YOUNG CHILDREN VOL. 72 NO. 4 SEPTEMBER 2017 GLOBAL PRACTICES THAT INFORM AND INSPIRE

Young Children

September 2017

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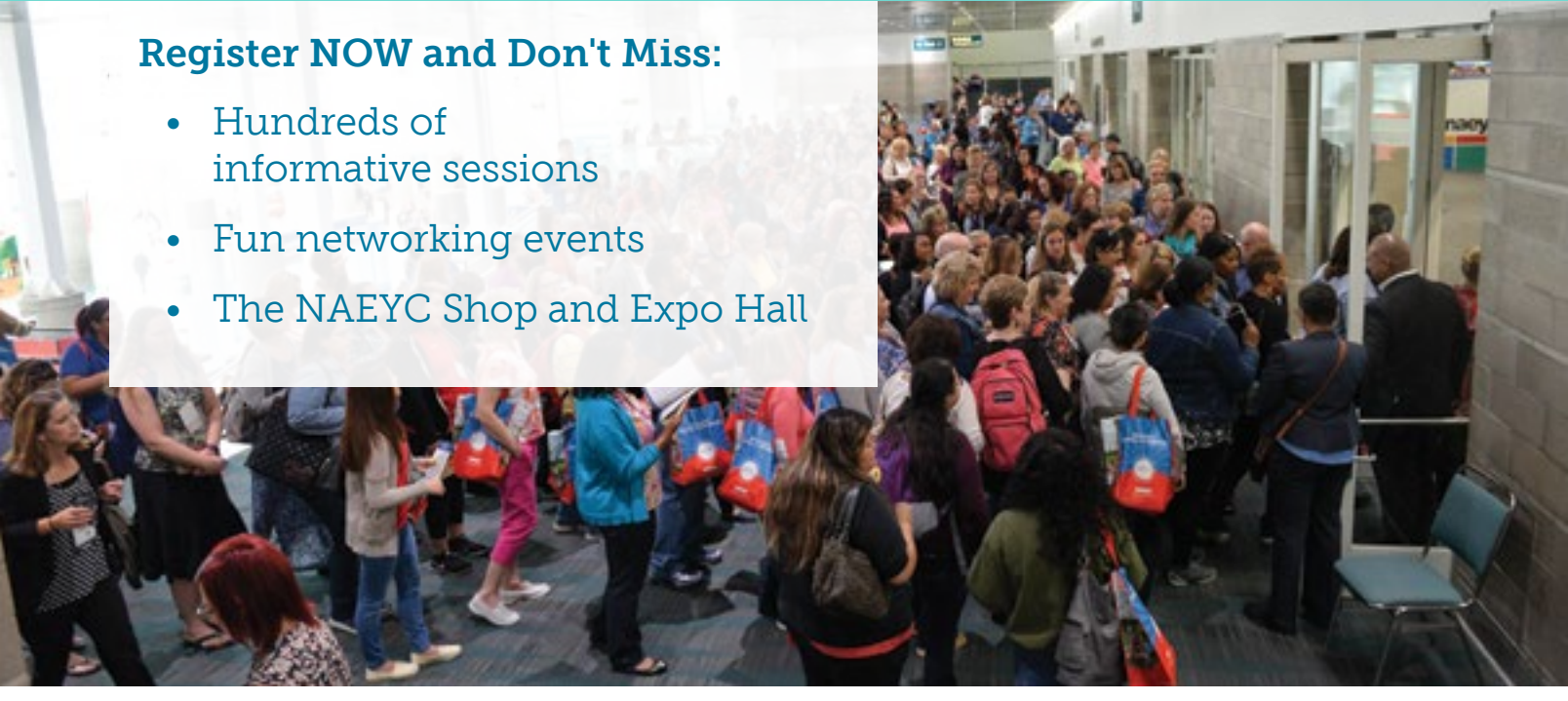

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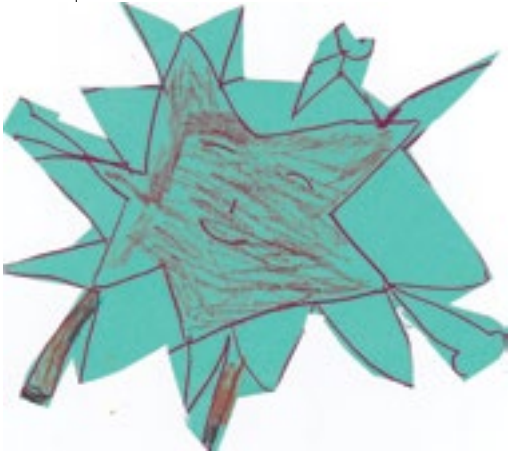
Marilou Hyson
YC Guest Editor

Global Practices that Inform and Inspire

Until 2005, family vacations were the main source of my international experience. Then out of the blue, while I was still on the NAEYC staff, my shero Joan Lombardi (whose insightful comments kick off this cluster) asked me to help with a World Bank early childhood project in Indonesia. Honestly, although I was excited to bring my knowledge of best practices to Indonesia, I had to look the country up on a map.

Now, after at least 25 trips to Indonesia, along with work on similar projects in six other low- and middle-income countries, I am continually struck by how much I—and others—can learn from our global colleagues. Through the lens of these experiences, I see promise in even the most unpromising circumstances. I see the innovation and persistence of early childhood practitioners, policy makers, and families, whatever their challenges; and my own framework for early childhood practice has been broadened and deepened. My goal with this cluster is to invite you on a similar journey.



Our first stop begins in the US but with a global twist, as educators working with both American and Australian early childhood programs take the concept of outdoor learning to a new level. In "Outdoor Learning Experiences Connecting Children to Nature: Perspectives from Australia and the United States," authors Jamie Huff Sisson and Martha Lash describe practices that may push your thinking about what is possible.

In the next part of the journey, Katherine Becker and Sonia Mastrangelo take us to Canada. "Ontario's Early Learning–Kindergarten Program: A Transformative Early Childhood Education Initiative" describes the large-scale government implementation of an initiative that most US educators only dream of: a publicly funded, two-year, mixed-age, full-day program for 4- and 5-year-olds, with an emphasis on play- and inquiry-based learning, before- and after-school programming, and a team approach to professional learning for teachers and principals.

Next, the journey moves to Africa and to another practice—one that everyone agrees is essential but difficult. In "Engaging Families and Communities to Support Early Childhood Development: The African Experience," Mary A. Moran and Pablo Stansbery share insights from their work in several African countries. They uncover rich examples of African programs' resilience, creativity, and cultural responsiveness in connecting effectively with families and local communities.

Is your classroom full of children's artwork?
We would love to feature it in *Young Children*! See the link at the bottom of the page or email **editorial@naeyc.org** for details.

We thank four young Indonesian children for these artistic slices of life in Indonesia.

Complementing this article, family-focused practices in the African country of Ethiopia are highlighted in "Save the Children's Emergent Literacy and Mathematics Initiative: Supporting Educators' and Parents' Efforts to Improve Young Children's School Readiness." Ali Amente, Alene Yenew, Ivelina Borisova, Amy Jo Dowd, Lauren Pisani, Sara Dang, and Katy Anís describe the processes by which both teachers and family members have acquired simple, everyday strategies that are realistic to use in their own environments.

Traveling on to Indonesia, my World Bank colleague Rosfita Roesli and I introduce you to a pilot project that aims to improve access to, and the quality of, early childhood services in low-income, often remote settings. "Connecting the Dots: Learning Communities for Village Teachers in Rural Indonesia" describes four complementary strategies and the lessons we are learning as these are piloted and evaluated.

The last article in the cluster, "Returning Home from International Experiences: My New Understanding of Developmentally Appropriate Practices," brings us full circle. Drawing on her efforts to apply international experiences when teaching US college students, Laurie R. Noe sounds a thoughtful note of caution about the pitfalls of trying to import what one observes in diverse countries and cultures to one's own environment, while remaining positive about the value of a global perspective.

As you read these engaging articles, please note that each concludes with a box of suggestions headed "From Global to Local Practices." For example, we ask whether you could make some simple changes in your outdoor space to promote more creative play or whether you might try using social media to connect teachers with others having similar interests. These and other suggestions are intended to prompt reflection and discussion about how the ideas in each article may be relevant to your work.

There has never been a time when global connections were more important for the well-being of all young children, and NAEYC is committed to strengthening those connections. I hope this cluster gives you practical ideas to adapt to your setting, while also deepening your commitment to a collaborative, global perspective on our work together.

—Marilou Hyson, Guest Editor

We'd love to hear from you!

Send your thoughts on this issue, as well as topics you'd like to read about in future issues of *Young Children*, to editorial@naeyc.org.

Would you like to see your children's artwork featured in these pages? For guidance on submitting print-quality photos (as well as details on permissions and licensing), see NAEYC.org/publications/forauthors/photoguidelines.

Global Teamwork

An Interview with Joan Lombardi

Stephanie Olmore and Jerilyn Gamble

In *Swimmy,* a widely read children's book, author and illustrator Leo Lionni relates how Swimmy and his fish friends work together to overcome a major obstacle in their habitat. One of the characters says, "We are going to swim all together like the biggest fish in the sea." As NAEYC expands its global presence, we hope to help all early childhood educators swim together to achieve healthy development in high-quality educational settings for all children.

To give young children everywhere brighter futures, we want to support collaboration between early childhood education and international development professionals, families, and activists. This means working across ideological, linguistic, racial, ethnic, cultural, religious, and economic differences.

With nearly 1,000 international members, NAEYC and its Global Engagement Department collaborate with ministries of education (which are similar to the US Department of Education) and like-minded organizations around the world.

Our current focus is bridging learning between early childhood professionals in different settings and countries by sharing the NAEYC experience and collaborating on innovative projects. Using NAEYC position statements and program standards, we are partnering with early childhood leaders abroad as they work to build comprehensive systems of early learning. We are also working to ensure that our content can be accessed in different languages through translation agreements and special-language tracks at the NAEYC Annual Conference (Good Start and Grandes Comienzos).

By forging connections outside our borders, we are expanding our knowledge—and we seek to include our members in this process. Opportunities like Hello, NAEYC's online member community, allow early childhood professionals throughout the world to engage with each other.

The Global Engagement team embraces diversity and promotes inclusion—two pillars of developmentally appropriate practice. We will continue to work as a team with countries that share our passion for growing the early childhood profession. We've got work to do, and we invite you to join in.

For more details on NAEYC's global efforts, visit www.naeyc.org/global.

Global Insights

For this Global Practices issue of *Young Children*, we asked Joan Lombardi, an international expert on child development and social policy, to provide us with some insights based on her experiences.

Global Team: What do we know about the state of early childhood around the world?

Joan: Early childhood has certainly become a global issue. All around the world more and more people understand that the early years matter to long-term health, education, and behavior. We are seeing mounting evidence from all corners of the world, increasing networks and innovations, and more efforts to scale programs from parent supports to preschool.

Yet we still have such a long way to go. As *The Lancet* reported in 2017, some 43 percent of young children under age 5 in low- and middle-income countries are at risk for not reaching their developmental potential (Daelmans et al. 2017). And an even greater number of children are at risk when we include those growing up exposed to violence at home, in their communities, and in their countries. Poverty and lack of quality supports remain serious issues that threaten the well-being of young children. Services remain scattered, quality stretched, and access to basic supports—from clean water to health care, from economic development to child care—continues to challenge families. Young refugee children and families, forced from their homes and facing stress and disruption, continue to lack sufficient support.

Global Team: Are you seeing early childhood workforce issues around the world, and if so, how do you think they may impact child development?

Joan: The most important people in the lives of children are their parents and other caregivers. This is true wherever children are growing up. To thrive, children need warm and responsive caregivers at home and in early childhood programs. The

working conditions of early childhood teachers remain a serious concern around the world. Salaries remain low, preparation is too often inadequate, and supervision and supports are minimal.

If we are going to deliver on the promise of quality programs for young children and families, more and more attention must be paid to developing an enabling environment that supports parents as well as those who work with young children and families every day. One way for people to better understand these issues globally is by following the Early Childhood Workforce Initiative, which was established to track competencies and standards, training and professional development, monitoring and mentoring, and recognition of the profession in countries around the world. (For further information, see www.earlychildhoodworkforce.org.)

Global Team: How can parents, teachers, and leaders in the United States support early childhood development in low- and middle-income countries?

Joan: Despite abundant evidence that investing in children and families is directly related to the economic development of a country, policies are not keeping up with the research. This is true in the United States and around the world.

Given increasing global connections, we all need to focus attention locally and globally on children. This means standing up for the rights of children to live in a peaceful world, a safe world, and in an environment that is healthy rather than life threatening. It means following the policies that might affect young children and families wherever they may live, including standing up for increasing US investments in the health and education of children here and around the world. It also means supporting families who may be displaced by war or poverty, volunteering with civic organizations dedicated to supporting children and families in the local community or around the world, and investing time and resources in supporting the most vulnerable children.

As teachers and parents, we must continue to model our values. We must teach children to celebrate diversity, to value the person next door, and to be interested in and respectful of other cultures. For future generations to care about the world around them, it has to start in our classrooms and in our families. It really all begins with how we treat one another.

Reference

Daelmans, B., G.L. Darmstadt, J. Lombardi, M.M. Black, P.R. Britto, S. Lye, T. Dua, Z.A. Bhutta, & L.M. Richter. 2017. "Early Childhood Development: The Foundation of Sustainable Development." *The Lancet* 389 (10064): 9–11. Published online in 2016: www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(16)31659-2/fulltext.

Further Reading
To learn more about early childhood education around the world, see "Advancing Early Childhood Development: From Science to Scale," a series published in *The Lancet* in 2017. www.thelancet.com/series/ECD2016.

About the authors

Joan Lombardi, PhD, is a longstanding advocate for young children and families in the United States and around the world. She served as the first deputy assistant secretary for Early Childhood Development in the US Department of Health and Human Services (2009–2011) and now serves as a senior advisor to a number of foundations on both domestic and global early childhood issues.

Stephanie Olmore is senior director of NAEYC's Global Engagement Department. She spearheads global efforts, working with international governments, top-level delegations, and large-scale systems to create guidelines for enhancing early learning and to support early childhood professionals worldwide.

Jerilyn Gamble is the NAEYC global engagement coordinator; she manages communications and provides outreach to global partners.

Internationally Focused Early Childhood Organizations

Here are names and brief descriptions of some of the many organizations working internationally on behalf of young children, their families, and the profession. NAEYC partners with many of them. Use these links to explore the organizations' extensive information and resources, and find opportunities to get involved.

ACEI (The Association for Childhood Education International) aims to create sustainable solutions for children and has developed global guidelines for young children's education and care. **www.acei.org**

The Bernard van Leer Foundation has worked in more than 50 countries to improve opportunities for young children in challenging social and economic circumstances. **https://bernardvanleer.org/**

ISSA (International Step by Step Association) is a membership organization dedicated to equity and quality for all children. **www.issa.nl**

OMEP: World Organization for Early Childhood Education works in over 70 countries to increase families' access to high-quality early care and education. **www.worldomep.org**

PLAN International focuses on advancing children's rights and promoting equality for girls. **https://plan-international.org/**

Save the Children works to ensure all children have the opportunity to learn and have a healthy start in life. **www.savethechildren.org**

UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) aims to defend children's rights and improve the lives of children and families. **www.unicef.org**

The World Bank supports early childhood development as a strategy to reduce poverty and create positive economic and social outcomes. **www.worldbank.org**

Outdoor Learning Experiences Connecting Children to Nature

Perspectives from Australia and the United States

Jamie Huff Sisson and Martha Lash

Hearing songbirds, watching butterflies, making mud pies, and climbing up trees—like many experiences connected with nature—are simultaneously enjoyable, healthy, and educational. Unfortunately, nature-connected play experiences are limited for many children because they may live in urban areas with limited access or because the adults in their lives may not prioritize it. Lack of outdoor nature play has raised cross-disciplinary concerns about nature-deficit disorder (Louv 2005), lack of movement and big body play (Carlson 2011), and increased childhood obesity (McCurdy et al. 2010). Advocating for and providing outdoor nature play experiences have become a priority for educators of young children around the world.

In this article we describe three exemplary early childhood programs—located in South Australia and Ohio—that support outdoor learning environments for reaching global goals related to outdoor nature play. While these programs do not collaborate, some similarities in their practices highlight their understanding of the importance of outdoor learning experiences.

Play in nature: Three programs with one goal

Il nido is a child care center in South Australia serving diverse children from birth to age 5 and their families. The preschool teachers use an emergent curriculum inspired by the principles of Reggio Emilia, which is respected internationally for its child-directed explorations of rich indoor and outdoor learning environments (to learn more, see http://bit.ly/1pHGOkF). Following national and state policies, the center provides outdoor environments for children that foster "knowledge of and connections with the natural environment" (ACECQA 2013, 81), offers opportunities to spend as much time outdoors as indoors, and fulfills children's right to nature play. The staff at il nido believe the outdoor learning environment is just as important as the indoor one; they provide children with long uninterrupted periods of play where they can freely move between the two. This is unusual, as many programs and staff follow a more structured daily schedule that limits time outdoors.

Time outdoors allows children to develop relationships with nature, teachers, and one another.

Felixstow is a public school in South Australia for children from kindergarten to grade 7. The former principal, Jen Bais, drew from her previous experience as a highly regarded preschool director to inform practice at this public school. In particular, the school borrows from Reggio Emilia principles to create a learning environment where children and families are welcomed as active protagonists in learning. Parents of children who attend the school are very committed and engaged. One priority shared by the faculty and families is the children's right to a variety of opportunities to play in nature. Felixstow's curriculum and pedagogy provide children with many engaging experiences that allow them to connect with and learn from nature. The outdoor learning environment stands out because older children, through the seventh grade, also participate in child-directed, play-based learning.

Kent State University Child Development Center (CDC), in Ohio, serves children ranging from toddlers to kindergartners and their families. As a laboratory school, the CDC primarily serves families of University faculty, staff, and students as well as a small number of community families. The school's diversity reflects the university's population, including international student families; approximately 15 percent of the children are dual language learners. The learning philosophy is grounded in the belief that exploring, investigating, and playing are critical to young children's ongoing construction of knowledge and skills—which is central to CDC's implementation of the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program. At the CDC, which is also inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach, every child is believed to be capable and competent and has the right to spend extended time each day

International Guidance on Children's Rights

The education systems in both Australia and the United States include policies regarding outside playtime in their child care standards; but throughout both countries there is considerable variation between what outdoor play should look like and what it does look like in practice. To increase access to high-quality nature play, early childhood policy makers in Australia embraced the findings and guidance of global leaders in the Convention on the Rights of the Child—a human rights treaty developed by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1989). (The treaty was ratified by Australia in 1990. Despite playing a leadership role in the development of the treaty, the United States has never completed the steps to ratify it.) America could benefit from following Australia's lead in using the treaty to provide expert guidance for devising policies that promote early learning.

The treaty establishes the right children have to an education that is free and allows for the development of their personalities, talents, and abilities (Articles 28 and 29); the right to play, which includes relaxation, leisure, recreational, cultural, and artistic activities (Article 31); the right to have their ideas heard and respected as they participate in making decisions that will affect their lives (Articles 12 and 13); and the right of indigenous children to education that ensures opportunities to learn about their culture and traditions (Article 30).

in an outdoor learning lab. One goal of the CDC is to strengthen children's harmony with and respect for all forms of life. This ethic of empathy and caring includes stewardship of the natural world. Long, uninterrupted time outdoors allows children to develop strong relationships with nature, teachers, and one another. The CDC's outdoor learning lab is larger than many indoor classroom facilities. It includes native plants, trees, an amphitheater, gardens, areas for composting, mud kitchens, riding paths, child-made sustainable structures, wheeled toys, a gazebo for artistic expression, and several water sources for creating or damming streams. Adjacent to the outdoor learning lab are meadows and wetlands children can explore. Importantly, this elaborate outdoor learning lab has a designated outdoor teacher-leader and is fully staffed.

These model programs and their outdoor learning environments share five essential elements, each of which we detail in the sections that follow: reflecting the local landscape; balancing risks and benefits; reconsidering time, materials, and space; including children's voices; and sustaining natural learning environments.

Reflecting the local landscape

Each of these three programs houses an outdoor learning environment that reflects the local landscape. This important design element connects children with the land. At il nido and Felixstow, man-made rock creeks with running water that can be turned on and off are reflective of the local environment, where natural creeks are full in the winter during the rainy season and dry during the hot summer months. There are also gardens where children can harvest fruits and vegetables. Children at Felixstow can play and learn in three sandpits (filled with white, yellow, or red sand) representative of Australia's beaches and outback. At the CDC, children have access to covered bridges constructed of wood, which are representative of historic Ohio and sized for children; an apple tree for climbing and harvesting fruit; a running stream; and opportunities for engaging in water play and dam building.

In the 2010 film *Play Again: What Are the Consequences of a Childhood Removed from Nature?*, the late Oregon parks advocate Charles Jordan warned, "What they [children] do not know, they will not protect, and what they do not protect, they will lose." Journalist Richard Louv (2005) shared this concern for the sustainability of our environment and caused a stir by labeling it "nature-deficit disorder," which he believes has reached epidemic proportions among children. Although some curriculum policies mandate time for learning about the importance of environmental sustainability, this educational focus is

Building Self-Confidence

Four-year-old Olivia is a preschooler enrolled at the il nido in South Australia. Olivia is known for her outgoing, playful personality and confidence. But as a toddler, she was very slow to warm up to others. Olivia used to observe other children playing for long periods of time before attempting the play herself; if the play seemed too risky, she would refrain from playing at all. Before her second birthday, Olivia started attending the nature play group at il nido. In the first year, Olivia shied away from making mud pies, catching bugs, climbing trees, or splashing in the mud pit. With support and encouragement from her caregivers, Olivia took her first plunge in the mud pit at age 3. Now 4, Olivia reflects on this experience: "I was jumping in and got mud all over myself. I was happy."

Olivia's story is an example of how experiences in nature can help support children's identity and self-confidence. Teachers provided Olivia with continued exposure to play in nature while also respecting her need to become familiar with particular activities before she was confident enough to take the risky plunge.

often restricted to vicarious experiences gained from photos and narrative text. Louv argues that hands-on learning is needed for children to build a relationship with nature that will lead to caring for the environment in the future.

Balancing risks and benefits

Concerns about health and safety risks have limited what children are typically permitted to do in outdoor learning areas. Overcoming the "culture of fear" that has limited children's time in the outdoors and in nature (White 2004) happens "when practitioners view the outdoors as a place where children can learn how to keep themselves safe through becoming able to recognize and identify potential harm and knowing how to deal with it" (White 2014, 98). Teachers in the three programs we are highlighting understand that balancing risks and benefits is important. When educators at the CDC learned about garter snakes (which are native and non-poisonous) living under one of the covered bridges on the playground, for instance, they assessed the situation and believed it to be more beneficial than risky. The children and teachers took the opportunity to learn about, touch, hold, and care for the garter snakes until they naturally moved to a new location. Such risk–benefit analyses need "to be a value-based exercise, which is dependent on the practitioner's

knowledge about children's capacities, their resilience, and their ability to make judgments" (Warden 2011, 14).

Including children in the risk assessment process is an increasingly common practice in South Australia. At il nido and Felixstow, children and teachers assess risks together, thinking critically about what could go wrong; evaluating whether issues pose low, medium, or high risk; discussing strategies to minimize the risk; and implementing those strategies. The teachers at il nido document the risk assessments in a binder and welcome suggestions from the children, families, and inspectors.

Reconsidering time, materials, and space

For many contemporary children, life is structured and supervised, with few opportunities for free play due to safety concerns, fears of perceived and real dangers, and hectic family schedules. Most children are unable to roam their neighborhoods, parks, or yards unless accompanied by an adult (White & Stoecklin 1997; Nature's Path 2016). Furthermore, among parents who have the means to enroll their children in sports or lessons, some have mistaken beliefs about the extent to which these activities make their children more successful as adults. And children, even very young ones, spend a great deal of their available free time indoors in front of the television or computer (White & Stoecklin 1997; Erikson Institute 2016).

To counter these influences, personnel at these three sites provide extended, uninterrupted play outdoors. Integrating indoor and outdoor environments creates a seamless learning experience that builds a sense of belonging, identity, and autonomy.

As is typical for many South Australian preschool programs, the natural transition between the indoor and outdoor environments at il nido provides children with long periods of uninterrupted play. The doors between the two spaces are kept open for the majority of the day, and children are free to continue their play outside instead of having their day defined by a strict schedule. To meet children's needs and bring

Learning to Take Responsibility

Lucy, a 7-year-old American attending Felixstow, has always loved playing outdoors—but before she and her family moved to Australia, her experiences in nature rarely extended beyond the local city playground, occasional camping trips, and visits to her grandparents' rural house. During her first year at the school, Lucy developed a close relationship with nature as she was encouraged to climb trees, play in the mud, examine insects, and build with natural materials. She and her classmates were also shown how to be good stewards through activities like a litter walk to clean up a nearby natural park. These activities, combined with discussions about environmental issues, have caused Lucy to develop a strong sense of responsibility for her local natural environment. At home, she initiates litter walks with her family through their neighborhood and nearby natural parkland. Lucy explains, "Because the nature that takes care of us could die, we need to care for it."

Lucy's experience demonstrates how nature play, exploration, and discussion at school can extend to children's homes and instill in them a sense of connection to and responsibility for the environment.

fresh challenges to the learning environment, educators alternate weeks of planning, arranging, and engaging with the children outdoors.

Loose parts—"materials that can be moved, carried, combined, redesigned, lined up, and taken apart in multiple ways" (Kable 2010)—such as rocks, small branches, stumps, and tires offer children endless possibilities for making, reshaping, and transforming the environment into whatever they can imagine. Providing natural items on planned outdoor play spaces increases children's opportunities for extended engagement, learning, wonder, and enjoyment (McClintic 2014). Loose parts have no directions for use and invite open-ended play with high levels of complex, unstructured, creative exploration (White & Stoecklin 1997; Keeler 2008; White 2014). In all three programs, for example, children manipulate loose parts from nature, such as sand, water, plants, rocks, and tree branches and stumps. The interactive properties of loose parts stimulate discovery, dramatic play, and imagination; they also attune children to their environments (White & Stoecklin 1997). These materials are widely available, and families, including those in low-resource communities, can often contribute.

Opportunities to explore both wild, open spaces and small, secret places allow children autonomy and privacy. Outdoor space supports children's willingness to experiment with putting distance between themselves and their teachers; it also demonstrates teachers' confidence that children are competent and capable (White & Stoecklin 1997; Keeler 2008). Secret gardens fascinate most children, and many benefits accompany the independence children experience there. Spaces at Felixstow and il nido have been specifically designed to allow children to enjoy privacy. To meet US guidelines that stipulate children must be in the sight of teachers at all times, private places at the CDC exist naturally in the outdoor learning lab—over slight earth inclines/slopes, in the garden, and in the amphitheater; in this manner, children can be monitored while still having spaces to feel special and separate.

Including children's voices

Including children's voices is an important element in creating and maintaining natural learning environments. As two leaders of nature education asserted 20 years ago, "The natural environment needs to read as a children's place, as a world separate from adults that responds to a child's own sense of place and time" (White & Stoecklin 1997, 2). Ideally, the outdoor learning environment would be "the child's domain, a more democratic place for learning about the world and about being human, where relationships and meanings with people, places, and things are explored and developed *by the child*" (White 2014, 4). When children are involved in shaping the outdoor learning space, they feel a sense of belonging and power as they see their contributions transform the landscape (Polakow 1992).

A prime example of the benefits of including children's voices is the "village" area at the Felixstow. The village—where children have autonomy and support from teachers to transform the space as they see fit—has become the most popular place on the playground. Some days this space is a mini main street where shops are built from natural materials and mud pies are sold using gum nuts as currency. Other days it becomes a theater complete with a stage, seating, and daily productions. The scenarios may change, but the village remains the children's

space, where creativity is cultivated through engagement with natural materials that support their imaginations.

Sustaining natural learning environments

Staff and families are essential to sustaining natural learning environments. Educators ensure that developmental goals are fulfilled, and families provide support for practices (White & Stoecklin 1997). At the CDC the staff and families were part of the process of creating the outdoor learning lab. For instance, the teachers recognized the importance of having a place where children could be creative in nature. Because the art studio is a much-loved indoor space at the CDC, the community decided to create an outdoor art area under a gazebo equipped with running water, tables, and

Strategies to Support the Five Essential Components of Outdoor Experiences	
Reflecting the local landscape	■ Talk to families, staff, or local community members about indigenous plants and the local landscape. ■ Go for nature walks in the local parks and talk with children about what they notice (sounds, patterns, collections of rocks, pinecones, feathers, leaves). ■ Draw connections between children's home lives and the school. For example, if some children are talking about camping trips with their families, set up a campsite at the school.
Balancing risks and benefits	■ Assess the risks and benefits for materials and spaces created. ■ As children show interest in activities that may pose a risk, include them in a risk and benefit assessment.
Reconsidering time, materials, and space	■ Assess your outdoor space and consider access, open spaces, private spaces, and inclusion of natural loose parts. ■ Collect natural loose parts with children. ■ Encourage children to make houses, storefronts, paths, seats, and smaller items to support their play with the loose parts. ■ Allow children to add to these structures and smaller items over a period of time, and assist children in adding materials, when needed.
Including children's voices	■ Take children to local parks to explore the landscape. ■ Involve children in designing and making decisions about the natural learning environment. ■ Have children help with the daily planning and setting up of the outdoor space. ■ Provide nature materials with few instructions.
Sustaining the natural learning environment	■ Consider the maintenance of the outdoor learning environment, who will be involved, what resources are required, and the frequency needed. ■ Involve children in creating an outdoor space sustainability plan. ■ Include children, families, and staff in caring for and maintaining the outdoor learning environment. ■ Schedule a garden party each term and invite families to socialize while doing a little gardening.

storage. At Felixstow, concerns about an endangered frog population in a nearby creek inspired teachers, children, and families to work together to create a frog bog outside the classroom.

Continuous maintenance is also an important consideration (White & Stoecklin 1997). Engaging staff, children, and families in discussions about maintaining and caring for plants and the natural environment during and outside school hours is critical. Asking the community to commit to maintaining the natural learning environment will ensure that the benefits are long lasting. For instance, the CDC staffs an outdoor educator to support the area, teachers, and children. Creating a parent nature group to hold gardening sessions during school holidays and ensuring that new staff understand the importance of the natural learning environment to the community are other ways to maintain support.

Conclusion

The essential elements and compelling examples from these three programs illustrate what is possible in natural, outdoor learning environments and should inform practice and policy around the globe. Policy can promote or hinder children's connection to nature. Advocating for nature and outdoor play and influencing outdoor learning policies for children's enjoyment, well-being, and learning should be important goals for contemporary educators. (See "Strategies to Support the Five Essential Components of Outdoor Experiences.") The three programs can serve as models, inspiration, and validation for ways to provide natural outdoor environments that children can explore and manipulate as they learn creatively through play. As a pioneer of nature-based learning stated, "Above all, a sense of attachment and belonging to our world is vital for children's deep well-being and for the future well-being of our beautiful, wonderful, fascinating, and nurturing Earth" (White 2014, 4).

From Global to Local Practices: Consider Trying Some of These Ideas

- Advocating (at the center, school district, or state level) for greater time allocated to outdoor experiences
- Finding ways to listen to children's voices to learn what they wish for in their outdoor environment
- Making a modest change, such as adding loose parts, to your outdoor space to encourage greater autonomy and creative play
- Documenting the effects of increased outdoor play on several children
- Designing a communication strategy to help families become aware of the multiple benefits of outdoor play and engagement in nature—at school and at home
- What other ideas come to mind?

–Marilou Hyson, Guest Editor

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Ontario's Early Learning–Kindergarten Program

A Transformative Early Childhood Education Initiative

Katherine Becker and Sonia Mastrangelo

The Ministry of Education of the province of Ontario, Canada, has initiated a remarkable new full-day, two-year program for 4- and 5-year-olds. The Full-Day Early Learning–Kindergarten Program (FDK) is the government's transformative response to the vast, ever-growing body of early childhood research indicating that high-quality early learning programs produce long-term benefits to children's social and academic skills (Ontario Ministry of Education 2017).

Although Ontario began providing publicly funded kindergarten over a century ago, particular hallmarks of the FDK program make it markedly innovative:

- Two years of full-day schooling before first grade, beginning the year children turn 4
- A play- and inquiry-based curriculum
- Optional before- and after-school care
- An instructional partnership, known as the Early Learning–Kindergarten team, between an early childhood educator, or ECE, registered with the College of Early Childhood Educators, and a kindergarten teacher registered through the Ontario College of Teachers
- A principal who works closely with the Early Learning–Kindergarten team
- Planned partnerships with families and local school communities

In FDK, 4- and 5-year-olds (i.e., first- and second-year students) are mixed in each class and typically remain with the same teaching team for their full two years before moving on to first grade.

The Ministry of Education (2017) projects that FDK will pay dividends for all children by supporting their social, emotional, and cognitive development; improving their reading, writing, and math skills; smoothing their transition to first grade; helping them achieve long-term academic success; and ultimately building a stronger future economy. The large-scale monetary investment—over $1.4 billion and growing (Grieve 2012)—and the pioneering nature of this early childhood initiative make it significant not only in Canadian education but even in the global early childhood sphere. In this article, we describe the context surrounding Ontario's transformation of kindergarten, the salient features of FDK, and some research literature documenting the importance of early childhood education. We conclude with an overview of initial research findings on the new program.

Early education for all

For decades, most of Ontario's 72 public school boards have offered part-time junior and senior kindergarten to children starting at 4 years of age. In 2009 the report *With Our Best Future in Mind: Implementing Early Learning in Ontario* detailed 20 recommendations for achieving a comprehensive new child and family service system for Ontarians, including all the key features of FDK (Pascal 2009).

The Ministry of Education acted swiftly, announcing that it would begin phasing in the new FDK program in 2010. It emphasized the importance of providing daily, full-day programming for children, drawing from a mounting body of evidence showing that the differences in attention, verbal, and social skills that children have when they enter the school system impact their academic trajectory (Shanker 2007). An estimated 25 percent of Canadian children are considered vulnerable when they enter first grade (Ontario Ministry of Education 2017), meaning that they have health, behavioral, and learning challenges that are likely to interfere with their academic achievement (Pascal 2009). The ministry projected that high-quality, full-day programming for all children for two years before first grade would address many of these challenges, giving all children a stronger, more equitable start to their education.

Prior to FDK, kindergarten classes were taught only by teachers certified to teach kindergarten through grade six.

Team teaching

The Early Learning–Kindergarten team is essential to FDK's equity goal. Prior to implementation of FDK, kindergarten classes were taught only by elementary teachers—individuals with a bachelor of education who are certified through the Ontario College of Teachers to teach kindergarten through grade six. Education in settings such as nurseries, family child care providers, and preschools was provided by early childhood educators—individuals with a minimum two-year college diploma in early childhood education who are certified through the College of Early Childhood Educators. Now, for the first time, ECEs are joining the staffs of elementary schools. With FDK's instructional partnership,

kindergarten teachers are primarily responsible for student learning, effective instruction, evaluation, and formal reporting to parents, while ECEs are primarily responsible for planning developmentally appropriate classroom experiences to promote each child's physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development (Ontario Ministry of Education 2017).

The Early Learning–Kindergarten team is essential to FDK's equity goal.

The daily schedule for each class is unique due to the child-initiated, emergent nature of inquiry-based learning (Family Resource Facilitation Program 2017), as illustrated in the following vignette:

> As Ms. Fields and her class engage in a read-aloud, 4-year-old Sarah gasps at a spider crawling up the wall. Ms. Fields stops reading and questions the children to support and extend their curiosity about the spider. Shared reading may need to be shelved until tomorrow—or perhaps quickly shifted to reading about spiders, depending on the children's level of engagement in exploring the world of spiders. Ms. Fields is eager to see how long the children's interest in spiders lasts. This could be the beginning of a weeks- or months-long entomology inquiry.

Although the daily schedule in each FDK class is emergent, flexible, and ever changing, the following essential elements guide each Early Learning–Kindergarten team:

- A balance of both team- and child-initiated learning activities
- A large block of uninterrupted play, when children manipulate objects, act out roles, and experiment with different materials
- A large block of time for child-initiated learning activities, often at learning centers where purposeful interactions have been planned
- Play, daily routines, and classroom experiences focusing on four frames of thinking and learning: belonging and contributing, self-regulation and well-being, demonstrating literacy and mathematics behaviors, and problem solving and innovating

In addition, the Early Learning–Kindergarten team plans daily outdoor learning experiences and is encouraged to provide children with daily opportunities to explore, care for, and interact with nature (Ontario Ministry of Education 2017).

Early childhood research informing FDK

Ontario's FDK program is inspired by research demonstrating the importance of early brain development, the relationship between high-quality programs and children's readiness for school and life, and the economic returns for society on investment in high-quality early education (Economist Intelligence Unit 2012). Longitudinal studies of US children from low-income families who engaged in high-quality early childhood programs indicate a significant payback for society due to reductions in dropout rates, crime, teen pregnancy, and adverse health conditions (Heckman 2017). Economists from the HighScope Educational Foundation calculated a long-term return for society of $17 on every $1 invested in the Perry Preschool program (Clothier & Poppe 2017), which was an intensive, especially high-quality initiative with children from low-income families (Derman-Sparks & Moore 2016a; Derman-Sparks & Moore 2016b). Recent research on high-quality programs that serve large numbers of children estimate a return of $2 to $4 for every $1 invested (Karoly 2017).

Full-day versus half-day kindergarten

In early childhood, evidence abounds for the advantages of full-day educational programs over half-day programs, especially for children growing up in families with limited resources. A study that examined the standardized test scores of over 4,000 US children, for example, found that 5-year-olds from low-income homes in full-day kindergarten programs scored significantly higher in language arts and math than students who participated in half-day programs (Schroeder 2007). Another smaller study demonstrated that students in a full-day kindergarten program showed greater improvement on a child developmental scale and on multiple educational measures than children in a half-day program (Baskett et al. 2005).

Peering into the classroom, one study suggested that students spend more time initiating learning activities and receive more one-on-one instruction from teachers when they are in a full-day, instead of half-day, program (Elicker & Mathur 1997).

Early brain development

Scientists have discovered that children are born with a desire to develop knowledge and skills, and their potential can be enhanced through positive relationships and interactions with parents and other adults in a variety of contexts (Cozolino 2013). One of the most important capacities to develop early in life is self-regulation. Children who have learned to self-regulate are able to control their impulses; they can stop doing something that is unnecessary (even though they do not want to) and start doing something that is needed. A number of studies have documented the role of self-regulation in school success—both academic and social (Boyd et al. 2005). Children's ability to self-regulate is correlated with vocabulary acquisition, emergent literacy, and math performance and predicts kindergarten reading achievement (Rimm-Kaufman & Wanless 2012).

In Ontario, there has been a concerted effort to focus on self-regulation in FDK settings. Many educators use Stuart Shanker's text *Calm, Alert, and Learning: Classroom Strategies for Self-Regulation* (2012) as a process to help children articulate their emotions and help them develop both calming and alerting strategies to use as needed.

Following a class outing to the park, several questions are added to the Wonder Wall, which displays children's questions for future exploration. Raj asks, "Do birds have eyelids?" Therese asks, "Where did the first bird come from?" The next day, when a small group of "bird researchers" wants to visit the library to find books on birds, the early childhood educator accompanies them while the kindergarten teacher stays with children choosing other classroom activities. To provide opportunities to share ideas and make plans with others—skills related to the development of self-regulation—children are invited to create a bird-watching center at the window. The popular center leads to bird-watching outings and a lengthy, open-ended inquiry about worms, soil, and the water cycle. It is fueled by children's wonder and sustained by their increasing self-regulation and ownership of their learning.

When behavioral issues arise, Early Learning–Kindergarten teams that use a self-regulation lens will realize the difference between a stress behavior and a misbehavior. When a child exhibits behavior due to a stressful situation, educators try to identify and reduce the stressor. Reflecting with children to help them learn self-awareness and ways to calm down is crucial so that they can be focused, alert, and ready for learning (Shanker & Barker 2016).

If a behavior issue is not stress induced but is indeed a misbehavior, educators respond uniquely, depending

on the circumstances and the child. For example, a teacher may explain the logical consequences of a child's actions in a way that is not punitive but instead is appropriate, supportive, and related to the behavior. Throughout Ontario, teacher preparation programs emphasize respecting the rights of children, using developmentally appropriate practices, developing authentic relationships, modeling prosocial behaviors, and fostering intrinsic motivation.

Play- and inquiry-based learning

Another hallmark of FDK is play-based learning, which takes various forms to support the development of numerous skills. For example, constructive play (e.g., building and drawing) fosters skills in planning, using language, and developing fine motor control. Pretend play (e.g., role play) promotes communication, planning, comparing, problem solving, and self-regulation (Ontario Ministry of Education 2017).

To maximize the benefits associated with play, the FDK curriculum requires educators to provide opportunities for both child-initiated free play and more structured play-based learning opportunities while encouraging children to think creatively, explore, investigate, problem solve, share their learning with others, and engage in inquiry.

> Mr. Beatty is with Marko and Eva, who have chosen to play at the new post office center. Mr. Beatty asks Marko what will happen next with the letters he is holding. Marko wants one to go to his grandfather in Croatia. Mr. Beatty asks, "How will it get there?" Soon Marko is arranging chairs to create a plane to pilot the mail by air. Eva wants to deliver letters around the neighborhood. She grabs a purse from the grocery store center to use as her mailbag, and begins distributing envelopes to cubbies and trays around the room. Five-year-old William picks up an envelope, brings it to Mr. Beatty, and says, "This needs a stamp." Mr. Beatty prompts, "I wonder what we can use as a stamp?" William has an idea, and he skips over to the art supplies to get started.

In inquiry-based classrooms, educators provide a rich variety of materials and resources, observe children as they notice and wonder, then support the inquiry process by posing strategic, open-ended questions to encourage children to extend or expand their learning

and connect new learning with prior knowledge (Ontario Ministry of Education 2017).

FDK teams and family involvement

Building relationships with families is incorporated into the roles of the Early Learning–Kindergarten team members and the principal. The goal is to build relationships with families to increase consistency between home and school environments, making the classroom an extension of home for each child (JourneyTogetherFDK 2014). A few specific ways educators involve families include:

- Inviting parents and caregivers into the classroom daily as volunteers and guest speakers
- Creating parent boards outside the classroom
- Sending written communication logs home and back daily
- Sharing good news by phone
- Creating class websites and blogs, such as those by FDK teacher Joanne Babalis at http://myclassroomtransformation.blogspot.ca
- Offering workshops on how children learn through play and the inquiry process

FDK preliminary research

Even though FDK is a relatively new model, program evaluations indicate that after two years of FDK, children experienced increased emotional maturity, decreased vulnerability (Janus, Duku, & Schell 2012), and greater school readiness, especially in high-needs schools (indexed by lower average third grade test scores and higher percentages of low-income families [Vanderlee et al. 2012]).

The hope is that FDK leads to long-term intellectual, cultural, and economic benefits.

In the first large-scale study, FDK students were compared with control group children on measures of emergent literacy development. Second-year FDK students were ahead of their peers in vocabulary and reading (especially alphabet knowledge and conventions of print). In addition, first-year FDK students were ahead in early reading (especially in meaning), and both first- and second-year FDK students were ahead in phonological awareness (Pelletier 2012).

Surveys indicated that parents of FDK children reported significantly less everyday stress (Pelletier 2014) and that parents of second-year FDK students rated their children as "more ready" in several respects, including small muscle control, getting along with other children, letter–sound knowledge, number knowledge, and speaking (Pelletier 2012).

FDK classrooms are attracting researchers investigating many other program aspects, such as the use of coteaching partnership (Tozer 2012), the integration of early childhood care into elementary schools (Gananathan 2011), and the synthesis of play-based pedagogy and mandated academic standards (Pyle & Bigelow 2015). Other researchers are adding elements and interventions to FDK environments, including tablets to enhance the inquiry-learning process (Harwood et al. 2015) and mindfulness strategies to improve social and emotional functioning (Viglas 2015).

Looking ahead, the Ontario government's hope for FDK is that it will lead to long-term intellectual, cultural, and economic benefits for children, families, and society. While it will be decades before the long-term return on investment can be ascertained, such research on this unique early childhood initiative promises valuable insights that will inform early childhood education policy and practice far beyond Ontario's borders.

From Global to Local Practices: Consider Trying Some of These Ideas

- Finding ways to inform and engage your principal in your own pre-K or kindergarten program
- Strengthening collaborations and partnerships between staff who specialize in pre-K and those who specialize in kindergarten
- Exploring (perhaps with your AEYC group) ways to advocate with your state or school district for these kinds of pre-K and kindergarten practices
- Doing more to notice and support children's spontaneous interests, building them into extended inquiry-focused projects
- Giving greater emphasis to some of the self-regulation strategies emphasized in Ontario's programs and professional development
- What other ideas come to mind?

–Marilou Hyson, Guest Editor

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Engaging Families and Communities to Support Early Childhood Development

The African Experience

Mary A. Moran and Pablo Stansbery

Around the globe, children's involvement in early childhood programs depends upon families' support for their participation. Across Africa, participation of young children and their families in early childhood development programs varies widely. A few countries, such as Ghana and Mauritius, have achieved high levels of preprimary education enrollment—upward of 95 percent, which is far higher than most high-income countries around the world (including the United States, which also lags behind most high-income countries).

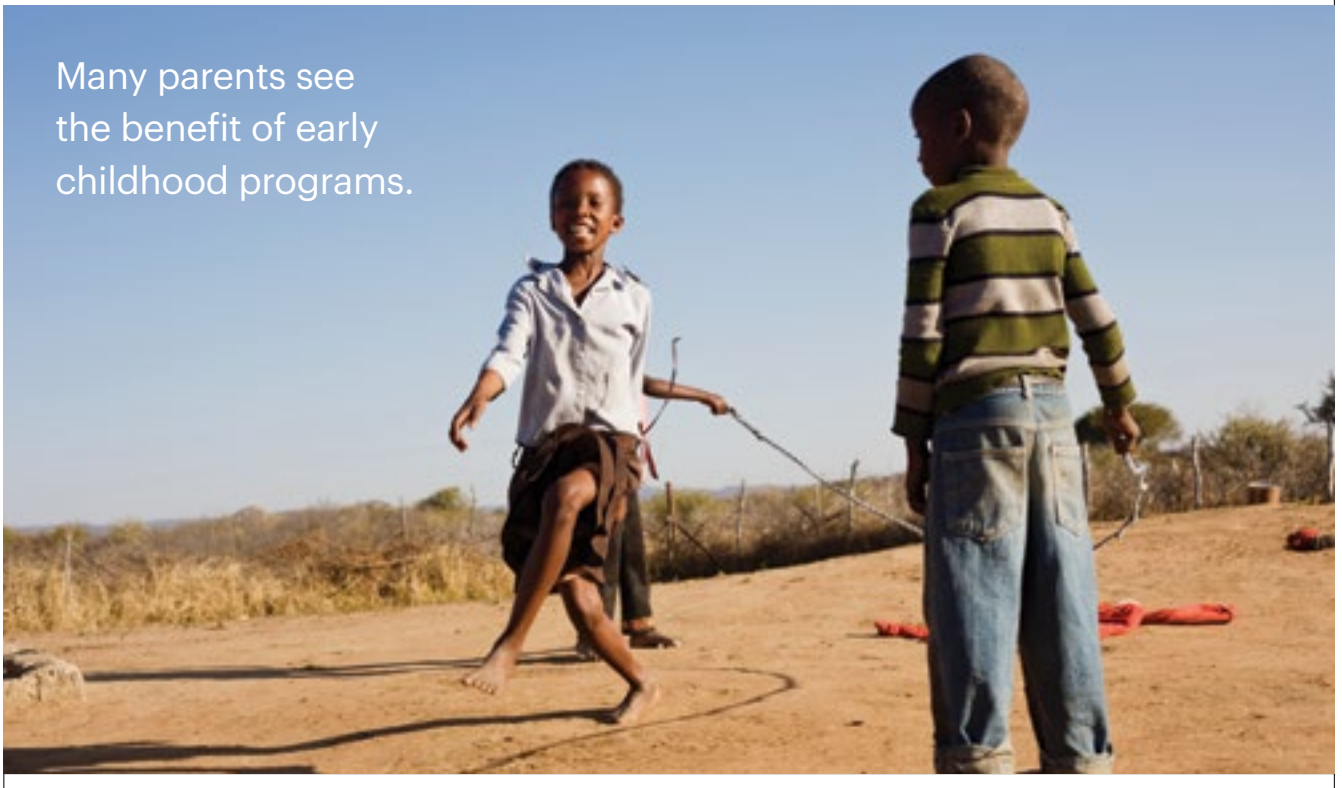
However, many countries in Africa still have extremely low rates of participation, such as Burkina Faso and Mali, which are estimated to have only 4 percent enrollment (The World Bank 2017).

All too often, there are extremely low participation rates for children who live in rural areas, who are marginalized by issues such as special needs or HIV status, who are of the lowest economic status, or who speak a minority language or are followers of a minority religion. In some cases, parents are not eager for their children to enroll because their children have vital roles in family sustenance, such as getting water for the household each day. However, many parents—including those who depend on their children's assistance—see the benefit of early childhood programs and want their children to participate.

One of the leading barriers for many parents is the cost for a child to attend a preprimary education program. Some countries report that, following the Millennium Development Goals' emphasis on expanding access to universal primary education, an increasing number of parents bring very young children to enroll in first grade—they see the benefits of early education and know that there is no charge for primary school, while preprimary programs charge a fee. A few countries, such as Mauritius (which has achieved extremely high enrollment), provide financial support to families who cannot afford the fee. This is especially important for marginalized children and families, including those living in extreme poverty (sometimes as a result of disabilities or HIV and AIDS).

Throughout much of Africa, two issues require special attention when trying to gain support for early childhood development programs. One is convincing communities that they should welcome and participate in such programs. Few families in rural African communities are even familiar with preprimary programs. The second is figuring out how to fund programs when there are many competing financial demands, especially in low-resource settings. In most programs, parents are responsible for the full tuition. There are no sliding fee scales, and many centers depend on parents volunteering to generate additional funding. For example, many programs obtain financial support through the efforts of women's groups that make handicrafts to be sold to tourists or in markets. These activities are not unlike the parent bake sales or wrapping-paper sales for schools in the United States, but they tend to be more urgent and intensive, requiring more of parents' time.

After the issues of community support and funding are settled, the priority becomes how to engage all parents



in the program, which is the focus of this article. Our diverse implementation partners—such as the Aga Khan Foundation, ChildFund International, Plan International, Save the Children, and many faith-based organizations—tend to include a parental engagement component in preprimary education programs.

A culture of collaboration

Most African cultures have a strong sense of community support and engage in collaborative decision making (although some have rigid structures or hierarchies based on gender and age, limiting when and how one can participate). There tends to be strong interest in what is good for children. When meetings of any sort—such as those for information gathering or training—are held, word spreads quickly, and many attend (whether they are targeted participants or not).

Because knowledge and engagement are highly valued, community meetings are a successful strategy for gaining support for early childhood education. Meetings can be lengthy because African traditions require that everyone who has a question or wishes to voice an opinion will be heard. For example, a meeting in rural Zambia that featured a speaker from the Ministry of Education was planned for parents of 140 children transitioning from preprimary to primary school. The meeting ended up with over 500 people, as those from many surrounding villages also attended. To accommodate the crowd, it was moved outside where people sat on the ground for several hours. None of the targeted parents had ever attended school.

During this meeting, many parents had questions about children's eligibility for school, including whether children who had a disability were eligible; who determined when a child was ready for school; what role parents had in this determination; what age groups were served in early childhood centers; whether any groups had preference for enrollment; at what age children were supposed to start grade one; and how school attendance was expected to help children get a job in the future. For example, one parent asked, "My child has a problem seeing. Can she go to school?" The official from the Ministry of Education explained that school was for all children and the girl would be enrolled at the same age as other children. The next parent stood and said, "My child has a physical disability; is he eligible for school?" The ministry official assured him that his child would be eligible. Parent after parent asked about their children's specific issues. No parent was hurried; no one interrupted or indicated that they were not interested in the issues being discussed. After all the questions had been answered, the parents showed great enthusiasm and commitment to both preprimary and primary education programs.

Because knowledge and engagement are valued, community meetings are a successful strategy for gaining support for early education.

Community meetings are a valuable way to survey the needs, priorities, and values of the community. In several meetings, parents voiced a desire to have their children learn a language they consider critical to academic and economic advancement—usually one of the colonialist languages (e.g., French, English, or Portuguese). Although early childhood advocates may emphasize short-term benefits of preprimary programs, such as school readiness, many parents are looking for far longer-term impacts. For example, even very young children in much of Francophone West Africa are taught in four languages—a local language (the child's mother tongue), French (the national language), English (in their opinion, the language of commerce), and Arabic (the language of their religion). Describing why she accompanied her 2-year-old son to the early childhood development center twice a week, a 19-year-old mother explained that she had never had the opportunity to go to school; by coming to the center she had learned English and Amharic, the languages of instruction, so that she would be able to help her son when he went to school.

In addition to meetings, many communication techniques have been used to provide understanding of and gain support for integrated early childhood development (which includes education, nutrition, health, and child protection). These initiatives may target children, parents, or both. Cell phone messaging of key bits of information has been used throughout the continent. For example, UNICEF currently promotes the "internet of good things," which delivers early childhood development messages (as well as other important information) via local mobile phone service, free of

charge (see za.goodinternet.org). Posters distributed to places where families or community leaders gather are common. Gaining support from respected leaders, such as tribal chiefs, is also a useful strategy. Collaboration with faith leaders is a successful tactic in some areas. Targeting the traditional sources of childrearing advice—often grandmothers—has been successful as well.

In some African countries, early childhood teachers are volunteers. Families support them by helping with teachers' daily chores, such as gathering water and firewood. Government funding for education in general is less robust than it is for things that officials may consider of greater importance, such as health. Even when early childhood teachers are paid, they tend to be paid poorly and may have lower standards, including education levels, to meet than those who teach older children (as is also the case in many high-income countries, including the United States). As is true around the world, across Africa preservice and in-service training requirements for early childhood teachers vary widely. Some countries—such as Mauritius, Tanzania, and Seychelles—require postsecondary training or diplomas. In most situations, preservice and in-service training requirements are more stringent in public programs than in those run by private providers.

Parents as leaders

In keeping with the broader cultural emphasis on community and collaborative decision making, African early childhood centers typically have parent management councils and parent advisory councils. Management councils may be comprised completely of parents whose children attend the center or may also include center staff (such as a teacher) and community representatives or other leaders who do not have children enrolled. Management councils may be responsible for such varied activities as overseeing the finances of the program and setting fees, hiring staff, choosing curriculum, and other aspects of programming, including setting hours of operation and determining the number of children to enroll. Advisory councils often focus on aspects like program setting, materials, and program approach.

An emerging goal in some African countries is to create interministry councils (e.g., with the ministries of education, gender, social welfare, and health) that work together to support integrated early childhood development programs. Some have ministry advisory councils that include parent association leaders or community leaders as well as public and private program leadership. Although a growing number of countries have a national early childhood education curriculum, parents are often very involved in setting their center's curriculum. Both parents and ministry officials tend to be strong proponents of curricula that mirror their values and expectations instead of curricula from high-income countries.

At the local level, these parent management and advisory councils may sound like Head Start's parent committees in the United States (Office of Head Start n.d.). In fact, they are very different in feel and more closely resemble American parent cooperatives. Many African councils are comprised of all of the enrolled children's parents, not selected or voted representatives. In community-based, community-financed child care centers parents are frequently responsible for all program funding, and they focus on program sustainability and many administrative issues. They are very involved in obtaining materials, identifying or constructing space, and ensuring safety, as many programs do not have outside monitoring or support.

Like many American parent cooperatives, parents in some settings provide crucial program components, such as cooking meals or snacks. Linking the expanding preprimary education programs with nutrition programs—in which children's growth is monitored and parents receive information on early health and nutrition—is increasingly common, but also has a long history.

Some programs invite parents to share activities with children. A skilled storyteller may come into the center once a week to tell traditional stories. An experienced drummer may visit to accompany music times. Storytelling traditions are strong in most African cultures, and music and dance are an important part of life. Most programs have field days when children play active traditional games, run races, and participate in other physical competitions, such as the high jump and long jump. Parents often participate by observing children's activities, helping set up, monitoring activities, and providing refreshments. Leading these activities helps parents feel valued and involved.

Another way parents and other family members usually contribute is by constructing classroom materials and playgrounds. As in many other countries, low-resource settings in Africa often struggle to obtain adequate materials. Workshop times in which parents make play materials from locally available low-cost items—such as wood blocks and rattles made from plastic bottles with pebbles—can help create and sustain community within the center. These workshops, which are opportunities for parent education and support, can also act as social glue. They allow families to be creative, share experiences, solve shared problems, and discuss child-related issues. Communities can design and build amazing play structures. For example, in Ethiopia, without any "expert" help, parents designed and built a structure that had a play house at the top, various ways to climb up and into the structure, and a slide to get down from the structure. Many children could be engaged in different activities at the same time. In a program in Kenya, parents built play structures that looked like large animals from sticks and mud or dung. These were strong enough for children to climb into and on, but because of the materials, they were not permanent structures. Parents rebuilt them willingly and energetically.

Early childhood centers as community centers

Many early childhood centers provide space for activities that are of significance to parents. For example, centers may serve as sites for regular growth monitoring, vaccinations, and birth registration (a vital activity that assures children's legal identity and access to school, as well as family inheritance, among other things). They may also serve as places for community meetings, after-school activities for older children and youth, and recreation. Collaborating to offer these other services builds community support for early learning programs. Interaction with providers of other important services also encourages sharing information about children and families that fosters children's optimal growth and development. Coordinating schedules so that growth monitoring and developmental screening happen on the same day helps ensure that children get the services they need.

Materials-making workshops serve as opportunities for parent education, support, and social glue.

Providing related services in a convenient place supports parents whose lives are often stressed by day-to-day necessities, such as gathering firewood, getting water for the home, finding sources of income, and searching for food. Additional stresses (such as HIV infections, faced by many families) can sap parents' energy and make it difficult to engage in chores and activities. The use of early childhood centers as convenient community gathering places helps stressed families keep abreast of the most important aspects of the program. Parents can easily see what their children are doing and the benefits of their participation.

Parents as partners

Among the many successful ways to engage parents is to involve them in activities that support their child's well-being. Teachers who gather information from families before their children's entry into the program can set the stage for active parent involvement. Validating that parents have important knowledge of

their child—and that teachers need that knowledge—is vital to creating partnerships between parents and teachers. Inviting parents to visit programs before their child enrolls is also important. In one rural area where no parents had been to school themselves, program visits not only gave parents a better understanding of what was expected of their child and what the child would do but also helped parents feel comfortable approaching teachers about their child, seeking information about their child's progress and what they might do to help, and coming to the center.

Gathering information about children is especially important when programs aim to meet children's special needs. Not only do parents have information about their child's daily skills and environment, they also have insights into their child's reaction style, temperament, and previous experiences with other children. If done well, this initial gathering of information is the beginning of successful partnerships between parents and teachers. Some communities place special emphasis on the social justice aspects of including children who are marginalized or stigmatized, such as children living in families affected by HIV and AIDS or children with disabilities. Community meetings may help this effort, along with collaboration with other service providers, such as health care or child protection.

Parents as participants in learning

Providing parenting education through the early childhood program is another way that programs promote ongoing community engagement. Many countries offer positive parenting programs in their early childhood programs, first surveying parents or holding community meetings to ascertain what parents want to learn. In Africa and America, the topics parents wish to better understand are usually very similar, such as specific child development issues. In some places, parents may focus more on moral and spiritual development in young children than in many parts of the United States (although this is not an uncommon American interest). In a few African countries, these programs are not offered to all parents but are targeted to those considered at risk of child abuse or neglect.

Parenting education or parent–child focused groups may be established through adult education programs in some areas of Africa. For example, in Eritrea, a government-run adult literacy program has created a successful parenting education component. The parenting education focuses on major topics related to parent and child health, techniques to enhance child growth and development, positive discipline, safety and hygiene, cultural practices, and disease prevention and treatment. As this program restricts participation to those who enroll in literacy education, it provides a useful model to consider in low-resource settings: incorporating critical elements of early childhood development into existing, funded programs. Much like the many uses of the early education centers, adult education and parent–child groups are often integrated with growth monitoring for children in the community or nutrition education for mothers. In addition to enhancing feeding practices and encouraging responsive feeding, early childhood stimulation techniques—especially focusing on language and cognition—are often embedded in nutrition efforts. Combining these valued programs makes obtaining and maintaining community support for a wide range of early childhood services more likely.

Looking ahead

Whether early childhood education should be targeted to those most likely to benefit, what the major goals of programs should be, and how to engage support for programs are issues throughout the world. In all places, children who are the most economically advantaged are the most likely to be enrolled in preprimary education. The focus of curricula—whole child versus specifically targeted literacy and numeracy curricula, for example—has vastly different support in varied parts of the world and is increasingly controversial in the United States as evidence-based practice takes hold. Culture and context are critical, and parental and societal values are crucial in obtaining and maintaining widespread support for early childhood education.

From Global to Local Practices:
Consider Trying Some of These Ideas

- Creating more opportunities for families to share with staff their long-term hopes and dreams for their children
- Reaching out to community and faith leaders to strengthen support for early childhood services
- Having a dialogue with parents about the extent to which your program's curriculum mirrors their values and expectations
- Increasing the opportunities for family members to share their talents and interests with children in your program
- Identifying, applying, or adapting some additional family support strategies that have been implemented in African early childhood programs
- What other ideas come to mind?

–Marilou Hyson, Guest Editor

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Save the Children's Emergent Literacy and Mathematics Initiative

Supporting Educators' and Parents' Efforts to Improve Young Children's School Readiness

Ali Amente, Alene Yenew, Ivelina Borisova, Amy Jo Dowd, Lauren Pisani, Sara Dang, and Katy Anís

Ethiopia is at the vanguard of Africa's move toward improving access to education. Enrollment in primary education increased from less than 30 percent twenty years ago to 95.3 percent in 2012–2013. During those decades of progress, however, Ethiopia paid little or no attention to early childhood care and development, viewing it as the responsibility of families and communities. More recently, Ethiopia has been giving increased attention to preschool education, and the preschool enrollment rate has increased from 5.3 percent in 2010–2011 to 26.1 percent in 2012–2013. However, many roadblocks still impede the progress of preschool education, such as lack of trained teachers, inadequate pay, absence of curriculum and teaching guidelines, and limited center facilities and developmentally appropriate learning materials.

Caregivers were taught how to foster literacy and math at home through simple activities.

Knowing that such challenges are found around the world, Save the Children developed an innovative approach for supporting emergent literacy and math (known as ELM) in preschool programs globally and began piloting it in Ethiopia in 2012–2013. The program was initially implemented in existing early learning centers, and a randomized control trial of the early implementation displayed strong positive results for children's learning and development. However, the results also showed that children who were not receiving any early care and development services were being left behind. Thus, Save the Children added the ELM parenting intervention in 2014 to reach more children. (See "A Multifaceted Approach," p. 32.) An evaluation of the parenting approach, which ran from November 2014 through May 2015, included 688 children and the same number of parents from 18 villages in the West Showa area of Ethiopia. To determine the effects of the parent intervention, the evaluation included two study groups: children in government-supported early childhood care and development centers, and children without access to preschool centers who would receive the ELM at Home program.

A Multifaceted Approach

Looking at both the early childhood care and development center (ECCD) and parenting programs, Save the Children's ELM initiative consisted of five elements.

Program element	Implementation strategy
Teacher training (capacity-strengthening activities)	■ **Basic training** for ECCD teachers/facilitators on emergent literacy and math (ELM) package was provided over five days. ■ **Refresher training** was given for two days after key skill gaps of the teachers/facilitators were identified through continuous coaching and monitoring by the ECCD team. Key ELM activities were revised during this refresher training, including planning and demonstration, interactive reading with children, and fostering comprehension, oral language, and phonemic awareness.
Group training for parents on ELM at Home	■ **Group training** was given for caregivers focusing on how to foster emergent literacy and math skills at home through simple, daily activities. Some parents went on to become facilitators and trained additional caregivers in their villages on ELM practices. ■ **Refresher training** was provided based on feedback from home visitations made by the parents' facilitators.
ELM-focused teaching resources	■ **Resources** related to ELM, such as child-appropriate story books, letter cards, puzzles, number cards, and math books, were provided to the teachers/facilitators in ECCD centers. Workshops on how to create ELM resources from local materials were also included for both teacher/facilitators and caregivers.
Parents/community involvement/education	■ **ELM awareness** was cultivated among parents' groups in each ECCD center implementing ELM. These groups, together with community representatives, cluster supervisors, and school directors, were given information about ELM in the center and at home to ensure sustainability, ownership, and quality.
Monitoring and supervision support	■ **Monitoring and supervision** supports included checking children's and parents' attendance, children's engagement, centers' organization and print-rich environments, children's interaction with the teacher/facilitator, daily lessons, and community involvement.

The evaluation found positive effects of ELM for parents—specifically, that children receiving the parenting intervention learned as much as children attending government-supported early childhood centers. Given that extension of early childhood care and development services to children throughout Ethiopia will take time, it is important to know that this ELM parenting program can serve as an effective, low-cost way to improve children's early learning experiences and help prepare them for primary school.

ELM as Save the Children's common approach

In 2016, ELM became a common approach across Save the Children for building children's emergent literacy and math skills at home and in early child care and development centers to bring about their success in school and life. To date, ELM has been implemented in 20 countries.

The ELM common approach has strengthened education systems in different ways. For example, in Bhutan, ELM has been integrated into the formal preschool system nationally. In addition, Bhutan's Ministry of Health is currently testing integration of the ELM at Home program into the health system in remote areas of the country.

In Rwanda, the ELM approach and activity cards have been embedded in the government curriculum for preschools. The curriculum also includes an emphasis on parental involvement. Teacher training has been significantly influenced, and Rwanda is in the process of embedding ELM in the lower primary curriculum.

Evidence of ELM's effectiveness from around the world has also prompted Save the Children's domestic programs to begin implementing the approach in rural communities across the United States.

Next steps

Around the world, far too many young children have limited exposure to foundational emergent literacy and math skills before entering primary school—this is especially true for children from families with limited economic means. Save the Children envisions continuing to advocate for and scale up its emergent literacy and math program through early learning programs and parents.

Save the Children is beginning to implement the approach in rural communities in the US.

Throughout program implementation, the following key principles will be focused on:

- Strengthen parents' capacity and confidence to support the development of early literacy and math skills at home. Parent education programs can encourage parents, no matter their education or literacy levels, to talk with their young children and to develop shared storytelling and active play habits.
- Create access to books and reading opportunities for families in low-income settings through mobile libraries and book banks and by teaching communities how to make or write their own stories.
- Improve access to quality preschool programs, especially for the most vulnerable children, which can significantly increase children's school readiness and their chances of becoming successful in early primary grades.
- Strengthen early childhood practitioners' capacity to support early literacy and math skills in preschool classrooms and provide effective teaching resources—in the form of games, activities, songs—to help foster skills in age appropriate and enjoyable ways.
- Improve transitions between preschools (or homes) and early primary school classrooms. The majority of children still lack opportunities to attend an early learning program, so early grades classrooms and curricula may need to be adapted to better accommodate children's varied levels of early literacy and math skills and scaffold their learning appropriately.

Further Reading

For peer-reviewed articles that offer greater detail on the research foundation, program components, and evaluation, see:

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To learn more about Save the Children's Early Math and Literacy Initiative, see:

"Ethiopia: ELMI Parenting Endline," published in 2015. https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/ethiopia-elmi-parenting-endline.

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Connecting the Dots

Learning Communities for Village Teachers in Rural Indonesia

Marilou Hyson and Rosfita Roesli

Dyah is a teacher of 4- and 5-year-olds in a small, remote village in Indonesia. Early childhood services are beginning to be requested by families, mostly farmers and shopkeepers. In response to families' recent awareness of the importance of early childhood programs, for the last few years Dyah and another young woman from the village have run a village "kindergarten." They lack formal training and their approach is informed only by their experiences with their own children and memories of their schooling. Parents, mainly farmers and shopkeepers, pay a small fee and help collect simple learning materials for the classroom, like cardboard boxes and empty water bottles. Recently, a pilot project provided a week of basic professional development for teachers in the area. Dyah loved the training

and would like to put what she learned into practice, but it's difficult to do without any follow-up support.

Dyah is not alone in needing ongoing, practical professional development. International research is clear: one-time training experiences are insufficient to allow teachers to consistently implement quality practices in their local environments. In several comprehensive literature reviews (e.g., Darling-Hammond & Richardson 2009; US Department of Education 2010), a clear theme emerges: one-time, or "drive-by," professional development is not likely to help teachers implement new approaches in their local environments. The research *does* show that more sustained professional development can help teachers apply new knowledge and reflect on it in collaboration with others. Effective strategies include observing other teachers' classes (Darling-Hammond & Richardson 2009; Flom 2014) and offering practice-based coaching—a process that connects teachers with coaches or mentors to think about and improve practice (Office of Head Start 2015).

In this article, we describe our team's challenges and early successes in piloting new ways to connect teachers with one another in poor, rural areas of Indonesia through a World Bank–supported project that aims to help the government of Indonesia improve access to, and quality of, early childhood services. Besides describing the Indonesian experience, we also identify some insights that may be applicable to teachers in the United States and other countries who struggle with similar issues.

Challenging conditions for teacher development

Indonesia is the fourth most populous country in the world. It has the world's largest Muslim population and is the world's third largest democracy (USINDO 2017). Although Indonesia has experienced some economic growth in recent years, the benefits have not yet reached the country's most vulnerable young children and families (Hyson 2015):

- Indonesian children rank near the bottom on most international comparisons of academic achievement, with the poorest children having the worst outcomes.
- Many poor children experience stunted growth, caused by poor maternal nutrition and inadequate early feeding; stunting limits children's physical and intellectual development, often for life.
- Families with low incomes have fewer resources to stimulate children's early development and learning.
- Most low-income families do not have access to affordable early childhood services.

Responding to these challenges, Indonesia has increased access to early learning and development services, particularly in rural areas. Yet these are still insufficient:

- The quality of services remains a concern, particularly the development of teachers' competencies to deliver quality programming.
- Coordination is challenging, with various ministries overseeing different aspects of services, often with minimal communication. Links between national efforts and implementation at regional and local levels are often weak.
- Teacher training is not widely available, with an inadequate supply of professional development providers and difficulties connecting with teachers in rural, often remote parts of the country.
- Most of the government-supported professional development has been brief, one-time basic training focused on transmitting theories and information through didactic methods.
- Teachers report great difficulty in applying what they have learned, and observations of practices in typical settings show a focus on whole-class teaching, with an absence of relevant, playful learning activities.

To address these challenges, the government of Indonesia has implemented Early Childhood Frontline, a two-year (2015–2017) pilot program that aims to increase the availability of high-quality, affordable, and locally relevant professional development for early childhood educators across the country. Frontline targets teachers in poor, rural villages, building local capacity to deliver teacher training and increasing community participation in the delivery of services. This approach is being implemented in 2,500 villages across 25 districts (local government entities), increasing the capacity of 15,000 community early education teachers over the two-year program period. Key elements include:

- Using local facilitators to engage villages in identifying their needs and linking them with professional development providers who can help
- Moving toward a local, district-based system for providing teacher professional development, with more practical, skills-focused training of trainers
- Enhancing the existing five-day basic training with more practice-focused materials and more interactive methods that engage participants with one another and with trainers
- Identifying and improving other follow-up professional development opportunities that build on existing community institutions

Creating connections among village teachers

Even though Frontline made the five-day basic training much more locally relevant and practical, isolated training tends not to make a lasting difference (Gulamhussein 2013). To strengthen teachers' ability to implement what they learn, Frontline has added four follow-up opportunities, building each on existing community institutions or frequently used media. Teachers receive support to (1) visit nearby programs; (2) attend meetings of teacher cluster groups; (3) become members of a peer group in WhatsApp, a popular social media application in Indonesia; and (4) receive some on-site coaching if they live in one of several districts.

1. Observing and discussing other teachers' practices

> Dyah had gotten to know some teachers in other villages, but due to travel costs and logistics, she had never had the opportunity to see what they do with the children. Now, thanks to Frontline, she has spent several days in other programs, observing and, after the children leave, discussing issues with the staff. Dyah says that it's encouraging to see that others have similar challenges. She is also trying to adapt some practices and activities for her classroom that she has seen other teachers do.

Professional development researchers (e.g., Darling-Hammond & Richardson 2009; Flom 2014) have noted the value of giving teachers a chance to see what other teachers are doing in their classrooms and then engaging in reflective discussions—what has been called *collaborative professional development* (Flom 2014). The classrooms do not have to be models of excellence as long as the teachers are focused on learning from one another.

In the past, Indonesia's government has tried to identify so-called model centers that can host visits and weeklong internships. These centers are often located far from the rural areas where most early childhood teachers work,

and the materials and physical environment in the model centers are much different from the realities of small village preschools. Frontline provides support for teachers to travel to local schools, where they spend a morning observing in peers' classrooms and then, after the children have left, engage in focused discussions with the staff of the partner schools.

Teachers usually say that they enjoy and gain much from these visits, but several challenges were apparent during Frontline's first year, and they are now being addressed. For example, more guidance and facilitation were needed to help the visitors and the host teachers understand how to get the most out of these opportunities. Many teachers simply copied whatever they saw in their visit without making adaptations to their own context. In response, more user-friendly materials have been designed and distributed, and some on-site coaching is being offered (described later in this article).

2. Enhancing the value of teacher meetings

Before participating in Frontline, Putri had taught for a year but had never attended meetings of the teachers in her area. She was not sure why it was important to be at the meetings, and travel was difficult. Now, with project support, Putri looks forward to more frequent involvement, when she can tell other teachers about what she's doing in her own classroom—both successes and challenges. In these meetings, she also has a chance to learn what others are doing and get other information that affects her work in the village.

Teacher cluster groups—or *Gugus*, in Indonesia's official language—began many years ago, as primary and secondary teachers would come together to learn new information and share their experiences. In more recent years, the concept was widely adopted for early childhood teachers, with monthly meetings of those from the same locality. Although the content of the meetings was often didactic and administrative, Gugus offered a promising foundation for developing professional learning communities.

In Frontline's first year, teachers who had completed basic training began receiving travel funds to attend the established Gugus meetings and to contribute to them by sharing what they had learned. Many teachers say Gugus meetings are useful because teachers are thirsty for professional development. They also see the meetings as important venues for gaining information about future early childhood events, government regulations, and funding issues.

As with Frontline's other initiatives, the first year unearthed some challenges. Although teachers had been given modest travel funds, in remote areas it was not always easy to travel to a central meeting point to attend Gugus. Furthermore, the content of many Gugus meetings had remained less practical and less interactive than was expected. As with the classroom visits, more specific guidance was needed about how to move from monthly lectures to a model of shared peer learning, with connections back to the practices being emphasized by the government and by Frontline. For the second year, Gugus leaders received a booklet full of ideas for interactive sessions that help all teachers—not just those participating in the pilot—learn about and

Examples of Ideas for Interactive, Practice-Focused Gugus Meetings

- Teachers demonstrate learning materials they have previously created using local resources (e.g., bottle caps, seashells, leaves, etc.), and then they work together to brainstorm and develop additional materials.
- In small groups, teachers volunteer to share information about a child in their class with a disability or other special need. Group members consider how to adapt activities to help the child participate.
- A member demonstrates a simple learning activity; other members brainstorm all the different ways this kind of activity can support children's development, and they discuss other activities that may have similar benefits.
- Members participate in a work session on how to begin implementing "corners," or "learning centers." Members who use centers share examples. Gugus leaders encourage members to try out ideas and report back at the next meeting.
- Members discuss a case study of a frequently encountered ethical issue; for example, what is the right thing to do if a family member may be mistreating a child?
- Members share ways they are engaging families and discuss how to address low participation.

apply positive early childhood methods and activities (see "Examples of Ideas for Interactive, Practice-Focused Gugus Meetings").

3. Using WhatsApp to connect from a distance

As a young person in a remote area, Syifa has often relied on social media—WhatsApp is her favorite—to keep in touch with friends and relatives. Now she has another reason to use WhatsApp: it allows her to connect easily with other early childhood teachers. A few times she has posted photos of activities she uses, both activities learned in training and those she saw others use when she visited their classrooms. She's also getting ideas from others in her WhatsApp group.

WhatsApp Messenger, a free social media application, is widely used in Indonesia. Seeing an opportunity to connect teachers, Frontline asked those who provided the five-day basic training to create WhatsApp groups for each cohort of participants. Use of the groups has varied, but participants often share photos or other examples of what they are implementing in their classrooms.

Focus groups showed that both trainers and teachers used and valued the WhatsApp groups. Teachers connected with others who had been in their basic training, and trainers connected frequently with one another and with the teachers with whom they had worked. These WhatsApp groups are especially valuable in connecting those living in more remote areas, as well as bridging the gaps between in-person connections with other early childhood educators (either teachers or trainers).

The potential for this type of social media connection is evident, but in practice it needed enhancement. Little support was provided to teachers or trainers for using WhatsApp for professional development. Some groups of participants used the platform primarily for communications unrelated to early childhood education. Trainers did not have specific guidance on how to communicate simple reminders about positive practices—but research in public health, education, and family engagement shows that such reminders are beneficial when delivered through social media or texting (e.g., Hurwitz et al. 2016; Jukes et al. 2016). Frontline trainers can disseminate messages to encourage recently trained teachers to implement specific practices and to share their experiences through WhatsApp. Now, during Frontline's second year, a detailed set of examples is being given to trainers, with discussion of the use and adaptation of these messages during training of trainers workshops (see "Examples of Weekly Reminders for WhatsApp Groups," p. 40).

4. Making coaching possible

Visiting other programs, attending Gugus meetings, and exchanging messages with her teacher friends have been helpful, but when asked, Dyah says she would really love to have a coach—a more experienced teacher who could help her improve. Dyah doesn't live in one of the areas where Frontline is trying out a new coaching initiative, but other teachers, like Tari, are more fortunate.

Tari, a teacher in a small preschool, lives in one of the "coach pilot" areas. She has recently completed her five-day basic training. Now, she wants to improve her ability to come up with playful activities connected to the assigned theme for each week. Before receiving training, Tari used to make presentations to the children about the theme; now she sees the need to engage the children in a different way. But Tari is confused about where to start, despite seeing a few other teachers' ideas. In her district, there are coaches to give that extra support.

Tari's coach helps her think about what resources might already be available. Tari realizes that the book *Theme Webbing* has been in her center's resource room, which she never used. In addition to answering her questions, the coach has empowered Tari to identify local resources that will continue to help her plan theme-related daily activities.

Sustained professional development can help teachers apply and reflect on new knowledge.

Even in the United States, it is difficult to implement one-on-one work site coaching, despite evidence for its benefits (e.g., Rush & Shelden 2011; Gupta & Daniels 2012). In countries like Indonesia, contending with greater poverty, more remote locations, and fewer qualified early childhood staff, implementing individualized coaching is even more challenging. Frontline is exploring various ways to make coaching possible, beginning in just a few areas. The first step has been to develop and pilot resources to train coaches, using group training sessions followed by required hours of practice and an observational assessment of coaching skills. Those trained to be coaches come from various backgrounds: principals, government staff responsible for supervising local centers, and senior teachers. To create the possibility of a sustainable system, those who successfully go through this initial process are then prepared to train others as coaches.

So far, the training and early implementation have been well received. Those trained as coaches want this to continue after the pilot, as their early coaching experiences have shown that it is very helpful for village teachers. Not only that, some principals and governmental staff who have received the training have said that the skills are also useful in conducting their other, primary responsibilities. Ani, a principal, said that since practicing coaching, she has felt a change in herself—she has become more patient and understanding when listening to teachers' problems and is more able to manage her emotions and to appreciate the teachers' point of view. Because results like these have been fairly typical, and because sustainability is a major concern, the second year of Frontline is focusing on preparing early childhood directors and principals as coaches.

Another challenge has been that, given limited resources, in remote locations one-on-one coaching is sometimes not feasible or occurs so seldom that its effects are limited. Small group coaching is an alternative Frontline is exploring. In this case, a coach meets with a small group of teachers who work in the same location or live near one another. Both common and unique challenges can be collaboratively discussed during these sessions.

Examples of Weekly Reminders for WhatsApp Groups

- Have friendly, personal conversations with a child you don't know very well.
- Ask open-ended questions (that do not have right or wrong answers) often.
- Encourage good behavior by suggesting to children what to do, instead of just telling them what they should *not* do.
- Have some time every day for children to choose their own activities. Show them what the choices are, and limit the number of children in each area.
- Organize your classroom so that there are several activity centers where small groups of children can learn by playing. Some can be outdoors.
- Remember to read a book with the children every day. Discuss the story!
- Teach math skills using everyday objects—even simple things like seeds or small sticks.
- Greet the children's families at the beginning and end of the day. Tell parents something positive about their child.

From Indonesia to the United States: Shared challenges and lessons learned

The contexts might differ, but Frontline's ongoing work may hold insights for educators, professional development providers, and others in the United States.

› **Success depends on continuous improvement.** The examples shared in this article show how lessons learned in the early stages of a pilot program can improve later implementation, if everyone remains open to that learning. Just in the last year, Frontline has made changes to materials

and procedures—changes that hold promise for further development of this intervention.

- **Strategically using and partnering with existing institutions and programs supports expansion and sustainability.** At every point, Frontline has tried to build on what already exists and is accepted within communities. Village preschools as observation sites, popular social media applications, existing teacher cluster groups—these and other venues create opportunities in the short run and the longer run. Frontline has also become a laboratory for innovation that various government programs may draw upon. For example, the Frontline evaluation is using a classroom quality observation tool, MELE (ECDMeasure 2017), that may eventually be adapted to assist with the government's new accreditation system.
- **Coordination and integration of professional development opportunities is needed to avoid fragmentation and to strengthen impact.** Frontline has made progress in drawing on a common set of teacher competencies to frame each of the four follow-up activities described here, as well as to link them back to the initial group training.
- **Intensity and dosage matter.** Because of constraints of time and budget, Frontline has been able to support each teachers' participation in only a few visits and a few Gugus meetings—probably too few to make a large impact. The hope is that in the future, local governments will see the value of teachers learning from each other and provide support for continuing professional development; there is already some evidence of this occurring in districts.
- **One size does not fit all.** If simple tools to connect teachers are provided, and if these are closely linked to existing, well-accepted institutions and systems, then different communities might pick up and combine the pieces in different ways. Early childhood educators will construct various combinations of this "menu of options" according to their culture, characteristics, and needs. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation will help document these patterns and their effects on practice, as well as support continuous improvement.

Conclusion

Frontline continues to tweak the tools and supports for teacher learning communities, implementing improvements during the project's second year and possibly beyond. Even at the midpoint, the project's process evaluation activities—including classroom observations, interviews, and focus group discussions—suggest that we are on a promising path. Interest shown by the government's early childhood directorates, as well as the participating local government districts, indicates that a number of these innovations may be sustainable.

Frontline is trying to create a culture of connection for all teachers, wherever they are and whatever their level of education.

Ultimately, Frontline is trying to create a culture of connection for all teachers, wherever they are and whatever their level of education and professional

preparation. Such connections are important for all early childhood professionals, within and far beyond Indonesia.

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From Global to Local Practices: Consider Trying Some of These Ideas

- Organizing opportunities for teachers to have "exchange visits" with colleagues' classrooms
- Building in time at AEYC or other meetings for teachers to share their successes and challenges in an informal setting
- Extending the learning that happens in training sessions with well-planned follow-up activities
- Experimenting with social media to connect teachers or administrators who are seldom able to get together in person
- Using social media to send concise, encouraging key messages about specific practices or priorities
- What other ideas come to mind?

—Marilou Hyson, Guest Editor

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Returning Home from International Experiences

My New Understanding of Developmentally Appropriate Practices

Laurie R. Noe

How long should group time be? What should the balance be between teacher-directed activities and child-directed activities? Should children spend more time inside or outside? Why? These and many other questions have been discussed by the students in the college courses I teach on inclusive early childhood education. While we are guided by research as much as possible, teaching young children is both a science and an art. And even within the realm of evidence-based practice, there is much to debate. For example, my students often disagree about which dispositions are most important for early childhood educators. Being nurturing, patient, knowledgeable, and collaborative are all essential, but the question as to which is most critical is relevant to the students; in their first few years of teaching, they want to know what to concentrate on to grow.

After visiting preschools and talking with early childhood educators in South Africa, Peru, Finland, Sweden, and China—and across the Unites States—I am prepared to refocus my students' debates about the precise nature of developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) in diverse contexts. Developmentally appropriate practice requires educators to consider not only typical child development and the specific developmental stages and individual characteristics of the children with whom they are working but also the cultural influences on those children, as multiple NAEYC position statements and publications emphasize (Copple & Bredekamp 2009; NAEYC 2009a; NAEYC 2009b).

Culture is comprised of many elements—it is a perfect example of the whole being greater than the sum of its parts. In each country I visited (and in the many others I have studied), cultural components that support a particular activity might be easily observed, such as the physical environment, or they might be less visible yet equally important, such as a deeply held value of interdependence or independence.

Learning from others, therefore, is not as simple as bringing home an inspirational practice that you find in one country, at one school, on the one day when you happen to be there. Successful adaptation across cultures begins with a thorough investigation of the practice and of the context surrounding the practice. Then there must be consideration of what that practice would look like and feel like in your school, your culture, and your environment. This provides a sharper focus with which to view the concept *developmentally appropriate*. From one culture to another—within as well as beyond the United States—practices vary in intriguing ways. Still, the core concept of trying to offer a developmentally appropriate education can be seen even across the most diverse contexts. (To be clear, even as the implementation of developmentally appropriate practices varies across cultural contexts, some foundational elements critical to healthy child development remain constant; for example, all children need warm relationships, opportunities for both free and guided play, and extensive language development.)

Jump ropes, old tires, and a tractor

When visiting preschools in the urban areas of Lima, Peru, and the rural area of Phokeng, South Africa, I saw schools with almost no materials, furnishings, or equipment of any kind. Particularly bare were some of the outdoor spaces—hardly able to be called "playgrounds" for lack of any toys or equipment with which children could play. And yet, play they did. Rocks, sticks, dirt, and leaves all became objects of play. At one school in Lima, old tires were stacked in a short tower and filled with sand to create a sandbox. And at a school in Phokeng, there were old tires lying around. The moment the children were outdoors, they began rolling and racing the tires up and down a dirt path. The speed, balance, and dexterity they displayed were fascinating.

At another school in Phokeng, 3- and 4-year-olds stood in line with toddlers for a chance to jump a long rope twirled by two 5-year-olds. They all demonstrated some degree of proficiency in jumping rope, and they all were right back at the end of the line when they missed the rope's rhythm. But what impressed me even more than the surprising proficiency these young children demonstrated was their patience and persistence. It was well beyond what I was used to in the United States with children of this age for an activity of this difficulty.

According to several teachers in Phokeng, the children have well-developed gross motor skills due to the availability of these activities and the limited

availability of alternative outdoor play equipment. Children practice the few things that are offered at outdoor time, and they become very good at them.

Successful adaptation across cultures begins with a thorough investigation of the practice and of the context surrounding the practice.

The teachers encouraged further physical and cognitive development during the play. They prompted children to count the number of pushes it took to roll the tire across the playground. They challenged children to roll the tire with their nondominant hand. They had children stack the tires in a climbable pile after the races were over. The familiar maxim of architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe came to mind: "Less is more."

Another school in Phokeng had been given an old blue farm tractor. It was a little rusty and had all the expected holes and moving parts that might pinch little fingers and scrape bare legs. At home in Connecticut, this would have been considered a major safety hazard. In this preschool, lacking other play structures, the old tractor offered a wonderful opportunity for climbing mixed with some dramatic play.

Overresourced and underchallenged?

Back home at our Lab School, I looked a little differently at our nicely manufactured climber with its smooth edges, our fenced and gated playground, and our nine inches of safety ground cover. I felt a bit jealous of the empty space available to the children I had observed in Africa. Adapting some of what I had seen abroad, we added small car tires to the playground and then watched as the children figured out all the things they could do with them. They do not have the room to roll them or the unencumbered hours to practice, the way the South African children did. Expecting to get that space and time in an inner-city American preschool playground is not reasonable. But our children found their own ways to incorporate the tires in their play.

As for jumping rope, my observations indicate that since there are so many easier things to do on our playground, the children are not drawn to such a difficult activity requiring so much perseverance to master. So, they have not developed the timing, rhythm, or interest to jump rope like the children in Phokeng.

On the surface, our Lab School's playground is far superior. Yet I wonder whether the sparse play environments I have seen abroad may not be better for challenging children to become more creative and persistent. Removing all the equipment from our playground would be unreasonable. And no amount of justification would condone providing rusted farm equipment. But my concept of developmentally appropriate practice has been deepened and broadened, even though direct application of what I've observed is not feasible in the United States.

Culture-based experiences were always inspirational in every country that I visited. In Peru we saw children weaving. In Africa we saw children balancing toys on their heads, imitating the way mothers carry objects every day. In China children baked elaborate moon cakes for the mid-autumn festival, and in one preschool they created a model of an army tank. In Scandinavia the babies napped outside all year round (BBC News 2013). All these activities make sense in their environments, where they are based on traditions and cultural norms.

The great outdoors and the pollution report

Outdoor time brings images of fresh air and active play. At our Lab School, we might plan an hour or so with children exploring vegetable gardens, climbing structures, riding tricycles, and participating in teacher-facilitated activities, such as scavenger hunts for natural materials. These types of activities are fairly common in many American preschools on good weather days. But in Scandinavia, outdoor time might be that—or much more. A prevalent preschool model in Scandinavia is called forest schools; they promote outside play all day long, in all kinds of weather, for preschoolers and kindergartners.

In these schools, children eat, nap, and play outdoors on freezing cold (and somewhat dark) winter days as well as on beautiful summer days. They dress for rain days and snow days and explore them all with gusto. Children in forest schools are often seen hiking for miles, climbing trees, whittling, wading in brooks, using sticks for role playing, and digging in dirt. By American standards, some of these activities might not be considered developmentally appropriate for health and safety reasons. Licensing agents in the States might cite a preschool facility for noncompliance with rules about covering sandboxes, not allowing play with sharp objects, and not allowing climbing where there is no approved safety ground cover. (There is a small movement for forest schools in the United States; it will be interesting to see if and how our regulations change in response.)

In sharp contrast to the United States, the health and safety concerns with children playing outdoors in parts of China focus not on dangerous play materials but on air quality. The morning weather report is accompanied by the air quality report, which indicates how safe (or unsafe) the air is to breathe. Preschools in Beijing often either close because of poor air quality or keep children confined to the indoor areas. Doing their best to meet children's needs, teachers offer gross motor activities indoors.

I wrestle with adapting the inspiring attitudes I saw toward risk-taking and exploration to my school.

Beijing's indoor restrictions and Scandinavia's forest schools present two ends of the continuum on outdoor learning and play. Yet both, in their contexts, reflect teachers' commitment to a developmentally appropriate approach.

Adapting to cultural exigencies and preferences

In different cultural settings, practices regarding supervision, teacher–child ratios, and teacher-directed versus child-initiated activities are very different. In South Africa, I observed classes with nearly 50 children under the age of 6 with only one adult present. Because some of the children were inside while others were outside, children were necessarily unsupervised in the bathrooms and elsewhere; it was nearly impossible for them all to be in one small room at the same time.

In Finland, preschool and school-age children moved about unaccompanied but for very different reasons. The culture of trust was so pervasive, children were expected to do something self-directed and meaningful regardless of whether a teacher was nearby. They wandered the nearby woods, climbed trees, and gathered nettles for snack without asking permission to do so or needing to have an adult with them. When it was time to begin a new activity, teachers played flutes or rang bells so all children would hear and return to the group. These teachers believed, as they explained during my visit, that if the teacher stays in the same place, the children will know where to find help when needed. The teachers' intent is to instill a sense of security while encouraging risk-taking and exploration.

In the United States, it is nearly impossible to give children an opportunity to explore on their own in this way due to strict regulations requiring constant supervision. In America, many teachers and directors are nervous about allowing any activities that might result in an injury of any kind. And in China there is a strong belief that learning takes place in the teacher-directed activities (Ying Hu, Fan, Leng leong & Li 2015). Thus, opportunities for individual exploration are extremely limited. And yet, the learning environment is not as bleak as many US educators might imagine. I saw wonderful whole group activities in which children learned choreographed dance routines that develop their awareness of their bodies and movements and a sense of community.

Bringing it home

While I learned a great deal travelling to so many countries, I continue to wrestle with how to adapt the inspiring attitudes I saw toward risk-taking and exploration to suit my university's Lab School and other US settings. One whole day per week of all-outdoor play might be a good place to start. On a prairie, in the suburbs, or even in a city, there are places outdoors to play. And if the Air Quality Index is too poor, the temperature too hot or cold, the rain too hard, or the snow too deep, find an indoor place that is new to the children, and let the exploration begin.

I would also like to consider ways to support a sense of unity and community through orchestrated whole group activities, as the Chinese do. Choreographed dance, choral singing, and speaking, for example, could support children's social, physical, and language development.

It's tempting to ask questions such as, "If Scandinavian preschoolers are outside all day, should our preschools follow suit?," "If African children play with tires in

exciting and inventive ways, should we all add tires to our programs?," and "If Chinese teachers lead organized dance and exercise routines each morning, should we rearrange our schedules to include those?"

Instead of thinking about importing activities as presented, I consider how activities reflect the cultures in which they are embedded.

Instead of thinking about importing activities in the exact way they are presented in other cultures, I will continue to consider how activities reflect and support the cultures in which they are embedded. Then we can adapt those activities to better reflect the cultures of the children, the families, and the communities in which we live. The goal should not be to transplant activities to our schools. The goal is to be inspired by them and to present similarly inspirational experiences for the children in our care. It might not all come back to my classroom—or your classroom—but it all comes back to developmentally appropriate practices.

From Global to Local Practices: Consider Trying Some of These Ideas

- Talking with families about their childhood memories—games, playthings, traditions
- Adding a few new, very basic materials—such as small tires or long bamboo poles—and watching how children use them (with plenty of time to experiment)
- Posing interesting challenges to children as they try to use basic materials in new ways
- Using some of the author's points to prompt a reflective discussion about DAP with program staff or early childhood teacher preparation students
- Noticing how children in your program enact some specific cultural practices in their play (as the African children in this article carried objects on their heads the way their mothers do in the village)—and encouraging this play
- What other ideas come to mind?

–Marilou Hyson, Guest Editor

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About the author

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NAEYC NEWS

The latest from the National Association for the Education of Young Children

FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Teacher Preparation: Get Involved and Join the Dialogue

Tammy L. Mann

Several articles have recently appeared in the popular press challenging research that underscores the importance of educated and well-prepared early childhood educators. Such views run counter to the Institute of Medicine and National Research Council's report *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation* (www.nap.edu/catalog/19401/transforming-the-workforce-for-children-birth-through-age-8-a). The report has stimulated planning at the state and national levels to strengthen the processes and methods used to develop and support teachers. As these efforts continue to emerge, including NAEYC's Power to the Profession collaborative initiative, it is vital that the voices of early childhood educators contribute to the discourse.

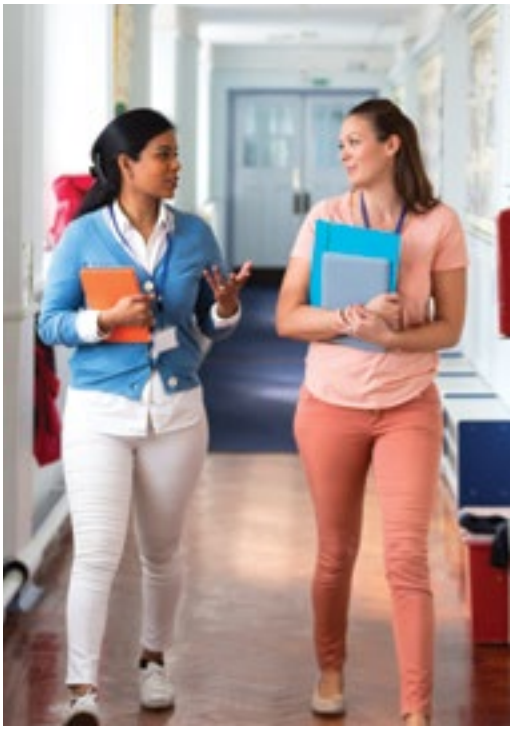
In April 2017, NAEYC launched Hello, an online community to foster dialogue and engagement among NAEYC members within and beyond current Interest Forums. My first post to Hello invited members to share their perspectives on thoughtful approaches to building capacity

DE NUESTRA PRESIDENTA

La preparación docente: Participe y entre en el diálogo

Tammy L. Mann

Han salido recientemente en la prensa popular varios artículos que cuestionan la investigación que enfatiza la importancia de la formación académica y la buena preparación para los educadores de la primera infancia. Tales perspectivas son contrarias al informe del Instituto de Medicina y el Consejo Nacional de Investigación *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation* (Cómo transformar la fuerza laboral dedicada a los niños desde su nacimiento hasta los 8 años. Un fundamento unificador), accesible en www.nap.edu/catalog/19401/transforming-the-workforce-for-children-birth-through-age-8-a. El informe ha estimulado planificación a



in the field for enhanced teacher preparation and development. The question generated 29 responses from individuals in 16 states. Responses generally fell into three broad categories:

- Tensions between increasing degree requirements for early childhood educators and maintaining and growing workforce diversity
- Access to flexible and affordable higher education programs
- Innovative approaches to professional development, enhanced compensation/benefits, and better working conditions

The conversation about increasing degree requirements and maintaining and growing workforce diversity must be balanced—they are equally important components of providing high-quality early education. Let's guard against "either/or" thinking and embrace a "both/and" perspective so as to safeguard the importance of both factors. A first step toward achieving this balance is to listen carefully to fully understand the meaning behind resistance to increased requirements by those in the workforce. In some cases,

los niveles estatal y nacional para fortalecer los procesos y métodos utilizados para desarrollar y apoyar a los maestros. Mientras siguen emergiendo estos esfuerzos, los cuales incluyen la iniciativa colaborativa de NAEYC Power to the Profession (Revalorizar la Profesión), es de vital importancia que las voces de los educadores de niños pequeños contribuyan al discurso.

En abril de 2017, NAEYC lanzó Hello, una comunidad en línea, para promover el diálogo y la participación entre los miembros de NAEYC tanto dentro como más allá de los foros de interés actuales. Mi primer aporte en Hello invitó a los miembros a compartir sus perspectivas de planteamientos bien considerados y destinados a aumentar en el campo profesional la capacidad para mejorar la preparación y el desarrollo de los maestros. La pregunta generó 29 respuestas de individuos de 16 estados. La mayoría de las respuestas correspondía a tres categorías generales:

- Tensiones entre los crecientes requisitos para los educadores de la primera infancia de obtener títulos universitarios y el mantenimiento y crecimiento de la diversidad en la fuerza laboral
- Acceso a programas flexibles y económicos de educación postsecundaria
- Planteamientos innovadores del desarrollo profesional y mejores salarios, beneficios y condiciones laborales

resistance may indicate that individuals are not committed to improving their practice (and therefore are not suited to the work). Being an excellent early childhood educator requires a willingness to examine one's practice in order to effectively meet the learning needs of young children. In other cases, resistance may reflect worry about one's ability to meet such requirements, based on the manner in which education systems are structured or on past challenges with such systems.

Fundamental shifts are needed in the way higher education is delivered—especially to currently employed workforce participants and for the sake of maintaining and growing workforce diversity. Some respondents noted online education as one important part of the process; others spoke about the need to incorporate past work experiences into evaluating and understanding competence. Still others talked about the need for financial support and assistance to pay for higher education. Exposing students to the profession during high school and evaluating the best methods for connecting theory to practice (i.e., more induction approaches) for full-time college students were also highlighted as areas ripe for reevaluation.

Being an excellent early childhood educator requires a willingness to examine one's practice to meet the learning needs of children.

Degree attainment is an important accomplishment; yet it marks only the beginning of a journey toward becoming an effective educator. In fact, some might argue that what happens after such a milestone is achieved is equally, if not more, important. Becoming an effective early childhood educator is a process that demands access to ongoing professional development and support from administrators who understand the importance of developmentally appropriate practice as a framework for meeting the learning and development needs of young children. The organizational culture must focus on education as a continuous process—for

La conversación sobre los crecientes requisitos de títulos y el mantenimiento y crecimiento de la diversidad en la fuerza laboral debe ser equilibrada, ya que son componentes igualmente importantes de la provisión de la educación infantil de alta calidad. Vamos a cuidar de los pensamientos "o...o..." y abrazar una perspectiva "tanto...como..." a fin de proteger la importancia de ambos factores. Un primer paso hacia lograr este equilibrio es el de escuchar atentamente para comprender plenamente el significado de la resistencia entre la fuerza laboral a los requisitos aumentados. En algunos casos, la resistencia podría indicar que los individuos no se comprometen con mejorar su práctica (y que por lo tanto no son adecuados para el trabajo). Para ser educadores excelentes de la primera infancia, es necesario que estén dispuestos a examinar su propia práctica a fin de satisfacer eficazmente las necesidades del aprendizaje de los niños pequeños. En otros casos, la resistencia podrá reflejar una preocupación por la capacidad personal para cumplir con los requisitos, basado en la estructura de los sistemas educativos o en dificultades anteriores dentro de dichos sistemas.

Son necesarios los cambios fundamentales en la provisión de la educación postsecundaria, especialmente para los participantes en la fuerza laboral actualmente empleados y con respecto a mantener y crecer la diversidad en la fuerza laboral. Algunos respondedores indicaron la educación en línea como factor importante del proceso; otros hablaron de la necesidad de incorporar experiencias laborales anteriores a la evaluación y la comprensión de la competencia. Aún más hablaron de necesitar apoyo económico y asistencia para pagar por dicha educación. La exposición de la profesión a estudiantes de la secundaria superior y la evaluación de los mejores métodos de conectar la teoría con la práctica (es decir, más planteamientos de inducción) para estudiantes universitarios que asisten a tiempo completo también se recalcaron como áreas listas para ser reevaluadas.

La realización de un título universitario es un logro importante, pero marca solamente el principio de un viaje hacia ser un educador eficaz. De hecho, se podría sostener que lo que pasa después de lograr tal hito es igual de, si no más, importante. El hacerse un

young children and teachers. The work's value must be reflected in higher compensation and benefits. Early childhood educators must feel valued and supported if they are to thrive and succeed in their work with young children and families. Coaches, peer mentors, and opportunities to plan—all support continuous improvement in practice.

Each of us has a role to play in helping to change public perceptions about our work as educators and its value as a public good. As Power to the Profession moves forward, I cannot underscore enough the importance of NAEYC members seeing themselves as *active* participants in the process. We have a tremendous opportunity to shape the outcome of what will become the next set of standards and expectations for early childhood educators. Connect with others and stay informed about the progress of this work. Most important, engage wholeheartedly when you see discussions about teacher education moving in a direction that might result in unintended consequences or even jeopardize what we want for young children and the early childhood education workforce.

For information about the status of the work of Power to the Profession, and to access a summary of its eight decision cycles, please visit www.NAEYC.org/profession/decision-cycles. For readers interested in engaging with those who have shared their perspectives about ways to enhance teacher preparation, please visit Hello (http://hello.NAEYC.org) and search for the discussion thread titled "How do we best prepare early childhood educators?"

educador eficaz de la primera infancia es un proceso que exige el acceso a la continuación del desarrollo profesional y el apoyo de administradores que entienden la importancia de la práctica apropiada para el desarrollo como marco de satisfacer las necesidades de aprender y desarrollarse de los niños pequeños. La cultura organizativa debe focalizar en la educación como proceso continuo, tanto para los niños pequeños como para sus maestros. El valor del trabajo debe reflejarse en mejores salarios y beneficios. Es necesario que los educadores se sientan valorados y apoyados para poder prosperar y tener éxito en su trabajo con niños pequeños y familias. Los entrenadores, mentores y oportunidades de planear apoyan el mejoramiento continuo en la práctica profesional.

Cada uno de nosotros tiene un papel en el cambio de las percepciones públicas de nuestro trabajo como educadores y el valor del mismo como bien común. Mientras se adelanta Power to the Profession, no puedo dejar de enfatizar la importancia de que los miembros de NAEYC se vean como participantes *activos* en el proceso. Tenemos una oportunidad tremenda de formar el resultado de lo que será la próxima serie de estándares y expectativas para los educadores de la primera infancia. Conéctese con otros y manténgase informado sobre el progreso de esta iniciativa. Más importantemente, comprométase con todo el corazón cuando vea conversaciones sobre si la preparación docente va por un rumbo que podría producir consecuencias imprevistas o hasta arriesgar lo que queremos para los niños pequeños y la fuerza laboral del campo de educación infantil.

Para ver más información sobre el estado del trabajo de *Power to the Profession* y acceder a un resumen de sus ocho ciclos de decisión, visite por favor www.NAEYC.org/profession/decision-cycles. Si le interesa interactuar con los que han compartido sus perspectivas de cómo mejorar la preparación docente, visite por favor Hello (http://hello.NAEYC.org) y busque en el hilo "How do we best prepare early childhood educators?"

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Your NAEYC, Our Future

Rhian Evans Allvin | *Chief Executive Officer*

When I arrived at NAEYC four years ago, one of my priorities was to focus on the National Dialogue, which had been under way for a couple of years. The National Dialogue was designed to open the lines of communication between NAEYC and its affiliates and to build a shared vision for our future. Three recommendations had emerged and were awaiting consideration by the Governing Board. The first recommendation was related to member voice, in particular that NAEYC exert leadership as the standard bearer for the early childhood profession. The second was that the organization's mission be revised and that affiliates consider aligning with the new mission. And the third recommendation was that the affiliate structure be revisited in a manner that simplifies, clarifies, and strengthens relationships.

In light of those recommendations and related issues, such as revitalizing NAEYC's fiscal health and better serving the rapidly evolving field of early education, the association embarked on a strategic planning process. Many of my *Young Children* columns have focused on elements of the strategic plan, what our goals are, and how we intend to measure progress, so I won't review them here. (You can find NAEYC's Strategic Direction at www.NAEYC.org.) However, I will explain why this fall is an incredibly important time in the life of NAEYC. It represents the culmination of a significant amount of work, grit, and collaboration with our affiliates to bring to fruition a number of projects vital for our shared progress and growth. Let's look at them.

FORMAR CONEXIONES

Su NAEYC, nuestro futuro

Rhian Evans Allvin | *Directora Ejecutiva*

Cuando llegué a NAEYC hace cuatro años, una de mis prioridades era la de focalizar en el Diálogo Nacional, que ya llevaba un par de años en marcha. El Diálogo Nacional se diseñó para abrir las líneas de comunicación entre NAEYC y sus afiliados, además de desarrollar una visión compartida para nuestro futuro. Habían emergido tres recomendaciones que esperaban la consideración de la Junta Directiva. La primera recomendación se relacionaba con la voz de los miembros, en particular que NAEYC ejerciera liderazgo como el abanderado de la profesión del campo infantil. La segunda era que la misión de la organización se revisara y que los afiliados consideraran alinearse con la nueva misión. Y la tercera recomendación era que la estructura de los afiliados se revisara de una manera que simplificaría, clarificaría y fortalecería las relaciones.

En vista de aquellas recomendaciones y las cuestiones relacionadas, como las de revitalizar la salud fiscal de NAEYC y servir mejor el campo en rápida evolución de la educación infantil, la asociación embarcó en un proceso de planificación estratégica. He centrado muchas de mis columnas en *Young Children* en elementos del plan estratégico, qué son nuestras metas y cómo pretendemos medir el progreso, así que no los repasaré aquí. (Se puede hallar la Dirección Estratégica de NAEYC en www.NAEYC.org). Sin embargo, sí explicaré por qué este otoño es una época increíblemente importante

Membership

With the launch of the Strategic Direction in 2015 came the bold goal to double NAEYC's membership within five years. This would make our 2020 membership slightly greater than one hundred thousand. While daunting after more than 10 years of attrition, with an early childhood workforce of more than a million, it is certainly a reasonable aspiration. We knew that turning membership around was going to take more than a flashy brochure—we would have to make substantial structural changes that included rethinking the value proposition of membership, the pricing structure, and member engagement opportunities.

This fall, the new membership structure goes into effect. It includes one national pricing structure—that is, NAEYC membership fees

en la vida de NAEYC. Representa la culminación de una cantidad significativo de trabajo, determinación y colaboración con nuestros afiliados para realizar varios proyectos que son vitales para progresar y crecer. Vamos a verlos.

Los miembros

Con el lanzamiento de la Dirección Estratégica en 2015 vino la meta valiente de doblar la membrecía de NAEYC dentro de cinco años. Así nuestra membrecía en 2020 sería de un poco más de cien mil. Esta aspiración, aunque es abrumadora después de más de 10 años de abandono y con una fuerza laboral en el campo infantil de más de un millón, también es con toda certeza razonable. Sabíamos que el despegue de la membrecía requeriría más que un folleto llamativo; tendríamos que hacer significativos cambios estructurales que incluirían la reconsideración del valor propuesto de la membrecía,

are uniform, no matter where in the United States you live. You can choose a membership option from four levels, and the least expensive isn't just for students! The association is also launching a national marketing campaign that affiliates can tailor to fit their needs. In addition, a new group membership option goes live at the same time. While individuals will always hold memberships, the group model makes it easy for employers to purchase NAEYC memberships for their entire staff. What a great way for employers to invest in their teams!

We are emboldened by our members' vision, humbled by affiliates' collaboration, and inspired by the National Governing Board's strategic direction.

Affiliates

This fall also heralds dramatic changes in the affiliate structure, another outcome of the National Dialogue. Members can now join NAEYC at only two levels—affiliate and national—and can choose to be part of any affiliate in the country. Among other improvements, the affiliates have accessible staff and are committed to being high performing and inclusive organizations. They have also agreed to align their affiliate identities with the NAEYC brand, so you can recognize the brand anywhere in the United States. Affiliates have worked tirelessly to ensure that this fall, and beyond, members have access to new and expanded engagement opportunities at the state and local levels.

Technology

The NAEYC National Governing Board has authorized the largest capital investment

la estructura de precios y las oportunidades para los miembros de participar.

Este otoño la estructura nueva de la membrecía entra en vigor. Incluye una sola estructura nacional de precios—es decir, las cuotas de membrecía en NAEYC son uniformes, sin considerar en qué parte de los Estados Unidos uno vive. Se puede escoger de cuatro niveles una opción de membrecía y ¡la menos cara no es solamente para estudiantes! La asociación también está lanzando una campaña nacional de mercadotecnia que los afiliados podrán adaptar según sus necesidades. Además, se activará al mismo tiempo una opción nueva de membrecía grupal. Aunque los individuos siempre podrán ser miembros, el modelo grupal facilita la compra por empleadores de membrecías en NAEYC para todo su personal. ¡Qué manera tan maravillosa de invertir en sus equipos!

Los afiliados

Este otoño también proclama cambios dramáticos en la estructura de los afiliados—otro resultado del Diálogo Nacional. Los miembros pueden unirse ahora a NAEYC en solamente dos niveles—el afiliado y el nacional—y optar por integrar cualquier afiliado en el país. Entre otras mejorías, los afiliados tienen un personal accesible y un compromiso con ser organizaciones inclusivas de alto rendimiento. También han consentido en alinear sus identidades como afiliados con la marca de NAEYC para que se pueda reconocer la marca por todas partes de los Estados Unidos. Los afiliados han trabajado sin cesar para asegurar que a partir de este otoño los miembros tengan acceso a oportunidades nuevas y expandidas de participación en los niveles estatal y local.

La tecnología

La Junta Directiva Nacional de NAEYC ha autorizado la inversión de capital más grande desde la compra en 2006 de la sede en Washington, D.C. Este gasto está dedicado a fomentar actualizaciones importantes de la tecnología. El Sistema de Manejo de la Asociación nuevo y el sitio web nuevo de NAEYC están listos para ser lanzados este otoño. Ambos esfuerzos se diseñaron para realzar considerablemente la experiencia como miembro y la facilidad de buscar y hallar contenido relevante en el sitio web de

since the purchase of the Washington, DC, headquarters in 2006. The expenditure is dedicated to fostering substantial technological upgrades. This fall, the new Association Management System and NAEYC website are set to launch. Both efforts are designed to substantially enhance your member experience and your ability to search and find relevant content on NAEYC's website, and to enable affiliates and NAEYC to better understand the needs of our members. These enhancements are in addition to the new Accreditation Information System (coming soon thereafter), which will be the backbone of our streamlined Accreditation of Early Learning Programs system (also to begin operations this fall), and our new Interest Forum online community (initiated in April 2017).

Innovation

Here at NAEYC headquarters, we are emboldened by our members' collective vision, humbled by the affiliates' collaboration and courage, and inspired by the National Governing Board's vision and strategic direction, all of which are steeped in innovation.

Join us this fall, as we raise a virtual glass to each of you who has linked arms with us as we step into our future as the professional association that early childhood educators can't live without.

Onward!

NAEYC, además de permitir a los afiliados y a NAEYC comprender mejor las necesidades de nuestros miembros. Estas mejorías son adicionales al Sistema de Información sobre la Acreditación nuevo (que saldrá un poco más tarde este otoño), que será la base central de nuestro sistema racionalizado de Acreditación de Programas de Aprendizaje Temprano (también este otoño) y la comunidad en línea de nuestro Foro de Interés nuevo (iniciado en abril de 2017).

Innovación

A los de la sede de NAEYC nos alienta la visión colectiva de nuestros miembros, nos dan lecciones de humildad la colaboración y la valentía de los afiliados, y nos inspiran la visión y la dirección estratégica de la Junta Directiva Nacional, todas las cuales son cargadas de innovación.

Acompáñennos este otoño mientras alzamos una copa virtual en el honor de cada uno de ustedes que nos ha tomado de brazo al avanzar a nuestro futuro como la asociación profesional sin que los educadores de niños pequeños no puedan vivir.

¡Adelante!

Photographs: p. 50, © iStock; p. 54, © NAEYC

NAEYC Member Spotlight

Joanne Orosco Browley—an NAEYC member since 2012—is a lead teacher at the Parent–Infant Center, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Joanne was featured on the cover of the April/May 2016 issue of *Teaching Young Children*, and she continues to commit herself to high-quality education for all young children. Joanne loves spending time with her extended family, eating Trinidadian and African foods. She will soon begin training for her first 5K.

A member of NAEYC since 2014, **Robin Goodnight** is the center director at Little Flower Learning Center, in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Robin will graduate with her master's in early childhood education this summer and will pursue a doctorate in education leadership. She is proud of the fact that her center has had no staff turnover in two years. Robin loves learning and going to school. She also enjoys watching movies and spending time with her teenage daughter.

Patricia Kjolhede—an NAEYC member since 1988—is currently an early childhood specialist in central Michigan. She has worked as a child care director and a teacher of pre-K, kindergarten, and first grade. Patricia made music a big part of her classroom, always having her guitar on hand. She produced two CDs with her son and released one more when she retired in 2010. Patricia is happiest when spending time with her sons, her daughter, and her grandson. She recently joined a ukulele group that caters to the senior crowd. A favorite quote is "Please understand that no matter how old I get, I will always be a kid at heart."

An NAEYC member for 17 years, **Ruby Metre** is the director of Blossom Preschool, in Dublin, California. Ruby holds an MA in leadership in education and human development from Pacific Oaks College and also works as a mentor teacher in Alameda County, California. Ruby is particularly proud of having established a preschool in West Africa in the early 1980s. In her free time, Ruby loves gardening, creative arts, and reading. One of Ruby's favorite quotes is, "I touch the future. I teach," from Christa McAuliffe, a teacher–astronaut on the space shuttle *Challenger*.

Kenneth Sherman is a training specialist with the HighScope Educational Research Foundation. A member of NAEYC since 2014, Kenneth went back to school to work on his advanced degree in early childhood education. He has been a HighScope certified teacher for 10 years. In his spare time, Kenneth enjoys visiting art museums—especially local museums when he travels for work.

NAEYC.org/membership/memberspotlight

SHARE YOUR STORY Answer a few questions to tell us about your work with young children and what NAEYC membership means to you.

NOMINATE A MEMBER Share why an NAEYC member you know should be recognized for his or her work with young children.

A Preview of Lessons Learned

NAEYC Pilots More Streamlined Early Learning Program Accreditation

Susan M. Hedges, Director of Program Quality Research, NAEYC Accreditation of Early Learning Programs

An essential component of the accreditation process has long been the use of data and feedback to enhance quality. Retaining this central focus, NAEYC is streamlining the early learning program accreditation system. Data from users and other stakeholders, as well as changes in the early childhood education landscape, have been used to sharpen the focus on quality and enhance the experiences of programs seeking accreditation.

In spring and summer 2017, over 85 programs and 45 assessors piloted this streamlined accreditation system, evaluating the accreditation assessment items, assessment protocols, and program support. Lessons learned about the *strengths* of the streamlined system include:

- *Quality over quantity*. The assessment items measured during site visits elevated high-quality practices and de-emphasized practices that are program norms and/or baseline child care licensing requirements. As a result, programs focused more on demonstrating and documenting more rigorous high-quality practices.
- *Transparency*. The assessment items measured during site visits were more explicit and less redundant. As a result, programs knew exactly the type and quality of evidence assessors were seeking.
- *Holistic view of staff quality*. Assessing staff qualifications together with working conditions and staff support embraced the research and reality of the field. Programs were assessed on their ability to recruit and support well-prepared staff in a more comprehensive manner. As a result, programs did not feel unduly penalized for factors beyond their control, like offering competitive compensation to recruit degreed teachers.
- *Focus*. Assessors could readily identify and review the evidence. As a result, they were able to spend more time reviewing a more succinct and rigorous volume of evidence.

Lessons learned about *areas needing continued attention* include:

- *Balance*. The number of assessment items in each of the 10 standards varied. Moving forward, assessment items will be redistributed to ensure the 10 standards are balanced.
- *User centered*. Resources were more successful when they were codeveloped with programs and aligned with specific standards and process steps. Moving forward, the quantity and quality of these user-driven resources will be increased.

Comments from participants in the pilot process:

Preparing my class portfolio was a more meaningful self-reflective process. —Teacher

I really appreciate how much support NAEYC gave us. They worked hard to answer our questions. —Program administrator

It was much easier to understand what and how much evidence NAEYC wanted me to give. —Teacher

I almost cried with joy when I saw how much more detailed, focused, and rich the class portfolio evidence was. —NAEYC assessor

The self-assessment process was intensive, but we could see how much the staff was getting out of it. —Program administrator

I love that class observations are now about what matters most: teacher–child relationships and great teaching practices. —NAEYC assessor

Programs seeking accreditation site visits in the September 2017 and January 2018 submission cycles may opt in to the streamlined accreditation method. Beginning with the May 2018 cycle, the streamlined version of our content and process will be required.

naeyc Accreditation
Early Learning Programs

Visit NAEYC.org/academy/streamlined to learn more about these improvements and the value of accreditation!

Inspiring Early Childhood Educators Throughout the World

Francine Markowitz, Publishing Manager, NAEYC Books and Related Resources

In a world that so often focuses on the differences among people, it is beneficial to reflect on the many ways in which we are alike. Among the most important are that we cherish, delight in, and do our best to educate young children.

In all parts of the world, young children have similar developmental needs—including nurturing relationships with responsive caregivers, opportunities to play and explore, and warm interactions throughout each day to support language development. While social, cultural, and geographic factors lead to great diversity in early education settings and practices—as the articles in this *Young Children* cluster on global practices demonstrate—research-based best practices for social, emotional, and academic development can and should be adapted and implemented throughout the world. Fortunately, there are passionate early childhood educators in every country and almost every community.

Because of our commitment to the early childhood profession and to children everywhere, NAEYC offers books, booklets, brochures, and posters globally. We have received requests from all over the world to translate and publish our books and position statements in Romanian, Chinese, Arabic, German, Hebrew, and other languages. We also have an international distributor so educators throughout the world can purchase NAEYC books in English.

Our Content Development and Global Engagement teams are thrilled that the future holds many opportunities to work with international partners to support everyone who cares for, educates, and works on behalf of young children.

For additional information, please contact Francine Markowitz at fmarkowitz@naeyc.org.

Photographs: pp. 58, 60, 61, © iStock

Back to School Essentials

For young children—and their teachers—school should be filled with **wonder and excitement**. As you get to know your students and develop activities to meet their academic, social, and emotional needs, *Young Children* is here to help with a rich array of complementary, online resources. Here are some of our favorites.

Looking for **great books** to add to your classroom library? *Young Children's* archive of The Reading Chair is full of reviews of carefully vetted children's books: www.NAEYC.org/yc/columns/readingchair.

Ready to become more intentional with **play-based learning**? "The Case of Brain Science and Guided Play: A Developing Story" walks you through the latest research and provides classroom examples for boosting vocabulary, mathematics, and spatial skills: www.NAEYC.org/yc/article/case-brain-science-guided-play.

Is your student population growing more **diverse**? Prepare yourself to foster understanding and collaboration in your classroom with "Culturally Appropriate Positive Guidance with Young Children": www.NAEYC.org/yc/culturally-appropriate-positive-guidance.

Do you wish you had more resources to share with **families**? Check out NAEYC's For Families website, which has accessible guides and practical tips on everything from improving relationships between siblings to fun activities that build mathematical understanding: http://families.NAEYC.org.

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September 2018	Supporting Families: Education and Collaboration	N/A*
November 2018	A Natural Choice: Learning Outdoors	December 1, 2017
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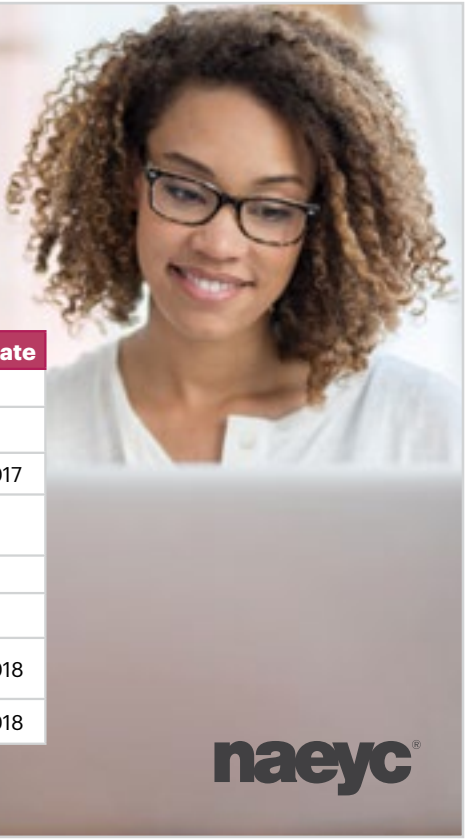

The Magic of Inquiry and Hermit Crabs

Empowering Holistic Development in Hong Kong

Suzannie Kit Ying Leung

Hong Kong is a large, cosmopolitan city. It has many wonderful cultural resources but little outdoor space in which children can explore nature. As an early childhood teacher in Hong Kong, I was concerned about helping the twelve 3- to 4-year-olds in my bilingual (Cantonese and English) class connect with nature. I was also concerned about giving them time to explore and direct their own learning.

The Hong Kong educational system is carefully planned and engaging, but the early learning curriculum requires three hours a day of teacher-directed instruction, leaving children in half-day programs without time to direct their own learning. Fortunately, I taught in a full-day (six-hour) program, and I knew that naturalistic exploration is critical for children's development (Gardner 1983). As a result, I had

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Voices of Practitioners: Teacher Research in Early Childhood Education, is NAEYC's online journal devoted to teacher research. Visit NAEYC.org/publications/vop to read a longer version of Suzannie Leung's article, learn more about teacher research, and peruse an archive of *Voices* articles.

the time and the knowledge I needed to enrich the children's learning with several inquiry-based, nature-focused projects.

Among the different projects we undertook, one that the children found especially inspiring involved two hermit crabs, perhaps because children seldom have the opportunity to get in touch with nature. This inquiry began with a visit to the Hong Kong Wetland Park, where the children spent a day observing different creatures, such as crocodiles, tortoises, birds, and insects. The hermit crabs impressed them the most.

Seeing their reactions, I believed hermit crabs would make an interesting topic for further inquiry. I talked with the children after the wetlands visit, and we decided to care for two hermit crabs in the classroom, studying their characteristics and habits. Every child had an opportunity to take the hermit crabs home after school for two or three consecutive nights to develop relationships with them. After each visit, the children reported on what they did with the hermit crabs at home. Throughout the project, I engaged in teacher research to explore and document children's questions and the way they demonstrated their understanding of the creatures through the use of the media I provided.

Policy and research foundations

Nearly 20 years ago, Hong Kong's Education Commission (which advises the government) emphasized that the overall aim of education is "to enable every person to attain all-round development in the domains of ethics, intellect, physique, social skills, and aesthetics according to his or her own attributes" (Education Commission 2000, 30). While that aim has primarily been pursued through a government-developed curriculum with little flexibility, changes are now under way.

Holistic learning can be achieved only if the curriculum respects children's autonomy.

Hong Kong's Curriculum Development Council recently published a curriculum framework that calls for an integrated curriculum (2017). This is a welcome change, as holistic learning can be achieved only if the curriculum is integrated and open (Haddad 2002) and respects children's autonomy by providing time for inquiry-based learning.

Inquiry-based learning is a dynamic process—an approach to "exploring the natural or material world, and that leads to asking questions, making discoveries, and rigorously testing those discoveries in the search for

new understanding" (National Science Foundation 2000, 2). My research study is grounded in the theoretical framework of inquiry-based learning through a project. Projects allow students to study a topic of interest in greater detail (Katz & Chard 2000). The project approach is rooted in John Dewey's ([1938] 1966) philosophy of learning by doing. When children work on projects, they record what is of interest to them without any prompting from the teachers (Lowenfeld & Brittain 1987; Griebling 2011). Engaging in projects is a useful approach because children need multiple means of exploration in order to enhance their investigations and increase retention of their new understandings (Davis & Keller 2009).

During our hermit crab project, children engaged in naturalistic and scientific inquiry.

Aligning with Hong Kong's new emphasis on integrated curriculum, projects connect different subject areas, various competencies, and academic and social skills, facilitating children's holistic development. During our hermit crab project, children engaged in naturalistic and scientific inquiry and also created visual representations of their explorations (Malaguzzi 1998).

Present throughout the project was the element of play—a primary way young children learn, socialize with others, understand their own feelings and others' perspectives, and become members of the classroom community (Elgas 2003; Riley et al. 2008.

Research questions and methods

My entire class engaged in the hermit crab investigation for a month, shortly after our Wetland Park visit. To help children gain an understanding of hermit crabs, I first introduced the children to the storybook, *A House for Hermit Crab*, by Eric Carle. Then I placed a children's encyclopedia in the science corner that the children could refer to while learning how to take care of the crabs in real life. Every day, at a learner corner for science exploration, children observed the two hermit crabs. At night, with assistance from their families, children took turns caring for the hermit crabs at home, carefully completing their own visual diaries. When they brought the crabs back to school, children shared their experiences with classmates, illustrating the activities they did with the crabs.

Throughout the project, my research questions were

1. What sorts of questions do children ask when exploring hermit crabs?
2. How do children use the materials I provide to represent their understandings of hermit crabs?
3. How does my facilitation help guide and sustain the children's interest, exploration, and understanding?

I chose the role of participant observer for this study. Participant observation is a technique of collecting central ethnographic data when an observer is attached to the situation (Punch 2005). My main methods of collecting data were observing, taking notes, taking photographs, and having conversations with the children. Observations are critical—they allow teachers to make specific plans and adjustments to accommodate children's varying rates of development (Jablon, Dombro, & Dichtelmiller 2007). They are also helpful for collecting data in authentic situations. As a participant observer, I took anecdotal notes, which are detailed, narrative accounts that factually describe a particular event (Jablon, Dombro, & Dichtelmiller 2007). I recorded events and conversations as they happened, jotting field notes during class and adding details later. During the children's inquiry activities, I probed their learning and understanding by raising questions to challenge their thinking and foster higher-order discussions (Ogu & Schmidt 2009).

Natural creatures and inquiring minds

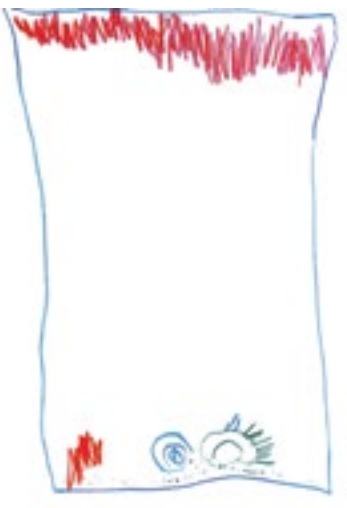
I opened the project by inviting children to observe the hermit crabs during their free activity time. Children were able to observe and study the crabs daily to develop their understanding of the hermit crabs and their relationships with them. To engage the children in drawing as a research tool and a powerful means of representing their thinking (Veale 2005; Roberts-Holmes 2011), I placed colored pencils and paper nearby, so the children could freely draw what they observed. Then I collected their drawings and recorded their thoughts about the crabs through naturalistic observation and anecdotal records.

Sum observed the crabs during the first four days and began an interesting relationship with them. She assumed that the crabs were her classmates, saying, "We've got two new classmates here. But why they are sleeping always?" When I asked her about her drawing, she explained that the circle at the top represented the hermit crab, and their tank and the sand were drawn at the bottom. Her drawing demonstrated that she was at the schematic stage (Steele 1998), as most kindergartners are (Lowenfeld & Brittain 1987), because she tried to represent objects by using symbols in two dimensions.

On the second day, Sum gained more information about hermit crabs through observation and started to understand the crabs' physical structure. She noted, "I can see his legs, Miss Leung. The hermit crab has lots of legs. He is leaving his room and climbing on the sand!" She drew the legs in the picture and the circle became a swirl—much closer to the image of a shell.

Sum's excitement about the hermit crabs must have been evident at home; her father took her to the beach to collect some shells for the crabs as their "new clothes." Sum displayed empathy toward the crabs on the third day, when she drew the shells she had collected for them. She said, "I put the shells into their house. So happy that they are having new clothes!" She humanized the crabs, believing they would change clothes like people did. The swirling shells in her picture became much more detailed.

On the fourth day, Sum drew two hermit crabs and wished to be their friend. She happily shared, "I am a friend of the hermit crabs. Do you know that they are good friends, too? He is very friendly and always walks around, and she looks so shy." Pointing to her drawing, Sum added, "He is the one on the right side, and she is the one on the left." She identified their gender by referring to their social characteristics, suggesting her strong stereotyped perceptions of males and females.



I interacted with the children as a colearner, facilitator, and observer throughout the project. In class discussions, I probed their thinking with questions like, "Where do the crabs live?," "What do they eat?," "What will

they do in their living room?" Early in the project, the children made several assumptions about the hermit crabs: (1) they need to have better living conditions, like we do, including having a pillow and a bedroom; (2) they are our classmates, therefore they have to learn something new at our school; (3) they will not eat only apples, because human beings don't eat only one kind of food; and (4) they will get bored staying in the tank without playing games.

Interior design

To address the crabs' living conditions, the children selected materials from the art corner and began a home renovation project, using an empty milk box as a bedroom for the hermit crabs. Due to variations in their motor development, children took on different duties in completing the artwork and collaborated throughout the renovation:

Lung: The hermit crabs have got a new room now, but it looks not very nice.

Yee: People will not live in an ugly house like this!

Miss Leung: What can we do for the hermit crabs?

Ting: We can make it more beautiful, then!

Yee: I like shiny pink a lot! I want to put them in the room.

Yang: It's nice! Let's put some green on it. I like green!

To further improve the crabs' quality of life, the children made them a pillow. Through the discussion, their schema about color and texture were newly expanded. By asking open-ended questions and documenting children's thoughts, I was able to revisit and later elaborate on their questions and ideas. I also modeled my reflection by reviewing contributions from the class discussion to determine who was more active and who was more hesitant in responding (Ogu & Schmidt 2009).

Students as teachers

To help the crabs learn something new at school, the children created a language and math activity. They designed a learning board so the hermit crabs could learn numbers, like *one, two, three, four,* and letters, like *A, B, C*. Children began to develop the concept of one-to-one correspondence (Davis & Keller 2009) with authentic hands-on counting:

Lam: *[Joey starts pointing at the numbers.]* This is *one*, and this is *two*.

Miss Leung: Very good Joey! Is that enough?

Yee: They have to learn more, Miss Leung. Let's count to four.

Miss Leung: Okay, sure!

Pui: *[Mary points and reads.]* This is *A*, and this is *B*, and this is *C*.

A balanced meal

The children's third assumption, that the hermit crabs wouldn't eat just apples, surfaced after they fed the crabs only apples for an entire week. They felt that "human beings cannot eat just one kind of fruit." The children decided to provide different fruits to the hermit crabs. Not knowing the crabs' taste preferences, they suggested four kinds of fruit: strawberry, banana, mango, and orange. The children tasted these fruits and sorted them into sweet and sour groups. Since they needed to know whether or not the hermit crabs had really eaten the different fruits, the children observed the hermit crabs every day. They checked whether the crabs had eaten the fruit and recorded their observations. I facilitated this by suggesting they divide into four groups. Each group was responsible for observing and recording for one day, and one kind of fruit was given each day. Children found that the crabs liked eating apples more than strawberries, mangoes, oranges, or bananas. They reported that the crabs gathered around the strawberry and hesitated for a while. The children concluded that strawberries were not the crabs' favorite fruit, explaining that the crabs did "a taste and a nice try," like the children often did at the supermarket with their families.

That's entertainment

To address their assumption that the crabs would be bored, the children sang and danced in front of the crabs. They learned to fold paper into a hat to represent the crabs' shells and write the letter *H*

(for hermit crab) on it. The children also wrote a new rhyme to entertain the hermit crabs with:

Hermit crab, hermit crab,
Climb up the rock.
Hermit crab, hermit crab,
Say hi hi.
Hermit crab, hermit crab,
You're so shy.
Hermit crab, hermit crab,
Don't say bye-bye.

Encouraging expression through different media

While collecting some samples in the art corner, I discovered that the children's artwork was influenced by the presence of the crabs. The samples showed how children's authentic learning experiences facilitated various forms of expression through visual art, photography, music, and movement.

Yang drew a picture that reflected his personal wish to make friends, projecting that desire onto the hermit crabs. He said, "This is the hermit crabs' house, and they have lots of friends inside. I like red color very much, so I want to decorate their house to be in red color."

Lee explored color in her pieces. Satisfied with her artwork, she laughed as she finished, saying, "The red color is the hermit crabs' room, and there are shells in purple and yellow."

Looking through a camera lens, Ming got excited seeing a hermit crab eating an apple. He observed in detail the body structure of the crab. The biology learning that happened during this project was apparent when he said, "See, Miss Leung! He is eating the apple. I can see his legs and pliers. He used his pliers to take the apple!"

Parents were impressed by the children's creative and caring thoughts about the crabs.

Sum explained that she had to take photos of the crabs to capture the pink crab's behavior, because that crab was always hiding in the sand. She remarked, "I think the pink crab will like her new room and the learning board. Will she read it all the time?"

The children's artistic expression was not limited to visual art. They engaged in music and movement as well, mainly in their efforts to entertain the crabs (as described earlier).

Reflections and conclusion

This teacher research study indicated that some factors are essential to effective inquiry-based curriculum design and implementation. First, parental involvement is crucial, since parents are also facilitators—or even participants—in the project. Parents should not take over children's roles. Instead, they can help extend children's learning from the school setting to their home. Second, learning diversity is a concern when conducting projects with children. As a teacher, I do not assume that every child has a similar level of prior knowledge. Indeed, in Hong Kong, where socioeconomic status among children is very diverse, I feel that authentic learning experiences and materials should be prepared by teachers to ensure equal learning opportunities for children and a common knowledge foundation for inquiry. In addition, in Hong Kong, a kindergarten class typically has up to 15 students. I conducted an in-depth study with my class of 12 children—a healthy class size that may help teachers cater to individual learning needs and encourage children to contribute to the project equally.

Children revised their original concepts about hermit crabs through exploration and experimentation. By the end of this project, they were all able to summarize the lifestyle of the hermit crabs—diet, living, study, and entertainment. The children stated that hermit crabs (1) live in their own shell; (2) like climbing on sand instead of learning at school; (3) enjoy eating only apples; and (4) have their own way of entertaining themselves.

The children's initial assumptions, when compared with their conclusions, show their thoughtfulness about living things. Parents were surprised and impressed by the children's

creative and caring thoughts about the crabs, and I was encouraged to keep working with young children, finding that their abilities and behaviors exceeded my expectations. Their dialogues reveal that they were developing the intellectual ability to understand another's perspective and feelings (Riley et al. 2008), even as they continued to display childhood egocentrism (Piaget 1959). The children selected learning experiences at their own levels of understanding and expanded their knowledge of the world and of their role in the world (Opper 1996).

As a reflective teacher-researcher, it was a fascinating research project, and I enjoyed listening to the voices and thoughts of young children in an authentic way. This project also empowered me to reassess my ideas about the competence of children and the role of parental involvement. I would like to share this project with the children's parents and the community through newsletters and social media in the hopes that others also develop a new understanding about children's minds and abilities.

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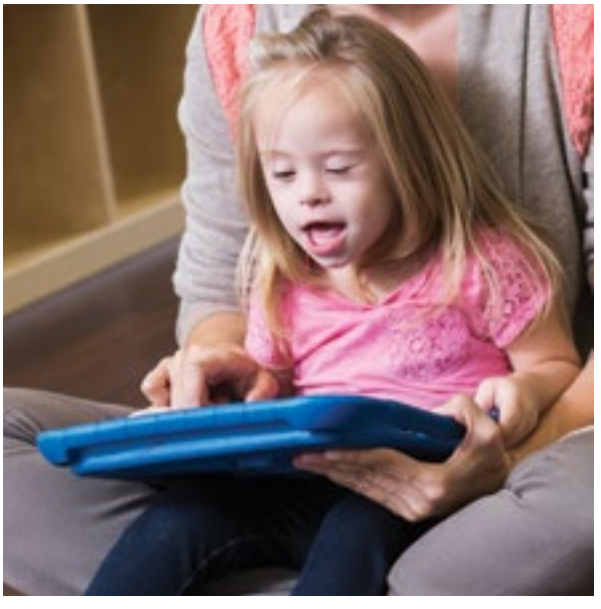
Technology and Interactive Media in Early Childhood Programs

What We've Learned from Five Years of Research, Policy, and Practice

Chip Donohue and Roberta Schomburg

In one seemingly simple activity, Kimberly Buenger, early childhood special education teacher at Harmony Early Childhood Center, in the Olathe Unified School District, accomplishes goals related to technology use, language development, social skills, and assessment:

> I serve children ages 3 to 5 in an integrated special education setting, with many demonstrating developmental delays. I use technology to support learning and development in several ways. One of my favorites is through a classroom job called *the journalist*. The journalist is responsible for taking pictures on the tablet during center time to document the activities of the other students in the class, and reporting about one picture during closing circle. The picture is shown through the projector so all the children can easily see it. I facilitate the discussion about the picture, adjusting my level of questioning for each child. This activity provides a natural way to assess a variety of communication skills, such as a student's ability to recall events and answer a variety of *wh* questions. Giving the journalist the freedom to document the activity of his or her choosing makes the activity meaningful, increasing motivation to share in front of the larger group. The simplicity of the activity makes it easy to implement in a variety of settings, using different technology tools, with the only requirement being the ability to take a picture. (Personal communication with Kimberly Buenger, 2017.)



Kimberly's budding journalists are a model for intentional, supportive use of technology in early childhood education.

Kimberly's learning environment is far richer than anything we could have imagined just 10 years ago, when the Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children's Media convened a group of experts (including us) at a preconference symposium during the 2007 NAEYC professional development institute. Participants discussed the role of technology in early childhood professional development and in the lives of young children, especially in early childhood programs.

Realizing that few educators were as technologically savvy as Kimberly (even given the more limited technology options of the time), conference participants recommended that NAEYC and the Fred Rogers Center draft a joint position statement to help early childhood professionals integrate technology in developmentally appropriate ways. As Jerlean Daniel, then-executive director of NAEYC, recalls, the field was embroiled in serious debates:

> Prior to the development of the current position statement on technology and young children, NAEYC had three statements—all in need of revision—on technology, television, and violence in the media. These were reflective of the grave concerns in the field about the exposure children had to violent themes delivered into their homes by television and the potentially inappropriate use of computers in early childhood education programs. As the quantity and diverse types of screens multiplied quickly, the field was quite divided about the developmental appropriateness of *any* technology for young children.
>
> The question of equity loomed large as well. Many children whose home language was not English used television as a tool to learn English. For Black children from low-income families living in underresourced communities, television was often a heavily used source of entertainment. White children from middle-income families were more likely to have a variety of screens at home, while rural children typically had spotty access to the Internet.
>
> Such charged controversy has always signaled the need for an NAEYC position statement. But we needed a highly respected partner, one with a proven track record for developmentally appropriate use of technology. No entity came close to the stellar reputation of the Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children's Media, a unique combination of child development and media knowledge. The transparent back-and-forth of consensus building was not easy, but all parties knew their concerns had been given serious consideration. The various factions saw their issues acknowledged in the final position statement. (Personal communication with Jerlean Daniel, 2017.)

Building consensus was neither fast nor easy, but in 2012, NAEYC and the Fred Rogers Center issued a joint position statement titled "Technology and Interactive Media as Tools in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8." (For the full position statement and a two-page summary with the key messages, visit www.naeyc.org/content/technology-and-young-children.)

Key messages

Grounded in developmentally appropriate practice (Copple & Bredekamp 2009), the statement provided a clear framework for effective, appropriate, and intentional use of technology and media with young children in the digital age of smartphones, multitouch screens, and apps. The following key messages were intended to guide educators in early childhood settings on the selection, use, integration, and evaluation of technology tools for learning:

- When used intentionally and appropriately, technology and interactive media are effective tools to support learning and development.
- Intentional use requires early childhood teachers and administrators to have information and resources regarding the nature of these tools and the implications of their use with children.
- Limitations on the use of technology and media are important.
- Special considerations must be given to the use of technology with infants and toddlers.
- Attention to digital citizenship and equitable access is essential.
- Ongoing research and professional development are needed.

Our long-term vision was to develop "digitally literate educators who . . . have the knowledge, skills, and experience to select and use technology tools and interactive media that suit the ages and developmental levels of the children in their care, and . . . know when and how to integrate technology into the program effectively" (NAEYC & Fred Rogers Center 2012, 4).

Now that the position statement is five years old, we are seeing more and more digitally literate educators. Take Sydney E. Spann, for example. A kindergarten teacher

and innovation coach at Rodriguez Elementary, in Austin, Texas, Spann carefully selects technology to help children build knowledge:

> Early last October, my kindergartners were working hard to learn all about fall, though it was still too early to see many of the indicators of the season change here in central Texas. One marker of the season that my students were able to observe was butterfly migration. Swarms of butterflies were migrating through Texas, and we were lucky enough to walk under a cloud of monarchs on our way inside from recess.
>
> We immediately looked at pictures online of the area in Michoacán, Mexico, where many of these butterflies would end their journey. Then I showed my students the Butterflies of Austin iPad app. All the introduction they needed was a quick demonstration of how to change the pictures, and they were ready to explore and record! They spent days looking through the photos of butterflies, caterpillars, and pupae and recording the images in their science notebooks. My students' use of this simple app showed me that the way children interact with technology is not that different from the way they interact with any other learning tool. It's not flashy features and bright colors that engage them, but simply the fact that there is new knowledge that can be gained. (Personal communication with Sydney E. Spann, 2017.)

The NAEYC/Fred Rogers Center's joint statement has served as one of my important resources about technology and its effect on young children. As stated on the technology section of our website, at the Pike School "we believe that a successful technology program is measured not so much by which technologies you use or by your frequency of using them but rather by what you choose to do with technology and how you use it."

—Jennifer J. Zacharis, Technology Integrationist/Coach, Pike School, Andover, Maryland

Essential Guidelines and Reports 2014–2017

The following resources summarize recent research, which reinforces central tenets of the NAEYC and Fred Rogers Center position statement (available at www.NAEYC.org/content/technology-and-young-children).

- "Screen Sense: Setting the Record Straight—Research-Based Guidelines for Screen Use for Children under 3 Years Old." 2014. ZERO TO THREE. (www.zerotothree.org/resources/series/screen-sense-setting-the-record-straight)
- "Using Early Childhood Education to Bridge the Digital Divide." 2014. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. (www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PE119.html)
- "Using Technology Appropriately in the Preschool Classroom." 2015. *HighScope Extensions* 28 (1): 1–12. (http://membership.highscope.org/app/issues/162.pdf)
- "Early Learning and Educational Technology Policy Brief." 2016. US Department of Education and Department of Health and Human Services. (https://tech.ed.gov/files/2016/10/Early-Learning-Tech-Policy-Brief.pdf)
- "Media and Young Minds." 2016. Policy statement. American Academy of Pediatrics, Council on Communications and Media. (http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/early/2016/10/19/peds.2016-2591.full.pdf)
- "Technology and Interactive Media for Young Children: A Whole Child Approach Connecting the Vision of Fred Rogers with Research and Practice." 2017. Fred Rogers Center (www.fredrogerscenter.org/frctecreport) and the Technology in Early Childhood (TEC) Center at Erikson Institute (http://teccenter.erikson.edu/tec/tecfrcreport/).

Alignment with recent statements, guidelines, and reports

The NAEYC and Fred Rogers Center joint position statement was the first in a series of guidelines and research-based recommendations about technology and young children published by organizations focused on child development and early childhood education (Donohue 2016, 2017). For other useful resources, see "Essential Guidelines and Reports, 2014–2017."

Two of the three most recent policy statements were released by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the US Departments of Education and Health and Human Services (ED/DHHS) on the same day in October 2016.

The AAP statement on "Media and Young Minds" includes recommendations for parents about technology and media use in the home with children from birth through age 8.

According to the AAP, parents need to be mindful about the risks of displacing or replacing essential developmental experiences in the early years due to overuse of technology. Limits on media use for children birth to 18 months, 18 to 24 months, and 2 to 5 years can provide adequate time for young children to play and be physically active, to spend time indoors and outdoors, to have social time with friends, to enjoy one-to-one time with siblings and parents, and for family time without screen disruptions. Parents are encouraged to create a family media plan that includes tech-free zones and times, including no media use during meals and one hour before bedtime. The AAP emphasis on joint engagement, relationships with family and friends, preserving essential early childhood experiences, and careful selection of appropriate, high-quality content are closely aligned with the principles and guidelines in the NAEYC and Fred Rogers Center joint position statement.

The ED/DHHS report "Early Learning and Educational Technology Policy Brief" includes four guiding principles:

- Technology, when used properly, can be a tool for learning
- Technology should be used to increase access to learning opportunities for all children
- Technology can be used to strengthen relationships among parents, families, early educators, and young children
- Technology is more effective for learning when adults and peers interact or coview with young children

In regard to screen time, ED/DHHS ask that families and early educators consider far more than time when evaluating technology. The report points to content quality, context, and the extent to which technology could be used to enhance relationships as key factors. These guiding principles from AAP and ED/DHHS build on and deepen the key messages from the NAEYC and Fred Rogers joint position statement, adding to our understanding of emerging research-based practices.

As the NAEYC and Fred Rogers Center joint position statement said, "When used wisely, technology and media can support learning and relationships. Enjoyable and engaging shared experiences that optimize the potential for children's learning and development can support children's relationships both with adults and their peers" (2012, 1).

In this era of uncertainty around the role of technology with all of us, especially young children, I am deeply appreciative of the position statement for offering a thorough examination of the strengths and possibilities of technology as well as the possible misuses. Through this research, we have seen educators willing to try new things and open doors to new worlds for themselves and children.

—Alex Cruickshank, Community Outreach Specialist, Boulder Journey School, Boulder, Colorado

The new report by the Fred Rogers Center and the Technology in Early Childhood Center at Erikson Institute, "Technology and Interactive Media for Young Children: A Whole Child Approach Connecting the Vision of Fred Rogers with Research and Practice," aims to say the same. It synthesized recent research to identify what has been learned about technology and young children since the joint position statement was released in 2012, with a focus on the intersection of technology, interactive and screen-based media, and children's social and emotional development. It's clear that we still have much to learn about the impact of technology on whole child development. Fortunately, one of the key findings in the report is that the majority of children's use of technology or media includes imagining, playing, wondering, creating, and reflecting. This bolsters the notion that technology and media—when appropriately used—can improve children's readiness for school and enhance their social and emotional development.

In many ways, this finding simply codifies what digitally literate educators have already demonstrated. Used well—as one of many tools to enhance exploration and learning—technology brings wonder and excitement to everyday learning environments. As Claudia Haines, a youth services librarian at the Homer Public Library, in Homer, Alaska, explains, those savvy educators and those rich environments are not found only in schools:

> Several mornings a week, preschoolers and toddlers scamper through the front door of the Homer Public Library with grown-ups—moms, dads, grandparents, neighbors, or nannies—in tow. Year-round, the centerpiece of these weekly visits for many families is Storytime, a free program that uses high-tech and low-tech media to foster lifelong learning and early literacy skills. The public library connects families from all walks of life with information and resources, as well as each other. At Storytime, we read, talk, play, sing, explore, and create together.
>
> For families who cannot afford preschool and for those supplementing it, the library's Storytime offers supported access to thoughtfully reviewed traditional and new media. And just as important, in the Storytime setting grown-ups also learn how to use media of all kinds in positive ways to support their young children's learning and development. Every book, song, app, art supply, and STEM activity we share is chosen with intention because it is high quality and supports research-based early literacy practices. (Personal communication with Claudia Haines, 2017.)

Consensus emerges

A synthesis of the position statements, reports, research reviews, guidelines, and recommendations released between 2012 and 2017 identifies strong agreement on a set of foundational elements necessary for successful technology integration with young children (Donohue 2015, 2016, 2017; Donohue & Schomburg 2015). For early childhood educators and the field, the takeaways about what matters most include:

The fact that these two organizations are working together serves as an inspiration and reminder to others (teachers, parents, home visitors, therapists, children's media producers, etc.) to work together and support each other as we learn to navigate the digital age.

—Stacey Landberg, Speech-Language Pathologist, American Speech–Language–Hearing Association

- **Relationships**—A child's use of media and technology should invite and enhance interactions and strengthen relationships with peers, siblings, and parents.
- **Coviewing and active parent engagement**—Using media together improves learning. Talking about what the child is seeing and doing, and connecting what is on the screen with real-life experiences, builds language skills and vocabulary, encourages interactions, and strengthens relationships.
- **Social and emotional learning**—Technology should be used in ways that support positive social interactions, mindfulness, creativity, and a sense of initiative.
- **Early childhood essentials**—Technology use should not displace or replace imaginative play, outdoor play and nature, creativity, curiosity and wonder, solitary and shared experiences, or using tools for inquiry, problem solving, and exploring the world.
- **Content, context, and quality**—The quality of what children watch on screens is more important than how much they watch.
- **Media creation**—Young children are moving from being media consumers to media creators. New digital tools provide the opportunity for making and creating at their fingertips.

- **Family engagement**—In the digital age, technology tools can improve communication between home and school, making it easier to exchange information and share resources. Engaging families improves outcomes for children.
- **Adult habits**—As the primary role models for technology and media use, adults should be aware of and set limits on their own technology and media use when children are present and focus on children having well-rounded experiences, including moderate, healthy media use.
- **Teacher preparation**—Preservice teacher education and in-service professional development are needed to provide educators with the media literacy and technology skills to select, use, integrate, and evaluate technology tools for young children.
- **Media mentors**—Young children need trusted adults who are active media mentors to guide them safely in the digital age.

Perhaps not surprisingly, these takeaways elaborate on a key point in the joint position statement: "Early childhood educators always should use their knowledge of child development and effective practices to carefully and intentionally select and use technology and media if and when it serves healthy development, learning, creativity, interactions with others, and relationships" (NAEYC & Fred Rogers Center 2012, 5).

Where to from here?

Although the consensus takeaways show that much progress has been made since the debates of a decade ago, there is still much to learn. We invite you to join us in building on our growing understanding of what matters most and of evidence-based practices. We believe that blending interactive technology and personal interactions with others offers the most promise for using technology as a tool for whole child development in the digital age.

Fred Rogers demonstrated how to use the technology of his day to support early learning with an emphasis on relationships, communication, and social and emotional development. He was a child development expert who always kept the child first and integrated technology in the service of positive self-esteem and healthy relationships. As Fred Rogers said, "No matter how helpful they are as tools (and, of course, they can be very helpful tools), computers don't begin to compare in significance to the teacher–child relationship, which

The Fred Rogers Center saw progress as we implemented the position statement across professional development workshops, reaching thousands of early childhood educators. Our perspective has not changed on the role of technology: we view it as an additional tool for young children, early childhood educators, and parents. The biggest challenge moving forward is providing practical guidance to families.

Early in his career, Fred Rogers listed six necessities for children to learn. As the Fred Rogers Center moves forward, we plan to apply those same necessities to technology use with young children. Following Fred's lead, we ask:

Does it ...

1. Create a sense of worth?
2. Create a sense of trust?
3. Spark curiosity?
4. Have the capacity to foster you to look and listen carefully?
5. Encourage the capacity to play?
6. Allow for moments of solitude?

As we develop initiatives around this concept, we look forward to continuing to champion the principles and guidelines from the position statement and working with our partners to implement a strategy that is based on positive and supportive messaging.

—Rick Fernandes, Executive Director,
Fred Rogers Center

Resources

To read more stories and testimonials and view photos of the NAEYC/Fred Rogers Center joint position statement in practice, visit the Technology in Early Childhood (TEC) Center at Erikson Institute:
http://teccenter.erikson.edu/tec/positionstatement5/

To learn more about the joint position statement, key messages, and examples of effective practice and technology that support early learning, visit:

NAEYC on Technology and Young Children
www.NAEYC.org/content/technology-and-young-children

Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children's Media at Saint Vincent College
www.fredrogerscenter.org

Technology in Early Childhood (TEC) Center at Erikson Institute:
www.teccenter.erikson.edu/

is human and mutual. A computer can help you to learn to spell H-U-G, but it can never know the risk or the joy of actually giving or receiving one" (Rogers 1994, 89). Fred was a media mentor to countless children, parents, families, and caregivers—and his approach will continue to guide our work.

Five years ago, NAEYC and the Fred Rogers Center took a bold step in laying out a vision for the critical role technology can play in early learning programs. While the position statement was clearly about technology, it wasn't about which apps to use or how to unlock digital coding. It was directed at early childhood educators and what they, as classroom and program leaders, must know and be able to do in order to effectively use technology.

Five years later, that is still the most important aspect of our work with technology. Neuroscience and behavioral science point to unparalleled cognitive, physical, and social and emotional growth in young children. These sciences have also shown us that our lifelong approaches to learning—things like initiative, curiosity, motivation, engagement, problem solving, and self-regulation—are at their height of development in the early years.

Early childhood educators must redouble their efforts to identify and deploy the most effective uses of technology in order to maximize the learning and development of young children. Think about the acquisition of oral language, the developmental progression of mathematics, the growth of self-regulation and inhibitory control, the mechanics of working memory, and the facilitation of relationships with children and their families—early childhood educators must master a great deal of knowledge and skill in each of these areas. There are many ways effective uses of technology and digital media can support early childhood educators in preparing young children for success in school and in life.

—Rhian Evans Allvin,
Chief Executive Officer, NAEYC

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Supporting Medically Fragile Children and Their Families

Julia Luckenbill and Amy Zide

Before 11-month-old Leshawn even entered the classroom at the Early Childhood Lab School, Julia, the program coordinator (and lead author), and her staff (including Amy, the second author) wondered whether being in group care would be a good fit for him. Diagnosed at birth with a diaphragmatic hernia, Leshawn had a team of specialists working with him. He had been hospitalized for most of his early infancy and was being fed through a gastronomy tube (G-tube) which, his mother feared, might be yanked by another infant. Unwilling to let his mother leave his side, Leshawn showed intense separation anxiety.

If the program enrolled this medically fragile infant, staff would have to be aware not only of his medical needs but also of his unique social and emotional needs arising from hospitalization. Fortunately, Julia's training in a specialty known as child life in hospitals enabled the program to include Leshawn in the classroom and tailor the curriculum to his needs.

An important home visit

Soon after the Lab School accepted Leshawn, his lead teacher, Monique, and Julia visited his home to meet with his parents, learn more about Leshawn and his needs, and ensure that everyone was in agreement on his education and care. Monique and Julia shared with his parents some common fears that infants Leshawn's age have during transitions to group care and explained how the staff would handle them in the classroom. Then, putting on her child life specialist hat, Julia pointed out some of the things in the daily routine that might trigger Leshawn's fears (such as teachers' use of gloves while diapering, which might remind him of hospital experiences). But more important, Julia and Monique listened. They wanted to learn about his family's cultural and religious views and their hopes for their son's educational experience—much the same as with any other home visit, but with a critical focus on gathering information about Leshawn's medical requirements and related emotional needs.

The whole staff would work closely as a team to support this family and child as they made the leap to a group early education setting. Talking with his parents, Monique and Julia learned how to care for Leshawn's G-tube and how to feed him and handle his reflux. They learned how his family soothed him. They built trust as they listened and asked questions about Leshawn's care. This home visit was the longest of any to the children and families the school served. And when Monique and Julia wrote his care plan, it was the longest in the classroom. The plan reflected Leshawn's special physical and emotional needs as well as his family's wishes. In view of Leshawn's separation anxiety, they also drafted a transition plan specifying that his mother stay with him in the classroom as long as necessary while he eased into trusting nonfamily members in this new setting. Understanding that it would be hard for Leshawn to trust nonparental caregivers turned out to be key in his eventual success in the classroom.

The child life specialist as the nexus of the care team

Because families are children's first teachers, and because many families hold strong cultural and religious perspectives about how their children should be cared for, clear communication that begins before the child joins the program is critical. When a child faces significant medical issues, the family often experiences considerable stress about the child's health and the family's finances. Parents may also struggle with strong protective urges that make the transition to an educational setting more difficult than usual.

Connecting with families of medically fragile children means conducting an unusually comprehensive initial home visit and writing a detailed care plan—as Monique and Julia did for Leshawn. During the home visit, it is wise to also find out how much information about the child's condition—if any—you may share with other families. To ensure continuity of care, ask the family for written permission to connect with the child's medical specialists. The privacy of medical information is protected by federal law (HIPAA—the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996), and family consent must be obtained before medical professionals share any details with others. Once the child has been integrated into the classroom, devote extra attention to keeping the family updated on his or her progress with photos, anecdotes, and conversations. Although this is typically done for all children, with medically fragile children it is especially important to keep lines of communication open, increase family engagement, and build trusting relationships.

While child life specialists generally spend most of their time working with hospitalized children to normalize their experiences and support coping, hospital–school links can greatly improve the care seriously ill children receive as they move between settings. For example, when Leshawn was hospitalized

Child Life Specialists Optimize Care

With a medically fragile child, continuous coordination among educators, medical staff, and families is essential. Ideally, hospitals or early childhood programs would have on staff—or have access to—child life specialists who could facilitate coordination, ensure families are aware of all available resources, and support educators in caring for the fragile child. With the parents' permission, the specialist could guide the teacher in adding developmentally appropriate medical information and activities to the curriculum.

According to the Association of Child Life Professionals, child life specialists "help infants, children, youth, and families cope with the stress and uncertainty of acute and chronic illness, injury, trauma, disability, loss, and bereavement. They provide evidence-based, developmentally and psychologically appropriate interventions, including therapeutic play, preparation for procedures, and education to reduce fear, anxiety, and pain" (ACLP 2017). Practicing professionals have completed coursework in the subject, gained clinical experience, and passed a qualifying exam. (For more details, see www.childlife.org/certification.)

To learn how child life specialists support families—including by reducing fear and stress in the hospital, during transitions, and in educational settings—and how to find a specialist, see the longer, more comprehensive version of this article online at www.NAEYC.org/members-only/yc/supporting-medically-fragile-children-families.

earlier with respiratory difficulties, he encountered many masked faces—a necessity to minimize his exposure to germs. But Leshawn was far too young to understand the purpose of the masks, and not being able to see peoples' faces often frightens very young children. A child life specialist would be aware of such fears and would share them with Leshawn's family and teacher, along with activities to use at home and in the classroom to mitigate the fear. For example, initiating peekaboo games with familiar people wearing surgical masks might allow Leshawn to master this aspect of his hospital experience. For older children, adding real medical masks to the dress-up area for use during make-believe doctor visits is helpful.

Leshawn, being an infant, had limited ability to articulate his fears and needs beyond crying and clinging to his parents. Older children may have more complex fears and may ask challenging questions about their medical experiences. These sorts of questions are more likely to come up during medical play and art activities (Malchiodi 2006). While the classroom teacher is probably not the right person to answer medical questions (unless told by the parent or specialist what the child needs to know and how to say it in a developmentally appropriate way), passing along these questions to the family and the child life specialist and sharing observations with them are good ways to help the child find answers and means of coping. (See "Child Life Specialists Optimize Care.")

To create opportunities for communication, the specialist can suggest activities for older children, such as making art using nonhazardous medical props (like cotton balls), engaging in water play with plastic syringes (without needles) and tubing, providing toy ambulances and doctors, and offering doctor and child puppets. These activities permit children to express their fear, anger, and ideas as they play in a judgment-free setting (Oremland 1988). They can also help restore some control to a child. As one art therapist explained, "When the ill child engages in art making, he or she is in charge of the work—the materials to be used; the scope, intent, and imagery; when the piece is finished; and whether it will be retained or discarded" (Councill 2012, 222).

A successful inclusion

Leshawn became integrated into the classroom slowly. Although he would not leave his mother's side, he played with staff and with the student caregivers in the Lab School who were assigned to care for him. His worst time of day was diapering, because being laid on his back and being attended to by a person wearing gloves signaled to him that a painful medical procedure was about to begin.

Initially, Monique and Julia asked his mother to change his diaper; later, they and other school caregivers let him feel the gloves before putting them on their hands. They communicated with his mother by email nearly every day. They were able to identify other things in the classroom routine that might be stressors for him, such as adults' blue shoe covers and the smell of bleach and other cleaners. While the school needed to continue these basic health and safety practices, being aware of Leshawn's perspective helped staff and student caregivers be more sensitive and allowed him to transition at his own pace. To avoid the use of shoe covers, Monique and Julia encouraged everyone to wear socks. They tried to make the room smell of lavender instead of bleach. The goal when Leshawn was an infant was to make it clear that this setting was free of medical procedures and was very different from the hospital.

Using Medical Curriculum in the Classroom

After hospitalization, adding medical props and play to the curriculum can help the child—and his or her classmates—better understand what has happened and address typical fears (which vary by age).

While it is wisest to develop activities in collaboration with the child life specialist, here are some things we do in our classrooms. These activities also work well in home settings.

Age	Fear	Coping tool
Infants	■ Separation ■ Being touched by or held down by strangers ■ Hidden or masked faces ■ Unfamiliar smells, sounds, and sights	■ Provide images of absent parents ■ Show that faces are still there behind masks ■ Let the child handle safe medical items to make them less scary ■ Model comfort with medical equipment ■ Offer opportunities to relax and engage in open-ended play
Toddlers	■ Separation ■ Fear of pain and unfamiliar things ■ Loss of control ■ Loss of body fluids ■ Imaginary things happening, such as machines coming to life ■ Getting undressed	■ Use all of the tools listed for infants ■ Use real but not dangerous medical instruments, such as stethoscopes, syringes (without needles), and blood pressure cuffs; Band-Aids are particularly exciting and promote eye–hand coordination ■ Add water play with syringes, tubing, and medicine cups to provide a less charged opportunity to see how the medical tools work ■ Provide access to art supplies, including cotton balls, gauze, and other unused, inexpensive medical supplies (avoid choking hazards) ■ Offer opportunities to dress and undress dolls in hospital-like gowns ■ Read aloud basic books about going to the doctor (avoid scary images such as MRIs)
Preschoolers	■ Separation ■ Fear of pain and unfamiliar things ■ Loss of control and not being included in planning ■ Loss of body fluids ■ Imaginary things happening, such as machines coming to life ■ Getting undressed ■ Misunderstanding procedures as a punishment for wrongdoing	■ Use all of the tools listed for infants and toddlers ■ Show puppets as children expressing fears or as doctors and nurses helping others ■ Provide doll-sized medical tools, like wheelchairs, and access to real props, such as casts that have been cut off and crutches ■ Invite children to engage in representational art with paint, markers, etc., and in "medical art," such as painting with syringes and gluing on surgical caps or gloves ■ Provide current nonfiction books about hospitals, but be careful not to show procedures that no one will be experiencing ■ Make books with all of the children about doctor's visits; if children are interested, invite them to share photos and drawings to document their experiences

Gradually, Leshawn's mother left him with Julia, and if Leshawn became upset, Julia took him out in the yard for one-on-one sessions watching squirrels and busses. It took time, patience, and training for Julia and Monique to help Leshawn manage and eventually reduce his terror in the classroom. Most of all, it took teamwork between Monique, his family, and Julia. After 25 weeks in the classroom, Leshawn had completely adjusted.

As Leshawn grew older, Julia and Monique adapted the curriculum with his needs in mind. When he was 2, they invited a parent who is a doctor to show the children her medical tools at circle time. For this visit, they invited Leshawn's mother to join the class. They were worried that seeing a medical professional in the classroom would cause Leshawn to panic, but he astounded everyone by being totally fine. He was clear about the difference between the classroom and the hospital and felt safe to explore autonomously. When Julia added several real medical instruments—including stethoscopes, masks, plastic syringes (without needles), and Band-Aids—to the dress-up area, Leshawn was able to relax with the tools and play with them with his trusted caregivers and peers. (See "Using Medical Curriculum in the Classroom.")

Summing up: Communicate and collaborate

When a child is returning to the classroom post hospitalization, there may be moments when hard questions come up or when the child expresses strong emotions. Educators can use the following strategies to support the child, then revisit the conversation later (after consulting with a parent or specialist), if needed.

- Encourage the child to talk about his or her feelings or concerns. Write them down to share with the family and the child life specialist.
- Assess the child's perceptions and understandings by asking questions such as, "I wonder why your doll needed to go to the doctor?"
- Guide play by asking about the "patient" (e.g., a doll or stuffed animal) to further assess the child's understandings and emotions surrounding the medical experience.
- Reinforce correct information about medical care, if you know the correct information. For instance, a teacher may say, "Giving a doll a shot helps her get medicine the best and quickest way."
- Be careful not to give incorrect information or too much information. It is better to say, "I don't know; I'll have to find out," than to add to a child's misconceptions. Help the child or child's family get answers to questions about specific procedures from the hospital's child life specialist.
- When the child says something about what he or she thinks might happen, reflect or repeat the child's comments and expressions to the child to clarify and to help the child feel heard (e.g., "When the bear feels sick, he cries."). This helps shape the child's ideas toward correct information when misinformation is revealed.

- If a child asks about death, be careful to respect the family's wishes, culture, and religion. Do not share your own religious beliefs, and be sure to tell the family about the child's questions.
- Share your observations about the child with the family and child life specialist, and get feedback frequently, so you're all in agreement on how to support the child.

Including in your program children who have experienced extensive medical procedures may seem daunting. Keep in mind that they are still children and can benefit from using play and art to express their ideas and needs, just like children who have not had major medical experiences. Working closely with a care team that includes parents (or guardians) and a child life specialist can enhance the child's physical and mental health across settings. Adding real, safe medical play props to the curriculum is an excellent way to value the experiences and needs of children who have been hospitalized. This has the additional benefit of preparing the other children in the room for possible future experiences with illness or injury. Being aware of the common fears and needs of children at different ages, and having access to a child life specialist, when necessary, is a great way to support medically fragile children in educational settings.

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Tips, Tricks, and Transitioning

A Practical Guide to Furthering Your Education

Kelly Mazerolle and Melissa Rothwell

Are you thinking about going back to school? As practitioners, we often have this in the back of our minds. You see advertisements for continuing education opportunities and wonder if this dream can become a reality. Or you might be strongly encouraged to take courses as part of your employer's professional development plan. Most of us have to juggle our family lives, full-time employment, and any volunteer work; it is scary to think about adding school to the mix. Having been out of school for a few years, you wonder if you would be able to start over again. As a mature student, you would have a lot more to learn than just the curriculum. Not only will you have to teach yourself how to study again, but you'll also face the challenges—technological, among others—of studying in the 21st century. There are many options available to suit your schedule, but you need to decide which one will work best for your family and your learning needs.

The use of technology in education has increased dramatically in the past 20 years. This investment is believed to give students the ability to solve problems, collaborate, study from the comfort of their homes, and analyze information to help them be competitive in the 21st century (Lim et al. 2013). The college or university you plan to attend may use an online learning management system that enables professors to post their lectures, create discussion forums, and establish a flipped classroom in which you are expected to listen to the lecture and do the readings before class and then apply what you have learned to real-life scenarios and activities during class time.

Higher education enables you to increase your qualifications and thereby provide services you might not have been able to otherwise. It might change your life completely (Pritchard & Roberts 2006). Returning to school involves change, and you may find the experience a little daunting. However, if you are prepared for the changes, you may be able to avoid unwelcome surprises and moments of anxiety (Pritchard & Roberts 2006).

We have developed tips—the first letters of which together spell COLLEGE—to help adults of any age return to school. These suggestions will ease your transition from practitioner to student.

Communicating

Professors share their knowledge and understanding of a subject in various ways. Some concepts might be quite clear to you, but others, not so much. One graduate's advice is to not be afraid to ask questions. (Before asking, review the course material to ensure that it does not already give the answer—for example, when is the midterm?) If you're stuck on a question or concept, don't spend a lot of time on it; go on to the next one, and then ask for help as soon as you can. Remember, the material is new to your classmates, as well, so in addition to talking to them, ask the expert.

Successful students meet with their professors early in the term and return regularly.

Professors have office hours set aside each week for helping students. This is a good time to clarify information or to ask questions you are uncomfortable asking during class. Successful students meet with their professors early in the term and return on a regular basis.

Another way to communicate with your instructor is via email. Before emailing your professor, check your syllabus and notes to see if you already have the information you need. Use a clear, informative subject line, such as "First assignment for Communications 101." Begin with an appropriate salutation, as you would in a letter. You are not writing an informal text message; therefore, greet your professor by name and title to show respect. Do not use emoticons or *i* instead of *I*. Professors receive a lot of correspondence, so be concise and politely explain why you are writing. Sign your email using both your first and last names so the professor can identify you and provide an appropriate response. To ensure that your email does not contain any spelling or grammatical errors, do not forget to edit it before hitting *Send*. (There are many editing tools, such as Grammarly or Ginger, for reviewing your written work. For example, if you make a mistake with the word *there*, these tools will tell you the difference between *there*, *their*, and *they're*.)

Remember, every piece of written communication becomes a permanent record that a variety of professionals may see. If you find yourself writing an angry email, do not send it! It might be better to make an appointment to speak with the professor, either in person or over the phone—after you have calmed down.

Organizing your school work

Check to see whether your school provides students with agendas, or if you prefer, use the calendar on your phone to keep yourself organized. In our experience, successful students schedule time to study in fixed blocks during the week, in addition to the time they spend in class. One way to reduce your stress level is to organize your assignment due dates. When the professor distributes the course syllabus, immediately add all deadlines to your calendar. You can then create your own time line, including the steps you need to take to complete an assignment. For example, if a paper is due on the 30th of the month, you might want to start your research no later than the 10th, write the rough draft by the 20th, and finish the final draft by the 25th. That way, you have time to reflect on the assignment and are not in a rush to complete it the night before. Be realistic when creating your time lines for assignments, and consider technology carefully. Do you really have time to learn how to use Prezi software, for example, and also research and write your presentation?

While we encourage you to look ahead in the syllabus, please wait until the professor has taught the material before beginning an assignment, and do not submit an assignment early. Reassess it shortly before it is due to ensure you have not missed a component.

Learning

To be successful as a student, you will probably need to sharpen your study skills. During the week, establish a schedule that enables you to focus on your course work outside of class. One of our students uses her lunch breaks to study and complete course work. Another is on her computer at 5:00 a.m., before she goes to work.

As is often true with children, many adult students learn material better when they engage with content in multiple ways. After reading and listening, for example, you might want to create a picture or diagram, write the material out in your own words, or ask a friend to quiz you on the material.

Typically, the first class in a course is critical—it lays the foundation for the rest of the term. This is when the professor explains in detail the syllabus and his expectations for students. If you arrive at least five minutes before class starts, you can prepare yourself physically and mentally. Choosing to sit near the front of the class helps reduce distractions.

Taking good notes is essential, as you cannot rely on memory alone, but do not try to write down everything. Focus on putting the key points—those things the professor spends a lot of time on—into your own words. The last five minutes of the class are often a summary. Use this time to listen closely and fill in some blanks in your notes rather than pack up your stuff. Periodically, compare notes with a couple of classmates to ensure you have not missed anything.

Living with less stress

One way to relieve stress is to take control of your situation. Make time to take care of yourself, even though you are busy. To be at your best, get seven to eight hours of sleep every night, drink a lot of water, and get regular exercise. If you do not already have a support system, it is important that you create one. It can be your significant other, family, friends, or colleagues. Surround yourself with positive people who are willing to help you reach your goals. Talk to them about what you are learning. Remember that you are a role model for the families and the children in your care. You are showing them that education is important and that you value lifelong learning, hard work, and determination.

For many adult students, the greatest source of stress is figuring out how to pay for college. Start by applying for financial aid; even if you do not think you qualify, apply anyway—you never know! Apply for every scholarship and grant you can find. Usually colleges have a list of scholarships and grants, along with the deadlines for applications. Talk to an accountant; there might be a tax credit you can use. The American Opportunity Tax Credit and the Lifetime Learning Credit are two great starting points (Colwell 2015). Contact your bank; they might be able to help you find an affordable loan.

Remember, you need to consider the cost of tuition, books, supplies, and transportation, and you might need to upgrade your Internet plan. If you are a parent, you might want to budget for someone to care for your children when you need to study for a test or write a paper. Last, redo your monthly budget to include your school considerations, so you can get an idea of what you will be able to afford as you pursue your degree. Overall, do not forget that education is an investment in your future.

Embracing supports

Many colleges have professional support services for students. They can range from medical care and counselling services to tutoring supports, academic accommodations, and advocacy. We encourage you to access these services—on an individual basis or by signing up for a workshop.

In addition to benefitting from these services, find time for yourself and take a break from all of the action. One strategy that is gaining in popularity is mindfulness—the awareness that emerges from paying attention to the present moment (Greater Good Science Centre 2017). Here is how it works:

1. Pay attention to your breathing, especially when you are feeling emotional and overwhelmed.
2. Really notice what you are experiencing at a given moment—the sounds, smells, sights.
3. Recognize that your emotions and thoughts do not define you; this can help you break a pattern of negative self-talk.
4. Recognize your body's physical sensations—the way you rest your body in your chair, the way the water feels when you wash your hands.

Research indicates that taking five minutes out of your day to be mindful helps reduce stress; fosters positive, healthy relationships; and improves your overall well-being. Instead of counting sheep, mindfulness training may help you sleep better (Greater Good Science Centre 2017). (For more information about mindfulness, see "Mindfulness and Meditation," by Teresa Buchanan [2017].)

Many adult students learn material better when they engage with content in multiple ways.

Getting the most from your courses

In college, learning and success require much more than doing only what is necessary to get by. Benjamin Bloom, an educational psychologist, created a taxonomy of educational objectives. Many professors consult this taxonomy when designing their courses. The following summary builds on Bloom's work (and on more recent cognitive science) to provide tips for maximizing your learning (Anderson & Krathwohl 2001).

- **Remembering** new information is just the beginning of your learning. If you don't revisit information that you have memorized for an exam, it will soon fade from your long-term memory. To be sure your hard work pays off, quiz yourself every week or so on the course material to date. The process of trying to remember, and checking your answers, is highly effective for making your new knowledge stick (Smith & Weinstein 2016).

- **Understanding** the material is essential to real learning. You must be able to explain, summarize, illustrate, or describe the concept you are learning in order to connect with other relevant material and understand it.
- **Applying** knowledge to real-world situations means that you can use it in the field. You will be able to draw on your knowledge to improve your practice and demonstrate what you are learning. You might even become a role model for your peers.
- **Analyzing** involves using the knowledge you have applied and comparing or contrasting it with other experiences. This stage will help you critique your role, as well as your program, in order to make it more efficient and effective.
- **Evaluation** means you can make informed judgments about what you have learned in the past and can critique new information. A full evaluation entails considering how sound your thoughts are (e.g., what evidence base they rest on) and the extent to which you can support your decisions and assess their effectiveness. It also often results in new questions to pursue to expand your knowledge.
- **Creation** means that you are able to take what you have learned and use it to construct something new. Combining your roles as teacher and learner, you should aim to plan, implement, and critique new instructional approaches and lesson plans.

Experiencing success

Be they online or face-to-face, many higher education options are available to suit your schedule and learning needs. Not only will adding to your credentials deepen your knowledge, it might even reignite your passion for the profession and open doors to new career opportunities. We believe that our tips will help you succeed because we have seen them work in our in-person and online classrooms. Take it from one of our students who earned an early learning child care diploma in 2016:

> I was successful because I loved what I was learning, and I was eager to succeed in my field. I broke down my assignments and used time management to make them seem like less of a task. Reliable teachers and fellow students were a great help, as well as prioritization and making sure that I took breaks and had time to relax.

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"Don't Let My Son Dress Up as a Girl!"—The Response

Stephanie Feeney and Nancy K. Freeman

The March 2017 Focus on Ethics column in *Young Children* featured an issue shared with us by Rosa Romero, a student in the master's program in early childhood education at the University of Hawaii at Mānoa. It involves a father who insists that his 4-year-old son not be permitted to dress up in female clothing (see "The Situation—'Don't Let My Son Dress Up as a Girl!'"). This case revolves around a conflict between a family member's request and an activity that appears to be valuable for a child.

The Situation—"Don't Let My Son Dress Up as a Girl!"

Four-year-old Victor enjoys playing dress up in the dramatic play area. He is a quiet and reserved child who usually follows other children's lead. But when engaging in dramatic play, Victor's leadership shines as he collaboratively creates scenarios with his classmates. He is particularly adept at playing characters such as firemen, princesses, bumblebees, and moms. One day, Mr. Jackson, Victor's father, who rarely comes to the center, arrives to pick up Victor and sees that he is in a pink princess costume. He curtly tells Marge, Victor's teacher, that he does not want her to allow Victor to play in the dress-up area in the future. He then orders Victor to change, and they quickly leave. Marge is taken aback by Mr. Jackson's behavior.

The center is devoted to fostering relationships with all of its families, and Marge has recently made great strides in attracting Victor's family to potlucks and school workdays. The staff collectively believe that in addition to building children's imaginations, dramatic play enhances their social and communication skills and is an integral part of the learning process that gives children opportunities to develop abstract thinking, literacy, math, and social studies skills.

What should Marge, the ethical teacher, do?

We are grateful for the input that we received about this case. The issue and the analysis rely heavily on Rosa Romero's careful work, and we thank Rosa for her significant contributions to this column. Thanks to Vandana Dev, a preschool teacher and an adjunct instructor at Mission College, Santa Clara, and at San Jose City College, for her analysis; other groups who worked on this case include participants in a Directors Leadership Academy training sponsored by Smart Start of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina; participants in a training of trainers session at the Oregon AEYC Conference; and students in the ED 200 class on professionalism, at Portland Community College, in Oregon.

The process for responding to this issue

We will follow the process described in *Teaching the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct: A Resource Guide* to systematically apply the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct.

1. **Identify the problem and determine whether it involves ethics**
   When you encounter a situation that appears to have a moral dimension, the first thing to do is to determine whether it involves ethics by asking yourself if the terms *right* and *wrong* or *fair* and *unfair* apply. This situation involves ethics because Marge must decide the *right* course of action when she is confronted by Victor's angry father.

2. **Determine whether it is an ethical responsibility or an ethical dilemma**
Ethical responsibilities require early childhood educators to follow the Code's clear mandates. Dilemmas, on the other hand, require them to make a choice between two or more defensible resolutions, each of which could be supported by relying on the Code. Marge is facing an ethical dilemma because she can justify agreeing to the father's demand and also justify refusing to honor it.

3. **State the dilemma**
Marge must balance the benefits for Victor of his taking part in pretend play with the right of his father to make decisions about Victor's upbringing. Victor enjoys pretend play with his classmates, and he might find it distressing if Marge were to single him out by excluding him from the dress-up center to honor his father's demand.

4. **Identify the conflicting responsibilities**
Marge must consider what her training and experience have taught her is best for Victor while honoring her responsibilities to his family. She also has responsibilities to Victor's classmates, who benefit from his good ideas and leadership during dress-up play, and to her director and colleagues, who feel strongly about the benefits of pretend play.

5. **Brainstorm possible resolutions**
Marge could:

- Honor Mr. Jackson's wishes and forbid Victor to play in the dress-up area altogether.
- Discourage Victor's play in "girly" costumes and redirect him to other costumes or other play areas.
- Continue to let Victor choose what and how he plays, and work with his father to help Mr. Jackson appreciate the benefits of dress-up pretend play.
- Ignore the situation and allow Victor to play in the dramatic play area, assuming that it is unlikely that his father will see Victor in a princess costume again.

6. **Consider ethical finesse**
Many of the educators who worked on this dilemma saw the potential for using ethical finesse to address this situation—that is, to find a way to meet the needs of everyone involved without having to make a difficult decision. A number of respondents focused on how Marge could try to change Victor's father's views about his son's play by meeting with him to share her professional knowledge about child development and the benefits of pretend play. Further, Marge could invite him to spend time in the classroom to see for himself that Victor enjoys a variety of activities, not just dress-up. She could also use the school's monthly newsletter to highlight the importance of dramatic play.

Marge is facing an ethical dilemma because she can justify agreeing to the father's demand and also justify refusing to honor it.

Other suggestions for finessing this issue focused on changes Marge could make to the dress-up center, including offering more gender-neutral choices and involving families by asking them to suggest dress-up themes and share different costumes and props. We were interested to hear one workshop participant explain that to avoid Marge's situation, her program stocks the dress-up area with scarves and pieces of colorful fabric to inspire non-gender-specific play.

7. **Look for guidance in the NAEYC Code**
Respondents found that the Code's core values, ideals, and principles offered guidance that applied to this situation. They noted, in particular, educators' responsibilities to children and the importance of nurturing positive relationships with families.

Core values

The following three core values are particularly applicable to this situation:

- Base our work on knowledge of how children develop and learn
- Appreciate and support the bond between the child and family
- Respect diversity in children, families, and colleagues

Ideals and principles

Respondents identified a number of items in the Code—specifically in the sections addressing our responsibilities to children and families—that could guide their thinking. They include these ideals:

I-1.2—To base program practices upon current knowledge and research in the field of early childhood education, child development, and related disciplines, as well as on particular knowledge of each child.

I-1.3—To recognize and respect the unique qualities, abilities, and potential of each child.

I-1.5—To create and maintain safe and healthy settings that foster children's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development and that respect their dignity and their contributions.

I-2.2—To develop relationships of mutual trust and create partnerships with the families we serve.

I-2.5–To respect the dignity and preferences of each family and to make an effort to learn about its structure, culture, language, customs, and beliefs. . . .

I-2.6—To acknowledge families' childrearing values and their right to make decisions for their children.

I-2.8—To help family members enhance their understanding of their children . . . and support the continuing development of their skills as parents.

And respondents noted that that the following principles were involved:

P-1.1—Above all, we shall not harm children. We shall not participate in practices that are emotionally damaging, physically harmful, disrespectful, degrading, dangerous, exploitative, or intimidating to children. . . .

P-1.2—We shall care for and educate children in positive emotional and social environments that are cognitively stimulating and that support each child's culture, language, ethnicity, and family structure.

P-2.2—We shall inform families of program philosophy, policies, curriculum, assessment system, and personnel qualifications, and explain why we teach as we do—which should be in accordance with our ethical responsibilities to children.

P-2.4—We shall ensure that the family is involved in significant decisions affecting their child.

P-2.5—We shall make every effort to communicate effectively with all families in a language that they understand. We shall use community resources for translation and interpretation when we do not have sufficient resources in our own programs.

8. Identify the most ethically defensible course of action

Many who worked on this case decided that the best alternative would be to use ethical finesse to help the father understand the value of dramatic play and to help him recognize that preschool play choices are unlikely to be an indication of adult sexual orientation. They also discussed ways to use finesse to modify the environment to eliminate gender-specific dress-up options.

Some concluded that if attempts to finesse the situation were not successful, Marge would be justified in deciding that restricting Victor's activities in the dramatic play area would cause harm both to him and to his classmates and, therefore, in refusing to honor Mr. Jackson's

direction. That decision would be guided by Principle 1.1—"Above all, we shall not harm children. . . ."

If finesse is not effective, Marge should involve her director—and perhaps the other teachers in the center—in helping her make a decision. If they decide not to honor Victor's father's wishes, it would be essential that she meet with the father—perhaps with both of the parents—to discuss her decision to continue to allow Victor to play dress-up in the dramatic play area. Marge would need to be prepared to accept negative reactions to this decision.

We agree that the best alternative would be to encourage the family to accept Victor's dramatic play and/or to change the classroom environment.

We agree with respondents who believed that the best alternative in this situation would be to encourage the family to accept Victor's dramatic play choices and/or to make changes to the classroom environment. It is important to remember, however, that when efforts to finesse issues like this are not successful, ethical early childhood educators must be prepared to make well-reasoned decisions that can be justified by relying on the NAEYC Code.

Reflecting on the case

This issue, which has been frequently reported to us, involves strong opinions about boys' play that can be culturally determined. In fact, the situation described by Rosa Romero involved a Hispanic family whose first language was Spanish. She described how Marge worked through an interpreter to be certain she was clearly communicating with his family about this sensitive issue. This is a good reminder that many childrearing values are strongly rooted in families' cultural beliefs. Sensitive teachers must carefully balance their responsibilities to children and families, a task that can be particularly challenging when working in cross-cultural settings. The Code reinforces the field's commitment to supporting the strong ties between children and their families, to respecting diversity, and to listening to and learning from families to support their children's learning and development.

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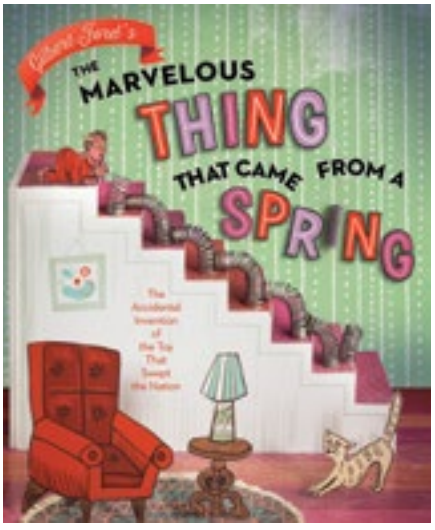
The Reading Chair

New children's books too good to miss and one forever favorite



The Marvelous Thing That Came from a Spring: The Accidental Invention of the Toy That Swept the Nation

By Gilbert Ford. 2016. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers. 40 pp. Ages 4 to 8.

The Slinky, one of the most popular toys in America, was invented quite by accident. The idea for the Slinky came one day in the 1940s when a spare coil fell off a shelf above the desk of a Navy engineer named Richard James. The coil's bouncing fascinated him, and he realized it made a marvelous toy. His son gave it a test run and concurred. The Slinky was soon in production. Richard's wife, Betty, managed marketing and operations for the toy start-up, and Richard pounded the pavement to make their first sale. It became a near-instant hit.

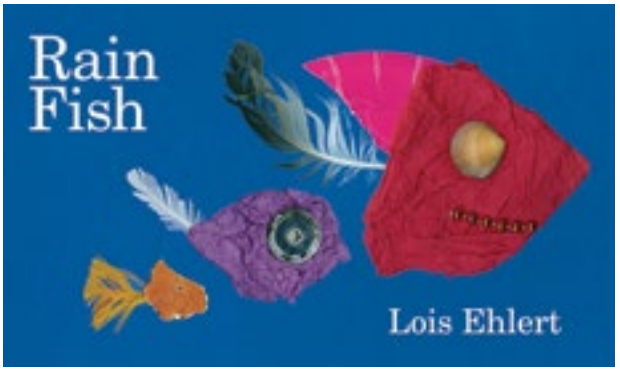
This peppy story is illustrated with digitally rendered drawings and photographed dioramas made with old-fashioned toys. The characters reflect the style of the 1940s and 1950s. But Ford was careful to overcome some of the biases of the time by including racially diverse characters in his illustrations. He also highlights the fact that Betty was a capable and significant partner in the business.

Bug Zoo

Concept and pictures by Andy Harkness. Words by Lisa Wheeler. 2016. New York: Disney Hyperion. 40 pp. Ages 3 to 7.

Insects are a big draw for young children: they're freely available for collection, they're small enough to keep for observation, and adults don't usually oppose taking in a caterpillar—whereas a puppy might be a harder sell. Lists of delightful words describing the bugs—"armored, teeny, leggy, greenie"—remind readers that their sheer variety is one reason they provide so much intrigue. That variety is brought to life on large pages with illustrations crafted from digitally colored clay models that are rich with texture.

Ben, the main character in this story, takes an interest in the beautiful bugs outside his door. He cages the bugs in jars and opens a bug zoo to show them off. When no one comes by, Ben realizes that the bugs belong in nature and releases them. This story is a nice way to initiate a classroom discussion about how to treat animals.

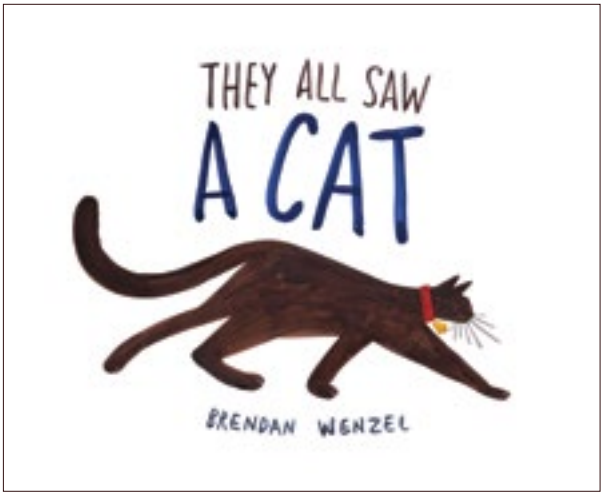


Rain Fish

By Lois Ehlert. 2016. New York: Beach Lane Books. 40 pp. Ages 3 to 8.

This is Lois Ehlert's 37th picture book. A national treasure, Ehlert continues to surprise and excite us with new books, and her collage illustrations are instantly recognizable. This is a book about garbage and strange objects washing into interesting patterns during a rainstorm, making "rain fish." What a delight to have a fresh look at the scraps and discards—feathers, old receipts, takeout containers—that we normally find distasteful. For Ehlert, soggy scraps "dance upon concrete" and "swish on down the street."

By the end of the book, the rain fish swim away, evoking the fleeting magic of a quick storm. This rhyming concept book provides incredible extension opportunities on topics like recycling, art, and using one's imagination.



They All Saw a Cat

By Brendan Wenzel. 2016. San Francisco: Chronicle Books. 44 pp. Ages 3 to 8.

This creative tale is all about perception and observation. When a cat walks through the neighborhood, it looks different to every animal it meets. The flea sees a cozy home. The child sees a friendly pet. The mouse sees a frightening monster. They all see a cat, yet each perceives something different. And when the cat looks at its own reflection in the pond, readers may be surprised by yet another view shimmering off the water's ripples.

The illustrations—made with watercolor, colored pencils, oil, charcoal, and "almost everything imaginable"—received a Caldecott Honor and are full of action, spilling across wide double-page spreads. The sparse text invites readers to fill in the story with their own observations.

About the authors

Isabel Baker, MAT, MLS, is president of The Book Vine for Children, a national company dedicated to getting good books into the hands of preschool children and their teachers. Isabel has worked as a children's librarian and is currently a presenter on early literacy and book selection.

Miriam Baker Schiffer, MFA, is a writer in Brooklyn, New York. She consults on book selections for The Book Vine, in McHenry, Illinois. Miriam's children's book, *Stella Brings the Family*, was published by Chronicle Books in 2015.

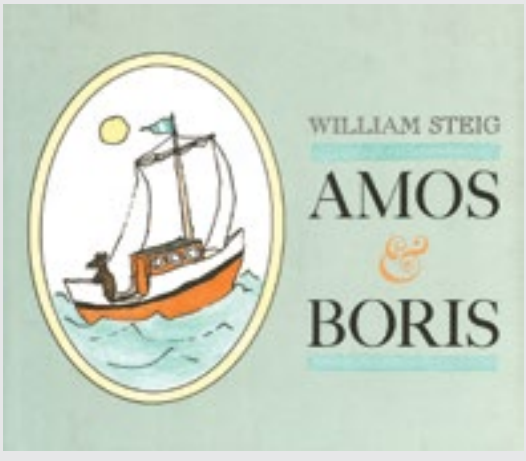
Follow Me!

By Ellie Sandall. 2016. New York: Margaret K. McElderry Books. 32 pp. Ages birth to 3.

Follow along as a playful lemur leads its friends on an adventure through the forest. They delicately balance on thin branches, pluck fruit from a spiky cactus, and cozy up together. With excellent rhythm and pacing, the leading lemur declares on each page, "Follow me, follow me, follow me!" But an encounter with a crocodile changes things. This delightful story features rich, repetitive language—"things to chew, things to munch, things to have for our lunch"—that is helpful for dual language learners and lends a sense of busyness and purpose to the lemurs' outing.

Forever Favorites

Each month we feature a classic book to (re)introduce teachers to old favorites.



Amos & Boris

By William Steig. 1971. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 32 pp. Ages 4 and up.

What a pleasure it is to celebrate the genius of William Steig by featuring this story of an unlikely friendship between a mouse and a whale who save each other's lives. The first rescue happens at sea, while the mouse is taking a voyage on his self-built boat. The whale comes to his rescue, and they become close friends. Years later, when the whale becomes beached, the mouse returns the favor by convincing two elephants to push him back to sea. Steig's language is what sets this tale apart. His writing is accessible to small children while still stretching their vocabularies and imaginations. He describes a "phosphorescent sea" and the whale being "breaded with sand." His characters offer insights, such as the whale's "You have to be *out* of the sea really to know how good it is to be *in* it." Children will learn science facts about land and sea mammals, how whales' bodies work, and what one might eat in the ocean. The two animals shed tears as they say goodbye at the end of the book, capturing the way happiness and sadness, or difficulty and joy, often come to us in pairs. What an enduring tale!

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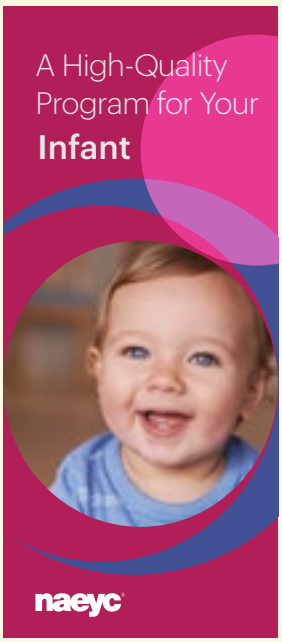

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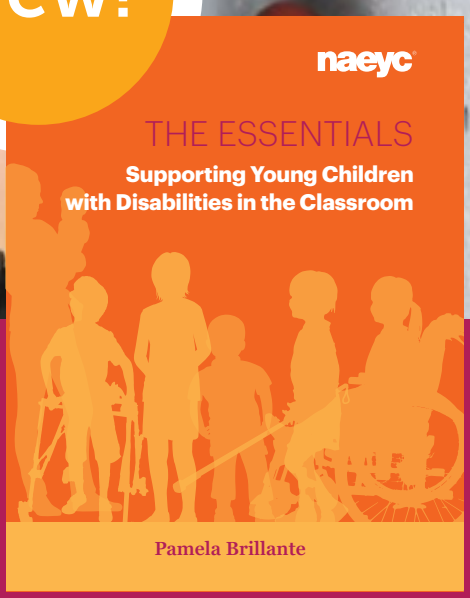

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