines. One thing is certain: without the support of every person who believes in the promise of children's rights, the struggle will be more difficult.

As NAREA continues into its second year, we invite you to renew your membership or become a member for the first time. Your investment in NAREA is an investment in present opportunities and in future possibilities. The essence of our collaborative work is to multiply our ideas, to compound our influence, to reach into the future with arms united and children, not following or falling behind but, rather, leading our shared journey. To learn more about our goals visit us at: www.reggioalliance.org .

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History and Mission Statement of NAREA

The North American Reggio Emilia Alliance (NAREA) is a network of educators, parents and advocates seeking to elevate both the quality of life and the quality of schools and centers for young children.

The history of this organization is rooted in the work and ideals of many dedicated individuals in the United States, Canada and Mexico. These individuals visited the schools in Reggio Emilia, and carried back images and narratives about this powerful community of education based on a philosophy that values the potential of all children to think, learn and construct knowledge. These first visitors returned to Reggio over and over again, leading delegations of colleagues. Supported by educators in Reggio Emilia and North America, they hosted the "The Hundred Languages of Children" exhibit, organized conferences and courses, opened their schools for study and dialogue, and published articles and books, creating a vast network of learning inspired by the Reggio approach. Since summer 2000, a small group of these educators has met regularly to develop the North American Reggio Emilia Alliance as an organization.

NAREA's mission is to build a diverse community of advocates and educators to promote and defend the rights of children, families and teachers of all cultures through a collaboration of colleagues inspired by the Reggio Emilia philosophy. The goals of the alliance are:

- to serve as a conduit for dialogue and exchange with Reggio Children and other international organizations that promote the rights of young children,
- to strengthen professional relationships among members by facilitating collaboration and exchange,
- to strengthen access to professional development initiatives and resources through communication tools, including *Innovations in Early Education: The International Reggio Exchange* quarterly periodical and the NAREA web site,
- to create professional development initiatives that are responsive to the needs and requests of our members, and
- to encourage the diversity of membership within our organization to include individuals from a full range of social, economic and cultural communities.

Outdoor Play Environments for the Soul

Rusty Keeler

Rusty Keeler, founder and designer of Planet Earth Playscapes, works to create one-of-a-kind, natural, community-built play environments for children. Keeler lectures at colleges and conferences internationally and was recently awarded second place in an international playground design competition sponsored by the International Play Association. He lives with his wife in the countryside of Ithaca, New York and can often be found playing in the region's creeks and gorges.

This article is adapted from, Creating Outdoor Play Environments for the Soul, published in *Children and Families*, the quarterly magazine of the National Head Start Association.

There is a new movement in the world of outdoor play environments - a shift back to nature. Instead of filling backyards and playgrounds with traditional "man-made" equipment, childcare centers across North America are transforming their outdoor landscapes into magical "playscapes". We can create sensory-rich play spaces that stimulate healthy development, change throughout the seasons, and offer children a world of creative play and exploration. These new play environments, inspired by local communities and their natural resources, can be made from grassy hills, trees, herbs, paths, sculpture, sand, water, and more - all with an intriguing medley of colors, sounds, scents, and textures.

Cherished Memories

Think about your childhood. What was your favorite outdoor place to play? What was that environment like? Do your memories evoke specific sights, scents, and sounds? What did you do there? What did it look like and feel like? Did this place change along with the seasons? What sort of games did you play and what did you discover there?

Most of us have vivid memories of our favorite childhood play environment. This was the place where we began to discover the wonder of playful exploration. It was the place where we first interacted with the natural world. This place was our introduction to the environment, our community, and the cycles of life.

The places where adults remember playing as children are so often natural places. Places with a stream, clumps of spongy moss, thick layers of slippery mud, fallen logs, or even a mound of dirt piled high in a vacant lot in the city. There is just something about connecting with the natural world that is so important for all people - particularly children. These are the kinds of experiences that nourish our soul.

Unfortunately, many children today do not have the kinds of opportunities that we had, not so long ago. Our fast-paced culture now places greater emphasis on going, doing, and becoming, and less on wandering, searching, and discovering. With modern urban and suburban development, natural, or "wild" areas are less available. And now that both mothers and fathers often work outside of the home, a large number of young children are spending the majority of their days in

structured childcare and education settings. This means that the outdoor space at these centers becomes their outdoor world - the place they visit day after day. It is the place where many young children will first develop a relationship with the natural world. What will the children in your center discover out in the yard? What will they learn? And what will they experience?

Since children spend so much of their time in these settings, it is important to make these play environments as beautiful, educational and engaging as possible. When we design a play environment, we are really creating children's experiences, which, if we do a good job, will become cherished memories. How do we create safe, meaningful environments that support and celebrate the cognitive, physical, and emotional development of young children?

Change Of Heart

After working for five years as the conceptual designer for Kompan, a playground equipment company in Olympia, Washington, I had the opportunity to work in The Netherlands for Speelhout, a Dutch playground manufacturer. I learned a great deal about children's play and development while designing play equipment for both companies, but it wasn't until I spent a year in Europe that I truly began to understand the value in children's playful connections with nature. In Europe, I saw public spaces and interactive public art like nothing I had seen in the United States. There were magical sculpture gardens and one-of-a-kind play environments. Neighborhoods and parks had playgrounds that blended seamlessly with the natural world. Every child *should* have access to these types of dynamic playscapes and every child *can*!

One-Of-A-Kind Spaces

A well-designed outdoor play environment should be a reflection and statement of the local community and its environment. It should, of course, suit the individual needs and characteristics of each program. A play environment in Arizona, for example, should be different than one in Ontario, particularly because the materials and plants available in those regions are so different. Think of play environments as a microcosm of the greater environment surrounding the community.

Be creative. To create a truly rich, imaginative play environment, add local stone, native plants, and other natural elements. Make use of your most valuable resource - the talent and skills of local artists and crafts people - by turning your playscape into a community-built project. Community-built projects are projects that are organized, designed, and constructed by community members. By making your project a community-built one, you'll cut down on expenses, establish new friendships and partnerships for your program, and infuse a sense of real belonging into the community.

Creating Your Playscape

To begin, establish a playscape committee. Invite staff members, parents, and community members to join. Then create

an inventory of the talents and skills in your community. Can you find some masons who would be interested in being a part of your project? Carpenters? Artists? Gardeners? Next, create a list of materials and plantings that are native to and available in your community. Are there places to gather boulders or old logs? Local plant nurseries or parents with knowledge of plants can help you make a list of safe trees and shrubs that grow well in your area. These two lists of resources will become your "design palette."

Your center's playscape design will gradually evolve once you see the skills of the people who want to help and the types of materials you will have access to. Once you have your basic design, the playscape committee should work on obtaining the necessary materials, tools, and volunteers needed for the construction. Oh, and don't forget to provide some nutritious snacks!

When I design playscapes, I typically schedule four to six months for planning. Once the planning is completed, building the playscape usually requires four to five days with 25 to 100 volunteers each day. You are sure to enjoy the special moments that your community members will share as they work together. Your project will leave everyone with a sense of pride and ownership that will last long after it has been completed.

Every community has surprise resources and talents. Sometimes all it takes is a bit of detective work to find them. In Caroline, New York, we contacted the city forester to see if he would like to contribute materials. He happily donated huge maple tree sections to our project. The trees had been recently cut down in the city, and this was a chance to give them a second life. Mark Watson, a local sculptor, used a chain saw to carve the sections, then sanded and polished them and transformed them into a beautiful, huggable sculpture. We covered the ground surrounding the sculpture with soft surface to make the sculpture safe for the children to climb. Add to that a simple maintenance plan, and the center had a wonderful, interactive work of art that the children would enjoy for years.

In Bellingham, Washington, volunteers collected smooth river boulders and local driftwood to create a playscape for young children with special needs. The large boulders were bonded together with cement to create a textural sand and water play sculpture. Colored marbles were embedded between the rocks to add a sense of discovery and surprise. Driftwood pieces were added to the yard as decoration, with larger pieces used as balancing, climbing, and sitting areas. Native plants were also used throughout the playscape, giving the children the opportunity to play hide-and-seek in the tall decorative grasses, sit in the shade of trees, and enjoy the delicious aroma of herbs. With all these local elements, the children who use this space get a first hand feel of their local natural environment.

In Skaneateles, New York, several of the members of an infant-toddler playscape committee were master gardeners, so that environment became very rich in plants. We created a Sunflower jungle, forests of Jerusalem artichokes and black-eyed Susans, a mini orchard of Dwarf Apple Trees, and we planted a variety of other trees, herbs, and shrubs. The owner of a pre-cast concrete company donated a section of culvert to be used as a tunnel, and the owner of a paving company donated the paving for a series of winding tricycle paths. We added a rubber surface to the paths to help protect toddlers from skinned knees and to give infants a soft crawling pad as they learn to walk. As a final touch, a local metal fabricator made a variety of chimes, so the children could experiment with sound.

Soundscapes

Shhh. Listen. What do you hear right now? While we are typically a visually-dominated culture, the sounds in our environment have a tremendous effect on us, often subconsciously. The landscape of sound in an environment often referred to as the "soundscape". When we think of creating multi-sensory play environments, sound is an important element that should not be overlooked.

I have a friend whose house is located above a giant waterfall. When you're in his house you can hear the falls from every room. You feel the falls. The sounds echo the changes of the seasons. In a dry summer, you hear a gentle trickle of water splashing down the rocks. During the spring thaw, you hear the raging river and you get swept up in the

thunder of water pounding down the falls. If my friend moved, he would deeply miss those sounds. For him, the sounds of those falls create a feeling of home. The hectic sounds of a city usually elicit a sense of excitement and action, while the hush of a forest creates a tranquil, relaxed mood. You can use sound to create certain moods in children's play environments as well.

At Cornell University's Early Learning Center in Ithaca, New York, we created an entire soundscape for their existing play environment. Our goal was to incorporate sound in a way that complemented the existing play area. We did so by first spending time getting to know the space and becoming familiar with the activities and types of play that occurred in the different areas of the play environment. Then we considered the following three uses of sound:

Sound as a backdrop to play

Ambient sounds create an overall mood that becomes a subtle part of the environment. Things such as wind chimes in trees make great melodies when the wind blows. Choose a variety for different sounds and textures - different sizes, different materials, even wood or bamboo. Many plants make sounds in the wind as well. Try planting large ornamental grasses or bamboo (where suited), as well as trees that rustle in the wind like Quaking Aspen or Poplar.

Sound as a by-product of play

This is achieved by adding sound elements such as bells, chimes and rattles to places where children commonly play. Think about what kinds of play occur in the different areas and how you can match the textures of sound to the types of play. Try to imagine what a gross-motor play area sounds like. What about a quiet, getaway spot? Now incorporate items into those play areas that will create the types of sounds you envisioned in those areas. For example, a quiet nook could have delicate chimes that ring when children pass into the space. A gross motor climbing tree or play equipment could have cowbells hung that jostle as the children climb.

Sound as the goal of play

Instead of incorporating sound as an inconspicuous part of the environment as described above, sound can also be used as an item that children can directly explore and play with. Install interesting instruments and sound sculptures for the children to experiment with. For example, you might include a metal drum for the children to bang, a set of bells for the children to ring, a giant marimba or xylophone to play a song on, a gong to hit, or a fire bell to clang.

Once the observations and designs were completed, local fabricators made most of the sound elements. Other pieces were purchased from nearby suppliers. The sounds range from delicate twinklings in quiet areas to loud resonating booms in active areas. Because too often children get stuck with clanky, inharmonious instruments and toys, all the materials we used were chosen for their rich, melodious sounds. We added a variety of wind chimes, some made out of wood and others out of metal. One set of four chimes made by Woodstock Windchimes is actually tuned to Vivaldi's Four Seasons. (The children and staff have a ceremonial "changing of the chimes" at the start of every season.) We hung tiny Tibetan bronze bells in a huge forsythia bush and cowbells from India in existing trees that the children are allowed to climb. *Listening cones* made from orange traffic cones were fastened to the outer fence; by putting their ears to the cones, the children are able to hear the sounds of the forest that borders the play area. Beautifully tuned *entrance chimes* were mounted in an existing railing just outside the door to help mark the transition point from indoors to outdoors. A *huge set of tuned standing chimes* give the children the opportunity to "pound out a song" using rubber mallets. The children can also make music on a *giant wooden marimba* and a set of tongue drums made by Sound Play of Georgia. An *enormous Thunder Drum* is the booming attraction in the far corner of the yard. The drum has six softball mallets and is plenty big enough to allow a group of children to make wonderful music together.

It's All About This . . .

As Buckminster Fuller said, "*playgrounds should be renamed research environments, because that is what the children are doing so vigorously. They are not just playing. They are finding out how the universe works.*" We know that through play, children learn vital problem-solving skills, they gain a sense of accomplishment, and they are introduced to the joy of exploration. By providing young children with sensory rich playscapes filled with colors, delightful sounds, surprises, textures, and enticing scents, you will be opening the doors to a world of discovery. This is what memories - and knowledge are made of !

The Ontario Early Years Centre: Our Journey

Lynn Cook

Lynn Cook, ECE, I/T, BA, is the Manager of the Ontario Early Years Centre for Sarnia-Lambton, and coordinator of the Resource Teacher Post Diploma Program offered at Kettle and Stoney Point. Her twenty years of experience, includes working with families at the Lab School, teaching in the ECE and Infant Toddler Care & Guidance program at Lambton College. Lynn has a long-standing passion for the well-being of children and their families and has worked to create an environment that will assist them in reaching their full potential.

Abstract

The Early Years Study, commissioned by the Ontario Government in 1998, states *"that the early years from before birth to age six have the most important influence of any time in the life cycle on brain development and subsequent learning, behaviour and health"*. McCain & Mustard (1999). Based on the findings of this study, the Ontario Government created Ontario Early Years Centres (O.E.Y.C)to service families of children zero to six. These centres are designed to be accessible, affordable and available to all families. Main sites, satellites and outreach centres service families in urban and rural areas. Programs include early learning and literacy for parents and children, pre and post natal education, parent and caregiver workshops, community professionals to support families and answer questions. This article describes the early journey of the Sarnia-Lambton O.E.Y.C.

Lead Agency selected for the Ontario Early Years Centre

Lambton College has been committed to the well being of children and families for almost forty years. As educators of young children and families, the Ontario Early Years Centre initiative became a perfect fit. Karen Harper, Manager, Lambton College ECE Centre along with Jim Elliot, then dean, spearheaded the proposal and presentation to the Community Planning Group, responsible for selecting a site for delivery of early years services. Through the strong commitment of ECE faculty, staff and college administration, Lambton College was selected by the community for its leadership in the community and excellence in delivery of children's programs.

The Ontario Early Years Centre has now been operating in the Sarnia-Lambton community for six months. We have had over ten thousand visits (Feb.2004) from parents, caregivers, home providers, grandparents, professionals and children from the community. The Ontario Early Years Centre is a government initiative, that provides funding for accessible, affordable and available family drop-in programs, parent education, information on children and family services in 103 communities throughout Ontario. The program is 100% funded by the provincial government and *free of charge* to all families.

The Environment

The Sarnia-Lambton Ontario Early Years Centre offers families an environment that promotes interaction between parents/caregivers and children. The environment is designed with families in mind. The infant area provides a large floor space for infants to engage in floor time and strengthen developing motor skills. Educators model by sitting on the floor and talking with children. The room is scattered with couches for moms feeding or soothing an upset baby. Thirty percent of our clients are children under two years of age. The environment promotes a well-rounded program with opportunities to explore all areas of development. A weekly visit from a Public Health Nurse, brings much needed service to the families in our community. Sarnia-Lambton is experiencing a shortage in physicians and new families to our area, must access local emergency rooms. Through a visit to our centre parents can have their infants/toddlers growth and development monitored. The Nurse is available to discuss lactation concerns, eating habits, temperament and new parent worries. This is a welcome addition to the advice and problem solving techniques offered by our Early Childhood Education staff.

Sand and water play are essential elements available at all times. Children are provided with materials to explore sand and water in bins adjacent to the tables. They have the freedom to make choices for themselves in regard to what materials they will use each day. Educator's introduce new language and encourage problem solving and exploration of materials. The program is child driven; at one time we tried something different in the water table and it was the children that let us know, "we need water every day! ". Parents have conveyed the same message, through our monthly site satisfaction surveys. "I'm glad they have activities here that I would never have in my home, like sand and water"

When setting up learning centers, we felt it was important to include learning

experiences for all children zero to six. A writing centre with real office materials is set up to promote emerging literacy skills. Tape, pencils, sharpener, staplers, envelopes, stamps and a telephone are available to create books, practice numeracy and writing skills. Parents are encouraged to sit with their children and support their efforts.

Early Literacy Initiative

The OEYC initiative promotes the development of literacy skills. A full time Early Years Literacy Specialist provides staff training to all of our Ontario Early Years sites and visits each program monthly. She provides workshops for parents and caregivers. The format for workshops includes parent/caregiver education, interactive parent/child programs and once a month she provides a program with the children in the OEYC, to model some of this teaching to parents. The Literacy Specialist trains ECE staff, school teachers, children service agency staff, library staff and anyone interested in promoting literacy in our community.

The Ontario Government has created Newborn Literacy Kits for distribution to all families of newborns in 2003 and 2004. The Kits are delivered by Community Health Nurses, during home visits. Families not wishing a home visit can visit an Ontario Early Years Centre to pick up their free kit. Each kit contains a CD with songs from the Parent-Child Mother Goose Program, "Precious Minds" Nurturing Literacy in the Early Years video, child development brochures, "Read Me a Book" by Barbara Reid, written especially for this project and an early years passport for important information.

Partnerships with the Community

Partnering with Children's Services and Public Heath Nurses to deliver the kits has strengthened our ability to reach out to families beyond our own centre. Community collaboration is important to the success of the Ontario Early Years initiative. Partnerships with School Boards, Children's Treatment Centre, Mental Health, Community Health Agency and our First Nations communities have been established. In Sarnia-Lambton, we are working closely with our First Nation families. Through the support of community leaders, Aboriginal families are visiting the OEYC instead of starting a separate program directly in their communities. Our mission is to make all families feel welcome, and to work together to introduce families to different cultures. Lambton College has been working closely with our First Nation community to deliver ECE Programs at Kettle and Stoney Point, Walpole Island and Aamjiwnaang First Nations. These strong connections garnered the support of the community planning group in choosing Lambton College as the lead agency for Sarnia-Lambton .

A strong connection to the Early Childhood Education Program and The ECE Centre at Lambton College makes the OEYC stronger in its ability to offer quality diverse programs. Curriculum foundations rich in inspirations from Emergent Curriculum, High Scope and Reggio Emilia approaches are visible as you enter our doors. A natural environment with gentle colours in which children make learning choices – guide and lead conversations and ask questions that support us in planning the program. Parents and caregivers have been very responsive to this learning style, which empowers their children. We felt parents may have been resistant to a curriculum driven by children, focusing on their interests and needs. We thought more emphasis from parents would be placed on the finished product and creative activities in which a model is provided. Instead, they have observed the staff guide their children through a variety of learning experiences, absorbing new ideas and contributing to their making.

One parent said to another "Look they have a felt board. Yes, they have a little bit of everything here."

Parent/Caregiver Education

Parent/Caregiver education is a major focus of OEYC programs. We make ourselves available to parents while visiting the centre. Informal discussion groups, referrals to community agencies, parent workshops, research articles and parent resource books are a few of the ways we are educating parents. The demand for parent education has been extremely positive. Workshops quickly fill up and we offer a second set that equally fills up. Parent commitment is excellent with 90% follow through by attending the workshops. We look for programs that promote interaction between parent and child. The mandate of the Ontario Early Years Initiative includes 200 hours of parent/caregiver education. We have surpassed this in the first six months of operation.

For six evenings, we offer a family math program for children in JK, SK and Grade 1. Five staff volunteers have been trained in this program delivery by the University of Western, Ontario. The evening begins with a family meal, followed by an hour and a half of math activities. These activities are based upon the Kindergarten and Grade 1 provincial curriculum. The last 15 minutes of the evening is time for the parents to meet with a facilitator to discuss "where the math took place". We ask parents for a three night commitment, but invite them to stay for all six sessions. Their response has been "is there another program after this?" A program for Grades 2-6 is also available but doesn't fall under the OEYC mandate; we are looking for a community partner to take this on.

For years, Infant Massage has been an important teaching component with families and Early Childhood Education students at Lambton College. As Educators we understand the value of touch and sensory stimulation. It has been exciting sharing this teaching with our families. Currently two of our Early Childhood Educators are completing Infant Massage Instructor Training. This process included a four-day training session in Toronto, massage classes with five families for five weeks, two literature reviews and a written exam. The local media presented a story on our massage program, interviewing staff and parents. This attention to the process has been very exciting. Parents often express an interest in attending out of curiosity. This curiosity soon becomes a passion for the process and the nurturing touch between parent and child. The massage facilitator models the process for parents and supports them through the massage. This process is not hurried, and weekly classes last for sixty to ninety minutes. Discussion among parents moves from massage to the birthing process, feeding schedules and sleep habits. Mabel Higgins, an ECE Professor at Lambton College conducts her classes across the hall from the Ontario Early Years Centre. She can often be caught taking a peek into the room, where the massages take place. Mabel melts at the closeness between parent and child, the atmosphere and the learning that takes place. *"Being touched and caressed, being massaged, is food for the infant. Food as necessary as minerals, vitamins and proteins"* (Babeshoff and Dellinger-Bavolek 1993)

The ECE Faculty and the OEYC are looking at ways to support learning in the classroom to reinforce what is taking place across the hall in our Family Drop In Centre. Opportunities for students to present workshops and for parents to share experiences with students will further enhance what we have to offer as a community college. Early Childhood Education students, as well as the Nursing and Child and Youth Programs, also complete field practicum in this setting.

Lambton College's Commitment to Child Care

An integral part of our childcare community at Lambton College is the Early Childhood Education Centre. The ECE Centre provides childcare for working parents of children 0-10 years of age. They serve all families in the community but provide an essential service to student parents attending courses at the College. A strong foundation for learning and exceptional programs for children with special needs has made the ECE Centre a community leader. All students enrolled in the ECE Program will complete field placement in the Centre, where they are nurtured and guided by dedicated staff, who endeavor to convey classroom theory in their practice.

It is a strong foundation for learning that encourages Early Childhood Educators at Lambton College to strive for excellence in the delivery of children's programs. The Ontario Early Years initiative has provided an additional avenue for delivery of inspiring programs that nurture and assist all families in reaching their full potential. We acknowledge the Ontario Government's commitment to children and families and the creation of Ontario Early Years Centres.

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Bringing Learning to Life: The Reggio Approach to Early Childhood Education

By Louise Boyd Cadwell

Reviewed By Will Parnell

Will Parnell is the Co-Director of Portland State University's Helen Gordon Child Development Center. He is currently pursuing a doctorate degree in Educational Leadership through Portland State University, emphasizing the Reggio approach and early childhood education. He has a tremendous passion for teacher research, reflection, and professional development. His latest work has been centered on the Helen Gordon Center expansion, architectural design in early childhood education, and the values of collaboration and human connection conveyed in and through the living environment.

Louise Boyd Cadwell's book *Bringing Learning to Life* illuminates an American school's own daily learning experiences and perspective on early education. Truly, it brings "learning to life" in its month-by-month description of a school's "life". Certainly the book's framework and context reaches back to its roots in the preprimary schools of Reggio Emilia, Italy; yet, this is beyond doubt an American early childhood education experience. Rich in picturesque language and beautiful photographs of families, teachers, children and their work, Louise guides the reader through the school year living with her as she paints on the canvas of this book. Starting with a provocative forward by Carla Rinaldi, we are thrust into our own motivations as to why we hold this precious learning journey in our hands. She asks us to consider why we continue to read and develop our understanding of teaching and parenting in this way.

"I hold that there is nothing worse for us as educators than to fall into a routine, because as events unfold, more often than not, routines lead us to repeat ourselves over and over, and finally, we have nothing left to offer. Falling into a routine, we risk losing the stimulation that our work can give us, and we cease caring about what we are actually offering children. We should pause more often to reflect on what we are doing in school and especially to think about daily life as a series of unexpected opportunities". (Cadwell, 2003, p. ix)

Carla Rinaldi guides us as we take in this inventive look at the life of a school. We grow, we think and we become more fully engaged. This Reggio-inspired approach comes alive and we begin to shift our perception of how to participate in community education and acknowledge our own metaphors for teaching and learning and theories of childhood.

We have values. How can we best live our own country's values?

Throughout Louise's narrative we turn pages along with the chronology of the months. Each chapter represents a month in time, starting with January 2000 and the metaphor of coming home to the arch of St. Louis. This image arouses a strong connection to Louise's earlier book, *Bringing Reggio Emilia Home: An Innovative Approach to Early Childhood Education*. I cannot help but think back to the similarities in these works, yet I am struck by the newness of this storyline.

In each of the six chapters - January through June - we seek out our teaching selves and the reciprocity between the words on the page and our own practices. We encounter new ideas about teacher and parent as listener who are fully present and attentive and about children as active participants in the learning atmosphere of a school's atelier. We rediscover and uncover in (a) January, the uses of the atelier; (b) February, the importance of parent participation, voice, and exchange; (c) March, the reasons behind teacher collaboration, change, reflection, and the accessible and visible organization of our work; (d) April, the development and transformation of place, time, space, and thinking; (e) May, the value of meaning making, meta-cognition, and children's work in the hundred languages; (f) and in June, the reconnection with our Italian mentors, the making of fresh perspectives, and the acknowledgement that ending brings about beginning. As Cadwell (2003) states, "*We can't just live with this experience as some kind of dream we've had. We must read, discuss, think together, organize round tables. We have values. How can we best live our own country's values? Maybe we won't stop at a few questions. Perhaps we will go deeper*" (p. 193). *Bringing Learning to Life* carries us into profound educational questions and slowly awakens our sensibilities to life's greatness - precious moments that exist in our everyday encounters with human wonderings and the struggle to become.

Within every educational project there exists struggle, resentments, heartaches, arguments, deconstruction and reconstruction. While this writing is certainly not idealistically uninformed about difficult realities, it does not touch on the human struggles educators face when encountering such a shockingly different

perspective on the image of children, teachers, and schools. Some early childhood teachers resist this "movement" (this Reggio Way), believing it to be a new fad or accessible only to the upper class. Nevertheless, the effervescence produced in Cadwell's work displays the true struggle of dialogue and meaning making between teachers, humans, and people who are different from one another. The work Cadwell suggests is accessible if we open ourselves to it. This story deliberately shows us *its* community's values and asks that we develop our own and not copy them. We are asked only for the courtesy of this chronicle's consideration in our dialogue and practices.

Bringing Learning to Life recasts the image of early childhood educational experiences with its thoughtful and heartwarming style. It evokes a smile at each turn of the page; I leave these pages wanting to witness more childhood beauty in my life. Louise Cadwell (2003) compels me to reflect back with her words, "*To experience oneself in the world in this way is to shift one's view to a world-view, a universe view, a web-of-life view. Recognizing this view as one that fits with life and with the way we wish to live in school with children calls us not to copy but to embrace and to evolve from what we intuitively know to be true*" (p.194). I begin to stretch my own vision and thinking around the rights of children toward a childhood of full citizen participation and a prospect that my community can value the intelligence, genius and brilliance of each child.

Thank you Louise Cadwell, the College School children, families, and teachers, and educators in Reggio Emilia for allowing us to witness this community's work. We know this makes you vulnerable to share your story of learning, which brings about a deep sense of gratitude for those of us seeking an inspired life with children.

Publisher: Teachers College Press, 2003
ISBN: 0-8077-4296-1 (paper) 0-8077-4297-X (cloth)

Oh, Baby, the Places You'll Go!

Adapted by Tish Rabe from the works of Dr. Seuss

Reviewed by Leigh Hathaway

Leigh Hathaway is an Early Literacy Specialist for the Sarnia Lambton Ontario Early Years Centre. She has been in the child care profession for 17 years.

Don't confuse this book with Dr. Seuss' great book for older children (I have one tucked away to give to my son when he graduates from university). *The Places You'll Go. Oh, Baby, the Places You'll Go*, is to be read to babies in utero. Research illustrates that babies start learning before they are born. Researchers asked prospective mothers and fathers to read *The Cat in the Hat* aloud to their babies during their pregnancy. "*The researchers found increased uterine activity during the reading – and a gradual settling down afterward. This response to the book continues after delivery. The baby, apparently recalled having heard the story before ... in utero!*"

This book will introduce baby and reacquaint you with all the old Dr. Seuss favourites ... Horton, Daisy Head Maizie, Cindy Lou Who, Sam I Am and of course, the Cat in the Hat. You will get to visit the Jungles of Jorn, Mulberry Street, Circus McGurkus, McElligot's Pool and Who-ville. In amongst all the traditional Seuss writing, there are heartwarming lines. "*While you are growing, we're all busy counting, the days till we meet you – excitement is mounting*" and "*the words I am saying you hear in your heart, and know that I wish you the very best start.*" are two of the lines written especially for the baby.

Reading to your child in utero is something both mom and dad can take part in, thus allowing dad some special bonding time. It will also provide both parents with practice in reading aloud. In Mem Fox's book, *Reading Magic,* we are told that research indicates that a child needs to hear 1000 stories before they are ready to learn to read. Just think of the head start your child will have, by hearing stories before they are born. She also talks about the importance of listening to rhyming in fostering your child's reading readiness.

Most of us grew up with Dr. Seuss and remember the stories fondly, so what better book to start your child on in the road to reading. His stories have been handed down from generation to generation. My 22-year-old son told me that he remembers the first book he learned to read. It was Dr. Seuss's book, Green Eggs and Ham. Oh, Baby, the Places You'll Go makes a great baby gift for a parent-to-be and a great way to pass down a tradition. If you think it sounds silly to read to your baby this early, remember the profound words of Horton, "*a person's a person, no matter how small*".

Publisher: Random House Inc., New York 1997
ISBN 0-679-88572-2

Dr. Wayne Eastman

PUBLICATIONS CHAIRPERSON

Dr. Wayne Eastman is the new publications chair of the Canadian Association for Young Children. In this position, Wayne's role is to liaison between the CAYC's board of directors and the editor of the Journal; as well as give input into all aspects of the publishing of Canadian Children. Wayne is no stranger to the Canadian Association for Young Children. He has not only been a long-term member, but has served in many capacities on the Board of Directors, as well as, published a number of articles in Canadian Children. Wayne's commitment to the well being of children will help guide the future vision of Canadian Children.

The World Book Dictionary defines a journey "as travelling from one place to another." Hence, as I embark on my role of publications chair, I feel that I have inherited the mandate to continue the journey initiated with the inception of our wonderful Journal in 1975.

During the past number of years, I have had the very good fortune to be invited to present and conduct research in such countries as Nepal, Malaysia, New Zealand, Panama, Ecuador, Columbia, England, France, Greece, Qatar, and others. On my travels, I have always packed a number of copies of Canadian Children to be dispersed to colleagues, friends, researchers, and any others interested in a good read. Even though many of the people I speak with know very little about CAYC, at the conclusion of each conference or forum I have attendees approach me to articulate that Canadians should be proud of our Journal with its academic and pragmatic perspectives. Their comments reinforce what we already know, Canadian Children is a treasure to be preserved and promoted.

I would be remiss if I didn't thank my predecessor, Carol Jonas, for her years of dedication germane to guiding our publication. As I recall the accomplishments of my predecessors and begin my own journey as publications chair, I find myself reflecting on Alexander Graham Bell's quote: "The achievement of one goal should be the starting point of another."

Finally, I look forward to working with our energetic and ever vigilant editor, Mabel Higgins. Remember, Canadian Children belongs to you, the members and friends of the Canadian Association for Young Children. Thus, we welcome and encourage you to think about submitting an article for publication consideration; and of course we are always looking for reviews pertaining to children's and field related books, videos and CD's.

Friends of Children Award Guidlines

The CAYC "Friends of Children Award" was established to give CAYC a way of recognizing outstanding contributions, by individuals or groups, to the well-being of young children. If you know someone you would like to nominate for this award, please use the procedure and criteria below:

PROCEDURE

- The submission for nomination(s) must come through a member of the board and be seconded by a member of the board. Board members can receive recommendations for nominations from other persons or groups.
- The nominator will be responsible to obtain approval from the nominee before submitting the name of the nominee with relative background or biographical information.
- The nomination(s) will come forward at a board or executive meeting from the board member assigned responsibility for the award.
- This board member or an executive member will present the nomination and speak to it.
- The nomination will be passed by the board and/or executive with a consensus decision.
- The award will be presented promptly and in person when possible.
- Publicity of the award and the recipient(s) will appear in the journal, Canadian Children, and other publications where possible.
- Number of awards per year will vary.

CRITERIA

This may be:

- An individual or group, regardless of age.
- Has a history of commitment to the CAYC mission statement and/or aims.
- Has shown an outstanding scholarly, advocate innovative and/or practical contribution to the well-being of young children.
- CAYC membership not mandatory but encouraged.
- Canadian citizenship not mandatory.

Karyn Callaghan, author, professor of early childhood education at Mohawk College in Hamilton Ontario & member of CAYC joins Carol Jonas, former Publications Chair for Canadian Children in thoughtful conversation.

FRIENDS OF CHILDREN AWARD

Dr. Wayne Eastman

Dr. Wayne Eastman has been a member of CAYC since 1995. Dr. Eastman is the Coordinator of Applied Arts, Access and Early Childhood Education Programs, College of the North Atlantic, Corner Brook, Newfoundland and Labrador. He received his undergraduate degrees, as well as three Masters from Memorial University of Newfoundland. He also has a doctorate degree from Boston University.

Dr. Eastman's beliefs regarding the rights of children, the importance of fitness & health in young children, and the relevance of all children being afforded the opportunity to receive excellent early years educational opportunities are reflected in his many publications in both national and international scholarly and educational journals.

Dr. Eastman, in collaboration with a colleague from Nepal, was the recipient of the 2003 World Forum on Early Care and Education Networking Project Research Grant. Wayne has presented research papers in such countries as Nepal, Mexico, Greece, Malaysia, Panama, Ecuador, England, France, and the United States to mention a few. He has also presented at the World Forum on Early Care and Education for the past three years.

Wayne and his wife, Karen, have a son Matthew. Wayne is a devout family person who enjoys spending time with his family and participating in outdoor activities. His family continues to be the inspiration that drives his daily pursuits.

Wayne has been a dedicated member to the Canadian Association for Young Children, spending time as a Provincial Director, National Treasurer, as well as the current Vice President / Publications. Wayne is the editor of Inside CAYC, the national newsletter of the Canadian Association for Young Children. Wayne recently moved into the role of Publication Chair of Canadian Children. As Mabel Higgins, editor of Canadian Children, states: "Wayne's many years on the Canadian Children Editorial Review Board as well as his contributions as an author have primed him well for this position." He is also a co-editor of the Journal of Early Childhood Development, a publication of Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal. His national and international research contributions germane to young children, has benefited the development of appropriate practices, particularly in movement and brain research and school readiness.

CAYC is thrilled to present Dr. Wayne Eastman with this esteemed award. The Friends of Children Award was established to give CAYC a way of recognizing outstanding contributions by individuals to the well-being of young children. In the spirit of the preceding goal, Dr. Eastman will be presented the Friends of Children Award at the CAYC 2004 spring board meetings in Vancouver, British Columbia in May.

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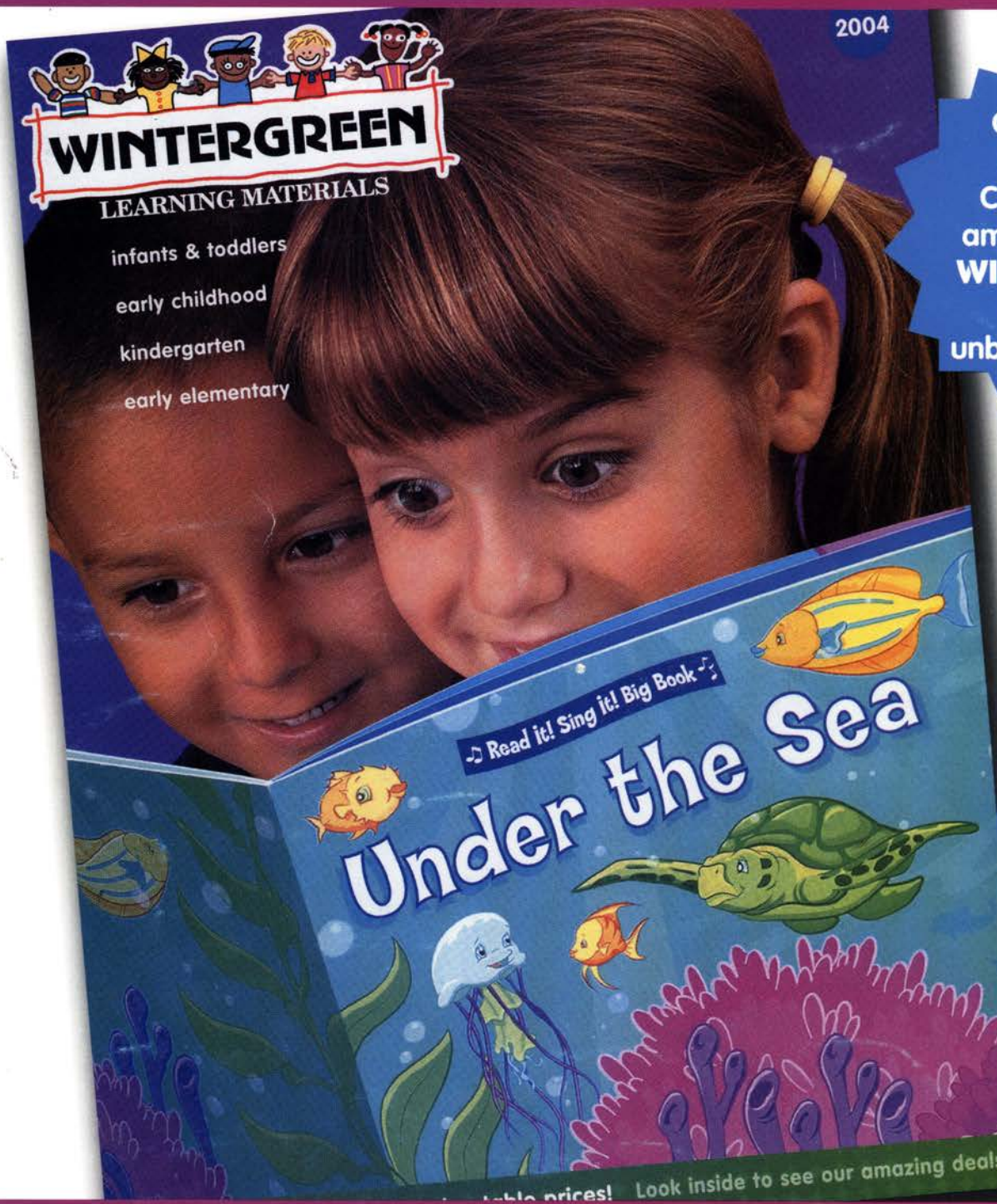

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