



DIMENSIONS

of Early Childhood

Volume 42, Number 2, 2014



Sharing Time as Culturally
Relevant Teaching

◦

Vocabulary Development using
Visual Displays

◦

Encouraging Healthy Eating
Behaviors in Toddlers

◦

Using the Art of Jasper Johns
to Teach Number Concepts

Join us in New Orleans for These Exciting Professional Development Opportunities

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The World From Our Front Porch: Community and Culture

CLASS: Instructional Support Strategies Wednesday/January 14, 2015



We are pleased to announce that SECA has partnered with Teachstone to provide this special pre-conference session as one of the training opportunities available through our 66nd annual conference. This 1-day program teaches education managers, coaches, and mentors research-based strategies they can use with teachers to boost Instructional Support.

Teachstone is offering a registration discount to participants and SECA will allow CLASS registrants to register for the annual conference at the SECA member rate. For more information on how to register for this special pre-conference session, go to http://www.southernearlychildhood.org/seca_conference.php

Thursday/January 15, 2015

The 2015 SECA Trainers' Institute *Make Learning Stick! Using the 4 M Strategy for Engaging Adult Learners*

Constant Hine

Participants will deepen and broaden their understanding of using a systematic approach to engage adult learners based on Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences and strategies based on Constant Hine's 4M's of Adult Learning (Magnetic, Meaningful, Memorable and Mobilizing) to get your message to stick.

Constant Hine lives in Denver, Colorado and is an early childhood consultant, adult educator, coach, and author with a M.A. in Education. Constant is known as a coach's coach, broadening and deepening the skills and mastery of coaches and mentors.



2015 Director's Seminar *Developing the Successful Team: Supporting Diversity for Staff and Parents*

Daniel Hodgins

The 2015 Seminar is focused on our theme, *The World From Our Front Porch: Community and Culture*. As directors, you're dealing not only with new cultural norms among many of your staff, you're also encountering these same issues with the parents of children you serve.

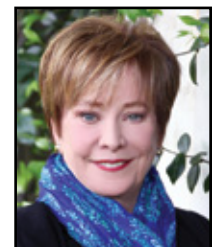
Daniel Hodgins is an internationally recognized presenter and author of two books titled: *Boys: Changing the Classroom, Not the Child* and his new book: *GET OVER IT: Relearning Guidance Practices*. His work has been featured in national publications including, *International Cooperative Nursery* and *Early Childhood News*.



Featured Session *Creating Amazing Environments That Will Inspire Learning and Literacy in the Early Childhood Classroom*

The environment in which young children live has a tremendous impact on their development. This session will focus on ways to design and implement classroom spaces that match children's way of knowing and help them reach their potential. It will include many practical ways to inspire communication and literacy learning that will engage children in meaningful experiences.

Dr. Rebecca Isbell was the Director of the Center of Excellence in Early Childhood Learning and Development and Professor of Early Childhood Education at East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN and is an Early Childhood Consultant and Author.



For information on how to register for the SECA conference, the Directors' Seminar or the Trainer Institute, go to http://www.southernearlychildhood.org/seca_conference_registration.php

See you in New Orleans!

Southern Early Childhood Association

Editor - Mari Cortez

Cover photo courtesy of Jennifer and Phil Salter

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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President's Message

Kathy Attaway

Hello everyone and happy summer.

As the season changes, plans for summer vacations and summer breaks begin to develop. Life becomes consumed with changes. Let's take a moment to reflect upon how much one simple change disrupts life and how one simple transition can completely change a learning experience. Teaching in a preschool classroom every day is a great reminder of just how change feels to the young child.

As adults we can accommodate change. Reflect on on changes helps to adjust feelings and attitudes when needed. Young children have not yet accumulated the tools necessary to take on change as quickly as the adults in their world. It takes TIME to accumulate those tools. Consequently, children feel frustrated when they are not given the TIME to complete a project or exploration.

TIME is crucial in the task of accumulating the tools that help to accommodate change. TIME is necessary to young children's learning in so many ways. It is essential that we consider TIME in all that we do with young children.

Take a moment to reflect on how many changes young children endure in the course of one day. In a typical classroom schedule there are at least five transitions/changes in a three hour time period. Double that number if you are working in a full day program. Sometimes moving young children from one activity to another is not as important as allowing TIME for them to finish or completely explore the activity that they are involved in. Endeavors to expose children to many different experiences sometimes gets in the way of allowing them to thoroughly discover what is right in front of them. Exploring and experimenting is how young children learn and they need TIME to do just that. When asked to stop what they are involved in, the experience changes drastically. The thought process is broken and exploration is stilted.

Being fed a new diance every twenty to thirty minutes may not be as productive as allowing for longer exploration and experimentation. Children deserve the TIME to play and explore and, yes, perhaps even get bored. In young children this is the time to expand their minds and stretch their thinking.

"Children learn best by playing" should be revised to say that children learn best when they have TIME to play. Teaching is not just feeding facts to young minds. Play should be the teacher and adults should be the facilitators. Given a rich environment in which to learn along with the TIME they need to discover, children will own their knowledge and thirst for more.

Consider giving the young children in your life the gift of TIME this summer to explore, create, experiment and experience the world as they see it.



Words from the Editor

Dr. Mari Cortez

I hope that everyone is enjoying summer time! As we travel places and spend time with our families, it is a perfect time to read *Dimensions* and get ready for the new school year. In this July issue authors provide very interesting suggestions for young children, including toddlers. If you ever had issues with motivating young toddlers to eat their food, authors Brawley and Henk provide excellent examples and suggestions to ensure that young children not only eat their food, but also develop healthy eating habits. As adults we must be good role models for children in all areas including

healthy eating habits. Similarly, social and emotional health is just as important for all young children, particularly those who are from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Bauml and Mongan tell us that sharing time or circle time is a good strategy to use with children to share cultural experiences with one another. Another excellent strategy included in this issue is the use of art to teach math concepts. Robin Ward shows us how she uses the art of Jasper Johns to get preschoolers motivated to practice number concepts. Finally, Ellen McKenzie provides a variety of examples of how the use of visual displays can help promote vocabulary development for young children.

I hope you enjoy this summer issue of *Dimensions* and we welcome you to submit new manuscripts to our journal.

Mari Riojas-Cortez, Ph.D.

Editor

Palabras del Editor:

¡Espero que todo el mundo esté disfrutando de este verano! Mientras viajamos y pasamos tiempo con nuestras familias, podemos leer *Dimensions* y así prepararse para el nuevo año escolar. En esta edición de julio los autores proporcionan sugerencias muy interesantes para los niños pequeños, incluyendo a los párvulos. Si alguna vez tuvo problemas para motivar a los niños pequeños a comer su comida, los autores Brawley y Henk proporcionan excelentes ejemplos y sugerencias para asegurar que los niños pequeños no sólo coman su comida, sino también desarrollen hábitos alimenticios saludables. Como adultos debemos ser buen ejemplo para los niños en todas las áreas del desarrollo, incluyendo los hábitos de alimentación saludables. Del mismo modo, la salud social y emocional es tan importante para todos los niños pequeños, especialmente aquellos que son de diferentes orígenes culturales y lingüísticos. Bauml y Mongan nos dicen que el tiempo de compartir o la hora del círculo es una buena estrategia para utilizar con los niños ya que pueden compartir sus experiencias culturales con otros. Otra excelente estrategia incluida en esta edición es el uso del arte para enseñar conceptos matemáticos. Robin Ward, nos demuestra cómo se utiliza el arte de Jasper Johns para motivar a los preescolares a practicar conceptos numéricos. Finalmente, Ellen McKenzie ofrece una variedad de ejemplos de cómo el uso de representaciones visuales puede ayudar a promover el desarrollo de vocabulario para los niños pequeños.

Espero que disfruten esta edición de verano de *Dimensions* y le invitamos a que envíe nuevos manuscritos a nuestra revista.

Mari Riojas-Cortez, Ph.D.

Editor

Getting to Know You: Sharing Time as Culturally Relevant Teaching

Culturally Relevant Teaching—Learn how to incorporate it into your classroom.

**Michelle Bauml and
Katherine Mongan**

For many children in Pre-kindergarten (PK) and Kindergarten, school is the first time during which they interact with others who have different cultural backgrounds. In early childhood settings, children encounter classmates who may look, speak, and behave differently than they do. These encounters with others who appear to them to be different can lead to acceptance or exclusion behaviors. Such behaviors may be attributed to a number of factors, such as individual dispositions, lack of familiarity, racial preferences that reflect societal discrimination, and the media (Ramsey, 2006).

**Culturally relevant
teaching makes
connections
between children's
school, home and
community.**

Early childhood educators have a responsibility to foster healthy relationships as well as appreciation and acceptance for diversity through culturally relevant teaching in their classrooms. Culturally relevant teaching, a term that has been written about extensively (e.g., Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Nieto, 2010) involves intentionally making connections between children's school, home, and community by "integrating cultural experiences, values, and understandings into the teaching and learning environment" (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011, p. 67).

In the majority of PK and kinder classrooms, sharing time is one of many events during the day in which children purposely or spontaneously reveal nuances of their individual cultural backgrounds. The decision to include sharing time in the daily schedule is therefore one way to engage in culturally relevant teaching. When effectively employed, sharing time can provide children with opportunities to explore in sensitive and meaningful ways the uniqueness of themselves and others. In doing so, children can gain cultural knowledge and understanding, which can lead to valuable social and academic skills and most importantly to acceptance and value of others. Thus, sharing time in early childhood classrooms allows for culturally sensitive teaching.

Each Child in a Classroom is Unique

All children bring unique cultural and linguistic backgrounds. It is important for teachers to understand the definition of culture so that they can develop ways to incorporate culture in the classroom particularly in their teaching. *Culture*, as defined by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) position statement includes, "customary beliefs and patterns of behavior, both explicit and implicit, that are inculcated by the society or by a social, religious, or ethnic group within the society," (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009, p. 13). Such definition has a tremendous influence on children's thoughts, actions, and ways of being and influences children's behaviors and interactions within classrooms.

Teaching children to view cultural diversity as an asset is crucial in today's increasingly multicultural society. Children in the same class may speak different languages, celebrate different religious holidays, and enjoy different kinds of foods. Even in classes where children



Photo by Elisabeth Nichols

A prekindergarten classroom may be the first time that children interact with others from different cultural backgrounds.

share similar ethnicity, race, and/or language(s), variations in background experiences and family expectations exist. For example, gender expectations may vary from family to family in terms of the types of toys children are encouraged to explore, such as dolls for girls and trucks for boys. Value systems may also differ among families. In some families, developing a sense of independence at a young age is desirable, while with other families, dependence on others is favored (Gonzalez-Mena, 2008).

According to NAEYC's position statement on developmentally appropriate practice, "As children grow up, they need to learn to function well in the society and in the increasingly global economy and to move comfortably among groups of people from backgrounds both similar and dissimilar to their own" (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009, p. 13-14). Early childhood teachers play a key role in children's development along these lines.

Culturally Relevant Teaching in Early Childhood

Culturally relevant teaching is a way of deliberately capitalizing on students' individual and cultural differences to promote learning (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Teaching practices that demonstrate respect and appreciation for culture and background experiences are significant catalysts for academic learning (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Menchaca, 2001). These practices require that teachers possess certain capabilities, including the following:

- Viewing cultural differences as assets
- Creating caring learning communities where individual differences and cultural diversity are valued
- Using cultural knowledge of ethnically diverse cultures, families, and communities to guide curriculum development, group dynamics, instructional

strategies, and relationships with students (Gay, 2010, p. 31).

Early childhood educators who view cultural diversity in a positive and accepting manner through their words, actions, and expectations are more likely to instill a sense of pride in their students' cultures than teachers who fail to acknowledge culture's role in children's social development and cultural understanding.

Teaching children to value themselves and their classmates as unique individuals begins with an understanding of the significance of individual family life and culture. In its position statement, "Valuing Diversity for Young Children," the Southern Early Childhood Association notes that early childhood educators who value diversity express their appreciation and respect through their interactions with children and in the curricular and instructional materials they use (McClain, ND). For example, classroom displays, books and read-aloud selections, and pretend play props such as household items in the home-living center should represent diverse families and cultures.

Effective early childhood teachers understand the importance of establishing caring learning environments for children (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). This is a key element of culturally relevant teaching. Caring teachers not only expect academic, social, and emotional growth in each of their students regardless of race, class, gender, or other types of diversity; they also support this growth through committed, creative, intentional ways. Caring teachers consider how family life and children's background experiences influence behavior in order to support learning in ways that build on what young children are coming to know

and understand about themselves, their families, and other children in their class. These teachers also seek opportunities to strengthen their knowledge of ethnic and cultural diversity, and they reflect on ways culture influences their teaching (Gay, 2010).

Capitalize on children's differences to promote learning.

Teachers who apply culturally relevant pedagogy “[use] the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (Gay, 2010, p. 31). Rather than adopting a “one size fits all” ap-

proach to instruction, these teachers intentionally seek to capitalize on their students' diversity as a medium for learning. For example, teachers might invite families to become active participants in the learning environment by sharing stories, experiences, and songs, and activities that represent their cultural and linguistic backgrounds (NAEYC, 1995).

Culturally relevant pedagogy can be implemented in early childhood classrooms in numerous ways. Small and large group sharing time can provide both deliberate and spontaneous opportunities to guide diversity learning among the children. Sensitive interactions and discussions during sharing time can support and promote children's individuality and diversity.

Time to Share

In a survey of nearly 400 teachers (Kindergarten through grade 2),

Robyn Ann Cusworth (1995) found that most teachers incorporate some form of sharing time into their daily practices. The age-old form of sharing time, traditionally referred to as “show and tell,” involves individual students talking to the whole class about an object or event relevant to their personal lives. Over the years, other forms of sharing time have evolved, such as think-pair-share conversations with a classmate, small group sharing, one-on-one sharing between teacher and student, and using message boards and digital albums as part of the sharing experience (Fantozzi, 2012; Martinez, Laster, & Conte, 2010). Topics may include personal items or events, classroom and playground experiences, imaginative story telling, and any number of other subjects. Teachers have historically used sharing time in a variety of ways and in all grades.



Photo by Subjects and Predicates

Children's books can be an excellent catalyst for promoting culturally relevant dialogue.

Benefits

Scholars have documented various benefits of sharing time in classrooms with young children. For example, because sharing time engages listening and talking, it is a language-based endeavor. Thus, it promotes language and literacy learning for both speakers and audience members (Blank, 2012; Cusworth, 1995; Martinez et al., 2010). Karen Gallas (1994) described a first grader in her classroom who “could hardly talk” (p. 20) when she enrolled, whose listening and speaking participation during whole group sharing time contributed to significant growth in verbal skills over the course of a few months. This student’s early participation during sharing time was characterized by long pauses, “unintelligible” language, and difficulty using basic vocabulary while narrating (Gallas, 1994, p. 20). However, with practice and support from her teacher and classmates, the child’s oral language skills progressed and she became a favorite storyteller in the class.

When carried out in sensitive and developmentally appropriate ways, sharing time also has strong potential to promote self-confidence and independence (Burrell cited in Daily, 1997; Martinez et al., 2010). For example, allowing young children to talk about a personal object during sharing time can help them build confidence in speaking in front of others without feeling like the focus of attention. Instead, the object itself is the focus, and the speaker can talk about the object’s name, use, and what makes it interesting to him or her. Other children may feel more comfortable simply talking about their experiences, real or imaginary (Blank, 2012; Gallas, 1994). Over time, the process of sharing and

listening to classmates can lead to a sense of trust among students and confidence in their ability to communicate their ideas.

Importantly, sharing time may be used to promote cultural understanding and an appreciation for others (Blank, 2012; Cheatham & Ro, 2010; Poveda, 2001). Sharon Murphy (2003) described an episode of sharing time in which three public school first graders collectively shared with the whole class what they had been learning about the Jewish holiday of Purim in Hebrew school. In this case, the teacher abandoned her usual sharing time procedures (which were largely teacher-controlled and ritualized) by asking clarifying questions about the holiday and by allowing other students with knowledge of Purim to add to the sharers’ story. Neither the teacher nor the majority of the class possessed knowledge of the holiday, and these students’ sharing time became a type of cultural lesson. This example resulted from an open invitation by the teacher to share a story about what happened during the weekend; there was no expectation that culture would enter the conversation. As the examples at the end of this article illustrate, sharing time can also be carefully planned to incorporate cultural knowledge and experiences.

Cautions

There can be risks to sharing time, even when a teacher intends to promote an appreciation for cultural diversity. For example, when sharing time is used in the traditional form of “show and tell” (i.e., bring an object from home to talk about in front of the class), there is a risk that children can become competitive or focus on items that evoke envy in

others. These sharing sessions may become materialistic in nature and involve expensive or highly desired objects, toys, or electronics. This can be troubling for children from families whose value systems are not materialistic or who have limited income and resources. Subsequent issues, such as envy, can lead children to negative interactions (e.g., hoarding, claiming as one’s own, or breaking another’s show and tell item). Additionally, there is the risk of children bringing inappropriate or dangerous objects such as toy or real weapons and other items that belong to adults and are not intended for show and tell (Dailey, 1997). These risks point to the need for teachers to be sensitive to diverse family income levels and to children’s responses to sharing time. Offering clear guidelines about what is and is not appropriate for sharing time and supporting children’s sharing of hand-made items, photographs, jokes, and story telling can help address these issues. It is also important for teachers to understand children’s developmental age in order to understand their feelings and emotions towards not having the same object as their peers.

There is also a risk that early childhood teachers may attempt to assume too much control over dialogue during sharing time (Poveda, 2001). Teachers should avoid managing sharing time to the extent that children are prevented from asking and answering questions of each other, are held to rigid time frames for sharing, or are held to inflexible narrative formats. These practices deprive children of opportunities to engage in richer, deeper learning experiences that can lead to community building and open communication about individual similarities and differences. Although sharing time

requires teacher guidance, it should be managed in flexible, child-centered ways that allow for authentic, imaginative discussions among children (Cusworth, 1995; Dailey, 1997).

Finally, when sharing time is the only avenue used to incorporate children's culture into the learning environment, there is a risk that children will be denied opportunities to make meaningful connections between their home lives and the curriculum in integrated, holistic ways. This is not culturally responsive teaching. Sharing time should be one of many opportunities for children to express themselves as unique individuals and to show "who they are" within the classroom community.

O.P.E.N. (Outline, Prepare, Engage, Notice) to implement classroom activities.

Making Sharing Time a Culturally Relevant Experience

How can teachers intentionally transform ordinary sharing time into culturally responsive, meaningful learning opportunities? Because "cooperation, community, and connectedness" (Gay 2010, p. 38) are cornerstones of culturally relevant teaching, successfully implementing this type of sharing time requires teachers to encourage dialogue among children and to guide discussions in order to achieve the desired outcomes. Teachers may find the acronym O.P.E.N. (Outline, Prepare, Engage, Notice) a helpful guide toward these ends:

- **Outline** the intended outcomes/lesson objectives. Decide ahead of time what children will be expected to learn or practice during sharing time. Outcomes may be as general as practicing speaking and listening or as specific as orally responding to simple stories about anything that is significant in their lives such as holidays like Hanukkah or Christmas, to encouraging children to develop stories about their families and the places that are important for them. Identifying outcomes in advance can help you monitor children's talk and steer conversations toward your learning goals.
- **Prepare** the class by providing directions, models, and examples. Explicit instruction about taking turns or listening to classmates can help foster participation and meaningful dialogue. Many teachers find that role-playing with a child in front of the class is an effective way to model dialogue for sharing time.
- **Engage** the class in sharing time by prompting conversations with questions such as, "When have you felt like...?" or "I wonder what might happen if...?" Open-ended questions such as these invite children to draw from their own experiences, and they communicate openness to individual perspectives. With practice and guidance, children will begin to ask and answer their own questions, reducing the need for teacher prompts.
- **Notice** who is not participating and when the conversation moves away from the intended outcomes. Children might not participate in sharing time for a number of reasons, such as being

an English learner, having family values that prevent calling out in a group, or feeling insecure about what they can contribute. Noticing who is reluctant to share and seeking ways to draw all children into the dialogue with sensitivity are important aspects of culturally relevant sharing time.

When selecting topics for sharing time, consider those with which children in your classroom can easily relate. Meaningful conversations can take place when children are familiar with and interested in the topics. Two excellent sources of sharing time topics that can help promote culturally relevant conversations are artifacts and children's literature. Suggestions for using both types of materials in PK and Kindergarten classrooms are described below.

Personal/Family Artifacts

During sharing time, children can be invited to show personal artifacts or photos from their homes that represent family life. Examples might include photographs of siblings, specially made blankets, favorite holiday decorations, or simple toys passed down from generation to generation. These kinds of items have personal significance to young children and can be springboards for inquiry, observation, and discussion. Talking about differences between objects from the "past" and "present," noticing artifacts that classmates have in common at their homes, and asking questions to gather information about artifacts are appropriate ways to engage children in conversations about differences and similarities among people.

Family photographs that showcase out-of-school activities and experiences make wonderful long-term displays in the classroom. Individual photographs of relatives, family celebrations, team sports, church group activities, or favorite places can be passed around during sharing time and displayed on a designated wall inside the classroom. Teachers should update photo walls periodically to supplement instructional themes that support home-school cultural connections such as families, celebrations, communities, and healthy living. As children learn about these topics, teachers and children can refer to the photos on display and make important connections between their lives and the world in which they live.

Children's Literature Response Talks

Children's literature can also be an excellent catalyst for promoting culturally relevant dialogue that deals with similarities and differences among children. Teachers can facilitate conversations about book characters and the choices they make, as well as settings, events, photographs, and illustrations as they relate to children's personal experiences and family life. For example, teachers may use *One World, One Day*, Barbara Kerley's (2009) award-winning children's book containing photographs of children around the world as they engage in ordinary life, to invite students to talk about the photograph of a Chinese family having dinner together (pp. 26-27) and to share about their own family meal experiences.

Finding high quality literature written for young children is relatively easy with access to lists of award-winning books on the



Photo courtesy of Westminster School for Young Children, Nashville, TN

Need a little change for sharing time? How about bringing it outdoors?

Internet. For example, each year the National Council for the Social Studies, in association with the Children's Book Council, publishes a list of children's literature selected for its quality, attention to diversity, and appropriateness for K-12 audiences (see www.socialstudies.org). Lisa R. Bartle's Database of Award-Winning Children's Literature (see www.dawcl.com) is another useful tool for locating award-winning books appropriate for early childhood classrooms. The database allows users to search for books featuring specific topics, genres, and languages. See Table 1 for a list of suggested award-winning books and conversation starters for promoting culturally related conversations among young children.

[See Table 1 on following page]

Teaching Tips

The suggestions above are most effective with **teacher guidance**, **flexibility**, and **parent communication**. Teachers can guide sharing time by stating clear expectations for sharing, modeling how to share, and selecting a child with strong verbal skills to serve as a model for other children (Passe, 2006). Guidance also includes avoiding dominating the conversations or limiting child-to-child dialogue during sharing time. Children's sharing tends to become more complex and meaningful when they are allowed to talk freely in back and forth conversations (Murphy, 2003).

Table 1. Suggested award-winning children's literature for young children

Title, publication information, and award	Summary	Sample conversation starters for sharing time
Ada, A. F. (2002). <i>I Love Saturdays y domingos</i> . New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers. Winner, IRA Notable Book for a Global Society, 2003.	This is the story of a bilingual, bicultural girl who spends Saturdays with her English-speaking grandparents and Sundays (domingos) with her Spanish-speaking grandparents. She enjoys different foods and activities with each family.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is special about the people in your family? • How does your family celebrate birthdays?
Ajmera, M., Kinkade, S., & Pon, C. (2010). <i>Our Grandparents: A Global Album</i> . Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge. Winner, Notable Social Studies Trade Book Award, 2011.	This book is filled with photographs of grandparents and their grandchildren from around the world as they engage in various activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kinds of activities do you and your grandparents enjoy together? • What special things do you do with other family members?
Jules, J. (2009). <i>Duck for Turkey Day</i> . Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman & Co. Winner, Notable Social Studies Trade Book Award, 2010.	Tuyet is excited about celebrating Thanksgiving until she learns that her Vietnamese family will have duck instead of turkey for dinner. Later, she is relieved to learn that many of her classmates did not have turkey either. Diverse families celebrate the holiday with all sorts of different meals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What special foods do you eat at Thanksgiving? • What is your favorite special food?
Kerley, B. (2009). <i>One World, One Day</i> . Washington, D. C.: National Geographic. Winner, Notable Social Studies Trade Book Award, 2010.	This book is filled with photographs of children around the world as they go about daily life from morning until night. Activities like eating breakfast and going to school look different in other cultures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is happening in the picture of the Chinese family? Tell us about what dinnertime is like for you. • What kinds of things do the children in this book do after school? How do you spend your time after school?
Ogburn, J. K. (2011). <i>Little Treasures: Endearments from Around the World</i> . New York: Houghton Mifflin Books for Children. Winner, American Library Association award, 2012.	The author shares how parents from many cultures express their love for their children with various terms of endearment, such as “angelito” in Spanish.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does your family show you that they care about you? • How do you show your family members that you love them?
Padmanabhan, M. (2011). <i>I Am Different! Can you Find Me?</i> Watertown, Mass.: Charlesbridge. Winner, Notable Social Studies Trade Book Award, 2012.	This book asks children to identify an object on each page that looks different from the others. The phrase “Can you find me?” is written in 16 languages throughout the book, and English words borrowed from other languages are featured.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What makes you special and different from your friends/classmates? • What special things do you notice about your friends/classmates?
Pinkney, Sandra L. (2000). <i>Shades of Black: A Celebration of Our Children</i> . New York: Scholastic. Winner, Carlotta Zolotow Award, 2001 and Skipping Stones Honor Award, 2001.	This book uses color photographs featuring African American children to explore the uniqueness of children's skin tone, hair, and eyes color.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let's take a careful look at everyone in our class. What similarities do we notice/how do we look the same? • What makes you look unique and special?

Flexibility is a key to successful sharing time. When sharing time activities become stale, routine, or uninteresting to children, a change may be in order (Gallas, 1994; Murphy, 2003). Simply changing the group size, time of day, topic, or format can spark new enthusiasm for sharing time. For example, when one classroom teacher noticed that her first graders had become bored with sharing time, she decided to have them tell sharing time stories for one month *without* using objects as they were accustomed to doing (Gallas, 1994). The results were very positive, and the children learned to talk about events in their lives in new ways.

Finally, communicating with parents and guardians about sharing time expectations and topics can lead to more meaningful sharing time conversations in class. Children are more likely to share and learn cultural lessons when everyone understands the purpose of sharing time. Furthermore, families can help children choose appropriate stories, artifacts, and photographs to share when they know about the topic and how their children will be asked to participate.

Conclusion

Fostering young children's healthy appreciation for cultural diversity requires early childhood teachers to be proactive by planning culturally relevant learning experiences and capitalizing on teachable moments as they arise. Getting started does not have to be difficult. Ask children to bring a family photograph to share with the class, or read a good book aloud and start a conversation with children about personal experiences that relate to the text, illustrations,

or photographs. These types of sharing time activities are excellent avenues for promoting meaningful learning about similarities and differences among children, both within a single classroom and in the world at large.

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Vocabulary Development using Visual Displays

Visual displays can support vocabulary development in unique and creative ways.

Ellen McKenzie

Vocabulary development is one of the top areas of focus for a child to learn to read and a central goal for primary grade students (Christ & Wang, 2010; National Research Council, 1998; Neuman, Dwyer, & Neuman, 2008). Because learning is so dependent on language, success in school is essentially dependent on knowledge of words (Coyle, Simmons, & Kame'enui, 2004). Furthermore, it is widely documented and generally accepted that school success is linked to vocabulary knowledge (Anderson & Nagy, 1991; Becker, 1977; Christ & Wang, 2010; Neuman, Dwyer, & Neuman, 2008). However, children enter kindergarten with varying levels of skills, dispositions, talents and needs. Some kindergarteners begin school with substantial differences in vocabulary understanding and knowledge (Christ & Wang, 2010; Hart & Risley, 1995; Newton, Padak & Rasinski, 2008).

Read-alouds expose children to a multitude of new words.

Kindergarten teachers use a variety of strategies that focus on vocabulary development. A common and effective practice to introduce new vocabulary to kindergarteners is reading storybooks to children, what is commonly known as “read-alouds” (Bus, van Ijzendoorn, & Pelligrini, 1995; Christ & Wang, 2010; Newton, Padak & Rasinski, 2008). Listening to books read out loud exposes children to a multitude of new words. Children’s literature has a collective abundance of complex language and rare words (Wooten & Cullinan, 2009) equal to more than those encountered in an average adult conversation or on prime time television (Cunningham

& Stanovich, 1998). Read-alouds introduce children to new words in meaningful contexts that make sense in their world. Not only do children’s books contain advanced vocabulary, the illustrations give visual context clues that aid in understanding (Christ & Wang, 2010; The Urban Child Institute, 2010).

Vocabulary development is a central goal of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), adopted by 45 of the United States in 2012. The CCSS detail specific outcomes for vocabulary learning. The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (2010) detailed the following kindergarten “Common Core Standards for Vocabulary Acquisition and Use”, which include goals for students to:

...determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on kindergarten reading and content; identify new meanings for familiar words and apply them accurately; use the most frequently occurring inflections and affixes as a clue to the meaning of an unknown word; explore word relationships and nuances in word meanings; demonstrate understanding of frequently occurring verbs and adjectives by relating them to their opposites; identify real-life connections between words and their use; distinguish shades of meaning among verbs describing the same general action; and, use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts. (p. 2)

Learning new words through hands-on, engaging, and interactive playful learning is one way to start bridging the achievement gap, meet the CCSS and respect and honor the child’s right to learn in an environment that is appropriate to his or her developmental level. It is important for teachers of young children to find engaging, creative and developmentally appropriate ways to meet the rigorous standards such as the use of graphic organizers after completing read-alouds in the kindergarten classroom.

Table 1

Graphic Organizer Name	Description of Graphic Organizer
Frayer Model	A four square model in which students and teachers define the word, list its characteristics, and give examples and non-examples of the target word (Graves, 2006).
Venn Diagram	Overlapping circles are used to describe relationships between concepts (TeacherVision, 2013).
Word Maps	Visual organizers that provide a space for a picture, definition, synonyms, and antonyms (Jones, 2007).
Vocab-o-gram	Words from a story are used to make predictions about the setting, characters, plot and resolution, helping build vocabulary knowledge (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2006; Newton, Padak & Rasinski, 2008).

Graphic Organizers

Research indicates that using graphic organizers for new vocabulary words is an effective way to promote understanding (Rakes, Rakes & Smith, 1995; Newton, Padak & Rasinski, 2008). Though typically used by older students, teachers are finding that kindergarten students are benefitting from using graphic organizers to reinforce vocabulary skills. In this article, examples of effective graphic organizers that can be used with kindergarten children are listed on *Table 1*.

Visualizing Words

The teacher in whole and small group settings can best model the

graphic organizers stated in *Table 1* as visual representations. Eventually, as the children gain more experience, the graphic organizers may be completed in pairs or small group settings. These visual vocabulary strategies are useful for increasing word recognition and understanding and maybe a good way to promote vocabulary development in English for English language learners (Newton, Padak & Rasinski, 2008).

Prior to Reading: Setting the Stage

It is best practice to select words on which to focus during the read-aloud prior to the reading. Texts should be chosen that include Tier

Two words – words that occur frequently across texts, domains and whose meaning the students probably do not already know are essential for comprehension (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002; Newton, Padak & Rasinski, 2008). Words should also be chosen based on student interest and opportunities for numerous exposures to the word in multiple contexts (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002).

In order for students to learn and remember new words, teachers must activate prior knowledge. Teachers must spend time building the child’s schema so that he or she can connect the new word to existing understandings (Christ & Wang, 2010; Newton, Padak & Rasinski, 2008).

As seen in *Figure 1* (following page), prior to the reading, the teacher selected the word celebration as a target vocabulary word. As seen in the photo, students brainstormed the meaning of the word celebration, and wrote and drew their thoughts about the meaning of the word on sticky notes. Once the students had finished and posted them to the poster, the teacher sorted and classified them with the students. The majority of the students thought celebration was some sort of party, while others thought of holidays

Strategies to Build Prior Knowledge

- After selecting the words from the story, effective teachers introduce the new vocabulary to students without defining the words.
- Writing the selected words on the board, sticky notes, word cards, graphic organizers, and word walls stimulates interest in the words and builds anticipation.
- Passing out word cards prior to reading is an effective way to encourage participation. This affords students the opportunity to hold up their words when they are heard in the text and maintains interest in the book and in the vocabulary.
- Taking a picture walk of the book to look for clues about the word’s meaning prior to reading is a good strategy for building understanding. Teachers can encourage students to discuss, draw, write, or visualize what they think the words will mean. Having students predict word meanings and draw or write them on sticky notes is a good practice for engaging students with vocabulary words.

Figure 1: Brainstorming meanings with students



such as Christmas and Thanksgiving. Several students drew images of Mardi Gras and parades, which are particularly interesting since these students live in the New Orleans area, and the vocabulary activity occurred during Mardi Gras season. A few others drew and named fireworks as a part of a celebration. The students and teacher grouped the words by similar characteristic and meanings. Drawing from the knowledge base of the child while building a definition together allows teachers to incorporate the child's cultural background in the meaning-making process. When students have opportunities to interact with their teachers and the text, vocabulary instruction is more meaningful and beneficial (Christ & Wang, 2010; Copple & Bredekemp, 2009; Coyne, McCoach, & Kapp, 2007).

During Reading: Building Understanding

During read-alouds, there are many effective ways to encourage students to learn new words from storybooks. Best practices include labeling items in the book orally, naming objects seen in the illustrations, stopping to ask questions, elaborating on student responses (Kindle,

2009; Newton, Padak & Rasinski, 2008), and modeling “think alouds” during reading (The Urban Child Institute, 2010). When teachers orally question themselves and the texts to find meaning and act out their own thinking processes, students are given a scaffold for learning cognition and comprehension. Students make the highest gains in vocabulary knowledge when teachers utilize interactive approaches (Copple & Bredekemp, 2009; Leong, 2008).

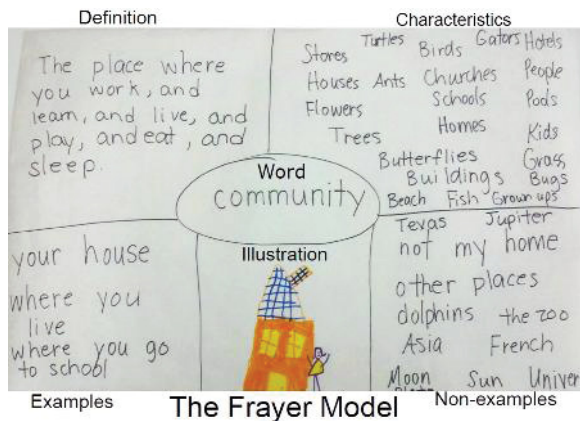
Knowledgeable teachers understand the value of giving students intentional exposure to new vocabulary. Upon encountering the new word, effective early childhood teachers ask eliciting type questions to focus the child's thinking on word meaning. In this way, definitions are drawn from and constructed with the children as opposed to simply exposing them to the new words within the context of the book (Newton, Padak & Rasinski, 2008; The Urban Child Institute, 2010). When reading aloud, using embedded definitions in which the meaning of the word is clear and obvious in the natural context of the story is beneficial to the student (Christ & Wang, 2010; The Urban Child Institute, 2010). Researchers have found that using this type of contextual

vocabulary instruction yields higher gains in vocabulary than lessons with provided definitions (Nash & Snowling, 2006). Further, research indicates that students have higher gains in language when exposed to sophisticated language through read-alouds, have repeated contact with the words, and are given opportunities to talk about the vocabulary (Beck & McKeown, 2007; Newton, Padak & Rasinski, 2008). Repeated readings of the same storybook result in higher gains in student vocabulary (Biemiller & Boote, 2006).

When teachers ask students questions about the details, pictures, and clues, they help scaffold children's understanding. Students make greater gains in vocabulary when teachers scaffold questions, beginning with low-demand questions and working towards more demanding questions (Blewitt, Rump, Shealy, & Cook, 2009). Effective teachers stop during reading and have students discuss what the word means with a partner. This allows teachers to check predictions with the students and supports the child's attempts to build understanding and meaning. While reading, it is important to point out the target words in the text. Students can be directed to discover how the surrounding text and illustrations support the meaning of the new words. Guiding students to vocabulary understanding through acting, singing, and drawing offers students multiple modalities for learning.

Pictured in *Figure 2*, the teacher selected the word *community* as a focus for vocabulary instruction based on words in the piece of literature she was reading. The students worked through the definition with their teacher and, together, they constructed the meaning and recorded answers on a Frayer Model with their

Figure 2: Frayer Model completed with students



teacher’s support. As students offered answers, they were written on the chart paper in appropriate headings of: definition, examples, non-examples, and characteristics. A student was selected to complete the illustration section. Once kindergarten students are accustomed to the format, it can be an excellent model to use for small group and partner work.

After Reading: Reinforcing New Vocabulary

After reading the storybook, teachers are able to reinforce vocabulary in a variety of ways. Intentionally using the word throughout the natural course of the day in the classroom context is an excellent strategy for repeated exposure to new words. Finding opportunities to weave the words into the child’s world promotes word use and learning (Christ & Wang, 2010; Newton, Padak & Rasinski, 2008; The Urban Child Institute, 2010). When students have opportunities to hear and use new words in multiple contexts throughout the day, students are more likely to learn and incorporate new words into their vocabulary (Christ & Wang, 2010; Copple & Bredekemp, 2009; Stahl, 2005). Checking for understanding and matching

pictures to the written words gives the child a visual representation to store in his or her schema. Teachers should also provide scaffolding, materials and opportunities for children to retell stories, thereby offering children chances to use the new vocabulary in the context of the book.

Figure 3: Word Cloud using Tagul



Following a read-aloud, teachers find success with reinforcing vocabulary words using Word Maps (Jones, 2007; Newton, Padak & Rasinski, 2008). After an interactive read-aloud, students brainstormed numerous meanings for the word *action* as their teacher typed their responses into a Word Cloud using the website Tagul.com, as displayed in Figure 3.

Incorporating Multimedia Exposure

Studies show that children who hear target vocabulary words through varied multimedia sources are more likely to remember and use them (Christ & Wang, 2010). Teachers can enhance exposure to words through books on tape, DVDs, stories recorded on iPods, and literature websites on the Internet. Resources such as these are often

very motivating venues for children to interact with new words. Applications for iPods, iPads and tablets further motivate and reinforce new vocabulary. Students entering kindergarten are highly versed in touch screen technology and tablet applications, given the high incidence of and exposure to these devices in the daily lives of today's children. Early childhood teachers can help students create a slideshow for iPads and iPods using such applications. As displayed in *Figure 4*, students took photographs of items to represent the word *spiky*, and then used thought bubbles to describe the word using the application Comic Touch. The result was an eleven-page slideshow of the target vocabulary word. The activity was engaging and motivating for the students and a great way to incorporate familiar technology in a meaningful and educational way.

Figure 4: Student generated slide using Comic Touch



for vocabulary development include literacy stations, learning centers, free choice time, outdoor play in the playground, lunch and snack times, circle time, or at any time of the day where children have opportunity to interact with others. Interactions such as these grant teachers many avenues to meet the CCSS for vocabulary development in developmentally appropriate ways (Copple & Bredekemp, 2009).

A key factor in children using newly learned vocabulary words is being in classroom environments that encourage active discussions among students and between students and teachers. By incorporating vocabulary learning with the use of children's literature, reinforcing word use through conversations, multimedia applications, play and scaffolding the child's word learning and use, teachers can make strides in reducing the achievement gap in early literacy skills. This will not happen in a quiet, worksheet based classroom, but rather in engaged, lively, experiential environments where teachers help children activate prior knowledge and build new understanding from existing schema (such as when using different graphic organizers).

Recommendations and Conclusion

In order to facilitate growth in vocabulary knowledge, several recommendations would prove beneficial to teachers, children and families.

- It is recommended that state and local school districts provide teacher workshops and training in vocabulary development, the use of graphic organizers with the young child, and current technologies such as tablets, iPods, iPads, and their applications for early learning.
- It is also suggested that reading specialists and coaches work with early childhood teachers to develop interventions to address vocabulary needs.
- It is also recommended that visual displays and graphic organizers, such as concept mapping and flow charts, be incorporated and creatively used to encourage word understanding in kindergarten math, science, and social studies.
- Furthermore, community outreach programs with information on the importance of language to the young child's development should be offered to educate

Graphic organizers are effective for promoting understanding.

Closing the Gap

Children in classrooms where there is repeated exposure to and use of texts have opportunities to use new words in the context of their work and play. Teachers can advance this through the use of graphic organizers as shown in the examples above, particularly when focusing on vocabulary development. Other classroom strategies that are helpful

adults who are central to the child's life. Educators, education students and volunteers in these programs will need to be sensitive to the cultural and socio-economic backgrounds of the families involved. These programs should incorporate modeling and practical, hands-on activities to encourage speaking, and listening to young children.

As early childhood educators, we must work to create developmentally appropriate opportunities for children and one clear way is to use interactive and engaging strategies to develop vocabulary knowledge in young children. In doing so, we can work to create an equitable learning environment for our nation's children.

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Encouraging Healthy Eating Behaviors in Toddlers

Learning healthy eating habits....toddlers are the place to start.

**Larra Brawley and
Jennifer Henk**

Young children's eating behaviors have a direct link to their future health and attitudes regarding food. Similarly, positive nutrition during the toddler years leads to increased brain development and thus children are generally healthier (Weaver, More, & Harris, 2008). This makes eating behaviors extremely important. During the toddler years children begin to eat table foods similar to adults. The adult role includes choosing food, encouraging children to listen to their bodies, and facilitating interaction and learning. The adult decides what to serve the child and, based on what is offered, the child will decide what and how much to eat (Horodyski & Stommel, 2005). In providing the child with food options, the adult may also reflect and respect the child's home and cultural experience with the food that is presented (Ziegler, Hanson, Ponza, Novak, & Hendricks, 2006).

Let's consider the following scenario between caregivers ("Ms. Lindsey" and "Ms. Irma") and their toddlers:

Imagine Ms. Lindsey sitting at a table as she eats lunch with five young toddlers. The children eat their lunch with a combination of hands and utensils. Ms. Lindsey waits for the children to signal they want more. If a child yells or reaches, she encourages the use of words and signs. Abby reaches her fork to Ms. Lindsey's plate. Ms. Lindsey gently guides it back and says, "You have peas, beans, and chicken. This [indicating the caregiver's plate] is my food." Abby quickly eats her peas and then signs for more. Ms. Lindsey dishes out more peas for Abby. Jack points to the chicken and says "muh" [more]. Ms. Lindsey tells the child that there is no more chicken left but if he is hungry he can have peas or beans.

In the room next door a group of older toddlers is eating lunch with their caregiver, Ms. Irma. Alex

puts a whole piece of bread into his mouth and has difficulty chewing. Ms. Irma sees him doing so and places a small bite in her mouth and chews it without saying anything as Alex watches. Ellen says, "I'm hungry, more chicken." Ms. Irma places another piece on her plate as she verbally tells her what she is doing. She then turns to the child next to her and says, "I see your plate is empty. Alex, are you still hungry?" Alex says, "Yes, hungry, want more peas." Ms. Irma dishes out more peas on Alex's plate as she looks back to Ellen and sees that she has not tasted her beans. She says, "Have you tasted the beans, Ellen?" Ellen looks at her plate and back at the caregiver and says, "Yes, I don't like beans." Ms. Irma takes a bite of her beans and says, "Did you like the peas?" Ellen looks down at her plate again and says, "Yes, more peas." Alex stands up from the table and says, "I'm full." Ms. Irma asks him to wipe his mouth with his washcloth. After he does so she asks him to take his washcloth to the laundry hamper. Alex does so and then washes his hands.

The scenario above shows how teachers can use mealtimes with toddlers to encourage healthy eating behaviors (among other skills). However, mealtimes can often be the most challenging time of the day for caregivers. Toddler mealtimes can turn from exasperating to an enjoyable learning experience when caregivers are equipped with the right tools for each child.

Picky Eating

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (2012), growth rate slows during the toddler years because children no longer require as much food. The related slowing of food consumption may make the

child seem like a picky eater and the caregiver may be concerned that the child is not getting the adequate amount of energy from calories necessary to thrive. Toddlers do not need as much food as adults as their stomachs are only the size of their clenched fist (Dosman & Andrews, 2012). While picky eating is common due to biologically based reasons, it is also developmentally appropriate in the toddler years as children from one to three are exerting their control. Less control perceived by the child is demonstrated by an increase in picky eating behaviors.



Photo courtesy of the authors

A young toddler (1 year) will utilize both hands and utensils to eat.

Frequent exposure to a variety of foods is important.

Toddlers are less likely to consume fruits and vegetables if they are perceived as picky eaters (Horodynski, Stommel, Brophy-Herb, Yan, & Weatherspoon, 2010). If a toddler does not like a given food there are many things the adult can do to encourage the child to taste it. Frequent exposure to foods is a useful technique in encouraging children to taste food (Dosman & Andrews, 2012). If toddlers are exposed to foods many times, they have more opportunities to taste them. Just because a child will not eat a given food during the first few exposures does not mean that he never will. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics states that children may need to be exposed to a food eight to ten times before they taste it (Nicklas & Hayes, 2008).

Language is Key

The way we interact with children has the potential to alter their perception of food. Conversation during meals supports lifelong nutrition habits if incorporated into the mealtime process, even with young children who may not be as verbal (Wiggins, 2004). Behaviors and attitudes also have the potential to support lifelong nutrition habits. Behaviors and attitudes about food are often expressed unconsciously during mealtime interactions. The child is likely to adopt the adult's food bias if the adult demonstrates a negative attitude or behavior towards a food. Likewise, the child may also adopt the adult's positive perceptions about food. The interaction during mealtimes that takes place between the adult and child predicts the child's food behaviors and habits (Akhtar-Danesh, Dehghan, Morrison, & Fonseca, 2011). Both positive and negative interactions have the capability to alter the behaviors of children. A new food presented with positive interaction from a primary caregiver increases the chance

that the child will react favorably to the food (Shutts, Kinzler, & DeJesus, 2012). Negative prompts and comments from an adult have the potential to increase poor eating habits and lead to disruptive behavior from the child (Dosman & Andrews, 2012). The interactions that go on during mealtime are therefore essential as they help teach the child what is and is not acceptable behavior in regards to food.

Internal Cues

Many adults unknowingly override children's internal cues of hunger during mealtime interactions. Internal cues of hunger are biologically based mechanisms that let the body know when it is full and when it is still hungry (Orrell-Valente et al., 2007; Ramsay et al., 2010). Many recent studies have found a trend in adult use of specific language that encourages children to override these messages. Language is an important component to supporting a child's internal cues of hunger. Instead of asking children if they want more, ask them if they're still hungry.

Using food as a reward or rewarding children for eating encourages children to ignore their internal cues (Ramsay et al., 2010). By cueing children to how they feel rather than the quantity of food consumed, adults are supporting children's internal cues of hunger. Sign language is a useful tool to help children express their internal cues of hunger before they have gained the ability to express their cues verbally. The use of signs for *eat*, *more*, and *water* can all be beneficial to help children communicate their internal cues with adults. The American Sign Language Dictionary on-line is a useful tool to find the appropriate signs <http://www.handspeak.com/word/>.

Mealtime Control

Children are more likely to develop healthy behaviors when adults select foods to serve the child and the child controls what to consume (Horodynski & Strommel, 2005). Adult control over food is associated with less consumption of healthy foods by the child and increased negative perception about the food. However, when the child controls the food this seems to lead to increased consumption of healthy foods (Vereecken, Rovner, & Maes, 2010). If the negative perception still exists, the same issue will arise the next time the food is served (Bante, Elliot, Harrod, & Haire-Joshu, 2008; Hughes et al., 2007).

While making a child try just one bite seems like a good idea because it encourages him to consume some of the vegetables that are vital for his development, in the long run it encourages the development of unhealthy eating behaviors because the choice is not theirs. Over time, this leads to less consumption of healthy foods.

The goal of positive nutrition during childhood is to create healthy habits that will last into adulthood rather than just increasing consumption during childhood (Bante et al., 2008; Hughes et al., 2007). Since children during the toddler years are developing self-regulation regarding eating behaviors (Horodynski & Stommel, 2005), caregivers can support self-regulation by:

- Following the toddlers lead to know how much food should go on the plate,



Photos courtesy of the authors

The goal is to create healthy habits that will last into adulthood.

Older toddlers (2 years) can handle utensils and glasses.



Photo courtesy of the authors

Toddler mealtimes should be fun, learning experiences with plenty of opportunities to experience and taste new foods.

- Allowing toddlers to pick the foods they wish to consume off their plate, and
- Following the child's internal cues of hunger.

When toddlers are hungry they feel similar biological processes as adults, such as a growling stomach or irritability. When children are full they may stop eating or refuse to eat anything but a preferable food on their plate and when they are still hungry they may ask for more or point to other food in the area.

Set the Example

Adults that model healthy practices set a good example for children and are more likely to have children in their care that self-regulate their behaviors (Horodyski & Strommel, 2005). This can be done through demonstration and modeling of the behaviors one wishes to see exhibited by the children. Show the children the same behaviors you want to see from them. When you are full, tell the children and stop eating. From birth children follow the social cues

of their caregivers to know what to do in a given situation (Shutts, Kinzler, McKee, & Spelke 2009). Infants choose to eat a food based on the social response of their caregiver and toddlers are more likely to consume fruits and vegetables if their caregiver eats them (Horodyski et al., 2010; Shutts et al., 2009). In the scenario, Alex, places a whole piece of bread in his mouth. The caregiver demonstrates taking small bites, modeling appropriate eating behaviors, as Alex watches.

Cultural and Family Considerations

Interactions with food are determined by cultural and social norms during mealtimes (Ziegler, Hanson, Ponza, Novak, & Hendricks, 2006). Cultural practices in relation to food should be considered when working with children and families. Cultural behaviors in regard to foods may impact children's food preferences (Mennella, Ziegler, Briefel, & Novak, 2006).

One aspect of culture to consider is the availability of food within the

community and individual households. The attainability of foods, both in terms of cost and distance, can create many challenges for some families (Omar, Coleman, & Hoerr, 2001). Food security and insecurity exist in the life of many families in the United States and has the potential to greatly impact the healthy lifestyles of families. Food security is defined as an individual's access, at all times, to nutritious and safe foods that can be obtained in a socially acceptable manner (Cook & Frank, 2008). Food insecurity can be especially detrimental to infants and toddlers because of the rapid growth that occurs during these years (Omar et al., 2001). Children who are unfamiliar with fresh fruits and vegetables (because of lack of access) may not consume them as quickly as children who are accustomed to the food. It is important to respect children's individual differences while still serving them healthy foods. Families have different knowledge levels related to nutrition and feeding practices, and may believe they are feeding their child healthily even when it contradicts the caregiver's beliefs of what constitutes healthy (Omar et al., 2001). Therefore, not only may parental education in healthy eating habits be beneficial, but also connecting families to resources within the community that may support food security.

All Children are Different

All children come into the classroom with differing awareness of their internal hunger cues. Children that have been supported by an environment that encourages them to listen to their internal cues will most likely tell you when they are full, whereas children that have been encouraged by their environment to

ignore their internal cues may quit eating before they are ready, leaving them hungry earlier in the day, or potentially leading them to consume too much food and feel ill (Orrell-Valente et al., 2007; Ramsay et al., 2010). Children that have little control over what foods they eat off of their plate may often demonstrate resistance during mealtimes whereas a child that has selected the foods to consume is likely to demonstrate decreased picky eating behaviors (Orrell-Valente et al., 2007; Ramsay et al., 2010).

Conclusion

The toddler years are critical in terms of the development of healthy eating behaviors as the eating behaviors that children develop at this age have the potential to impact their eating behaviors throughout life. It is the adult's role to choose and encourage healthy food choices and the child's role to decide which foods and how much he wants to eat. Toddlers develop attitudes regarding food during this time period as well. Caregivers have an opportunity to make conscious decisions that promote healthy eating behaviors when interacting with young children.

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Go Figure! Using the Art of Jasper Johns to Teach Number Concepts

Discover how to seamlessly integrate the visual arts into a mathematics activity.

Robin Ward

Paint, pastels, and colorful collages in the mathematics classroom? But, of course! It is hard to deny the natural connection between mathematics and the visual arts, as both disciplines embody the study and use of line, shape (two-dimensional), form (three-dimensional), patterns, proportion, and perspective. In the study and creation of art, students are encouraged to use their intuition, perception, imagination, inventiveness, and creativity while they discern, interpret, reason, and draw inferences. Additionally, children in art classes are observing, envisioning, innovating, and reflecting (Hetland, Winner, Veenema, & Sheridan, 2007). These abilities develop children's intelligence, argues David Perkins (1994), Senior Co-director of Harvard University's Project Zero, as the practice of looking at art requires thoughtful attention to what the artwork has to show and say (National Art Education Association, 2009). In fact, as early as age four, children begin to "think of the visual arts as a tool for communicating" and use this second language to express their feelings and to make sense of the complex circumstances of their lives (Cole, 2012, p. 82). Don't we, as educators want our young children to develop these same talents, cognitive and communication skills, and abilities as they learn mathematics?

A growing body of evidence continues to present compelling evidence that connects student learning in the arts to academic and social skills (Bransford, et al., 2004; Burton, Horowitz, & Abeles, 2000; Deasy, 2002, 2008; Korn-Burtszyn, 2012; McCarthy, Ondaatje, Zakaras, & Brooks, 2005; McDonald, 2010; Ruppert, 2006). For example, arts instruction can increase learning and achievement by boosting literacy and English Language Arts (ELA) skills, advancing math achievement, and developing critical thinking (Arts Education Partnership, 2013; McDonald, 2010). Arts instruction can also

engage and motivate students (Catterall, Dumais, & Hampden-Thompson, 2012; Deasy, 2008; Perrin, 1994; Ruppert 2006; Seif, 2013), strengthen students' problem solving abilities (Hamblen, 1997; Rabkin & Redmond, 2006; Ruppert, 2006), foster mathematical thinking (Seif, 2013), build collaboration and communication skills (Perrin, 1994; Ruppert 2006; Seif, 2013), and increase capacity for leadership (Cole, 2012). Additionally, arts instruction emphasizes the importance of children taking small steps, practicing to get better at something, and being persistent and patient (Burton, Horowitz, & Abeles, 2000; Deasy, 2008; Eisner, 2002; Nathan 2012; Seif, 2013). The visual arts are crucial, particularly in early childhood, as they provide an entry point to engage different kinds of learners and activate the learning and growth of young children (Cole, 2012).

The visual arts engage different kinds of learners.

Despite convincing research and strong public support, education budget cuts have forced schools and districts to limit or even eliminate arts instruction. As educators, we need to address the critical need to preserve and, in those cases, re-integrate the arts back into the school curriculum mostly because the arts are foundational to high quality early education (Korn-Burszyn, 2012). How can we do this? It is easier than you think! Not an artist? Have no fear! Let me share how simple it is to infuse a mathematics lesson with the visual arts.

Put on Your Math Goggles!

For the last seven years, I have been teaching an integrated mathematics-visual arts program at two preschools in Texas. Each week, I introduce the children to a new artist and, using a PowerPoint slideshow presentation, I show several quintessential pieces of the artist's work. I encourage the students to describe what they see and what they like (or dislike!) in each piece, giving them the opportunity to develop a sense of art appreciation, while honing their observational skills as well as language skills. Next, using simple supplies such as crayons, colored paper, and glue sticks (no paints or easels needed!) students create their own masterpieces in the spirit of the artist. Then, we don our "math goggles" (Ward, 2012, p. 9) and explore a variety of mathematics embedded in the artwork. One of the artists that I have integrated in my mathematics lesson presented to my preschoolers is Jasper Johns.

Jasper Johns' *Color Numeral Series* (1968) is a collection of ten color lithographs featuring a single digit (Johns refers to each of them as a *Figure*) zero through nine. After viewing several of Johns' *Figures*, students were given their own "canvas," a piece of white paper on which was pre-printed a single digit, zero through nine. I chose to create these pre-printed "canvasses" using a Jasper Johns-like font so that the children's finished artwork most closely resembled the artist's actual work. For me, this activity was as much about art appreciation as it was an exploration in number. Additionally, I wanted the focus of this activity to be on number development and relationships among numbers, as opposed to practicing writing numerals, a

Who is Jasper Johns?

Jasper Johns is an American painter, sculptor, and printmaker best known for his artwork featuring maps, targets, letters, and flags. Born in Augusta, Georgia in 1930, Johns' early works reflected the ideas and techniques of abstract expressionism, yet his unique style of endowing focus to familiar, everyday objects in his artwork paved the way for subsequent art movements including Pop art and Minimalism. To view Johns' artwork that inspired this project, go to the Museum of Modern Art, http://www.moma.org/collection/artist.php?artist_id=2923



Photo retrieved from <http://www.jasper-johns.org/>

recommendation of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics in their *Standards* (NCTM, 1989). Further, at this young age, most children will participate in invented numerals similar to invented spelling where children write numbers in a variety of ways.

Using simple supplies such as crayons and markers, students traced the outline of their *Figures* (see Figure 1). This activity engaged the students' fine motor skills while

simultaneously allowing the children to experience *line*, one of the seven elements of art. Next, students adorned their *Figures* in the spirit of Jasper Johns, using stripes and other colorful patterns (see Figures 2 and 3). After they finished creating their Johns-inspired masterpieces, students put on their math goggles and the mathematics lesson began!

I first asked the pre-kindergarteners to simply name the numbers they had colored, an important task,

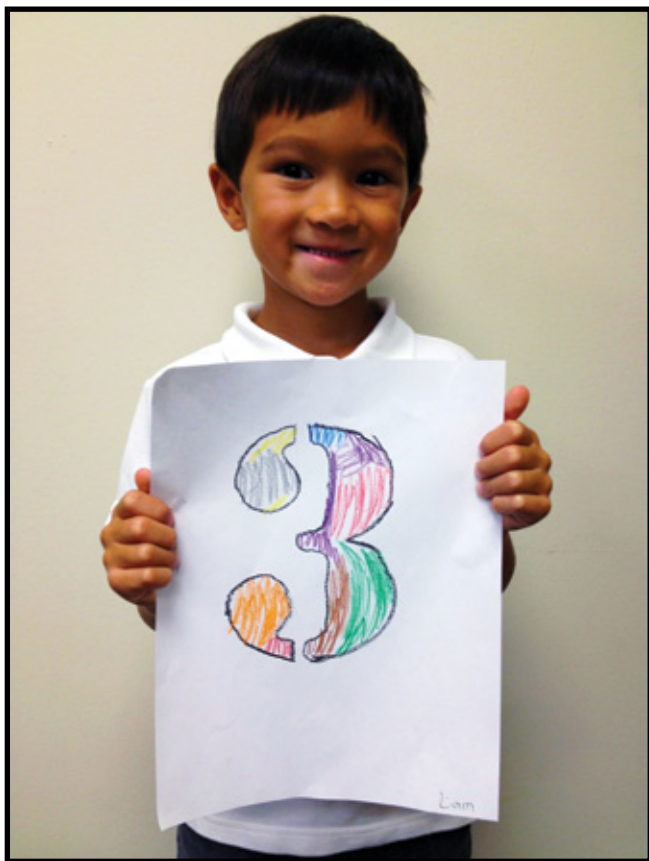
Figure 1: Pre-K children first outline and then use their imaginations to color their number artwork.



Figure 2: A Pre-K student proudly shows off her Jasper Johns-inspired art.



Figure 3: A pre-K student proudly shows off his Jasper Johns-inspired art.



as Kamii (1982) points out that in order for children to become interested in numbers, they must speak and write them in their environment. Next, I asked students to point to a classmate who had colored a number bigger than their number and to name that number as well. Students justified their reasoning by using blocks. For example, one child, who had colored the number three pointed to a male classmate who had colored the number seven. When I asked her to use the blocks to show me why she thought seven was bigger than three, she first counted out three blocks, placed them into one pile, and then counted out seven more blocks, placing them in a separate, nearby pile. While pointing back-and-forth between both sets of blocks, she then explained that her pile of three blocks was “lots smaller” than her classmate’s pile of seven blocks because visually she saw that, “Seven blocks is more... It’s more bigger than three. There’s more blocks here in the seven.” This activity embodied Kamii’s (1982) research on teaching number, whereby children need opportunities to quantify objects, and to make and compare sets with moveable objects.

Next, I challenged a small group of students to arrange themselves at the front of the room from least to greatest (see Figure 4) while the rest of the class observed. Although this activity took a bit of time, it was mathematically worthwhile! Watching the children move about as they negotiated their position in the line and hearing the children articulate their thinking and reasoning was fascinating. Even the children who were seated became helpers and problem solvers, verbally assisting their peers as they tried to arrange themselves in ascending order. This activity beautifully embodied Kamii’s (1982)

recommendation that children need to socially interact and exchange ideas with their peers.

The visual arts support the development of both concrete and abstract reasoning skills.

Extensions

The list of mathematical questions and challenges a teacher can pose is endless when using student-created *Figures*. For example, with elementary school children, a teacher might ask students to hold their numbered artwork and to separate into two groups of even or odd numbers, or students might arrange themselves from biggest to smallest, giving them

practice with counting back. Or, perhaps a teacher could ask two students to hold up their Jasper Johns-inspired artwork and to then compute the sum of their *Figures*. Put on your math goggles and ponder what questions you might ask!

Conclusion

Using Jasper Johns' art provided these young children with the opportunity to see the connections between mathematics and visual arts and thus delight in a colorful exploration of number. In fact, the level of excitement on the part of the students was truly palpable, in particular, as they arranged themselves in ascending order in the front of the classroom, with the help of their seated peers. Also, when called upon, the children smiled ear-to-ear, as they proudly announced to the class the name of their colored *Figure*. Although this exploration of number could have been accomplished using

manipulatives and verbal instruction, this activity deftly and seamlessly provided the added benefit of introducing the children to the world of art.

Research findings show that the visual arts challenge students to use both concrete and abstract reasoning skills to draw conclusions and formulate ideas (Gullatt, 2007). Yet, the deterioration of the arts in the curriculum continues to plague American schools. Demand arts instruction! Thus, I encourage you and your students to put on your "math goggles" and to use the visual arts as a lens for deepening students' mathematical understandings while immersing students in the academic, social, and emotional benefits of arts instruction.

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Figure 4: Pre-K students use their numbered artwork to arrange themselves in ascending order.



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teaches a weekly integrated math-visual arts program to children enrolled in the Early Childhood Program at All Saints' Episcopal School in Fort Worth, Texas.

Dr. Ward, a seventeen year mathematics educator, has been published national and internationally in numerous journals and she is the author of five teacher resource books on using art and children's literature in the mathematics classroom. She is regularly heard encouraging teachers and students to "Put on their math goggles!" as a means to see mathematics in their world.

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2015 SECA Directors' Seminar With Daniel Hodgins



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- Support an understanding of how adults work together to make a better place for children and families.
- Practice strategies to work with challenging adults.
- Review how stereotypes influence team practices and analyze bias that adults bring to the team.
- Demonstrate practices that support integration of culture with staff/parent/guardians and participate in family practices that recognize diverse family structures.
- Practice developing philosophy, mission, communication styles that celebrate differences with staff, parents and guardians.

For an agenda and to register go to:
www.southernearlychildhood.org/conference

In Memoriam—We Say Farewell to Two SACUS/SECA Presidents



Betty Pagan

Betty Jo Hardin Pagan, 92, a distinguished educator and children's advocate died March 25, 2014 in Little Rock, Arkansas.

Betty received her Bachelor's degree in Home Economics and a Master of Science in Child Development and Family Relations at the University of

Arkansas at Fayetteville. Betty began her teaching career in Greene County in Arkansas in 1946, moving to Little Rock in 1947 to teach at area high schools.

In 1962, Betty originated Hall High School's innovative kindergarten laboratory program which she directed until 1969. She taught child development courses at the State College of Arkansas (now UCA) from 1969-1971; supervised the Little Rock School District's home economics and kindergarten programs from 1972 to 1979 and served as the District's director of educational services from 1979 to 1983.

She served as president of the Pulaski County Pre-School Association and the Arkansas Association on Children Under Six (AACUS) and as president of SACUS in 1973 and 1974. Both AACUS and SACUS recognized Betty with their annual Outstanding Member awards. She was also a delegate to two White House Conferences on Children and Youth.

A keen horticulturalist and certified Master Gardener, Betty chaired the Arkansas Unit of the Herb Society of America and served on the group's national board of directors. She belonged to the Central Arkansas Horticultural Society and the Chenal Garden Club.



Dr. Kevin Swick

Kevin James Swick, 71, passed away on Wednesday, July 16, 2014, in Columbia, South Carolina.

Kevin earned his Bachelor's degree in history and speech, then completing a Master's Degree in education from Bowling Green State University. Following graduate studies at the University of Cincinnati and Northern Illinois University, Kevin received his Ph.D in Education from the University of Connecticut in 1970 where he directed the New London Student Teaching Center.

As an assistant professor at Southern Illinois University, Kevin developed and taught innovative courses while directing the University Head Start Program. In 1976, he joined the faculty of the University of South Carolina where he served as Chair of the Early Childhood Education Department for several years and Coordinator for the Early Childhood program during three multi-year periods. Kevin served as Director of the University Children's Center for five years, directed the Ed.S. in Teaching degree program for more than a decade and developed and led the Early Childhood Education Summer Institute for many years. He also served his profession as SACUS President in 1985 & 1986.

Kevin thrived as a beloved teacher who inspired his students through courses including family involvement, multicultural issues in education, parent/family dynamics, and educating teachers on strategies for helping homeless and high-risk students find success in school. While he retired as Distinguished Professor Emeritus from USC in 2010, Kevin continued teaching as an adjunct professor for several more years, teaching his final classes during the spring semester of 2014.

Memorial Donations in Honor of

Dr. Betty Pagan

By Her SECA Friends

Arkansas Early Childhood Association

Marilyn Peyrefitte Coleman, Mother of
Carol Montealegre

By Nancy Cheshire

Dr. Kevin Swick

By his SECA Friends

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The 2014 SECA Exemplary Outdoor Classroom

Creating a Nature Inspired Outdoor Learning Environment on a Shoestring Budget

For the past two years, SECA has sponsored a contest to showcase an exemplary outdoor classroom in the Southern region that demonstrates great outdoor spaces for young children. For this second year of the contest, we asked for submissions that demonstrated that “great spaces could be developed on a shoestring budget.....developmentally appropriate spaces designed without significant budgets.”

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.

The overall winner of the 2014 contest was profiled in our first 2014 issue of *Dimensions of Early Childhood*, Volume 42: 1 (pp.26-31). *Agapeland Youth Enrichment Program* (YEP) in Marion, South Carolina clearly demonstrated that with hard work, some resources and a lot of creativity, outdoor spaces could be developed that provided educational and fun opportunities for children to experience and learn in the outdoor environment.

We want to introduce you to another exemplary program that was designated as a runner-up in the 2014 contest. *The Child Development & Family Studies Center of Mississippi State University* in Starkville, MS was recognized for creative use of space and materials, again “on a shoestring budget”.

The Design

This outdoor classroom was designed as an “experiential learning garden” and is located adjacent to a main playground. The space is 40’ by 10’ and is used primarily by the three preschool classrooms in the Center. With room for children to run and play freely, it is designed to

encourage collaborative interactions with allowances for individual space.



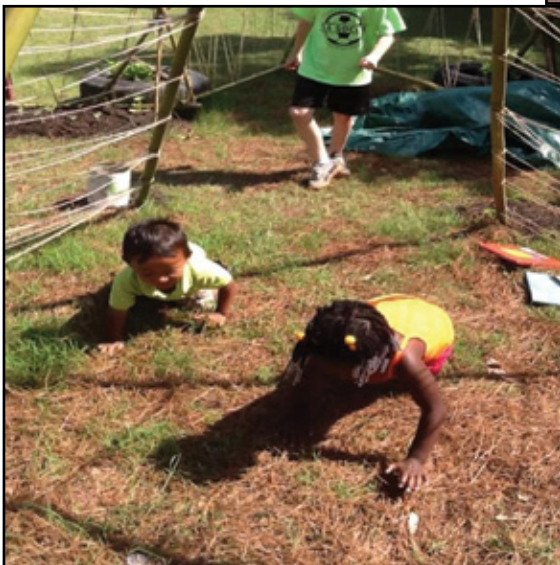
The space features two large bamboo teepees with borders around the perimeter that include these learning centers: sand & water play table, worm bed & storage, garden space, and a building area.



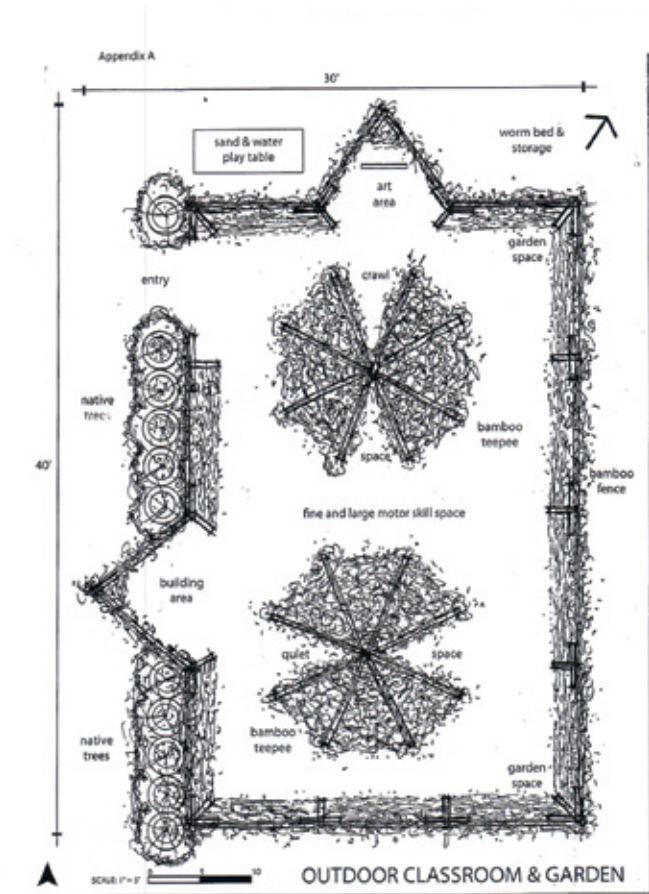
The area between the garden space and the teepees allows for gross motor play such as hula hooping and catch.



The teepees provide a great crawling space for children and are also used for literacy and group and solitary activities, such as story and snack time.



The area is surrounded by bamboo fencing and native trees are featured.



Construction

The garden was constructed using cardboard and newspaper to lay a foundation for the top soil. Cardboard boxes were cut to form an outer edge, it was topped with newspaper and then the soil was placed. Bamboo and jute was used to construct a fence to enclose the area and make it an identified outdoor play and learning space. Pine straw was used as the ground cover and to control grass and reduce insects.



Natural materials from Mississippi were included in the construction. Bamboo grows throughout the state and provides a green, renewable resource. The fence constructed of jute and bamboo has a predicted life of three to five years.

Pine straw is readily available and will be replaced or replenished each semester by the Center. Native trees should flourish in the state's environment.

Sunflowers, cucumbers, beans, peppers, basil, tomatoes, squash and melons were planted in the bed garden and in containers. Beans and trailing flowers were planted around the tepees and will grow to form a cover and provide shade. Sunflowers were planted along the back wall of the garden to also help provide shade as well as seeds to be eaten. (Starting the garden from seeds has allowed the children to be able to see the growing cycle from start to finish.)

Native dogwood, redbud and oak trees were planted in old painted tires and placed along the front and the side of the bed garden.





When these trees mature, they will provide excellent shade for the play space.

Composted soil was developed using leftover vegetable scraps from meals and snacks and will be used to replenish and establish new plants in the garden.

How It Works

The experiential learning garden has eight learning centers: large motor space, crawling space, art area, dramatic play area, garden area, water, sand, and dirt digging.

Art, Science & Math

Art areas were designed out of high traffic areas in triangles made on each side of the experiential learning garden. The art easels fit into these specifically designed areas to promote creativity and open-ended art.

The garden area is used for math and science experiences. Children have tilled the soil, planted seeds, watered the plants and picked and tasted fruit during snack time. These experiences have promoted science concepts by allowing the children to learn about food origins, plant life cycles, composting and developing a worm bed. Additionally, the children have sorted, counted and identified colors of plants.

A sand and water table located next to the experiential learning garden allows for an additional science and math area.



Dramatic play

Dramatic play is facilitated within the experiential learning garden as children entertain their stuffed animals and friends.

Bamboo sections are used for dramatic play materials such as building blocks or cooking utensils.



Dirt Digging

Dirt digging opportunities are found throughout the garden and children develop fine and gross motor skills to dig, plant, cover and water all of the seeds and plants. The edible landscape is planted around the perimeter of the garden and tepees to allow for easy access and to reduce damage to the growing plant.



Monitoring & Maintenance

The experiential learning garden is designed to allow for easy access and monitoring and accommodates approximately 17 children and 3 adults. The bamboo fence and tepees allow teachers and student observers to see children at all times and to monitor or document interactions and activities. When the vegetation becomes mature and the vegetables climb the tepees and fencing, the foliage will provide some covering but will not obstruct viewing each activity area.

A rotating watering schedule has been established so that no one person or teacher is burdened with the

sole responsibility of caring for the garden. The three preschool classrooms, as well as students, researchers, parents and the director, participate in the watering schedule.

Center employees involved in food preparation are responsible for the maintenance of the compost. They bring scrap food out daily. Laminated pictorial signs have been placed on the compost bin to ensure that appropriate food scraps are composted.

Weeding is reduced by the use of pine straw and the initial construction

utilizing newspaper as a base for the soil. Students and faculty assist with weed maintenance as needed.

Budget

The development of the experiential classroom was supported by a \$2000 grant from the Office of Research at Mississippi State University. Many of the materials used to establish the classroom were donated and some materials were purchased.

These materials and labor were donated:

- Bamboo (on-campus fraternity)
- Design of fence and tepees (landscape architect student & volunteer)
- Heirloom plant seeds (families at the Center)
- Trees (families at the Center)
- Plastic jugs & aluminum vegetable cans (families and staff at the Center)

Total cost of the experiential learning garden: An amazing \$509.90!

What We've Learned

You've now had the opportunity to view two amazing examples of exemplary outdoor learning spaces that cost less than \$1000 to develop. We know that:

- Ingenuity and creativity can take something rather ordinary and turn it into something special.
- Available & recycled resources are a cost effective way to design outdoor spaces that are developmentally appropriate.
- It doesn't cost a lot to provide an outdoor space with significant learning opportunities for young children.
- **Anyone can do it!**

Children don't need "fancy" and "expensive". They need "hands-on" and opportunities to explore with adults who can help to guide them through their explorations.

In the last 2014 issue of *Dimensions of Early Childhood*, we'll explore three other programs that were selected for recognition because of specific highlights in their outdoor spaces. Lifespan Montessori of

Purchased Materials	Cost
Pine straw	\$ 51.00
Jute twine (338 feet)	\$ 6.99
Bulk planters soil mix (4 yards)	\$188.00
Bone meal (20 pounds)	\$ 15.95
Gardening gloves (2 pairs)	\$ 14.58
Pot planters (6)	\$ 81.50
Shepherd hooks (4)	\$ 39.88
Water hose (2)	\$ 40.00
Tarp (1)	\$ 40.00
Cable ties	\$ 2.00
Spray paint for tires	\$ 30.00

Athens and St. Martin's Episcopal School in Georgia and the Child Development Center of the University of Louisiana/Monroe will be featured in that issue.

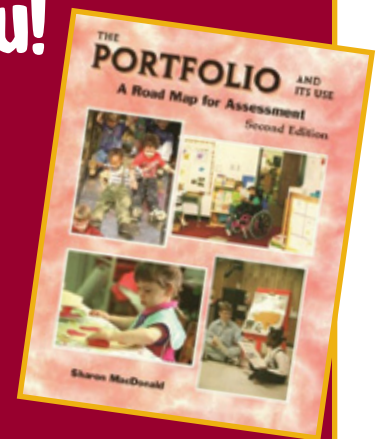
Congratulations to our colleagues at the Child Development & Family Studies Center of Mississippi State University for creating an Exemplary Outdoor Classroom on a Shoestring Budget!

If you're interested in learning more about this program, contact:

Dr. Julie Parker
 Mississippi State University
 School of Human Sciences
 Box 9745
 MS State, MS 39762
 662-325-0828
 JParker@humansci.msstate.edu

The majority of the content and photos in this article were submitted in the contest application by Dr. Lori Staton and Dr. Julie Parker on behalf of the Child Development and Family Studies Center of Mississippi State. The article was prepared from the contest application by Glenda Bean, Executive Director of the Southern Early Childhood Association.

We Heard You!



Professional publications too expensive?

Portfolio and Its Use: Second Edition is now available as an **E-book for 1/2 the price** of the print copy!

Purchase it now through the SECA website for only \$10 and download to your computer, tablet or mobile device. http://www.southernearlychildhood.org/online_store.php

Watch for announcements in the coming months about new e-books available through SECA.

It's Time to Vote! Meet Your Candidates

Voting for the next SECA President will open on September 1st. Beginning in January 2014, we have provided information to SECA members about the three candidates for SECA President-Elect: Carol Coleman Montealegre of Florida, Linda Novak of North Carolina and Beth Parr of Georgia.

This will be our last article about the 2014 presidential candidates before the vote and we'll provide you with an insight on their vision for SECA's future. We hope you'll also take advantage of these other opportunities that we've provided to get to know the candidates before you make your choice.

- On the homepage of the SECA website, you'll find a **video of the candidates**. The video will provide you with an "up close and personal" look at each candidate and you'll get to see them in action. Click here to view the video, or go to http://www.southernearlychildhood.org/leadership_info.php.
- In the spring 2014 and summer 2014 editions of *The SECA Reporter*, you'll find articles that contain their answers to specific questions concerning their leadership abilities and the value of SECA membership. Click here to access those issues of *The SECA Reporter*, or go to http://www.southernearlychildhood.org/publications_reporter.php.

This article will contain their answers to the following questions as well as a brief biography of each candidate.

Question #1: What is my vision for the future of SECA?

Question #2: What are the two biggest challenges that SECA faces in the next five years? Provide suggestions to meet these challenges.

Carol Coleman Montealegre of Florida



Carol is a native of New Orleans but spent her childhood in Honduras. After returning to the states, she attended Stuart Hall (secondary school) in Staunton, Virginia and received her bachelor's degree from the University of Southwestern Louisiana (now University of Louisiana in Lafayette). She met her husband, a native of Nicaragua, while in college and moved to Nicaragua after graduation where she taught at the Nicaraguan-American School. As her husband pursued his career with Bank of America, Carol, her two children and husband lived in several countries, finally settling in Miami in 1987 where they have remained in residence.

She worked as a preschool teacher and lead trainer for the Division of Early Childhood Programs of Miami-Dade Public Schools for fourteen years and earned her Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education from Nova Southeastern University.

After leaving the school system in 2000, she developed her own consulting company and served in a variety of consulting capacities in the field of early childhood education. She served as a Senior Consultant at the National Institute for Innovative Leadership in Miami, as Director of the Quality Counts Career Center operated by the Children's Forum in Florida, and as a consultant to the Miami Children's Museum Charter School, the YWCA of Greater Miami and Dade County, and the Catholic Charities' South Dade Child Care Center. She is also a certified teacher/trainer for the HighScope Educational Research Foundation and has traveled extensively throughout the US in that capacity.

Carol has served as President of the South Florida Association for Young Children (SFAYC), on the Board of the Florida Association for the Education of Young Children (FLAEYC) and as a Member-at-Large on the SECA Board of Directors (2008-2013). She is fluent in Spanish and was instrumental in working with the SECA Editorial Committee to develop the SECA publication, *Aula Infantil*, which includes articles authored by Carol. Her goal was to provide materials in the native language of many caregivers in the South Florida area (and other SECA states) to enhance their knowledge of early childhood best practices.

Carol states that her *"passion is to move our great organization forward by serving membership, nurturing leadership and strengthening advocacy."*

My Vision for SECA

Question #1: My vision for the future of SECA is a stronger SECA...Stronger in its number of members, visibility, advocacy and leadership.

As President of SECA, I will provide the leadership to achieve my vision by moving the organization forward in the following areas:

1. Increase and serve membership by embracing diversity, increasing the number of Student Chapters, reactivating inactive affiliates, and reaching out to those professionals working in Kindergarten and the primary grades.
To accomplish the endeavor, I will seek innovative ideas and those knowledgeable in the use of technology. SECA is blessed with a wealth of knowledgeable, creative, and energetic members.
2. Nurture and develop leadership at all levels, from the teacher working in an Early Childhood center to those who sit on the SECA Board.
To attain the goal, I will encourage SECA's Leadership Commission to investigate ways that support and strengthen local and state affiliates. For example, SECA has an effective infrastructure that can be duplicated. When needed, adaptations can be made.

Again, SECA has an abundance of talented and resourceful minds in all of the Southern states that are just waiting to be tapped. Involving the Fossils, who have served on the SECA Board, would be a good beginning.
3. Strengthen and increase SECA's efforts in advocacy so that SECA's voice is listened to in the halls of local, state, and federal government. To achieve this far-reaching goal, leadership beginning at the grass roots level is essential. SECA's outstanding publications are also avenues for supporting this undertaking.

In conclusion, my vision commits to preserving and enriching our SECA heritage. A bastion of our Southern traditions and values, I know that together we can move SECA forward!

Question #2: I think that the two biggest challenges facing SECA in the next five years are the following:

1. Maintaining financial sustainability, and
2. Remaining relevant to its members.

To meet the challenge of financial sustainability, I have two suggestions. The first is to strive to increase membership by embracing diversity, reaching out to kindergarten and primary grade professionals, and forming more Student Chapters. My second suggestion is to investigate other streams of revenue. In the United States we are witnessing a rapid growth in the field of Early Childhood Education. The public and decision makers are recognizing the critical importance of high quality programs. Therefore, I believe that we can grow membership and find other means of income.

To meet the second challenge of remaining relevant to members, I suggest the need to respond to the concerns and needs of the individual Southern states. One way to be more responsive is to increase SECA's communication with membership via technology. Members who live in rural areas, and those who are technologically savvy such as students, and younger members would benefit and be acknowledged.

Through publications and conference tracks SECA can be responsive to membership by embracing diversity. When I think of diversity it is in the context of plurality... all-encompassing including different cultures, ethnic groups, faiths, professional roles.

Strengthening SECA's advocacy efforts is still another means of being responsive to membership. To do so, requires growing leadership beginning at the grass roots level.

SECA has been facing challenges for several years. Considering the economic downturn and other changes that have occurred, SECA has managed to navigate through rough waters. I believe that with SECA's strong leadership and committed membership our association will continue to meet challenges and move forward.

To meet Linda Novak and Beth Parr, turn the page!

Linda Novak of North Carolina



Linda first entered a leadership position with SECA as a member of the West Virginia Association for Young Children (WVAYC), serving as President. She was a founding member of the West Virginia Child Care Centers United (WVCUU), which she served as President.

With a personal move to North Carolina, Linda assumed the position of Interim Division Chair, Public Service, at Fayetteville Technical Community College in Fayetteville, North Carolina, and initiated discussions about bringing SECA back to North Carolina. (*The North Carolina SECA affiliate was dissolved in the early 2000's.*) As a first step, she mentored a group of early childhood students from Fayetteville Technical Community College, applied for a SECA Student Grant, and brought them to their first SECA conference in Williamsburg, Virginia.

Linda began her early childhood professional career after earning a B.S. in Psychology with a specialization in Child and Developmental Psychology from the University of Pittsburgh. As a teacher of 2-5 year-olds at Tiny Town Day Nursery in Parkersburg, WV, she advanced to become director in 1983. She continued to progress through different professional positions, including Co-Director of a Preschool in Williamstown, WV, Director of the Children's Room at West Virginia University in Parkersburg and Instructor for the Child Development Specialist Apprenticeship Program through the U.S. Department of Labor. In 2009, she earned a Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education from Concordia University.

Her professional journey continued through positions as adjunct faculty at several colleges, Director of the Evergreen Child Development Center at Washington State Community College in Ohio and Director of the Early Learning Center at West Virginia University Parkersburg. She has developed and taught online courses and supervised practicum field placements.

She is a certified trainer for the West Virginia State Training and Registry System and has completed Level 1 and 2 ECERS training. She is also a member of the inaugural class of the President's Leadership Institute at Fayetteville Technical Community College and received the 2012-2013 Excellence in Teaching Award for Curriculum Programs at FTCC.

Her goal is *"to utilize my knowledge of early childhood education along with my organizational, managerial, and training talents to benefit the organization's members and employees."*

My Vision for SECA

Question #1: My vision for the future of SECA would include membership growth with a focus on students in higher education and continuing to meet the needs of current members. As faculty in higher education, I see the importance of this information to students who are just embarking on their career and to adult learners who have worked in our field for many years. Embracing this group of potential members would not only bring in future leaders but also the faculty who work with adult learners.

This focus does not mean excluding the needs of current members. SECA does many things right. We teach young children to look at problems with fresh eyes and consider all possibilities. A healthy organization must continue to look at their services with fresh eyes. Are we meeting the needs of all generations in our membership? The focus will be on growing new leaders within SECA to carry on traditions and bring fresh ideas for continued growth and relevancy.

Question #2: The two biggest challenges SECA will face in the next five years are finding the right person to assume the Executive Director position as Glenda Bean transitions to a well-deserved retirement. The second challenge is to grow membership and remain relevant to incoming and current members.

The first challenge will be the most difficult because the Executive Director is essentially the face of our organization in many aspects. To lead SECA through this process, I would recommend the Board first develop a clear vision of the qualities they require and desire in an Executive Director. Our vision must be clear before we can find an exceptional individual to guide SECA through the upcoming years. A nationwide search should be conducted, and then potential candidates narrowed down. A detailed interview process will occur with the Board before a candidate is invited to become Executive Director. The process may involve a second interview to ensure the appropriate individual is found. I would ensure the process is clear, has a schedule with deadlines for the Board, and allows for input from the entire Board.

Growing membership will include a focus on student groups in high schools, community colleges, and four year institutions. I would consider one article in each *Dimensions* that can specifically be used in academic courses with follow up

activities and expansion on learning opportunities. *Dimensions* is currently a high-quality, relevant publication that can be used, and is used in college courses. Providing instructors with additional resources will meet the needs of faculty, teachers and all ages of students. As an electronic benefit provided to members, it would showcase SECA's relevancy in the higher education early childhood field. This provides an opportunity to higher education professionals to contribute to their field, by creating the learning modules for publication in *Dimensions* or distributed electronically. Our footprint will broaden in higher education. We will meet our current member's needs by continuing to do what is already working and maintaining an ongoing dialogue to see if SECA can meet any additional needs.

Elizabeth (Beth) Strader Parr of Georgia



A resident of Georgia for many years, Beth assumed a leadership role with the Georgia Association for Young Children (GAYC) and was elected as their representative to the SECA Board of Directors, serving in the positions of Chair of the Public Policy Commission of the SECA Board and as SECA's representative (ex-officio) on the NAEYC Affiliate Council.

Beth earned a BA in History and American Studies at St. Andrews Presbyterian College in North Carolina and later earned her Master's in Education including Educational Technology at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro. She began her career in early childhood education at Leonard St. Kindergarten in High Point, NC and served as the Children's Librarian at Roddenbery Memorial Library in Cairo, GA.

In 1982, she began her work with faith-based institutions, contributing significantly to the creation of programs and curricula for those institutions. She was the founding Director of the Mother's Morning Out Program at Porterfield United Methodist Church in Albany, GA and the Director of Children's Ministries at St. Luke United Methodist Church in Columbus, GA. Additionally, she served as a consultant for various church congregations in South Georgia as they developed children's ministries. The United Methodist Publishing House recognized Beth's expertise and utilized her as a writer and editor for various curricula to be utilized in the church's programs, including six volumes of the curriculum, *Bible Zone Live*, for preschool.

Her work in the field was not limited to faith-based institutions. Beth took a brief "break" to serve as the Education Specialist at the Coastal Heritage Society of Savannah, GA and was instrumental in helping to design the Savannah Children's Museum. She has served as a CDA instructor at Chatham Childcare Collaborative and Coastal Georgia Community College, as a technical assistance consultant for the NAEYC Accreditation Facilitation Project of GAYC, and a regional accreditation assessor for NAEYC.

She is a certified playground safety inspector, has attended workshops on puppetry and participated in the North Carolina Storytelling Festival. She has also served as a member of the Bishop's Initiative Task Force on Children and Poverty.

For her, being president means, *"the opportunity to lead SECA in embracing new ways of nurturing our membership while retaining the warmth for which we are known as we continue to advocate for the young children of the South."*

My Vision for SECA

Question #1: My vision for the future of the Southern Early Childhood Association is based on an analysis of the things we do well. I see SECA in the future as a dynamic organization that reaches out to the early childhood community in creative ways that are relevant to early childhood professionals. We have sought throughout our history to provide valid research related to the special needs of those working in Early Childhood in the South. We likewise have sought to provide support to those in the early childhood classrooms, lending insight into needs of children and innovative ways of meeting those needs. I don't see any of those foci changing. It is who we are and what we can contribute to the larger early childhood community. What I do see changing is the ways that we go about accomplishing these goals. I see a greater reliance on technology for at least two reasons. One is that we are being challenged by the economic situations in our states. There are fewer travel dollars which will allow early childhood professionals to go to conferences, particularly if they are out of state. The second reason is that technology is a huge part of our lives today. More people have become accustomed to using their computers, tablets, and phones for learning. We need to embrace the ways in which we can make use of technology to make our information and materials accessible to more people more easily.

continued on the next page

Question #2: The challenges we are facing in the next five years directly relate to the above-mentioned economic situation in our states. For those of us who have been a part of SECA for a “few” years, the conferences have been what we have cherished because of the relationships and professional growth offered there. Losing that aspect of our identity would be very difficult. There is more training, free training, available locally, so we will need to provide training that is current and top-notch and might not be available at the local level. We need to look at ways that we can retain the pluses while at the same time providing cost effective opportunities. Though research will have to be done, options might include regional leadership conferences, e-conferences, webinars, and/or support of our state conferences.

We will have to work even more diligently to assess the needs of our constituents and to recognize those needs that we can meet. Another significant challenge for us is how to embrace change without “throwing the baby out with the bath water.” Change is hard, even when it is for the good of all who are concerned. We need leadership that will be sensitive to concerns of the various groups that make up our organization. We must change in order to continue to be an organization that can make a difference for the children of the south. We must avoid any “us and them” arguments. We can make a difference for children but it will require new ways of thinking for all of us.



DON'T FORGET TO VIEW THE CANDIDATE VIDEO ON THE SECA WEBSITE. YOU'LL GET TO KNOW THE CANDIDATES PERSONALLY!

SECA 2015 The World From Our Front Porch: Community and Culture January 15-17, 2015 • Astor Crowne Plaza • New Orleans, Louisiana

Meet Our Keynote Speakers!

Friday, January 16, 2015

Donald Davis, Storyteller

Go to <http://www.jackstreet.com/jackstreet/KSECA.Davis.cfm> to listen to Donald's SECA Radio interview.

Donald Davis was born in a Southern Appalachian mountain world rich in stories. "I didn't learn stories, I just absorbed them," he says as he recounts tales and more tales learned from a family of traditional storytellers who have lived on the same Western North Carolina land since 1781. Davis grew up hearing gentle fairy tales, simple and silly Jack tales, scary mountain lore, ancient Welsh and Scottish folktales, and-most importantly-nourishing true-to-life stories of his own neighbors and kin.



"I could have listened all morning to Donald Davis...his stories often left listeners limp with laughter at the same time they struggled with a lump in the throat."

Wilma Dykeman
The New York Times

Daniel J. Hodgins

Boys: Changing the Environment, Not the Child

- Do boys really learn differently than girls?
- How can I nurture attachment and bonding while being firm?
- How do I deal with challenging issues with boys?
- What does a supportive environment for boys look like?

Many teachers and parents are asking these questions and more. Increase your awareness of boys: how they learn, how to educate them based on brain science research, and how to create the ultimate environment that supports boys' needs.

Daniel Hodgins is an internationally recognized presenter and author of two books titled: *Boys: Changing the Classroom, Not the Child* and his new book: *GET OVER IT: Relearning Guidance Practices*. His work has been featured in national publications including, *International Cooperative Nursery* and *Early Childhood News*.



Dr. Rebecca Isbell and Dr. Shirley Raines

Spellbinding Stories and Songs from Our Front Porch Swing to Yours

Southerners have a rich cultural heritage that is filled with wonderful stories and foot stomping songs. These creative forms of expression bind us together as families and communities and teachers and children. Today, listen to stories that will inspire you and demonstrate important moral lessons. Participate in music that will stir your soul and make you clap your hands. Build your collection of stories and songs that can be passed on to the children with whom you work and help them feel a sense of pride in our roots. Get your day off to a great start with stories, songs, humor and joy!



Saturday, January 17, 2015

Johnette Downing

Johnette Downing is a multi-award winning musician and author presenting concerts and author visits for children, and keynotes and workshops for educators globally. Johnette's presentations celebrate childhood and speak to a child's interests in an engaging, interactive, thought-provoking, educational, entertaining and culturally respectful way; earning her a reputation for being the "Musical Ambassador to Children."



Downing has garnered multiple awards including eight Parents' Choice Awards, four iParenting Media Awards, two Parent's Guide to Children's Media Awards, four National Parenting Publications Awards, a Family Choice Award, two Family Review Center Best of the Year Awards, an Imagination Award and a Haiku International Association Honorable Mention Award.

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for the

**66th Annual Conference
of the Southern Early
Childhood Association!**



January 15-17, 2015

Astor Crowne Plaza in the French Quarter

**THE WORLD FROM OUR FRONT PORCH:
COMMUNITY & CULTURE**