SECA

# DIMENSIONS of Early Childhood

Authentic Learning Environments
°
Self-Regulation & Language
°
Home & School Connections
°
Outdoor Classrooms

Volume 41, Number 2, 2013

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## 65th Annual Conference

of the

## Southern Early Childhood Association!

**January 16 - 18, 2014**
**The Williamsburg Lodge**
**Williamsburg, VA**

Theme: *Children's Play: Past, Present and Future*

**Southern Early Childhood Association**

*Editor - Stephen Graves*
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## *Dimensions of Early Childhood*

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SECA serves the interests of early childhood educators concerned with child development, including university researchers and teacher educators; early childhood, kindergarten, and primary-grade teachers; and early childhood program administrators and proprietors. The association has affiliates in 13 Southern states. Non-affiliate memberships are available to anyone living outside the 13 affiliate states. For information about joining SECA, contact the executive offices at P.O. Box 55930, Little Rock, AR 72215-5930, (800) 305-7322. Members receive a one-year subscription to *Dimensions of Early Childhood* and discounts on SECA publications and conference registration fees.

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Volume 41, Number 2, 2013

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# President's Message

Nancy Cheshire

Dear Friends,

**The Southern Early Childhood Association is committed to improving the quality of care and education for young children and their families through advocacy and professional development.** You, our members, fulfill this mission within your community and state as you work each day to improve the care and education of young children. You are our advocates!

During the past week I had the opportunity to be a guest reader in a classroom of first graders. I loved being with the children and watching their faces as they listened intently. I remembered my excitement as I learned to read as a child. I reflected again on the SECA mission statement and the adults who introduced me to the joy of reading. As early childhood professionals, we have the opportunity to help children develop the love of books both within classrooms and within our families. What a privilege and responsibility! Through our actions we model that books are precious, enjoyable and full of hidden treasures of life changing information. At the same time we enjoy the pleasure and privilege this brings to us and the children… lives are enriched! It is truly amazing that the simple process of reading to children brings great enjoyment and allows us to achieve our mission by improving their lives.

Before the 2013 SECA Conference, the SECA Board of Directors met and each member brought a copy of their favorite book for young children to the meeting. A gift exchange was enjoyed as board members selected a wrapped book. As packages were opened, there were many smiles and comments such as, "Oh, I love this book." or "That has always been one of my favorites." The books were donated to the SECA Silent Auction.

Your work with children, parents and early childhood professionals is appreciated as you live the SECA mission of improving the quality of life in the South. As a small gift of appreciation, the **Favorite Books of the 2013 SECA Board of Directors** are listed. Read, enjoy and share your love of books. Happy Reading!

| | |
|---|---|
| Anita Dailey | *Llama Llama Misses Mama* (Anna Dewdney) |
| Beverly Peden | *Love You Forever* (Robert Munsch) |
| Carol Montealegre | *The Three Billy Goats Gruff* |
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| Susan Barnes | *The Relatives Came* (Cynthia Rylant) |

# Create an Authentic, Inclusive Early Childhood Learning Environment for Teacher Candidates

*How can early childhood teacher educators help college students experience a high-quality learning environment? By teaching in a model classroom! These ideas can spark ALL educators to revitalize their teaching environments.*

Donna Kirkwood and Elizabeth Beavers

> "Plainly, the environment must be a living one, directed by a higher intelligence, arranged by an adult who is prepared for his mission." Maria Montessori (as cited in Lillard, 1972, p. 85)

As the early childhood team—at the University of Houston Clear Lake— awaited the arrival of students for the spring semester, they were filled with excitement. The faculty had spent the last few months preparing a new classroom for their college students and couldn't wait to see the looks on the teacher candidates' faces when they finally arrived.

Since the onset of this project, the team members had brainstormed, begged for financial support and donations, ordered supplies, opened and unpacked more than 50 boxes, arranged and rearranged equipment, organized materials, added lots of personal touches (such as teacher-made materials, motivational signs and quotes, and decorations), and labeled everything. As former preschool teachers, the process of setting up a classroom environment was not new, but this time they were awaiting college students and ready for a revitalized mission.

***Faculty were ready for a revitalized mission.***

## Why the Project Started

There are two typical settings in early childhood education at the university level: programs that have lab schools and programs that do not. The beauty of a lab school is that teacher candidates can see and interact with children in their own environment. They then take that information back to their classes to discuss, explore, and evaluate.

Unfortunately, lab schools are difficult to sustain and many colleges and universities are being forced to cut funding for or even close their lab schools (Bowers, 2000; Branscomb & McBride, 2004; McBride, 1996; McBride et al., 2012). In addition to the large financial commitment that lab schools require, the advent of professional development schools and the increasing need for full-time campus child care centers have circumvented the need for campus lab schools in some cases (Branscomb & McBride, 2005; Clark & Huber, 2005; McBride, 1996; McBride, et al., 2012).

But even with a lab school, higher education courses usually occur in classrooms that are used for all subjects and are equipped accordingly. When teaching early childhood education courses, many times discussions focus on how materials are used, how children interact with their environment, and how the environment impacts behavior and learning. Having a model setting where students can see and explore a high-quality environment can provide a frame of reference for learning about the varied benefits of intriguing classroom

environments and in teaching about all aspects of early childhood education.

It is sometimes difficult to adequately convey to teacher candidates how important the environment is when they work with children. Immersing them in an authentic classroom enables students to see the effects on children's learning first-hand.

## The Importance of High-Quality Learning Environments

According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the physical environment in an early childhood classroom "reflects the goals, values, and expectations of the program" (2005, p. 9). The design of the classroom

- sets the mood for the interactions that occur,
- shapes the children's attitudes about school and their growing self-concept, and
- promotes feelings of independence (Greenman, 2005).

A high-quality learning environment has accessible materials that promote growth in all areas of development—physical, cognitive, communication, social, and emotional—and is designed specifically for their learning and care. It supports learners' varied interests and abilities. Further, the classroom itself provides the most effective manner to naturally assess children's development and learning (Epstein, 2007).

As important as it is to provide a high-quality environment for children, an authentic learning environment is equally important for teacher candidates. Authentic learning requires providing relevant, real-world experiences in a meaningful context. Authentic learning environments in higher education enable students to experience various perspectives, thus promoting critical thinking and reflection. A high-quality authentic environment is one that offers both "cognitive authenticity" and "physical authenticity" (Herrington & Herrington, 2006, p. 3).

### Characteristics of an Authentic Learning Environment in Higher Education

- relevant, real-world experiences
- meaningful context
- perspectives that promote critical thinking and reflection
- cognitive authenticity
- physical authenticity
- reflects goals, values, and expectations of program
- research-based best practices

***Immerse students in an authentic classroom.***

Such an environment, at the higher education level, reflects the goals, values, and expectations of the program by conveying to students a clear indication that the faculty values their learning. In embracing research-based best practices, current beliefs, and in reconceptualizing how faculty can best accomplish this mission, the early childhood team decided to create and offer an authentic learning space for teacher candidates majoring in early childhood education.

Greenman (2005) suggested that learning spaces are incredibly powerful and do more than speak: they load the inhabitants' bodies and minds with sensory information. Therefore, the team wanted to set up an environment where students would be surrounded by and immersed in best practices.

## The Journey to Create a Model Classroom

The journey started in the fall of 2011 when early childhood team members were told that they would be given a dedicated classroom in a newly renovated building. They knew that having their own classroom just for early childhood teacher candidates meant that they would have a place to store teaching materials and that class projects could be built upon week after week.

Then the faculty took the opportunity a little further. What if they could get funding to truly set up some learning centers? What if they set it up like a real early childhood classroom? After the early childhood team focused on a shared vision, their minds went wild! They decided to set up a model early childhood classroom for their students and that's exactly what they did!

After the Dean of the School of Education approved an initial budget, team members met with a local representative from a major educational supplier, other faculty within

Photo Courtesy of the Authors

*When students found out about the new classroom, they donated items. Faculty members donated many learning materials for the math, science, and literacy centers. Most items for the model classroom were purchased.*

the School of Education, the director of the Center for Educational Programs on campus, and a representative from a major company within the area to seek supplemental funds and materials.

Additionally, when the students found out about the new classroom, they offered to donate items that they had or could collect at conferences. Most items for the model classroom were purchased, but the team found that departments within the School of Education were willing to donate some things. Other faculty members donated many learning materials for the math, science, and literacy centers. After the team knew what materials were donated, they focused on developing a list of items that would be needed to create the model classroom.

## Select and Arrange Materials

Early childhood team members were very particular about the items to be included. They did not want to just set up a classroom; they wanted to set up a high-quality model classroom. When discussions focused on the block, dramatic play, or literacy center in classes, they wanted students to be able to see, and feel, and play in centers that were the height of quality.

The team wanted students to discover all the places where they could incorporate reading and writing while exploring in a learning space. They wanted students to see environmental print around the room and well-labeled items on the shelves and organized baskets of intentional materials. The team wanted to provide a setting and varied materials where the students could analyze and think critically and reflectively about teaching young children. They wanted students to know what to strive for in their own classrooms, so the selection of materials was based on the best sources available.

The list of items for the model classroom came directly from the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scales (Cryer, Harms, & Riley, 2003), NAEYC standards (2005), and Head Start guidelines (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families & Office of Head Start, 2010).

Within the budget, along with additional funds and donated materials, the early childhood education model classroom was configured with eight learning centers set up individually around the perimeter of the room. These centers each include:

- **Labeled child-sized shelves** that are well organized, easily accessible, and arranged to define the area
- **Books related to the learning experience** (books about architecture, building, and transportation in the block center; books about colors, shapes, and famous artwork in the art area; cook books, menus, and books about homes and cultures in the dramatic play center)
- **Varied writing materials** related to the center (phone books, menus, and checkbooks in dramatic play; music sheets and blank paper in the music center; graph paper, blueprints, and blocks with chalk or mirrored surfaces that can be written on in the block area)
- **Resource materials** associated with standards and quality indicators for each center; and adaptation suggestions for addressing cultural, linguistic, and developmental diversity

The individual centers include a variety of age-appropriate materials that promote creativity and exploration at differing levels of ability, and that encourage cooperative play while reflecting diversity, as listed in Table 1.

## Table 1. Materials in High-Quality Learning Centers

| Blocks and Building | Math and Manipulatives |
|---|---|
| • Several types of blocks including unit blocks, mirror blocks, natural blocks, foam blocks, and Duplos®<br>• Dollhouse furniture<br>• Traffic signs<br>• Replicas of people<br>• Replicas of animals<br>• Large area rug depicting a city with roads and buildings | • Items to count, sort, classify, and compare<br>• Games and puzzles of various sizes and levels of difficulty<br>• Geo boards and pattern blocks<br>• Items for measuring such as rulers, tape measures, scales, timers, and clocks<br>• Small building materials |
| **Science and Sensory** | **Art** |
| • Selection of natural things<br>• Plants<br>• Various types of sensory materials<br>• Items to encourage experimentation with measuring, motion, light and sound, magnification, reflection, magnets, and sink/float<br>• Light table with recycled X-rays and various transparent items<br>• Sensory table with a sand wheel, shovels, sifters, measuring cups, funnels, trowels, and rakes to measure, pour, mold, and build | • Materials to draw and write on: drawing paper, foil, parchment paper<br>• Tools to draw or write with: tempera paints, watercolors, markers, crayons, colored pencils<br>• Collage materials: magazines, pompons, buttons, googly eyes, fun foam<br>• Tools: brushes, scissors, glue, rollers<br>• Dough and putty with tools |
| **Quiet Area** | **Music and Movement** |
| • Bean bag chair<br>• Canopy<br>• Books<br>• Soft toys and puppets | • CD player and a variety of music CDs<br>• Variety of instruments including basic rhythm and multicultural instruments<br>• Items to encourage movement such as ribbons, scarves, and hoops<br>• Large area rug |
| **Dramatic Play** | **Literacy** |
| • Complete kitchen set<br>• Child-sized table and chairs<br>• Pretend food and utensils<br>• Dress-up clothes including multicultural and occupational items<br>• Play car<br>• Cash register and phones<br>• Dolls with baby bed and clothes<br>• Brief cases<br>• Large area rug | • Large assortment of children's books: board books, picture books, and story books in a variety of themes and genres<br>• Hand puppets and finger puppets<br>• Homemade books<br>• Literacy kits with accompanying books<br>• Letter sets—magnets, sensory letters, and foam letters<br>• Story cubes<br>• Question cubes<br>• I-spy bags |

Also included in the model classroom is an interactive smart board, a teaching station including a computer and document camera, a secure storage space, six round adjustable tables, and access to laptops that students can use in class as needed.

Another concept that the team wanted to convey through the space was the value of organization and accessibility of materials. The materials for children are well organized and clearly labeled with pictures and words so the students know what they are and where they belong (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; Epstein, 2007).

Further, these materials are available on each table:

- pens, highlighters, tape, markers, paper clips
- copies of Texas state licensing standards
- NAEYC standards
- guidelines for developmentally appropriate practices
- Division of Early Childhood-Council for Exceptional Children's Professional Standards
- recommendations and tips for adapting materials and experiences for children with diverse needs

These resources are referenced frequently in early childhood courses and are accessed regularly.

Near the entrance is a designated place for handouts and a place to display flyers of interest to students. The early childhood team explained to students that, just as classroom teachers provide consistency in their environment, the model classroom has been arranged and offers supplies, materials, and experiences consistent with their learning needs in mind. As far as the early childhood

team is concerned, the possibilities for learning and growth of teacher candidates are endless.

## When Students Arrived

Early childhood team members were not surprised that students were thrilled to see their new learning space. It was obvious from their expressions that they felt very comfortable in the classroom. When asked to write one word to describe their first impression of the model classroom, students replied with words such as welcoming, interactive, realistic, perfect, inviting, organized, engaging, special, and intriguing.

In addition to liking the way the space looked, students indicated that they felt a sense of comfort and ownership that they did not feel in a typical college classroom. The classroom encourages students to express themselves more clearly and to experience their learning in a more concrete way. One student said that the room "makes learning for adults more inviting." Another stated, "I'm excited to dig into learning."

## Authentic Teaching and Learning

Access to a model classroom can enhance teaching and learning in many ways. Here are a few examples of how the environment can provide a meaningful context for learning.

- Simulate authentic assessment when students observe each other playing in centers.
- Assess the classroom using the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS) to see what additional materials are needed (the faculty intentionally remove some items for this experience).
- Model truly creative experiences by urging students to explore the art center freely.
- Use math manipulatives to help students practice assessing children's mathematical abilities and asking appropriate questions to enhance learning.
- Explore classroom materials and then identify what national and state standards are being addressed during different types of purposeful play.
- Provide students with child profiles (including developmental objectives) so they can plan an embedded learning experience in a learning center.
- Ask students to create adaptive materials based on objectives in sample IFSPs and IEPs that could be infused in centers.

## Necessities to Create a Model Classroom

In reflecting on the process of actually creating a dream teaching space, team members identified four key necessities to fuel the development of the model early childhood classroom: dedicated space, imagination, support, and commitment.

- **Dedicated Space**. The most important component in creating a model classroom is to have a dedicated space and support from the university or college. Everyone who uses the space understands its use, its importance, and its value and works to maintain it.
- **Imagination**. Without a creative vision of what could be, and an awareness of all the possibilities, the new space would not have been realized. This spark of imagination ignited the creativity and motivation to provide students with the same high quality of learning environment that the faculty members hope that these future teachers will provide to children. Imagination and creativity guided students to offer meaningful environments, materials, and interactions with children.
- **Community Support**. From the onset, this project received

Photo Courtesy of the Authors

*Child-sized shelves in each center are well organized, easily accessible, labeled, and arranged to define each area.*

various forms of support from the Dean of the School of Education, other faculty, the nearby community, and local businesses. These partners nurtured faculty efforts, because they knew that it would help teacher candidates to better nurture the children they will teach.

- **Commitment**. Planning, designing, and creating a model classroom is not a short-term project. Collectively, faculty must be committed to maintain the space, equipment, and materials—and have it evolve to meet the curricular and learning needs of students over time. The commitment ultimately is to provide innovative learning experiences within an authentic learning environment.

Photo Courtesy of the Authors

*The environment provides a meaningful context for learning. Students simulate authentic assessment by observing each other. They assess the classroom using ECERS. And they identify which national and state standards are being addressed during different types of purposeful play.*

## Addressing Concerns

Classroom arrangement is a vital consideration of any early childhood program, and creating a model classroom within a college classroom was challenging. Table 2 identifies some of the arrangement challenges that the early childhood team faced, how some of the concerns were addressed, and why some of them could not be avoided.

## Ideas to Maintain and Sustain a Model Room

Just like any classroom, this model classroom is ever evolving. It will need to be modified, refilled, and nurtured through the years. It is full of consumable supplies and materials, which will need to be replaced or updated. In the future, the early childhood team would also like to add more technology and adaptive materials to further support their desire to help teacher candidates

## Table 2. Challenges and Solutions for Model Classrooms

| Concern | How the Concern Was Addressed |
|---|---|
| Ideally, an early childhood classroom would have quiet and noisy areas located so they do not interfere with each other. All centers would be arranged so that activities are not interrupted by traffic. Furnishings would be set up to avoid rough play (Cryer, Harms, & Riley, 2003). | The eight learning centers were necessarily set up around the perimeter of the room. All of the shelves can be moved to simulate an ideal setting. |
| An ideal classroom for children would have furnishings for routine care (cubbies, sinks, toilets and/or changing tables, and rest mats) where children and teachers could easily access them. | These are the few areas that the faculty had to compromise and also where the college classroom limited the development of the model classroom due to space and financial limitations. |
| Due to the size of the centers and the limited space in the room, the arrangement of the centers is not exactly an ideal replica of how a classroom would be designed for children. | Initially, the faculty were concerned that this would not provide a realistic example, but found that the circumstances gave students an opportunity to think critically, analyze the space, and plan better ways to arrange centers with children in mind. |
| The room had to offer adult-sized tables and chairs situated in the center of the room for college classes. Doing so facilitates small-group work and conversations. | Tables and chairs are on wheels so they can easily be moved when activities require more space and movement. Tables are adjustable so they can be lowered to child-size. |

learn how to specifically differentiate instruction using assistive and adaptive technologies.

Some ideas for sustaining and enhancing the classroom include:

- Collect student fees to replace consumable supplies.
- Engage in community outreach. Offer low-cost teacher education for local early childhood professionals.
- Seek grants and mini grants.
- Organize fundraisers by students such as book fairs and bake sales.
- Host children's programs such as summer camps.

This model classroom is already transforming the early childhood team members' teaching in ways that they had only previously imagined. Students are inspired, are learning in an authentic space, and experience what a high-quality early childhood environment looks like. This new environment is definitely helping to meaningfully accomplish the mission of providing authentic, relevant, and transferable learning experiences to adult students . . . and to their students.

**This model classroom is ever evolving.**

Photo Courtesy of the Authors

*This model classroom is transforming the early childhood team members' teaching. Students are inspired, are learning in an authentic space, and experience what a high-quality early childhood environment looks like.*

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# Extend These Ideas With a Professional Book

## Connect Learning Environment Design With a Professional Book

Sandra Duncan

### *Real Classroom Makeovers: Practical Ideas for Early Childhood Classrooms*

**by Rebecca Isbell and Pamela Evanshen. 2012. 156 pp. $26.95. Beltsville, MD: Gryphon House.**

The physical environment is a critical element in early childhood classrooms. Well-designed children's spaces have the power to support the implementation of excellent early childhood programs. Learning environments influence how young children act, react, and interact.

The authors of *Real Classroom Makeovers* help teachers understand the "nuts and bolts" of designing classroom environments that are effective, engaging, challenging, and nurturing. Using before and after pictures of early childhood classrooms, *Real Classroom Makeovers* shows teachers how small and relatively inexpensive changes can transform ordinary spaces into extraordinary places for young children.

Authors Isbell and Evanshen believe that not only must children's environments engage children in real-life experiences, but their spaces should be beautiful and promote a sense of wonder and engagement. Attention should be paid to elements that affect children's senses such as light and sound. Children's work should be honored with places to display, share, store, and value it. The effective classroom is organized with a place for everything and everything in its place.

Effective spaces provide children with a secure and supportive environment that embraces diversity and individuality as well as classroom community. In a well-designed classroom, relationships are easily built and children's self-confidence and abilities to interact with others are enhanced.

*Real Classroom Makeovers* guides teachers through the entire makeover process, beginning with the planning stage, preparing for classroom changes, implementing the space's transformation, and introducing children to new features in the environment. With basic and easy-to-follow directions, *Real Classroom Makeovers* shows teachers how to transform their spaces into wonderful places for children to learn, grow, and love.

*Real Classroom Makeovers* is a valuable resource for any early childhood teacher who is looking for ways to create classroom environments that foster children's growth and learning. It offers innovative ideas and strategies to transform and build positive learning environments for young children.

**Sandra Duncan, Ed.D.,** Educational Consultant, Schererville, Indiana.

# Make Every Word Count: Using Language as a Bridge to Self-Regulation in Early Childhood Settings

*How can teachers in early childhood classrooms assist young children in self-regulation through language? Implement these recommendations that have been shown to be successful in today's diverse learning environments.*

Kristi Cheyney, Jun Wang and Elizabeth Bettini

The demands placed upon children entering Kindergarten are considerable. In addition to higher levels of pre-reading and math skills, young children are now expected to regulate their own behavior in increasingly complex academic and behavioral interactions (Blair & Razza, 2007; McClelland et al, 2007; McClelland & Cameron, 2011; Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, & Cox, 2000). Some new Kindergarten students are ready to interact as expected, while others are unprepared for this new set of challenges. Kindergarten teachers are most likely to identify children who struggle to follow directions, not children who struggle with academics, as unprepared for school (Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2000). Fortunately, preschool teachers can structure language interactions to provide a pathway for self-regulatory development. When teachers thoughtfully support children with appropriate language interactions, they are more likely to acquire independent control over their own actions before entering Kindergarten, and eventually learn to make healthy choices on their own.

## Other-Regulated vs. Self-Regulated: Lev Vygotsky's Theoretical Framework

Self-regulation, according to Vygotsky, is the "mastery of one's thinking," (Gredler, 2009, p. 9). This mastery may manifest as regulation of emotions, management over a physical activity, or monitoring of cognitive tasks. Vygotsky's theoretical framework, which is central to current research on self-regulation (Fox & Riconscente, 2008), identifies a child's emerging language acquisition as a vital force in the development of self-regulatory skills. According to this theory, a growing child's development is shaped by the specific social context in which he or she is enmeshed. Self-regulation develops through language interactions and experiences with the specific cultural tools of that social context. Adults scaffold the child's self-regulatory development by providing interactions that model, require, and boost linguistic and self-regulatory skills at the upper range of the child's ability. This upper range is often referred to as the zone of proximal development.

As they develop increasingly sophisticated language, children progress through a typical cycle:

**Phase 1:** External speech, in which young children speak to others;

**Phase 2:** Private speech, in which the child talks to himself, beginning around the age of three years; and

**Phase 3:** Internal speech, in which the child uses language to think internally (completed around the age of seven years; Harris, 1990).

Language thus begins as a social tool, allowing the child to communicate with others, and only later becomes a tool for cognitive processing (Wertsch, 2008). During the private speech stage, thinking is external. As children acquire inner speech, thinking moves "underground," inside the mind (p. 11). Language becomes thought, which becomes action, as illustrated in figure 1. Self-regulation is the mastery of thinking. Therefore,

## Figure 1. The role of language in the young child's journey from other-regulated to self-regulated

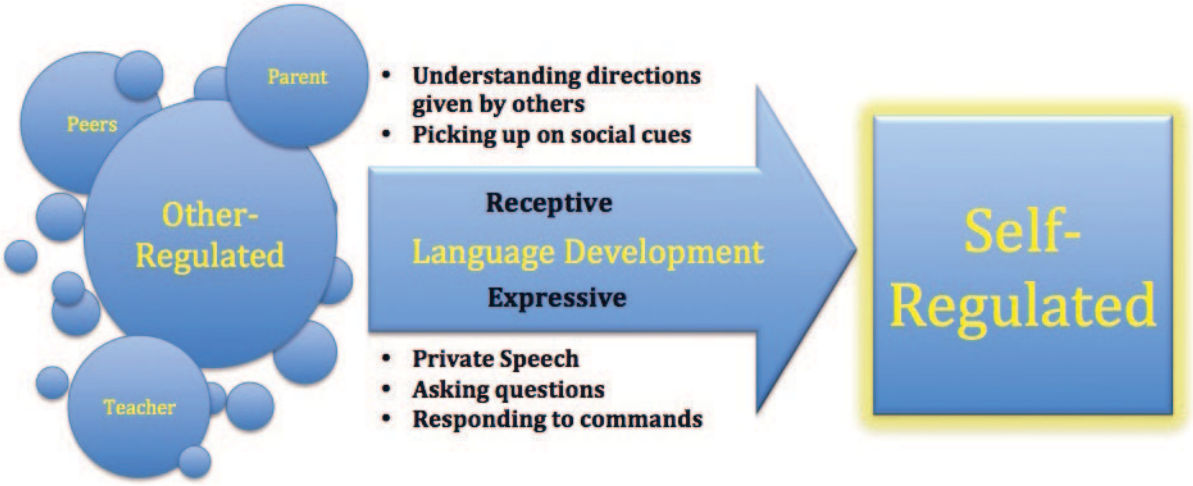


Figure Provided by the Authors

language development underlies the development of self-regulatory skills.

## Research Findings

*How can early childhood educators effectively guide children through the process of becoming self-regulated rather than other-regulated? How can daily language interactions move this process forward?*

Although the relationship between language and self-regulation still requires further investigation, decades of research in this area provide empirical support for Vygotsky's theory and for specific practices that support young children in their development of self-regulatory skills. This research can inform efforts to prepare preschoolers for the increasingly rigorous demands they will experience in Kindergarten. In the following section, we summarize these research findings and then offer tips for how to use these in preschool classrooms. Think about the strategies you are already using in your classroom, as well as the reasons behind why they work. Also consider how you can tweak or amp-up the supports that you provide for the young children in your care.

### Thinking in Pictures

Research suggests that inner speech is not fully developed until around the age of 7 (e.g. Winsler, DeLeon, Wallace, Carlton, & Wilson-Quayle, 2003; Winsler, Diaz, & Montero, 1997; Winsler, Diaz, Atencio, McCarthy, & Adams, 2000; Fernyhough & Fradley, 2005; Manfra & Winsler, 2006; McClelland et al., 2007). Preschool children think in pictures, not words. Ask a four year old to count a line of Cheerios and most typically developing children will do so accurately. Ask a four-year-old to count silently, and an interesting thing is likely to occur: he may attempt to count on his fingers, touch his fingers to his nose, or just plain

### Teacher Tip: Communicate with Words *and* Pictures

In this case the cliché "a picture's worth a thousand words" applies perfectly. Post classroom rules, procedures, and rituals in a visual format. Many teachers struggle, for instance, with the wiggling and giggling of Circle Time. This challenge provides a good example of an appropriate time to use pictures, in tandem with language, to communicate expectations to young children.

1. **Be explicit**. Ask yourself, "What do I want my children to do, not what do I **NOT** want them to do?"
2. **Create a Visual Reminder** that represents the limit you want to set. For example, stage a class picture with everyone sitting in the circle, mouths closed, and eyes on the teacher while she reads a book.
3. **Show them the Visual Reminder**. Then state your expectation simply. "I want to hear what everyone has to say, but I can only hear one voice at a time. So the rule is: One voice at a time. When it's my turn to talk, you will be silent. When it is your turn to talk, we (point to everyone in the circle) will be silent."
4. **Emphasize the reciprocal nature of this limit** by adding another staged picture with one *child* talking and the rest of the group *and the teacher* listening intently.
5. After you have used the Visual Reminder to introduce the expectation, **place it at eye level near your Circle**.
6. **Practice the skill often**, always referring to the Visual Reminder.
7. **Use the Visual Reminder when children need a check-up on this skill**. When we've practiced the skill and referred to it often, sometimes we will need no words at all. We can simply point to the poster and wait.

guess. Even if young children have mastered the concept of one to one correspondence, counting objects in their head is not possible because they have not yet developed inner speech.

**Preschool children think in pictures, not words.**

## The Value of Private Speech

Preschoolers often talk out loud to themselves as they attempt a difficult activity. Increased levels of this private speech in preschoolers have been associated with increased success on complex tasks (e.g. Berk & Landaue, 1993; Winsler, Diaz, & Montero, 1997; Winsler et al, 2000; Winsler et al, 2003). Observational studies have also demonstrated that self-talk increases as task complexity increases, then ceases when children reach their frustration level (Fernyhough & Fradley, 2005; Benigno, Burd, McNamara, Berh, & Farra, 2011; Al-Namlah, Fernyhough & Meins, 2006). These findings suggest that private speech supports children's efforts to complete tasks that challenge them without exceeding their ability level.

Photo courtesy of the authors

*Help children learn to make choices for themselves. Talk yourself through a task when children are present. "I'm not sure what to do next on this puzzle. Let me try this piece. Nope, that didn't work. This one also has a curve. Let's try it. That worked!" You're modeling self-talk and helping children to problem solve.*

## Facilitating Positive Choices

Preschool children need structured choices in order to learn self-regulatory behaviors. Winsler and colleagues (1997) video-recorded preschoolers performing cognitively demanding tasks while an adult scaffolded children's efforts. The investigators found that, as expected, adult scaffolding resulted in better task performance; this result was stronger when children used private speech after the scaffolding. Adult support followed by private speech was the phenomenon linked to task success. The researchers propose that children need to actively participate in the progression from interpersonal collaboration to independent problem solving, or in Vygotskian terms, the process of moving from other-regulated action, to self-regulated action. In other words, children need attuned and analytical adult interactions that catalyze their own initiative. Although structured and guided language is a necessary prerequisite for self-regulation, this guidance should lead to independent choice-making. Children must practice making choices for themselves, even if this means they will make mistakes.

Choosing from specified options can be used throughout the day. Children can choose the center at

## Teacher Tip: Encourage and Model Self-Talk

Teachers can actively encourage private speech in preschoolers as a means to develop self-regulatory skills. Although silence may be necessary on occasion, young children's school day should be filled with many opportunities for them to practice self-talk in both academic and social-emotional learning interactions.

1. **Listen** for spontaneous examples of private speech.
2. **When you hear it, encourage it.** "Hey, you talked yourself through calming down when you got frustrated that you had to wait for your turn on the swing. That was helpful! Good for you."
3. **Model self-talk.** Talk *yourself* through a task when children are present. "I'm not sure what to do next on this puzzle. Let me try this piece. Nope, that didn't work. This one also has a curve. Let's try it. That worked!"
4. **Scaffold the development of private speech.** Ask open-ended but leading questions, such as, "I notice you tried this puzzle piece, but it didn't seem to work. Why?" As the child discusses his or her choices, the teacher can guide him or her through helpful self-talk.

## Teacher Tip: Two Positive Choices

In order to develop children's initiative, Bailey (2000) suggests the practice of providing two positive choices.

1. **Observe your classroom routines for a day or two.**
   - What opportunities do students have to make choices?
   - Are there times when children have too many choices and chaos is likely to ensue?
   - Are there opportunities where choices are possible but not offered?
   - Are these choices you offer between a good and bad option (i.e. sit still or go to time out)?
   - If so, how could you reframe the choices to make both positive (i.e. sit with your hands in your lap or sit with your hands on your knees)?
2. **Choose a time of the day to try the two positive choices strategy.** We suggest choosing a time that is presenting you with a classroom management challenge. A good example is lining up for transitions.
3. **Establish in your own mind what you want children to do.** Again, think of what you want them TO do, not what you DON'T want them to do. In your mind, shift from "Line up without pushing" to "Line up with your hands and bodies in your own space."
4. **Choose two appropriate options.** How many different ways could they line up with their hands and bodies in their own space? Think of some, and then select two.
5. **State the two choices and show them with your own body.** This provides them with an impromptu Visual Reminder. For example, "You can line up with hands straight up like a robot, just like this…(*Teacher models what this looks like*)…or with your hands in a bunny tail behind your back, just like this."

Photo Courtesy of the Authors

*Self-regulation develops through language interactions. Utilize group time to communicate expectations to young children. Post classroom rules, procedures, and rituals in a visual format.*

which they will begin their work time, the music they will play during clean up time, or even what strategy they will use to calm themselves during an emotional moment. In each situation, providing specific positive choices gives children a sense of autonomy and self-direction within the structure the teacher establishes. Everyone must line up, everyone must clean up, and everyone must learn to self-calm. However, choices allow children to exercise autonomy and self-regulatory skills by selecting how to do these tasks.

## Support General Language Development

Research suggests that self-regulation and private speech are closely connected with expressive language skills in general (Benigno et al., 2011; Daugherty & White, 2008; Smith, 2007; Cole et al, 2008; Manfra & Winsler, 2006). Manfra and Winsler (2006) found that preschoolers who were aware of their private speech were also more advanced in their expressive language skills, even after controlling for age. Furthermore, a positive attitude toward private speech correlated to more advanced language skills. They propose that the "rich use of language provides children with more experience of hearing their own voice in multiple contexts. Such experience may help children understand that they can use speech to not only communicate with others but also that they can overtly communicate with themselves" (p. 547).

## Special Populations

All of these practices are especially critical for children from special populations. Winsler and colleagues (2000) studied the private speech of

preschoolers who were identified as exhibiting behavior problems. They found that children with behavioral problems at age three tended to have identifiable behavior problems in Kindergarten. Moreover, they found that the more private speech preschoolers used, the less likely they were to exhibit behavior problems (Winsler et al, 2003). Similar studies have yielded similar results with other at-risk populations, including children with learning disabilities, Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (Berk & Landau, 1993), and children living in poverty (Daughtry & White, 2008).

Although all children benefit from rich early language experiences (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 2000), private speech research suggests that strategies to promote the development of early language, private speech, and self-regulatory skills may be especially critical for children who are at risk for school problems. Preschoolers with physical, behavioral, or academic problems present teachers with special challenges, which many teachers feel ill-equipped to handle (Hemmeter, Ostrosky, & Fox, 2006). Children experiencing these types of challenges may have difficulty developing positive peer-competence even when fully included with their typically developing peers, often resulting in isolation (Kemple, Duncan, & Stragis, 2002). Moreover, research with school-age children suggests that teachers often avoid interacting with children who have behavior problems (Sutherland & Oswald, 2005). As a result, children who most need connection with peers and caregivers often become those least likely to experience attuned interactions (Bailey, 2011). However, avoidance will do little to

***Early language, private speech, and self-regulatory skills may be especially critical for at-risk children.***

## Teacher Tip: Engage in Rich Language Interactions Throughout the Day

Don't practice what we call "drive-by communication". In a busy classroom, it is easy to get caught up in the rush of activities, and interact only through brief commands, praises, and redirections (e.g. "Good job!" "Get down from there!" "Hands are not for hitting!"). Rich language interactions require more than just a few words. A rich interaction is an exchange in which adults and children have a back-and-forth, responsive dialogue. Children need experience hearing their own voices and the voices of their peers and teachers.

1. **Observe yourself for a day or two.** Make a list of all the times during the day when you can slow down and interact with children.
2. **Plan for rich interactions.** Make notes in your lesson plans about these times, and discuss them as a teaching team. Plan for who will be in charge of extraneous tasks such as preparing the craft lesson for later, and who will be talking to children. Treat these interactions as a part of your curriculum.
3. **Use books to spark conversations.** During transitions, on the playground, and during centers, ask children about the book you read in Circle Time. Carry short books in your apron, pull them out during a free moment, and see who wants to snuggle up for quick story. Then talk about it! Ask questions, listen closely to answers, then stretch the child's ideas.

## Teacher Tip: Cozy-Up with the Challenging Kids

To prevent more serious problems in the future, it is especially critical that preschool teachers engage frequently with the students who present the biggest challenges.

1. **Watch your class.** Who are the children most stretching your abilities as a wise and compassionate early educator? These are the kids who need you the most!
2. **Create a special time during each day to interact with a challenging student.** For an extroverted child, this may come in the form of playing a game on the playground or building towers during Center Time. For an introverted child, you may decide to read a story in the Book Nook.
3. **Offer this special language interaction time consistently.** As a teaching team, brainstorm ways to make this happen. Go to your administrator or director if you need support. The time you invest now will pay dividends for the rest of the child's life.
4. **Keep track of how often you engage in these personal language interactions and how the child responds throughout the day.** Make decisions about when to decrease or increase these interactions based on the child's needs.
5. **Check your attitude.** Challenging children will not benefit from interactions that are forced, manipulative, or strained. Find something loveable about this child and repeat it as a mantra. Remember, your care and compassion have the power to make a lifetime's worth of difference for this child.

Photo Courtesy of the Authors

*Teachers can specify options for children that allow them to make choices, even choosing how to calm themselves during an emotional moment. Choices allow children to exercise self-regulatory skills if teachers structure these options.*

solve the challenges these children face, in the short or the long term.

## Make Every Word Count!

When planning for instruction, we must consider how to arrange the classroom environment and activities in ways that foster the development of language and self-regulatory skills. The language children hear becomes internalized over time. By modeling self-regulatory private speech, we can help our students internalize thought patterns that will support their self-regulatory skills for years to come. By offering choices, we provide children opportunities to experience and learn from their own failures and successes. As they grow and mature, early language experiences will help children to master their thoughts and actions. As teachers, we must remember that the external language we model and encourage today will become the child's internal voice for a lifetime.

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## Council for Professional Recognition Announces the Release of CDA 2.0 – Advancing the Professional Development Experience

On June 1, 2013, the Council for Professional Recognition celebrated a significant milestone in the successful launch of the Child Development Associate (CDA) Credentialing SystemTM, making it even more valuable for the early childhood field. CDA 2.0 will advance the professional development experience for early childhood professionals across the nation. The new CDA National Credentialing SystemTM revolutionalizes entry-level credentialing utilizing the latest technology, allowing CDA candidates to apply or renew their CDA online; choose a CDA Professional Development Specialist to support them through the credentialing process; and complete the CDA Exam at a local Pearson-Vue testing center. Learn more by visiting the Council website.

*announcement courtesy of SECA*

## Thank You, Reviewers

The Southern Early Childhood Association expresses its gratitude to these content experts who reviewed the manuscripts published in this issue, and the previous issue, of *Dimensions of Early Childhood.*

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# "Cozy Up" Story Time Action Plan

Do you teach a child that is stretching your knowledge and skills as a teacher?

A **fixed, shared storybook reading schedule** that will meet his/her need for extra connections is one strategy to implement while you continue to teach this child new, more helpful skills to replace the problem behavior. Follow these simple steps.

**Step 1: Pre-Intervention Reflection**

- What is the specific challenging behavior? Describe what it looks like.
- When and how often does it occur? Take a full day to document the answer to this question.
- How severe is the behavior? How long does it last? What is the level of intensity? How difficult is it to redirect the behavior?

**Step 2: Plan to Intervene with Cozy-Up Story Time**

- Which books will be of interest to the child? Put these books in a basket that is readily available when you need it.
- Where will I share a story with the child? Choose a place that is somewhat free of distraction and where the child will feel safe.
- When will I share a story with the child? Choose **three** times during the day. If this is too much, start with one and work up to it.
- What types of support do I need from other adults? Ask the other adult(s) in the room to help take care of regular classroom activities for the 5 minutes it takes for you to share the story book.

**Step 3: Document Implementation**

Implement your plan for one full week. Remember the most important aspect here is to make connections (eye contact, smiles, playful interactions).

- Document daily when you complete a shared story.
- Include a sentence or two about what you observe during your story time. Is the child willing? Is he interested in the books you've gathered? Where you able to focus your attention on him?

**Step 4: Document Results**

As the week progresses, continue to document the challenging behavior.

- How often does it occur?
- How severe is the behavior? How long does it last? What is the level of intensity? How difficult is it to redirect the behavior?

**Step 5: Re-evaluate Your Plan**

Looking at the data you've collected, revise your intervention plan.

- Can I lessen the number of shared story reading times? (Don't stop altogether! Scale back slowly when the child is ready, and continue to offer these special times when needed.)
- Do I need to increase the frequency of shared story reading times?
- Do I need to change the way I implement shared story reading times? (Do you need a more quiet space? Do you need to work on your own frustration level with the child? Is there a better choice of an adult to work with this child?)
- Create a new plan for the following week and continue as needed. When ready, move on to another child.

# The 2013 SECA EXEMPLARY OUTDOOR CLASSROOM STATE WINNERS

***To honor our theme for the 2013 SECA Conference,* Hand-in-Hand: Children and Nature, *SECA launched a search for exemplary outdoor classrooms in the Southern region. One overall winner was selected and winners at the state level also were designated.***

***Applications were reviewed based on the following criteria and, upon designation as a potential winner, on-site visits were made by members of the SECA Board of Directors to verify the application components.***

**Criteria 1:** Natural modifications and innovations in at least five of the following areas: large motor, climbing/crawling space, building area, art area, music and movement area, garden area, storage, water, dirt digging, sand and wheeled toy area.

**Criteria 2:** Effective and appropriate monitoring of children in these areas by caregivers/teachers.

**Criteria 3:** The use of natural materials in the outdoor classroom.

**Criteria 4:** The use of materials specific to the region/community.

**Criteria 5:** Ease of maintenance of the outdoor classroom.

**Criteria 6:** Compliance with local/licensing regulations.

In our first issue of *Dimensions of Early Childhood* in 2013, we introduced you to the overall winner of the **2013 Exemplary Outdoor Classroom Contest**—Highland Plaza United Methodist Preschool in Hixson, Tennessee. Through photos and text, we led you through the wonderful outdoor space that the program had developed for young children. It had it all: natural elements, wonderful use of outdoor features, connections to local places and geography and inventive uses of materials and spaces.

But Highland Plaza wasn't the only exceptional outdoor space for children: there were other programs that merited recognition and we're pleased to introduce you to the three programs that were designated as **State Winners of the SECA Exemplary Outdoor Classroom Contest**. Those winners are:

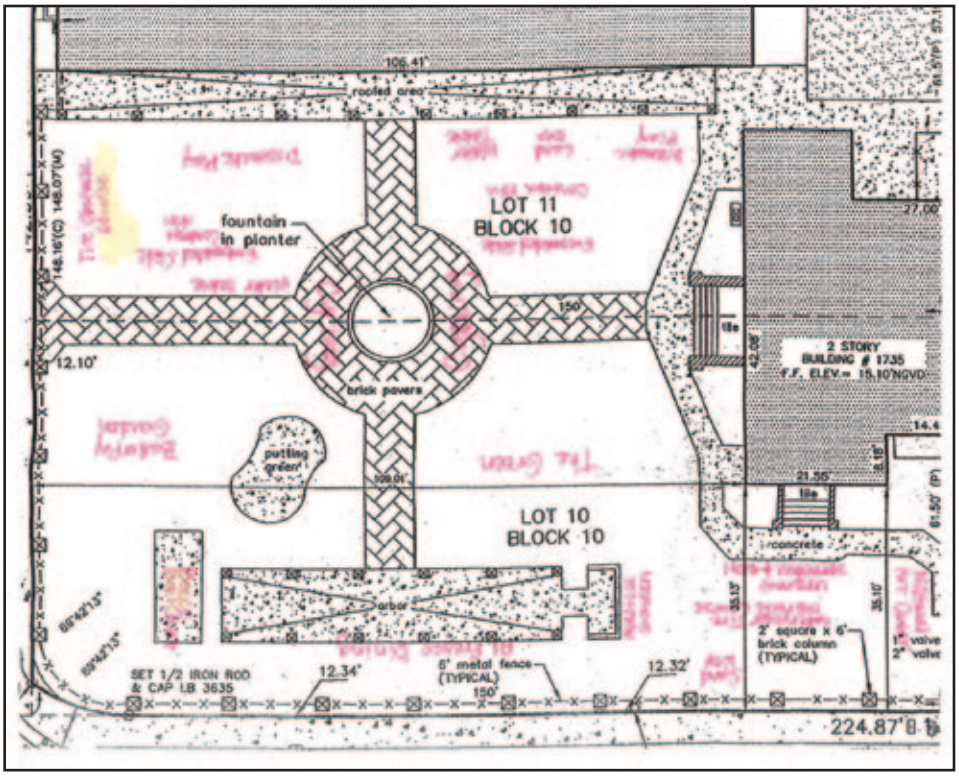
*Vicky Flessner, Director of Highland Plaza United Methodist Preschool accepts the Exemplary Outdoor Classroom Award at SECA 2013 in Mobile, Alabama.*

- **BB International Preschool & Kindergarten** in Pompano Beach, Florida.
- **Westlake United Methodist Preschool** in Austin, Texas.
- **Dora L. Lewis Family & Child Development Center** in Richmond, Virginia.

Join us as we travel to **Florida**, **Texas** and **Virginia** to view three very different but equally wonderful outdoor spaces for young children. We'll share just a few of the innovative ideas and creative uses of materials in these outdoor spaces…..let them spark your imagination!

## BB International Preschool & Kindergarten

Pompano Beach, Florida
Owner: Julia Musella,
director@bbinternationalpreschool.org




*"Picture yourself on a hillside in Tuscany, with a warm breeze and the gentle rustling of lush trees over a red barrel tiled roof, as the music softly encourages you to take a moment and do nothing other than enjoy the beauty of the gardens that surround you.*

*Welcome to the daily experience for each child and every child, parent and teacher of BB International Preschool. The BB International Preschool garden is an Italian inspired, multi-sensory experience, designed for children of all ages. The variety of foliage includes fragrant flowering trees that bloom during different seasons in different colors, fresh herbs and vegetables, a National Wildlife Certified Butterfly Sanctuary and textures that appeal to all senses…..Children enter their outdoor classroom experience eagerly, continually delighted by the surprises that outdoor play brings to them. Nowhere in sight is evidence of a traditional playground setting. Instead they are brought to a place where their consciousness will forever be raised about what a "garden" has to offer and more importantly, use their imagination and creativity to design the outside time."* ( Julia's words from the contest application)

The BB International Preschool bases its philosophy on Reggio Emilia and the outdoor space is planned around that philosophy.

The **morning assembly** (an important part of the Reggio philosophy) takes place in the gardens and is used as a celebration of the "day's projected activities and recognition of the journey in learning that will take place."

**Outdoor social dining experiences** take place under the partially shaded pergola and Venetian style curtains provide additional shade. A wide selection of music plays during this time: opera, classical, jazz and great American standards.

The **Musical Garden** was created using recycled materials from a metal company and features a xylophone designed and created by a parent with the help of the children. The backdrop of the musical garden is a multi-cultural tile mosaic of musical notes and children playing various instruments… again designed by a parent (a local artist).

The **Herb and Vegetable Garden** allows children to learn life cycles as the time of year changes and plants go through their natural cycles. It includes lessons in science/nature by using natural methods of pest repellent and fertilizers to raise awareness of an alternative to chemically enhanced farming methods. The garden always begins with the children and parents having a homework assignment that allows them to participate together in the purchasing, planning and cultivating of the garden.

The **Butterfly Garden** is National Wildlife Certified and features a variety of plants and small birdbaths in which children can leave their snack scraps. "Countless hours are spent searching for cocoons, watching the development and finally emergence of the butterfly." This area (now 5 years old) was designed and created with the children by a graduate student of Florida State University in conjunction with the National Wildlife Society.

The **Bocce Ball Court** exercises counting/math skills and works on gross and fine motor accuracy as well as hand-eye coordination. This area allows for cultural awareness encompassing the international games of American bowling, Italian bocce and French boules.

**What is Bocce?** An ancient sport from the time of the Roman Empire, it developed into its present form in Italy. Want to know how it's played? Watch this You Tube video. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2hhN6S-1urM

The **Caterpillar Tire and Obstacle Course** was created as an art project by the children and provides the opportunity to crawl and balance atop the creative and colorful design. A local tire company donated the new tires.

**The Green**, a name borrowed from a college campus, is an open space that the children and staff use for a variety of different activities or "just plain gazing up." In summer, the pergola on the Green turns into an area that has overhead water sprinklers raining down: beach blankets abound on "The Green."

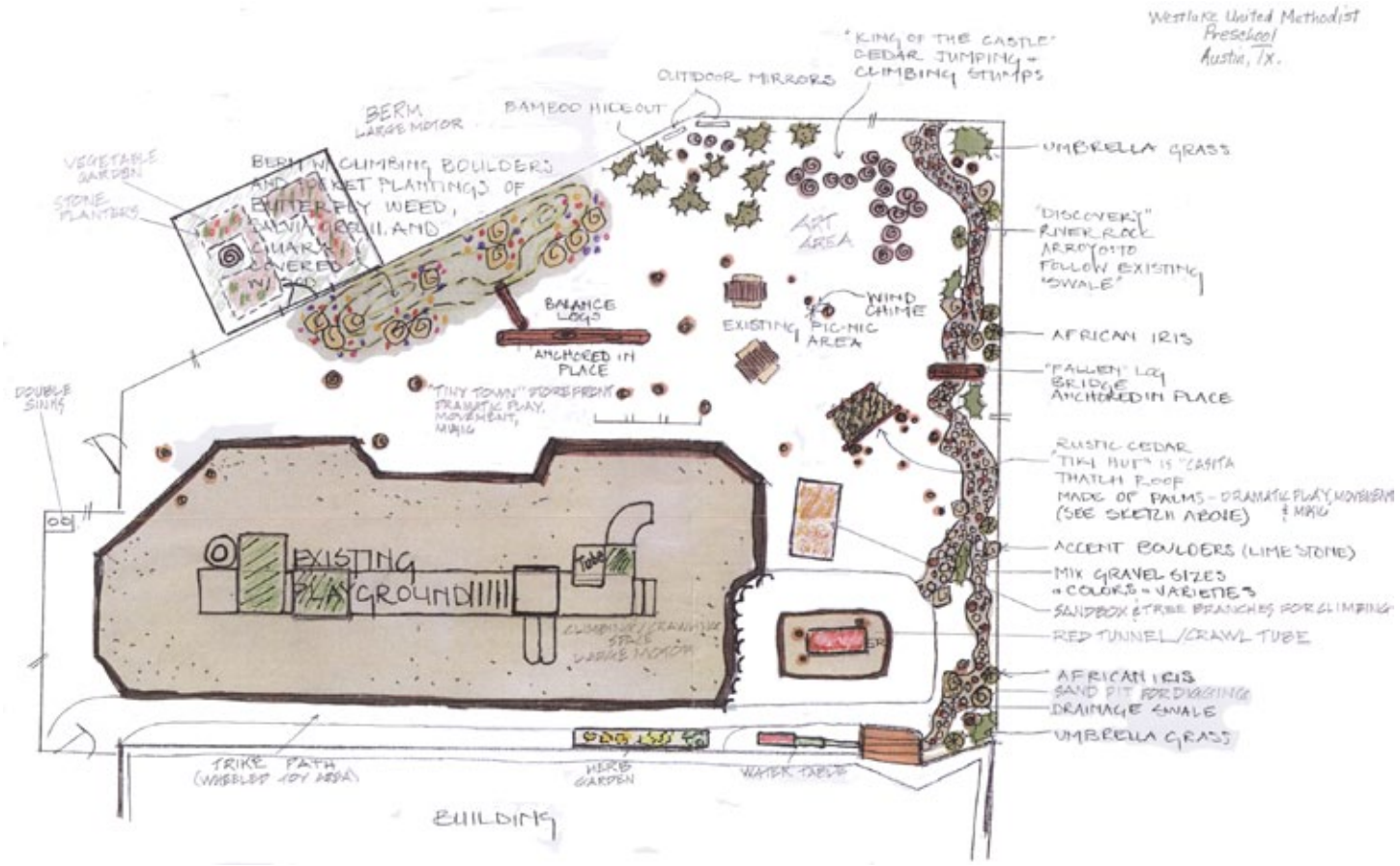
*Photos courtesy of BB International Preschool*

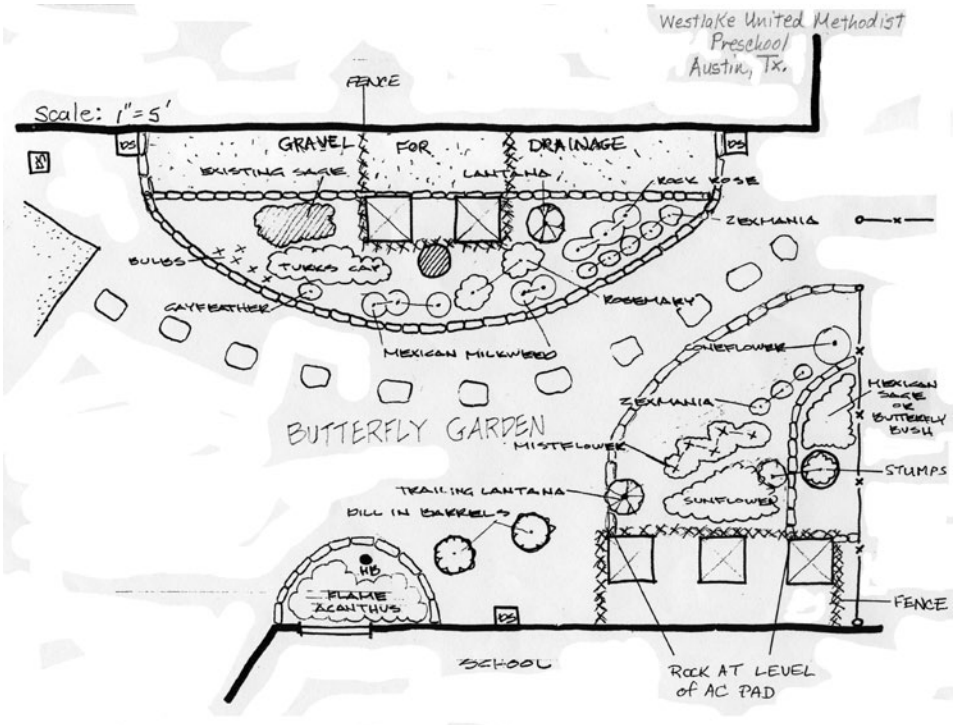
## Westlake United Methodist Preschool

Austin, Texas
Director: Sharon Coleman
scoleman@westlake-umc.org

This outdoor play space has evolved from an existing area to encompass more natural elements and incorporate inventive spaces. The existing play space contains the traditional large scale equipment of slides, parallel bars, ladders, platforms, a climbing wall, tires for climbing and a suspension bridge. As an addition to this area, the play scape has been expanded to include outdoor areas for art, water play, dramatic play and gross motor activities. These new areas are built around naturalistic components, many of which represent the geography and topography of the Austin area.

Reflecting the natural environment of Texas, **an arroyo** made of large rocks winds throughout the area and is ideal for climbing and balancing. There are also two log bridges, large stumps for balancing, and trees with low limbs for climbing.



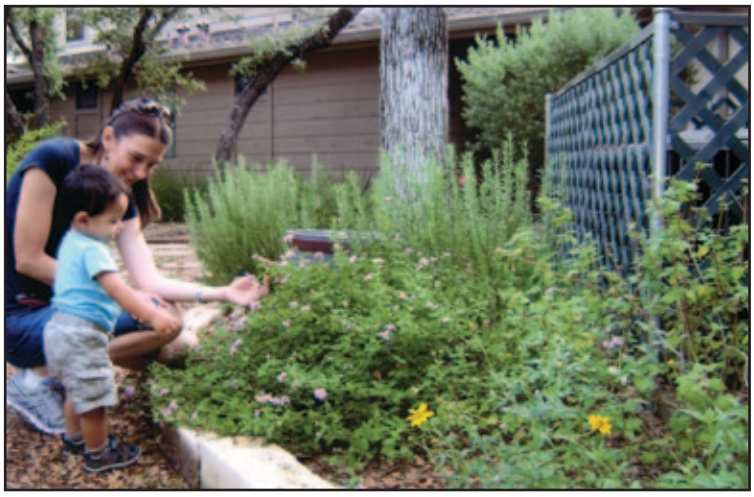



**What is an arroyo?** The Spanish name for a brook, it is a wash or dry creek bed that fills and flows with water after sufficient rain. It is found in drier climates and water flow is often a seasonal occurrence.

The **Art Area** moves and changes daily. There is a three sided easel for painting or other art media and an outdoor weaving frame.

**"Tiny Town" storefronts** are used by children as props for stores, homes and restaurants. A "**casita**" made of cedar logs is a place for children to engage in dramatic play or just relax and read. What the "casita" becomes on any given day is dependent upon the props that teachers make available to the children. For **music**, the area contains wind chimes, musical instruments and large stationary bamboo pipes.

**What is a casita?** A casita is the Spanish name for a small house and the term is used primarily throughout the Southwestern United States.



**Three distinct garden areas** are located within the larger space: an herb garden lies next to the trike path, an enclosed vegetable garden is planted and tended by the children, and a butterfly garden filled with native plants that attract butterflies and hummingbirds rounds out the garden areas.

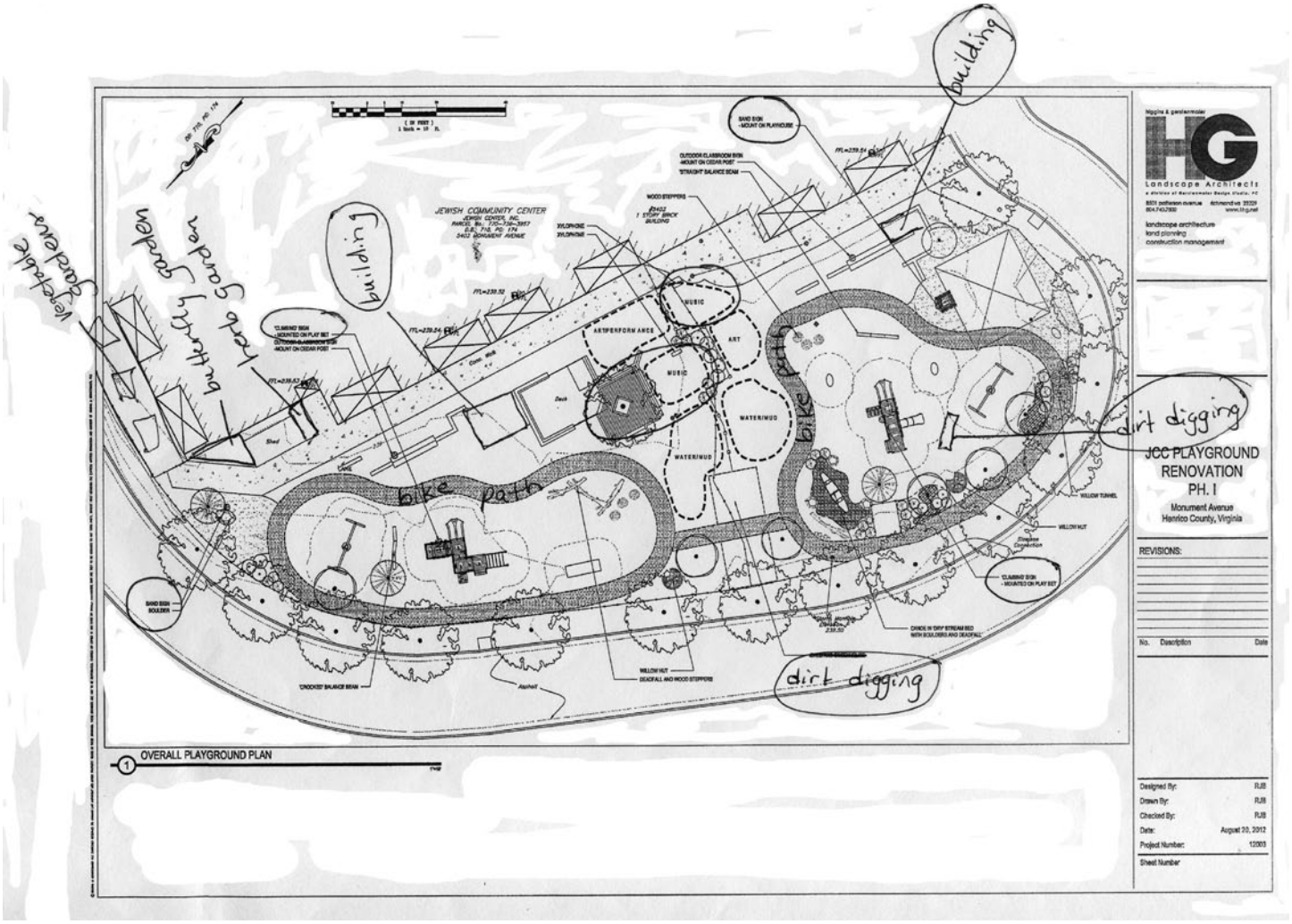
Not only do children learn many valuable science lessons as they watch seeds germinate, leaf, bear fruit, ad go to seed but the sensory experiences are so valuable.

Children dig in the soil when gardening, making a place for a seed or plant to grow. There is also a space filled with sand under the trees that provides additional "digging" opportunities.

**Water play** is available in a water table made of large PVC pipes that flow from one table to another, finally ending in a drain. A favorite activity is carrying water to a sand pit where rivers, dams and sand castles are constructed.

**Maintaining the outdoor area** involves both staff and children. In the morning before the children arrive, a designated staff member checks the outdoor area for damage, locked gates, any trash or debris and unlocks the storage areas. While the children are at school, they help to maintain the area by picking up and returning toys to the storage cabinets, returning rocks to the arroyo and helping to sweep sand from the sidewalks. Each afternoon a staff member checks the space to make sure that all materials have been returned to storage, sidewalks and steps are cleared, sandboxes are covered and art materials put away.

*Photos courtesy of Westlake Methodist Preschool*




## Dora L. Lewis Family & Child Development Center

Richmond, Virginia
Director: Donna Peters
dpeters@weinsteinjcc.org

This outdoor classroom consists of two separate areas: one for 2-year-olds and another for 3-5-year-olds. Each area contains the same "centers" except for the gardens which are used by all of the classes.

The **building area** is used for free play and exploration in small groups. It contains hard surfaces made of slate flagstones and a limestone wall where the children can build with natural tree blocks, tree cookies and miniature bricks as well as other natural elements such as rocks, pine cones and acorns. Building outside allows the children the freedom to take risks, experiment, collaborate, problem-solve and use their imaginations as they explore building without the constraints of space and noise often experienced indoors.

Children can experiment with making music and creative expression in the **music and movement area**. Each music and movement area contains a permanently installed all-weather marimba, wooden slap drums, and a variety of natural instruments from other cultures such as shakers, tambourines, and drums. Scarves encourage children to move and children are encouraged to make music and dance in unstructured ways, learning about sound, pitch, and rhythm. A nearby deck offers an open space for the children to stage performances or just to move freely.

This outdoor classroom also contains **three distinct garden areas:** vegetable, butterfly and herb. Additional planter boxes are located outside the classroom and children plant, cultivate, water, weed and harvest.

Used for free-play and exploration in small groups, the **dirt-digging area** provides a space for the children to dig directly in the dirt, bounded by a wooden perimeter. Using either small hand tools or large tools requiring whole body movement, the children experience the textures, smells and calming effects of dirt, as well as the excitement of uncovering and exploring a variety of insects.

The **sand area** provides a large, organic space for the children to experiment with the properties of sand and encourages group interaction. The children experience a different tactile experience working with the sand as opposed to dirt, surrounded by natural elements such as stump trees and galvanized metal buckets for digging and pouring.

Children and teachers together are responsible for **the care** of the outdoor classroom, with children assisting teachers and maintenance staff with cleaning decks and pathways as needed.

As we've explored these three very different classrooms, we hope you've come away with ideas that can translate to your outdoor space. All it requires is a little ingenuity, some manual labor and a willingness to "think outside of the box"!

If you decide to undertake an outdoor renovation or create a new classroom, we'd love to get photos and ideas from you that we can share with your colleagues throughout the SECA region. Just send them to Glenda Bean, Executive Director, at gbean@southernearlychildhood.org. Remember to get photo releases from any of the children that you feature….if you need assistance or information about how to submit these ideas, just call us at 1-800-305-7322.

Look for some great honorable mentions and specific project ideas from the Outdoor Classroom Contest in the fall 2013 issue of *Dimensions of Early Childhood*. We still have much to share!

# Supporting Literacy Development for Young Children through Home and School Connections

*How can teachers and families work effectively together to support young children's literacy development? Strengthen the family involvement role in programs by implementing these strategies.*

Sonia Michael

Early care and education professionals recognize the importance of parent involvement in a child's education. Indeed, it is becoming increasingly evident that children whose families are involved in their education are more successful in school (Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, & Weiss, 2006). Even before children come to school, the kinds of experiences provided at home can make a big difference in the level of success experienced by the child (Halle, Forry, Hair, Perper, Wandner, Wessel, & Vick, 2009; Justice, 2004).

Everyday routines such as trips to the grocery store or conversations at the dinner table begin to prepare children for the more formal literacy learning that typically occurs in school (Horn & Jones, 2005). Supportive communicative interactions beginning at birth and continuing throughout early childhood encourage language development, an important precursor to literacy development (Dickinson & Porche, 2011; Vukelich, Christie, & Enz, 2002). Reading to children, providing books and writing materials, and talking to children about letters and writing are all experiences that encourage the development of print awareness and the importance of written language (Roberts, 2008; Sénéchal, 2006). Playing rhyming games and singing songs and nursery rhymes with young children support the development of phonological awareness, which has also been documented as an important forerunner of literacy development (Horn & Jones, 2005; Snow, 2002).

What about children whose early experiences do not involve the types of interactions with language or print materials that are known to be supportive of literacy development? Does it make a difference what information and resources professionals share with families related to language and literacy development? Should instruction provided at school be the focus rather than being concerned with what happens at home?

## The Importance of the Home Literacy Environment

While the types of literacy experiences provided at school do make a difference in the way children learn and the kinds of attitudes they develop toward literacy and school (Snow, 2002), it is equally important to make certain that early care and education professionals are helping families and caregivers understand the significance of their role in each child's literacy development (Horn & Jones, 2005). Many times families want to do whatever they can to support their children but do not understand what types of experiences they should provide, or they may assume that their children are not ready for certain types of learning experiences (Barbarin, 2002). For example, families with young children may not be aware of the importance of such activities as reading books, telling stories, or singing songs with their children (Barbarin, 2002; Massetti & Bracken, 2010). For these families, the information provided by early care and education professionals can make a difference in their child's literacy development.

Children from homes with fewer material and educational resources as well as children who are African-

American, Latino/Hispanic, or Native American, or whose home language is other than English tend to enter kindergarten with lower reading and mathematics skills. Denton, Flanagan, & McPhee, 2009; Massetti & Bracken, 2010; Qi, Kaiser, Milan, & Hancock, 2006). These children also tend to have continued gaps in achievement throughout their school careers (Fryer & Levitt, 2006; Halle, et. al., 2009; Yeung & Conley, 2008). Much time and effort has gone into addressing the achievement gap, but engaging families and providing them with the support they need to supplement and extend their child's early development may be one of the most effective ways to address this gap.

Photo by Subjects and Predicates

*Families who read to their children frequently support literacy development. Early childhood professionals can help families to understand the importance of reading and other literacy activities by sharing strategies and ideas.*

**Family involvement supports children's greater success in school.**

In a study of kindergarten literacy practices, Michael (2010) examined the relationship between kindergarten instructional practices and student literacy outcomes in one school district. Classroom practices were measured using two standardized instruments, the Early Childhood Language and Literacy Classroom Observation Toolkit (ELLCO) (Smith, Dickinson, & Sangeorge, 2002) and the Assessment of Practices in Early Elementary Classrooms (APEEC) (Hemmeter, Maxwell, Ault, & Schuster, 2001). No association between the classroom practices measured with these instruments and kindergarten students' overall literacy achievement were identified. The factors identified by this study that most impacted literacy development were children's socioeconomic status and home literacy environment. While this finding is consistent with research that identifies socioeconomic status and home literacy practices as significant indicators of literacy development (Dearing, et. al., 2006; Halle, et. al, 2009; Matthews, Kizzie, Rowley, & Cortina, 2010) this study also suggests that students from lower socioeconomic conditions and students from homes reporting fewer literacy resources entered school with lower literacy abilities but showed more growth in literacy during the kindergarten year as measured by the district's literacy assessment system. In other words, students from upper and middle income backgrounds and homes with more literacy resources entered kindergarten with higher levels of literacy development but did not experience as much literacy growth over the kindergarten year as students from homes with fewer literacy resources. Thus, although no specific instructional practices measured by this study were identified as making a difference in student outcomes, this study nevertheless suggests that kindergarten teachers are implementing practices that positively impact literacy development.

This and other studies have suggested an association between family-school partnerships and literacy development (Dearing, et. al., 2006; Michael, 2010; Meier & Sullivan, 2004). Involving families by sharing reading strategies and sending home books for families to read with their children have been reported as successful literacy strategies (Michael, 2010; Meier & Sullivan, 2004). Additionally, family involvement as classroom volunteers, in social events such as PTO/PTA meetings or school book fairs, and participation in parent-teacher conferences appear to be positively associated with children's literacy development (Dearing et. al., 2006; Michael, 2010). Based on this information, it seems reasonable to assume that interactions between the home and the school are positively impacting the literacy development perhaps as much as the instruction that occurs within the classroom.

## Supporting Literacy at Home

So what can early care and education professionals do to increase the awareness of families related to supporting their child's literacy development? How can they provide literacy related resources to families that will help to improve their child's literacy outcomes?

Providing additional information and resources to parents may be the extra boost that is needed to support children's literacy development. Teachers and community organizations can work in partnership with parents to help them recognize the importance of language interactions with children as well as helping them understand ways to increase literacy interactions with their children. They can also help parents realize the importance of early access to literacy materials for their children as well as ensuring that families know how to access these materials.

As early care and education professionals seek to provide suggestions and resources to support families' awareness of each child's literacy development, they must keep in mind the importance of respectful interactions with families (Strickland, 2002). When reaching out to families, it is essential to acknowledge the role of the family's culture as well as challenges, time constraints, and other demands that families experience. In order to develop effective partnerships with families, professionals have an obligation to develop open and ongoing communication with families and to demonstrate a willingness to accept family input as it relates to their roles in each child's education and development (Barbarin, 2002).

***Positive interactions between home and school support literacy development.***

## Supporting Language Development

Possibly the most important information to share with families is the importance of talking with their children. Research suggests that children whose families have fewer resources tend to have much lower levels of language development by the time they are four years of age based on the nature of the home language environment (Hart & Risley, 1995; Hoff, 2003; Roberts, Jurgen, & Burchinal, 2005). We also know that oral language development is one of the early predictors of later reading ability and academic achievement (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008). Sharing with families the importance of language modeling and language interactions with their children can positively impact the amount and types of language children hear in the home (Landry, Smith, Swank, & Guttentag, 2008). These increased language interactions positively impact the child's language and literacy development (Dickinson & Porche, 2011).

When speaking with families about their interactions with children, there are specific activities that can be suggested while keeping in mind each family's particular circumstances. For some families, an excellent activity to support oral language development is looking at family photos and discussing the people, places, and things portrayed. As discussed in the vignette, this may not be a fitting suggestion for all families, as some families may not have the resources or time required for this activity. For some families, it may be more appropriate to suggest talking to children about favorite family activities, or sharing stories about family members. This type of activity can be accomplished while driving, preparing dinner, helping children prepare for bed, or other family routines. Other activities that support oral language development while encouraging supportive family-child interactions include pointing out familiar signs while driving, or talking about familiar sites along the road. Families might also name food items and read labels while cooking or shopping. Early care and education professionals should think about the resources, abilities, and time constraints of families and provide suggestions based on each family's particular needs.

During a home visit with Jacob's family, Annette had planned to emphasize the importance of looking at pictures with Jacob and talking about them to increase Jacob's oral language skills. During the visit, however, Jacob's mother repeatedly mentioned how busy the family was with the parents working different shifts and the necessity of driving the older children to various activities. It became clear to Annette that Jacob's family had very little time to devote to individualized interactions and to make this suggestion would cause more stress for the family. As a result, Annette spoke instead about how the family could integrate language activities into routines such as time in the car, bath time, and bedtime. She recommended several songs and games the family could use and even provided the family with a compact disc of children's songs to use in the car. Jacob's mother was extremely pleased with the suggestion and was happy there was a way to support Jacob's development while meeting the needs of her entire family.

The Center for Early Literacy Learning has developed materials specifically for families of young children that emphasize the development of literacy. Among these are several booklets related to supporting language development for infants, toddlers, and preschool aged children. The booklets provide suggestions for activities that families can use with their children and are all available free of charge. Early care and education professionals can provide these resources to families as print materials through regular interactions such as parent meetings or home visits. See Table 1 for a list of these materials.

## Providing Encouragement for Reading

Another way to support families in promoting the literacy development of their children is to emphasize the importance of reading with children early and often. Families living in lower socioeconomic conditions are less likely to read with their preschooler than are families with more resources (Whitehurst & Storch, 2002). Thus, it is important that all families understand the importance of sharing books and literacy experiences with their children.

Again, it is important to consider each family's circumstances when making suggestions, but there are several activities that early care and education professionals can suggest while keeping each family's particular needs and resources in mind. Sharing picture books and reading stories with children is always an excellent activity to support literacy development, however, families should never be made to feel obligated to read to their children if they have time constraints or other limitations. Reading with children should be enjoyable rather than forced. For some families, it may be more appropriate to emphasize the importance of having print materials such as newspapers, magazines, and catalogs available in the home. As in the vignette, some families may not have the ability to read fluently and may feel that reading is something they cannot successfully carry out with their child. For families like Carrie's, catalogs are an excellent literacy source. Catalogs are an especially inexpensive and accessible item, and can provide opportunities for families to discuss new words with children and talk about the beginning sounds of words. Families might also read food labels to children while cooking, recite nursery rhymes during routine activities such as bathing, and provide alphabet

Leslie was preparing for a conference with Carrie's parents. In previous interactions with Carrie's family, Leslie had noticed Carrie's parents limited literacy abilities. While Leslie wanted to encourage literacy interactions in the home, she was aware that sharing an expectation to read to Carrie would cause her parents to avoid interactions with the school because of their inability to carry through with this expectation. As Lesley prepared for the conference, she decided to gather several catalogs to share with the family. She planned to demonstrate for them how the catalogs could be used as a literacy experience.

At the conference, Leslie demonstrated the use of the catalogs. She pointed out items in the catalog and encouraged Carrie to talk about what they could do with the item. She also pointed out the words that described each item and pointed out several letters in the words. Leslie then asked Carrie's parents if they would like to try this activity. Carrie's parents took over and began talking about items in the catalog and pointing to letters. Leslie gave the catalogs to Carrie's parents to take home and encouraged them to use catalogs that arrived in the mail at their home in the same manner.

## Table 1. Language and Literacy Materials from the Center for Early Literacy Learning

| Website | Materials Available |
|---|---|
| http://www.earlyliteracylearning.org/pgparents.php | Infant Practice Guides for families that address: Literacy Learning Experiences, Stories and Listening, Scribbling and Drawing, Rhymes and Sound Awareness, Vocalizing and Listening, and Gestures and Signing |
| http://www.earlyliteracylearning.org/pgparents.php | Toddler Practice Guides for families that address: Literacy Learning Experiences, Symbols and Letters, Storytelling and Listening, Scribbling and Drawing, Rhymes and Sound Awareness, Talking and Listening, and Gestures and Signing |
| http://www.earlyliteracylearning.org/pgparents.php | Preschool Practice Guides for families that address: Literacy Learning Experiences, Letters and Spelling, Reading and Storytelling, Drawing and Writing, Rhymes and Sound Awareness, Talking and Listening, and Signing |

magnets or blocks for children to play with while family members are busy with household chores.

Sharing materials with families that promote the importance of literacy experiences and discussing the significance of the information provided in the materials is a technique that early childhood professionals can use in their efforts to support families. Many materials have been specifically developed to emphasize the importance of reading with children and are available at no cost. These materials include the Shining Stars series as well as other print materials in electronic format developed by the National Institute for Literacy to provide families with information related to reading with their children. The U.S. Department of Education has developed materials, also available at no cost, that support family and school partnerships in the development of literacy and general school success. The Reading Rockets and Get Ready to Read websites also provide downloadable materials for families including home literacy checklists and tips for reading with children, many of which are available in multiple languages. Early care and education professionals may choose to provide print copies of these materials as many families may not have access to the necessary technology to obtain the materials on their own. See Table 2 for information about how to access these materials.

## Table 2. Literacy Materials for Families

| Website | Materials Available |
|---|---|
| http://lincs.ed.gov/publications/publications.html | This site includes a list of publications for parents to use for teaching their children how to read. It also provides a link to each specific publication. Listed below are the publications available on this website:<br>• Literacy Begins At Home: Teach Them To Read (PDF File Only)<br>• Shining Stars: Toddlers Get Ready To Read<br>• Shining Stars: Preschoolers Get Ready To Read<br>• Shining Stars: Kindergarteners Learn To Read<br>• Shining Stars: First Graders Learn To Read<br>• Shining Stars: Second and Third Graders Learn To Read<br>• A Child Becomes A Reader: Birth through Preschool<br>• A Child Becomes A Reader: Kindergarten through Grade 3<br>• Big Dreams: A Family Book About Reading<br>• Dad's Playbook: Coaching Kids To Read<br>• Put Reading First |
| http://www.getreadytoread.org | The Get Ready to Read website has excellent materials for parents including a home literacy checklist and an early literacy screening tool available in English, Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, and Korean. There are also suggested activities for parents to help with early literacy development as well as online games. |
| http://www.readingrockets.org/audience/parents | The Reading Rockets website has excellent downloadable handouts for families including *Parent Tips: Reading with Your Child* which is available in 11 different languages. There are also downloadable files that you can use to create family literacy bags complete with a letter to the family and activity handouts. You just have to add the books. |
| http://www2.ed.gov/parents | The US Department of Education publishes several helpful materials for parents related to partnering with schools and helping children succeed. Booklets can be downloaded in pdf format or ordered in hard copy from the website. |

Photo by Elisabeth Nichols

*Welcoming families into the early childhood classroom on a regular basis fosters a sense of partnership between family and teacher.*

## Expanding Access to Literacy Materials

Access to literacy materials such as books, crayons, pencils, and paper is another factor that influences literacy development in young children. Access to materials is highly impacted by a family's socioeconomic status (Whitehurst & Storch, 2002). It is important that early care and educational professionals identify community resources that can be used to provide these materials to families. Donations from area businesses are one way to provide resources to families. Identifying businesses and organizations that provide free materials to schools and families will help get materials to children in need of this type of support.

Encouraging families to access the public library is an effective way to increase young children's exposure to books and literacy materials and experiences. A class field trip to the local public library branch is one method of increasing a family member's comfort level with the library and of introducing them to the vast array of resources available there (Michael, 2010). During the field trip, families and children can sign up for a library card if they do not have one and begin borrowing literacy materials of interest to them.

Very often, health fairs and summer community programs are offered at no cost. Locating these programs and ensuring that families are aware of them can greatly increase a family's ability to provide experiences for their children. For example, public libraries offer summer reading programs and activities developed to encourage families to participate in using library resources. Additionally, schools often team up with community organizations to provide community health fairs that provide resources such as free books, toys, and other materials for participants. By gathering information about available community programs and making this information available to families, early childhood professionals can enhance a child's access to materials and experiences.

## Making Home-School Connections

Positive interactions between families and schools increase children's success in school settings and support ongoing family involvement in the child's education (Colombo, 2004; Galindo & Sheldon, 2012). Connections between the home and school environment, including communication between the two settings, positively impacts the child's development and educational success (Galindo & Sheldon, 2012). Finding ways to connect literacy activities at home and at school are an important part of each child's ongoing literacy development. Making connections between the home and school requires early care and education professionals to become familiar with each family's strengths and resources. While schools can and should provide outreach and educational opportunities for families related to their child's learning and development, it is also important to listen to families and incorporate family suggestions into the early care and education setting when possible (Colombo, 2004; Strickland, 2002).

***Initiate respectful interactions with families.***

School related family nights are one method of reaching out to families to provide connections between the home and school. Through functions at the school, families can learn new ways to interact with their children related to literacy, and educators can learn more about families as they observe the interactions that occur between children and family

members (Colombo, 2004; Michael 2010). One way to provide this type of interaction is through a family literacy night. During such an event, school personnel can model literacy interactions that typically occur in the school setting including storybook reading and dialogic reading techniques, and explain the importance of these types of activities. Guest speakers may also be invited to address concerns of families and to provide additional resources (Galindo & Sheldon, 2012; Strickland, 2002).

It is also important to incorporate the kinds of literacy practices that children experience at home into the school setting. These types of experiences are generally more functional and include activities such as making grocery lists, sorting coupons, paying bills, and reading newspapers or other materials (Colombo, 2004). Early care and education professionals can incorporate activities into dramatic play or library areas in the classroom to help children make the connection between home and school literacy activities.

Other methods for developing connections between the home and school include sending weekly newsletters to families with songs and activities of the week, and asking families to come into the classroom to share songs they like to sing with their children. Sending home theme related literacy bags with activities and books for families to enjoy with their children is another excellent method for supporting literacy development and connecting with families (Horn & Jones, 2005). Several exceptional suggestions and materials related to developing literacy bags are available on the Reading Rockets website provided in Table 2.

## Summary

In summary, it is imperative that early childhood professionals recognize the importance of family involvement in the role of early literacy development. We know that socioeconomic status, home language, home literacy environment, and family awareness of appropriate early language and literacy interactions with their children all play a major role in each child's literacy development and school achievement (Halle, et al, 2009). As early care and education professionals, it is critical to identify ways that make materials and experiences available to families. It is equally important to identify ways to help families understand how important their role is in the academic success of their children.

By making connections between the home and the school, we can support young children's literacy development and academic success. We must ensure that we are respectfully approaching families in our efforts to encourage their use of materials available in the community while helping them to understand their important role in the development of young children.

Photo by Elisabeth Nichols

*It's not just the classroom experiences that make a difference. A family's everyday routine, such as trips to the grocery store, can offer enriching experiences and support language development.*

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Photo by Elisabeth Nichols

*When reaching out to parents, make sure to acknowledge the role of the family's culture as well as challenges, time constraints and other demands.*

## About the Authors

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# Extend These Ideas With a Professional Book

## Connect Multicultural Partnerships With a Professional Book

Martha C. Nicholson

### *Multicultural Partnerships: Involve All Families*

**Darcy J. Hutchins, Marsha D. Greenfeld, Joyce L. Epstein, Mavis G. Sanders, and Claudia L. Galindo. 2012. 160 pp. $29.95. Larchmont, NY: Eye On Education**

The five co-authors work with the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) at Johns Hopkins University whose mission is to "develop goal-oriented programs of family involvement, parental engagement and community connections within schools." Although focused on elementary and middle school settings, the book will be helpful for those looking for strategies to increase parent involvement, to welcome all families, and to respect different language ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The activities are based on well documented research principles, but most activities will take some adaptation to be appropriate for young children in child care and preschool settings.

As a step-by-step guide for schools to increase the involvement of all parents, including immigrant and refugee parents, in their children's education, the majority of the book is devoted to practical ideas and activities, although there is a concise and easy to understand summary of research findings. Activities are divided into three sections:

- Multicultural Family Nights
- Workshops for Parents
- Curriculum Connections

**Multicultural Family Nights** includes ways to explore the word through the arts, games from around the world, and a celebration of nations to highlight the diversity of cultures in the school or community.

The **Workshops for Parents** section features three different types of workshops: 1) a forum where parents contribute ideas for school improvement, 2) a workshop series to build parent knowledge about topics such as school policies or child development, and 3) workshops that do not actually require parents to come to the school building.

**Curriculum Connections** offers activities that begin in the classroom and then extend learning by connecting it to family and community. One example is Literacy Bags to help families read with children at home.

The book includes reproducible handouts in both English and Spanish. These are also available online for a free download. The Spanish translations are well done with simple, grammatical language.

The authors value, understand and respect diversity, but some of the suggested activities may be criticized as a "tourism" approach to culture for featuring surface aspects such as food, music, art, and games.

**Martha C. Nicholson, B.A.,** Parent Services Manager, Oklahoma Child Care Resource and Referral Association, Oklahoma City, OK

# In Memory of

## Ramona Ware Emmons Paul
## SECA President 1967-1968

Dr. Paul passed away unexpectedly on June 30, 2013 while vacationing in Wyoming with her husband, Homer. Her beauty, elegance, commitment in her work for young children and growing young professionals will be truly missed by all those who knew her.

A true "legend" in Oklahoma, Dr. Paul played a key role in creating a nationally recognized early childhood program in that state. (Oklahoma ranks #1 in access for children in pre-K according to the National Institute for Early Education Research). Drawing on her experience as an educator, Ramona developed the state's prekindergarten curriculum in the early 1980's and served as assistant state schools superintendent from 1991 until her retirement in 2011. Named Oklahoman of the Year by *Oklahoma Today* magazine in 2009, she was the first educator and state employee chosen for the award.

She served as President of the Southern Early Childhood Association in 1967 and 1968 and remained a dedicated member of the SECA Fossils, an organization of past SECA Board members.

*"I have known Ramona for 50 years. She was my professor at Texas Woman's University, my mentor and my friend. She took me to my first SECA conference in 1963 in Norman, OK and it was at that conference that I sat at the feet of Helen Harley, talking about young children and the role of SECA (SACUS). I became a member of SACUS (SECA) that year.*

*She loved simple toys for young children and knew the importance of unit blocks in a child's play. Her approach to pre-K was as simple as the wooden blocks she loved…."Make prekindergarten a fundamental part of Oklahoma's common education culture….Hire education professionals trained to work with young children….Offer early education voluntarily to all children, regardless of socioeconomic issues." Her unwavering support over the years, our lunches and long talks about life, family and the early childhood field will be deeply missed. All who worked with Ramona were enriched and grew as professionals."* Ruth Ann Ball of Oklahoma, former SECA Vice-President and 2002 SECA Outstanding Member

Dr. Ann O'Bar (SECA President 1981-1982) and Dr. Janie Humphries (SECA President 2010-2011) also shared their love and respect for Ramona. Ann remembers working with Gerdie Ware, Ramona's mother, while both were involved with Head Start training…obviously, the love of early childhood education was passed down from mother to daughter.

For Janie, Ramona was Dr. Emmons, one of her instructors at Texas Women's University in Denton. Janie remembers her as a *"young and very inspiring professor who helped me understand the importance of working with families and understanding child development when teaching early childhood education. Her knowledge of child development was remarkable and appeared to be something that she naturally knew. She was a great role model."*

For a more extensive look at Ramona's career, you can find the 2009 article in *Oklahoma Today* at http://www.oklahomatoday.com. Memorials may be sent to the Oklahoma WONDERtorium which features a play area named "Ramona Paul's Block Party", the Oklahoma State University Foundation or the Southern Early Childhood Association.

# In Memory of

**Isabell Powell**, daughter of Landon and Ally Powell and granddaughter of Donna Davies, South Carolina Center for Child Care Career Development.

*"Little Izzy spent only four short months with her mom, dad, brother, twin sister and grandparents. She was wise beyond her months and joyful despite her pain. She will be missed and never forgotten. Her lessons in bravery will linger forever with those whose life she touched."*
Dr. Pam Schiller

**Memorials**

Isabel Powell, granddaughter of Donna Davies, by Dr. Pam Schiller

Ruth Edna McLaine, mother of Sandra Hackley, by the South Carolina Early Childhood Association

Sam Prince, father of Cindy Galloway, by the South Carolina Early Childhood Association

Dr. Ramona Paul by Dr. Milly Cowles & Dr. Janie Humphries

Marianne Leonard, mother of Mary Jamsek, by Dr. Janie Humphries

## Looking for more resources? Check out SECA online!

Go to **www.southernearlychildhood.org** to find:

- SECA publications, like *Dimensions Extra* and the *SECA Reporter*
- Information on the SECA conference, its exhibitors, speakers, location, how to get there, and how to register
- Up to date information on public policy; Find out where SECA stands with position statements and stay in the know with policy briefs
- Access to a variety of resources and publications available for sale through the SECA store

**Don't miss out on this treasure trove of resources! Visit SECA's website today!**

# Are You Our Next SECA President?

It's time again to select our candidates for SECA President for a term beginning in 2015. The winning candidate will assume office as President-Elect in 2015, serve as President in 2016-2017, and end their tenure on the Board as Immediate Past-President in 2018.

Nancy Cheshire is completing her term as President in 2013 and will assume the office of Immediate Past-President in 2014. Kathy Attaway, currently our President-Elect, will assume the office of President in 2014.

According to SECA Election Policies, nominations may be made in the following ways:

- By state or local affiliates.
- By individuals who are SECA members.
- By individuals who are SECA members and wish to self-nominate.

The **SECA Nominating Committee** will interview all nominees for the position prior to the 2014 annual conference in Williamsburg, Virginia on January 16-18, 2014. This year, the SECA Nominating Committee will be composed of representatives of the following states: Texas, Oklahoma, Virginia, Georgia, West Virginia, Tennessee and Arkansas. State affiliate presidents have been asked by President Cheshire to appoint their state's representatives.

*President Nancy Cheshire 2012-2013*

**Persons who wish to submit for consideration by the Nominating Committee should send the following to the SECA office by October 1, 2013.**

- A letter of interest stating their qualifications and rationale for submitting for consideration.
- A resume or professional vita.

*Kathy Attaway, President- Elect 2013*

For more information about SECA Election policies and procedures, go to http://www.southernearlychildhood.org/leadership_pdf.php#policies. You will find the Election Policies located on pages 35-36 of the Policies and Procedures Manual. For information on the Nominating Committee, go to page 27 of the Manual.

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