



DIMENSIONS

of Early Childhood

Children Who Challenge



Helping Children Express Curiosity About Disabilities



Connecting Kids and Nature



Intentionally Changing Dramatic Play



Making Sense of Children's Drawings

Volume 43, Number 3, 2015



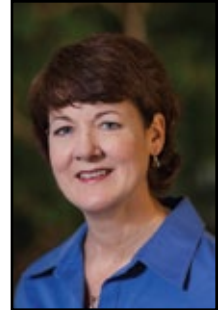
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Meet Our Keynoters!

Kathleen C. Gallagher, Ph.D.

The Whole Child in Harmony: What It Means & What It Takes

Kathleen (Kate) Gallagher, Ph.D. is an educational psychologist and early childhood professional, with over 30 years of experience teaching and leading early childhood programs. She is a Scientist at Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute and Clinical Associate Professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Dr. Gallagher designs and evaluates approaches that promote the development and wellbeing of young children, families, and early childhood professionals – particularly in the contexts of poverty, disability and cultural diversity. Dr. Gallagher’s passion and ability to communicate and elevate the importance of high quality early care and education are manifest in her talk at TEDxUNC 2015, “The Healthy Child: Assembly Required”.



Patrick Mitchell “The Down To Earth Dad”

How to Talk to Dads So They’ll Listen

...Getting (and Keeping) Good Men Involved!

Patrick Mitchell, known nationally as “The Down To Earth Dad,” shows preschool, kindergarten, and primary school educators, child-and-family advocates, policy makers and practitioners how to get good men optimally involved for the sake of children’s cognitive, social, and emotional development.

Patrick is a columnist for *Children’s Voice* magazine published by the Child Welfare League of America in Washington, DC, directs the *National Dads Matter!*™ Project, and he’s the founding editor of *The Down To Earth Dad* monthly newsletter.

The Down To Earth Dad provides school readiness and parent and family engagement “Family Storytelling Night” events, and staff trainings, for programs and schools across America. Patrick lives in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho and is the father of three children.



Stephen Fite

The Magic of Music & Movement

As long as Stephen can remember, he has always loved music. At the young age of five he had big dreams of being the fifth Beatle. That whole British band thing never panned out, but, he has found something just as cool, if not cooler. He has realized his dream of playing before crowds of screaming fans - the very young variety. The bonus is that through his play he is able to touch their lives by aiding in their education.

Stephen Fite is an award-winning children’s musician/writer whose albums have received eighteen nationally recognized honors. Suitable for the classroom, car or living room, his upbeat brand of children’s music has been delighting students, teachers and parents around the nation for three decades. His Concert Tour draws over 70,000 teachers and children to theaters throughout the Southeast and Midwest while his trainings infuse educators with the passion he holds for music as a dynamic tool for teaching.



Southern Early Childhood Association

Editor - Mari Cortez, Ph.D.

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Dimensions of Early Childhood

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Southern Early Childhood Association
1123 S. University, Ste 255
Little Rock, AR 72204
(800) 305-7322
info@southernearlychildhood.org
www.southernearlychildhood.org

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President's Message

Kathy Attaway

This is an especially exciting time to be a member of the Southern Early Childhood Association, and I am so glad to be a part of it right along with you. With the dawn of a new era in SECA's history comes an excitement that is palpable. It is with great pleasure that I speak about SECA's recommitment to our southern states. We are unique, proud of our heritage and on a path to greatness.

As I have traveled to our state affiliates these past two years, I have listened and learned. Membership in our association is growing and strengthening. We are broadening our outreach to multiple groups by reaching directly into communities to assist with their local endeavors. If you keep your eyes and ears open, you will discover some exciting actions coming your way very soon. We are committed to offering even more services to our members both directly and through your State Affiliate, such as reaching out to Home Visitors with a unique membership. The SECA website has had a facelift and will be opening a blog very soon to incorporate The SECA Reporter in a more useful way. Watch for Spanish language articles in Dimensions of Early Childhood, beginning with this issue. So many other benefits are in the works for you, our members.

It has been not only a pleasure but a joy for me to have the opportunity to serve as your president for the past two years and I want to take this time to thank you for the thrill of the journey on which you sent me. I couldn't be more pleased with where the Southern Early Childhood Association stands today and the wonderful opportunities visible just over the horizon.

Please welcome Carol Montealegre as your new President. I am sure that under Carol's guidance the Southern Early Childhood Association will continue to prosper in the coming years.



Words from the Editor

Dr. Mari Cortez

What do you think about when you hear the word “diversity”? The meaning of diversity encompasses many definitions that are of particular importance for the children and families in our care. In this issue of *Dimensions of Early Childhood*, I would like to invite you to read and reflect on the different aspects of diversity included in the articles. For instance, two of our articles focus on cultural relevancy. Hall describes the importance of enhancing children’s sociodramatic play by providing culturally relevant materials and changing the housekeeping area intentionally for children’s play to be richer. Campbell and Williams remind us that children’s environment also includes

the geographical area where they live and the importance of the flora and fauna for their development. (This article was selected to be translated to Spanish for our Spanish speaking audience, adding to the notion of diversity.) Crow, Cooper and Dallas as well as Cellitti and Hastings present a different view of diversity focusing on children with special needs, including those with challenging behaviors. Finally, Soundy reminds us of the importance of creating meaning through the medium of drawing, which is an excellent way to learn about the diversity of children. These articles provide you with useful ideas that can be easily implemented in the classroom. I hope that these ideas will help you with your definition of diversity.

Notas del Editor:

¿Qué es lo que piensas cuando escuchas la palabra “diversidad”? El significado de la palabra diversidad abarca muchas definiciones que son de particular importancia para los niños y familias en nuestro cuidado. En este número de *Dimensions of Early Childhood*, los invito a leer y reflexionar sobre los diferentes aspectos de la diversidad comprendidos en los artículos. Por ejemplo, dos de nuestros artículos se centran en la relevancia cultural. La autora Hall describe la importancia del juego social-dramático de los niños y como se enriquece cuando proporcionamos materiales culturalmente pertinentes y cambiamos el área de la “casita” intencionalmente. Campbell y Williams nos recuerdan que el medio ambiente de los niños también incluye el área geográfica en la que viven y de la importancia de la flora y la fauna para su desarrollo. (Este artículo fue seleccionado para ser traducido al español para nuestra audiencia de habla Hispana, añadiendo a la noción de diversidad.) También, los autores Crow, Cooper y Dallas, así como Cellitti y Hastings presentan una visión diferente de la diversidad se centran en los niños con necesidades especiales, incluyendo aquellos con comportamiento desafiante. El artículo escrito por Soundy nos recuerda la importancia de la creación de significado a través del medio del dibujo, ya que es una gran manera de aprender acerca de la diversidad de los niños. Estos artículos les proporcionan ideas útiles que se pueden implementar fácilmente en el aula. Espero que estas ideas les ayuden a expandir su definición de la diversidad.

Best/Deseándoles lo mejor,

Mari Riojas-Cortez, Ph.D.

Editor

Emergency Relief for Teachers of Children Who Challenge

Challenging children can make a teacher's day difficult. These authors share some strategies that can provide "emergency relief" to teachers.

**René Crow,
Mark Cooper,
& Jamie Dallas**

"I am facing the most difficult year in my 12 years as a teacher. I come home and cry all the time. I am at a complete loss. I have such a passion for my students, but I just don't think I am good enough for this class. It truly makes me want to give up." This real-life situation is often shared by teachers of students who show severe signs and symptoms of impulsivity, distractibility, and hyperactivity combined with frequent, aggressive behaviors including biting and hitting.

How many teachers can identify with this kind of scenario? Such teachers need hope, the kind described by Jerome Groopman (2004), the author of *The Anatomy of Hope*. This book emphasizes that to find hope, discouraged teachers need tools specifically designed to combat their chronic hopeless thoughts with those that help them believe that challenging behaviors can be successfully changed.

Emergency Relief

Teachers of students with chronic challenging behaviors need relief, and they need it quickly. While they may appreciate the sympathy of others, what they really need is some genuine help. The same Noah Principle for students with disabilities described by Dr. Mark Cooper in *Bound and Determined to Help Children with Learning Disabilities Succeed* (2005) must be applied to teachers challenged by chronic misbehavior. The Noah Principle according to Cooper is that there are no more prizes for predicting rain, just prizes for building arks. Cooper writes, "We can no longer afford to walk in waist-deep water in the middle of a storm holding umbrellas over our heads thinking that this will protect and insulate us from the challenges" (xii). Teachers who face huge

behavioral obstacles by students need and deserve more.

There is no quick fix, no magic pill, or no one-size-fits-all strategy. However, there are some helpful practices designed to achieve three goals.

Goal #1: Reduce the frequency of behavior challenges

Goal #2: Shorten the duration of such challenges, and/or

Goal #3: Lower the intensity of those challenges

The elimination of challenges is certainly ideal but we concede that it is probably too idealistic. Still, we have found that the strategies and techniques described in this article have been helpful to many teachers who found themselves in need of emergency relief.

Behavioral challenges must be anticipated and expected.

Teachers of young children are appropriately encouraged to develop and implement appropriate instructional and guidance strategies. At times, however, they are inappropriately misled into thinking that such strategies will help their students behave appropriately. When good, committed teachers work hard to implement strategies steeped in best early childhood practices and still find themselves struggling with inappropriate behavior from the children they teach, they begin to question themselves as viable teachers (Kohler, Cooper, Crow, & Atkins, 2008).



Photos courtesy of the authors

Explicit SEL

Emergency Relief Strategies for Teachers of Children Who Challenge

In this article we share a number of strategies and techniques designed to address the needs of young children who have social skill and self-management challenges. These strategies include the use of:

- Explicit, Direct Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Instruction
- Behavior Identification
- Descriptive Comments
- Visual Cueing
- Auditory Prompting
- Gadget Guidance
- Techno-Guidance
- Interactive Behavioral Picture Stories
- Home Connections
- Integrated Content Area Activities (Crow, & Cooper, 2006; Cooper, Crow, Filer, Murphy, & Benson, 2005; Crow, & Cooper, 2004; Cooper, & Filer, 2003; Cooper, Russell, & Sullivan, 2003).

Explicit, Direct Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Instruction

Early childhood teachers are encouraged to commit themselves to a whole child teaching philosophy, and this includes deliberate, focused attention on social and emotional competencies. Instructional needs of children go far beyond cognitive skills, and children need teachers who are dedicated to helping them learn and use social and emotional competencies in various settings. Just as concerned adults take action to intervene when a child develops a spiked temperature or shows deficits in language or cognitive skills, teachers who face children's challenging behaviors cannot stand idly by and think children's behaviors will change without deliberate plans and follow through to intervene. In its new review of evidence based social and emotional programs for young children and older children alike, the Collaborative for Academic and Social Emotional Learning indicates an increased focus on programs that "provide explicit SEL skill instruction, teacher instructional practices and pedagogy, and programs that

fully integrate SEL with academic content in specific core content areas" (<http://www.casel.org/guide/criteria.>)

It is important that childhood educators directly teach knowledge and skills important for healthy relationships while concurrently taking care to ensure developmental appropriateness using concrete tools and age-appropriate strategies. Important knowledge and skills include self-awareness, social awareness, emotional management, problem solving, respect and concern for others, and a variety of behaviors that reflect caring, cooperating, sharing, helping, accepting no, waiting for what you want, persisting, and listening. Teachers committed to teaching such competencies can sometimes find themselves overwhelmed. To help them determine what knowledge and skills to teach, early childhood teachers may find the following resources helpful.

Early childhood teachers can and should use *applicable standards for their organizations* to help guide their planning of social and emotional instruction (i.e., Head Start Program Outcomes, state curriculum standards, and Common Core State Standards, especially the Common Core standards related to the Speaking and Listening strand of English Language Arts.)

The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has identified key competencies that represent research based categories of skills children need in order to succeed in and out of school environments (Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004). The competencies are categorized as follows: self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision making, relationship skills, and social awareness.

Their website, <http://casel.org/why-it-matters/what-is-sel/skills-competencies>, offers helpful information to teachers working to implement direct social and emotional instruction related to these categories. CASEL identifies clear evidence-based guidelines to assist educators in building and implementing strong, effective social and emotional learning programs (Elias, Zins, Weissberg et.al, 1997.) The guidelines include:

- interactively teaching SEL skills for applications to daily life
- building connections to school through caring, engaging classroom practices
- promoting developmentally and culturally appropriate instruction
- linking SEL across the whole child curriculum
- addressing social and emotional dimensions of learning alongside cognitive dimensions of learning
- involving families
- establishing organizational supports for SEL programs
- providing high quality professional development for staff with sustainable continuous improvement efforts.

CASEL also periodically publishes the *CASEL Guide* that identifies and rates evidence-based SEL programs that are well designed and shown to be effective for advancing social and emotional as well as academic skills in PreK-12 students. For programs interested in exploring various research-based curricula as a framework to more deliberately address social and emotional needs of students, this report can be especially beneficial. The 2013 report can be accessed at <http://casel.org/guide>.



Descriptive Comment

Photo courtesy of the authors

Behavior Identification

Too often students are taught what not to do rather than what to do. Bailey (2001) states, *“What you focus on is what you get.”* She is right. Teachers who exclaim to students, *“Don’t hit!”* teach students what **not** to do. However, the students rarely learn what to do. It is better for teachers to identify the behavior for the students to learn. In a particular case with a teacher who has a student who hits, the teacher should say, *“Johnny, you need to use safe hands when you’re angry. Safe hands stay close to our bodies like this.”* The same can be said for teaching a student who wants what he wants when he wants it. It would help for the teacher to say, *“Johnny, it’s important for you to learn how to wait for what you want. That is called patience.”* Teachers must describe, demonstrate, and encourage students to rehearse/practice those behaviors, as well. When they do, students begin to demonstrate what they know to do rather than remained confused about what they are not to do.

Descriptive Commenting

Deliberate use of positive teacher language is a valuable guidance strategy in itself (Denton, 2013), and the use of Descriptive Commenting is a powerful language tool that can offer the emergency relief that students and teachers need. Descriptive comments are like a play-by-play commentary that describes students’ thoughts, feelings, and actions. Descriptive comments focus on the student and the deed. In response to a student who hits, the teacher may say, *“Trudy, you sure kept your hands safe when Johnny took the ball from you. You are becoming a very safe friend to be around.”* The focus is on the person, Trudy, and the deed – showing safe hands. Such statements both affirm/praise Trudy as well as help her learn the meaning of safe hands and ways to demonstrate safe hands when angry. It is also a good idea to teach students like Trudy to use “I” statements and say, *“I am using my safe hands when angry.”* Again, this form of descriptive commenting helps the students learn what to do rather than what not to do.

Visual Cueing

Visual cueing refers to photos or illustrations designed to encourage or promote the learning of social emotional skills. Too often, children hear the vocal sounds, “*Boys and girls, I need you to show self-control.*” without visual cues that help anchor the encouraging words. Yet, we frequently hear people say, “*Pictures are worth a thousand words.*” There are a variety of learners in our classrooms – auditory, visual, tactile, and kinesthetic. There are many examples of visual cues used to reinforce what we say such as display boards, bulletin boards, and game boards.



Photo courtesy of the authors

Auditory Prompts

Auditory Prompting

Auditory Prompting involves music with educational lyrics that promote learning. Think back to a song played on a repetitive basis. What happens? Very often, the lyrics are played over and over in the mind. During the entire day, you find yourself singing and humming the tune. Auditory prompts are designed to leave students “thinking” about the lyrics using the melody as a magnetic appeal. Students love to sing, dance,

tap their feet, and pretend to play instruments. Auditory prompts help anchor lessons taught. For example, the teacher who wants students to befriend one another can use a song that highlights that concept. Once students become familiar with the song, the teacher can use simply 10 seconds of the song to encourage students to go outside for recess and demonstrate friendliness. There are also songs that represent a wide range of social emotional needs that children have, such as anger manage-

ment, self-control, and believing in oneself.

Gadget Guidance

Gadget guidance involves the use of concrete, hands-on, tangible, manipulative props designed to activate and motivate the students in an inviting way. The teacher may use puppetry, bubbles, toy glasses, telescopes, and so forth for teaching purposes. A teacher may use bubbles for students who want what they want when they want it. An impatient student waiting to pop a slow floating bubble can learn that they can in fact wait for what they want. Young students who often personify inanimate objects are more inclined to show self-control when carrying a stuffed monkey in the classroom, reminding them to serve as a good role model. Play glasses might be a symbol for looking at a problem differently or the mist from a spray toy might be just the way to cool students off when learning to manage their emotions. The point is that high-interest gadgets help motivate students to not only remember what they are learning but also to develop a desire to apply such learning.

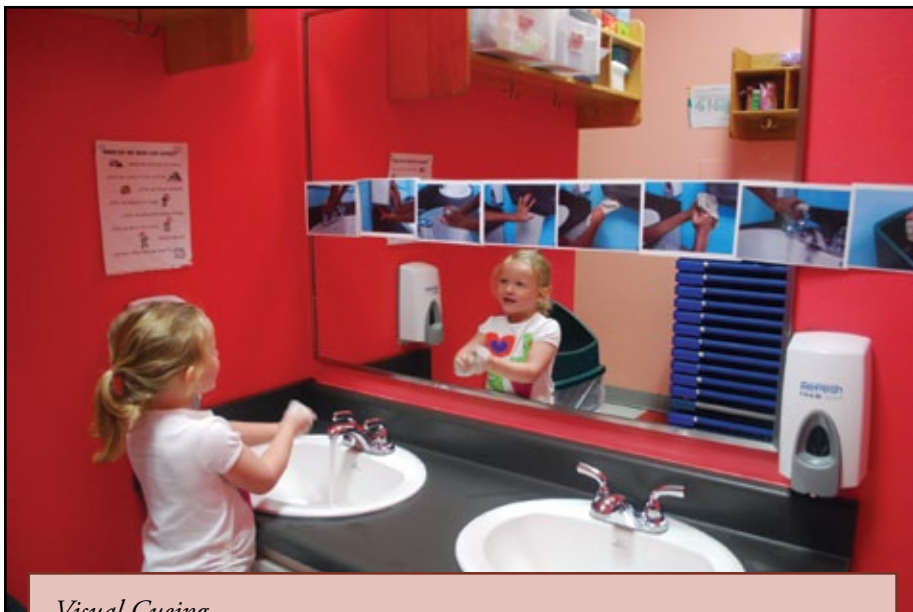


Photo courtesy of the authors

Visual Cueing

Interactive Behavior Picture Stories

Behavior Stories are adaptations of Carol Gray's (2010) social story intervention, developed originally for children on the autism spectrum. Like Gray's social stories, behavior stories are written in child-friendly language and assist children in practicing perspective taking and appropriate social and emotional responses to situations they find confusing or frustrating. Specific to the concrete, experiential needs of young children, Crow (2008) suggests the creation of teacher-made behavior picture stories that are interactive in nature, highlight photos of the child for whom the story is written, and provide interactive, movable parts that enable the child to practice the social skills that are highlighted in the story. Another way to enrich behavior stories for young children is to set them to music. Elizandro, Bramlett & Crow (2012) found that preschoolers with hyperactive and impulsive behaviors were positively impacted when their teachers implemented behavior stories with a music component.

Techno-Guidance

Techno-Guidance is the use of technology (audiotapes, videotapes, YouTube, etc.) that motivates and activates behavior skill development. For example, young children love to watch video clips, especially when they are the actors and actresses. A very effective techno-guidance technique is to capture and videotape the children demonstrating positive behaviors such as caring, helping, sharing, and working. Snapshots of children displayed on the bulletin board are equally inviting and exciting to the children. Children will

Song Selections for Young Children

- *Friends Forever* – Greg and Steve– (*We All Live Together, Vol. V* CD) Produced by Young Heart Music ASIN # B00000DGMT
- *You've Got a Friend in Me* (*Disney's Superstar Hits* CD) Produced by Walt Disney Records, ASIN # B000060P4B
- *I Like You, There's No Doubt About It* – Jean Feldman – (*Dr. Jean Sings Silly Songs* CD) Produced by Progressive Music – ASIN # 028021000120
- *I Can Settle Down Collection* – David Kisor – Produced by Children, Inc. and Kisor Music LLC. ASIN #659696202528
- *Teaching Peace Collection* – Red Grammar – Produced by Red Note Records ASIN # 886146128
- *Believe in Yourself* – Greg and Steve – (*Kidding Around with Greg and Steve* CD) ASIN #6307799595
- *We're All Different and We're the Same* – Jack Hartman – (*Bop, Pop & Hip-Hop in Preschool* CD) – Produced by ASIN
- *Come Join the Circle Collection* – Paulette Meier – Produced by Lesson songs Music. ASIN #B00078GGFS
- *Make a Difference* – Marilyn M. Linford – (*Your World at a Glance* CD) Produced by Marilyn M. Linford.
- *Getting Better at Getting Along Collection* – Jack Hartman – ASIN #B001N46TLG
- *If You're Angry and You Know It* (*Follow a Dream* CD) Produced by Hop 2 It Music ASIN #B0009X6RSC
- *I Can Count on You Collection* – David Kisor – Produced by Children, Inc. and Kisor Music LLC. ISBN 659696202726)
- *It Starts in the Heart Collection*– Jack Hartmann and Becky Bailey – Produced by Hop 2 It Music – ISBN 636723109722



Home Connection

Photo courtesy of the authors

spend much time comparing looks with big grins. The use of animated YouTube stories bring to life talking points that help children embrace characters who show caring, helping, sharing, and so forth. Audiotapes are also useful for teaching positive

thoughts and behaviors. Children become very attentive when asked to “figure out” answers to the two questions, “Who do you hear?” “What are they saying that makes us feel good?” The suspense becomes the leverage for listening.

Home Connection

Effective teachers recognize the powerful influence of strong, clear relationships with families. One way to strengthen relationships and positively influence the generalization of social skills is through the use of planned home connections. For the explicit, direct SEL instruction lessons that directly teach social competencies, extensions can be planned that enable children to practice the skills learned not only at school but also in their homes. Similarly, when teachers create Interactive Behavior Picture Stories, it is suggested that they make copies for the child to take home and share with their families. When teachers make concerted efforts to offer descriptive comments highlighting positive behaviors of children at school, families should know what children are doing right, as well. A dialogue journal or descriptive comment note cards sent home can be helpful in involving families in our social and emotional learning efforts at school.

Integrated Content Activities

Early childhood teachers have a longstanding commitment to integrated curricula that highlight thematic or child-initiated units. These projects integrate learning in various content areas such as science, math, art, drama, literacy, and music. In connection with these unit topics, teachers develop learning centers that extend whole and small group discussions surrounding the topics of exploration. While such integrated units of instruction are steeped in best early childhood practices, they can be improved upon by making explicit efforts at including social and emotional learning in the integrated activities. For

instance, when choosing children's literature to support thematic units and learning centers, there is a vast array of titles that can promote social and emotional learning. Similarly, music, math, and drama activities that support social and emotional learning can be incorporated into almost any unit topic. Perhaps most noteworthy, though, is the reconsideration of the unit topic itself. Often, units are developed around seasonal or topical themes such as pumpkins and scarecrows, farm animals, plants, or robots. While social and emotional learning can certainly be embedded within any theme or project, we suggest creating a unit topic surrounding obvious social and emotional themes, such as kindness, diligence, or friendship. To bring these abstract concepts to a more concrete level, teachers should take care to choose appropriate thematic children's literature, teaching tools, learning scenarios, and examples that reflect real life experiences of young children. Certainly, young children who can and do become engaged in thematic units about topics such as dinosaurs and space exploration can similarly learn about diligence and persistence, but it takes careful planning and experiential learning activities in order for the topics to be meaningful to them.

***It takes time
for behavioral
challenges to
change.***

The use of service learning projects is another excellent teaching strategy to promote such unit topics and help children make clear

connections between social and emotional competencies and other content embedded in the unit (Lake & Jones, 2012). Service learning projects combine learning objectives with service to others in age appropriate ways. For teachers committed to age appropriate, concrete learning that is critical to the education of young students (Coppie & Bredekamp, 2010), developing units with a service-learning component is an ideal match.

All Day, Every Day

For the Emergency Relief strategies described in this article to be used at an optimal level, it is best practice for teachers to use them all day, every day during the early morning greeting, large group time, transition time, snack/lunch time, independent exploratory center time, lunch and snack times, outdoor play, and rest time.

Conclusion

Behavioral challenges to teachers are like fever to pediatricians or broken bones to emergency room doctors. They must be anticipated and expected. Otherwise, an acceptance of the big picture, which includes behavioral challenges, is replaced by frustration and sometimes hopelessness. Preparation for such challenges is critical to a successful environment. In most instances, teachers are prepared to handle behavior challenges. Baumeister & Tierney (2011) suggest that teachers must feel a sense of empowerment and use their willpower to apply skills necessary for the promotion of positive behaviors and the demotion of negative behaviors.

Explicit, Direct Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Instruction, Behavior Identification, Descriptive

Comments, Visual Cueing, Auditory Prompting, Gadget Guidance, Techno-Guidance, Interactive Behavioral Picture Stories, Home Connections, and Integrated Content Area Activities are all Emergency Relief strategies that are difference makers in the lives of teachers and children. They are strategic and must be delivered with precision from the beginning to the end of the day. Just as children can't learn to read overnight but take time to master the skills they need to read, the same children face challenges to master social, emotional, and behavior development and need time and multiple opportunities to learn and practice those skills over time. There are many reasons that explain challenging behaviors. There are just as many reasons that explain why it takes time for such behavioral challenges to change. The use of the teaching strategies described in this article will be the launching pad for happier times for all – children, families, and, yes, teachers.

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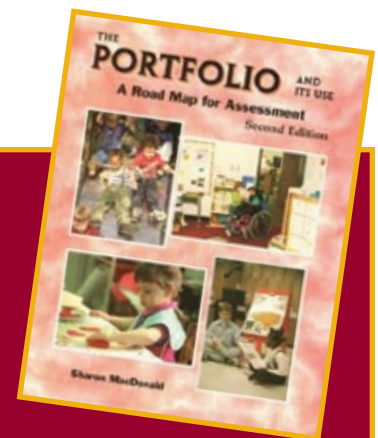
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About the Authors

René Crow is an Associate Professor of Early Childhood and Special Education at the University of Central Arkansas. She specializes in behavior guidance for children with and without disabilities and in designing curricula for young children.

Mark Cooper is a Professor of Early Childhood Education and is a licensed counselor specializing in behavior guidance for young children in their families. He has special interest in service learning for children across the globe.

Jamie Dallas is a Clinical Instructor and Director of the University of Central Arkansas Child Study Center. She specializes in child development and differentiating instruction for young children.



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I Just Want to Know: Helping Children Express Their Curiosity About Others with Disabilities

Gain insights about the reasons behind young children's comments concerning children with disabilities and discover tools to prepare yourself to handle these situations more effectively.

**Anarella Cellitti
& Rascheel Hastings**

Many new teachers are concerned with how to respond appropriately when preschoolers make statements that can be considered rude, hurtful, or socially inappropriate. This is particularly true for comments related to children with disabilities (Diamond & Hong, 2010). New teachers are often afraid that negative and unkind comments will be made by young children in their classrooms. If this occurs, the teacher may be petrified, not respond, or respond in a manner that makes the situation worse (Twyman et. al, 2010).

The purpose of this article is to offer insight about the reasons behind young children's comments concerning others with disabilities in the inclusive classroom environment. Moreover, this article will provide new teachers with tools to prepare themselves to handle these situations more effectively. When teachers expect comments and are prepared to respond to such comments, the situations tend to be less intense. As a result, both teachers and children benefit from the interchange.

Be Informed and Prepared

As a teacher in an inclusive public school setting, you will have students with disabilities (Buisse, Goldman, & Skinner, 2002). Knowing in advance who to expect, the specific needs of the child, and the classroom's accommodations will help you prepare to respond to children's comments and questions. You can reflect on what are the most likely things to be asked by children such as:

- *"How did she get to be in a wheel chair?"*
- *"What is that thing behind his ears?"*
- *"Why are your glasses so thick?"*
- *"Why do they talk funny?"*

- *"Why does that thing (hearing aid) make that noise?"*

Young children are curious and often make remarks about a disability simply because it is new and novel: this occurs in classrooms when young children have not previously been exposed to individuals with disabilities (Diamond & Tu, 2009).

**Young children
may be afraid
of children with
disabilities.**

As children are exposed to children who use wheelchairs, hearing aids, or use other adaptive equipment and devices, they begin to recognize the equipment as tools to assist the child. When children become familiar with individuals with disabilities (Krahe' & Altwasser, 2006) and children with challenging behaviors, they perceive them as part of their group and as typical, rather than different. These characteristics will no longer be noticeable but common in the child's environment.

Another reason for young children's comments is fear for themselves and of the child with disabilities. They may believe the physical, social, emotional manifestations of the disability are contagious or brought on by not following adult requests. Children may also be afraid that they will make the situation worse by getting closer or playing with children with disabilities. Teachers can help alleviate this fear by explaining how disabilities occur (Buisse, Goldman, & Skinner, 2002). Of course,



Photo courtesy of BB International Preschool, Pompano Beach, FL

Outdoor learning spaces can accommodate children with disabilities by creating structures such as this raised gardening bed.

this information needs to be stated at the child's developmental level and explained in basic terms easily understood by young children. For example, a child may say "*She/he is walking funny.*" when they see a child with orthopedic impairments. At this point teachers will have to redirect the comments and state that the child has difficulties walking due to a physical condition.

When a child is in a wheel chair, with or without breathing support, children might stare and show fear of the child. Talk to the children and explain how the equipment works, that they should not touch such equipment and give simple explanations as to possible causes such as illness and/or accidents.

Lastly, children make comments because they are children. Preschool children are developing social skills and usually say what they think. Children may stare or avoid children or individuals with disabilities because they do not know how to cope with the feelings that the situation might bring up for them (Diamond & Hong, 2010). The teacher should recognize the situation and intervene by helping the young child learn to ask appropriate questions related to the child with a disability (Cook, Tankersley, Cook,

& Landrum, 2000). Learning to ask questions about unfamiliar situations is conducive to both social and emotional growth.

Answer Children's Questions

Young children tend to ask questions that are concrete and related to practical things, such as "*Can they play with me?*" and "*If they play with me, will I be like them?*" Many young children shy away from children with disabilities because they are afraid they might break the equipment or make the children's issues worse. Talking with children and explaining that the child with a disability can play and do most of the things others kids can do may be sufficient (Buysse, Goldman, & Skinner, 2002). It is also helpful to have well-prepared answers concerning how disabilities occur. For example, some children have problems at birth but later may develop typically: other children have had an injury that led to short- or long-term disability. Comments like these are generally sufficient to satisfy young children's curiosity.

In addition, prepare the child with a disability (Milsom, 2006). Most young children have apprehension

and fear of unfamiliar environments and situations. Anticipate the child's questions and concerns, including fear of other children's reactions. Help him or her prepare responses. For example, if a child who uses a hearing aid notices children looking at the device, encourage him or her to tell other children how the hearing aid works. Also, when children first enter the group, encourage all children to talk about their families, what they can do, and what assistance they may need. Empower all children to talk about their individual strengths and limitations.

Recognize your own biases and address personal issues (Buysse, Goldman, & Skinner, 2002). You do not have to agree with various segments of society, but your personal views should not undermine a child's sense of self or their family. Be professional, open, and accepting to all students, their families, and the complexities presented. Children are very perceptive and may recognize when adults are stating something they do not believe. When children feel safe and secure, their focus is on learning and social growth -- your goal for them.

Prepare the Environment

Be proactive and include literature about children with disabilities in the classroom library. Reading appropriate books provides opportunities to discuss differences and respond appropriately (Milsom, 2006). While reading, teachers can ask questions about how children with disabilities feel, what they may like, what they may need. Also, teachers and children can role-play ways to ask children with disabilities to play with them. Other discussions include what is a friend and how

to be a friend, and similarities and differences between young children, both with and without disabilities.

Another way to familiarize children is to post pictures of children in wheel chairs, with hearing aids, and/or with mobility equipment, even if no children with disabilities are enrolled in the class. Presenting these pictures may facilitate an open conversation about children with disabilities and help prepare children for future situations. Familiarity through pictures is an excellent way to teach inclusion and acceptance (Han, Ostrosky, & Diamond, 2006). Teachers must remember, however, that not all disabilities are physical so including other types of disabilities that may not be visible is of great importance and benefit for children to develop empathy for others.

Prepare Parents

Teachers in early childhood programs should consult with parents about ways to accommodate and address their children's disabilities in the classroom (Macdonald & Callery, 2008). Be aware that parents may not have a specific answer. Inform parents that some children may have questions and discuss how you plan to respond. This conversation may be difficult for parents who are unaccustomed to the early childhood classroom environment, so reassure them that you want all children to feel comfortable in the classroom. Emphasize the fact that young children may not have been exposed to children with disabilities and creating a plan of action will promote their children's acceptance in the classroom. Many parents have faced the situation of other children staring or making comments and recognize that interventions need to be



Photo courtesy of Dora L. Lewis Family & Child Development Center, Richmond, VA

Including children with disabilities in a regular classroom can provide rich learning opportunities for all children.

put in place (Macdonald & Callery, 2008). Parents can tell you how their children respond and the information they are comfortable disclosing. Parents may suggest books or toys they use to talk with siblings about the disability. Some parents have prepared their child with a disability to respond to questions and curiosity by showing how their equipment works or saying what they can do and what assistance they may need.

Have well-prepared responses to common questions.

If parents do not offer suggestions, present some statements you have prepared and encourage them to respond to those statements. Remember your role as teacher is to dispel myths and misinformation and to create a classroom climate of

acceptance and inclusion (Buysse, Goldman, & Skinner, 2002).

Prepare the Children

Teachers need to prepare all children, those with and without disabilities. While it is essential to talk about children with disabilities when they enroll in the class, this is not sufficient (Han, Ostrosky, & Diamond, 2006). Begin conversations with children about disabilities even if there is no one in the classroom with a disability (there may be children with a disability in other classrooms). Dispelling myths and addressing causes of disabilities is important to help children understand how certain disabilities occur; this helps children avoid fear or surprise when they see peers or adults with disabilities (Hallberg, 2013).

Be consistent in language when referring to any child who is different from other enrolled children, regardless of the nature of the difference. Children may make inappropriate comments. Address the situations

and offer an alternative message such as

- “*This is what we say.*”
- “*Saying things like this can hurt other people’s feelings.*”
- “*Do you want to know more about what he/she can do?*”

Try to discern what the question or the comment is really about and respond accurately, appropriately and on the child’s developmental level. Remember that young children may not be clear in their questions or comments. Listening carefully can help you avoid giving a wrong answer and not responding to the child’s underlying need for understanding.

For example, children with Tourette’s syndrome often have tics, make sounds, and repeat words that may seem hurtful, funny, or out of context. These inappropriate words may include profanity (Marsh, 2007). Often youth with Tourette syndrome are noticed by their peers because of their tics and/or vocalizations and ridiculed (Topolski, 2014). Behaviors of children with Tourette’s syndrome may be perceived by their peers as amusing or funny. It is inappropriate to allow other children to mimic this uncontrolled behavior, laugh at the behavior, or call him/her names.

If inappropriate behavior such as name-calling occurs, the teacher and parent can talk to the children about Tourette syndrome. Provide simple explanations or use books that present the condition in simple terms easily understood by children, such as *Why Do You Do That?: A Book About Tourette Syndrome for Children and Young People* (Chowdhur & Robertson, 2006).

Another event that may catch children’s attention is an epileptic seizure.

The child with the seizure may collapse, experience violent jerks, and make gasping noises. This event can be frightening for other children and they may be unaware of how to react or behave. After a seizure episode children may make hurtful comments such as “*You were foaming at the mouth like a dog.*” Teachers can talk to the entire classroom after an epileptic seizure occurs. Allow the children to express their feelings and talk about what to do if the event happens again and the teacher/care-giver is not right by the convulsing child’s side. Make it a two-steps process -- first, get the teacher and then move chairs, furniture, and other objects out of the child’s way. Reading books such as “*Taking Seizure Disorders to School: A Story About Epilepsy*” by Kim Gosselin, or “*The Why and What of Epilepsy: A Book for Children and Teens*” by Roopal Karia, can help children realize that this is a physical condition and that negative remarks will not be accepted. This talk can be done through “class meetings” or “group talks” about disabilities into the weekly curriculum (Corbett, 2001) to present children

with accurate information and to give opportunities to role-play positive responses to peers.

Children and adults with low vision or blindness may navigate through society with the use of a walking stick or a guide dog. Guide dogs and other service dogs are usually large friendly animals and attract children’s attention. However, children who are afraid of dogs may insist that the dog leave or may even try to chase the dog away. Other children may want to pet and play with the dog. Explain to children that these are working dogs with an important job to do and therefore should not be distracted with petting or playing (Citizen Reporter, 2008). Talking about service dogs is an excellent way to teach children about ways dogs work with and for people. Consider starting the discussion after seeing the National Geographic series “*Dogs with Jobs*” and talking about the many roles dogs play in our lives. Talk with children and encourage them to ask questions about the dog’s work and the owner’s disability.



Photo by Elisabeth Nichols

Books about children with disabilities provide opportunities to discuss differences.

Young children often model a teacher's responses and may begin to correct parents and other individuals at home (Buysse, Goldman, & Skinner, 2002). When children are provided the appropriate dialogue they will use it, especially if appropriately reinforced by teachers, parents, administrators, and peers (Taub, 2006). This response training should be continual and address all areas of diversity.

Prepare the child with a disability to enter your classroom.

Conclusion

Public schools reflect the diversity of society, and the key for successfully reducing unwelcome and unkind comments about children with disabilities is preparation. Teachers can prepare themselves, the environment, the parents, and children so

when situations arise, the implementation of proper strategies is effortless. Teachers should become familiar with the disabilities that their children are exposed to in the school so they can anticipate the kinds of questions the children may ask.

In addition, there should be a clear understanding by parents that this preparation is for the benefit of all children and is designed to facilitate a classroom climate of acceptance. The common goal for teachers and parents should be to give every child an opportunity for understanding and accepting one another.

The following is a chart that could be used as a tool when trying to address preschoolers' comments about individuals with disabilities. Remember that being prepared helps you deal with any children's indiscretions and/or curiosity questions with ease.

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Prepare yourself	Prepare the environment	Prepare parents	Prepare the children
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be open and accepting of all types of families • Use proactive language • Be consistent • Research various disabilities • Listen to the recommendations from parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compile an inclusive classroom library of children's books about disabilities • Display pictures of children with disabilities • Anticipate children's comments • Prepare responses to commonly asked questions • Dispel myths and misinformation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach out to parents early in the school year • Be supportive of the family • Communicate often with parents • Convey the importance of an inclusive classroom environment • Ask for suggestions on what to disclose to classmates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach children about their disability • Teach children to ask for help • Teach children to advocate for themselves • Promote social growth and acceptance among children

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2016 Trainer Institute

Thursday, February 11, 2016

Nailing Jelly to the Wall: Defining and Providing Technical Assistance in Early Childhood Education

Presented by Nancy P. Alexander, Juliette Semien and Staff of the Northwestern State University Child and Family Network

About the Authors

Dr. Anarella Cellitti has been a teacher educator since 1998. Dr. Cellitti has served on the Diversity Committee of the Texas Association for the Education of Children, on the Task Force on Diversity and the ACEI Diversity Committee. Currently, Dr. Cellitti is a member of the Arkansas Fatherhood Initiative and Welcome the Children Project.

Rascheel Hastings, Ed. D. is a former special education teacher, disability consultant and currently is an Assistant Professor of Special Education at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. His research interests include autism spectrum disorders, assistive technology, behavior management, and minorities in special education. He values diversity in all aspects and promotes inclusive critical thinking skill development among pre-service and in-service teachers.

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Nancy P. Alexander is Executive Director of Northwestern State University Child and Family Network in Shreveport, Louisiana. She has a Master's Degree from Northwestern and additional graduate hours in adult learning and early childhood education. Her work involves staff in their roles of helping program directors and teachers implement ongoing improvement.

She is the author of two books, *Early Childhood Workshops that Work: The Essential Guide to Successful Training and Workshops*, and *Nailing Jelly to the Wall: Defining and Providing Technical Assistance in Early Childhood*, both published by Gryphon House.



Juliette Semien is a child care specialist for NSU Child and Family Network following over 10 years as a center director. Her job responsibilities include training and technical assistance. Additionally, she is a certified CLASS observer and certified for interrater reliability with TS Gold. She has a BS in Family and Consumer Sciences with a concentration in child development and family relations from Northwestern.

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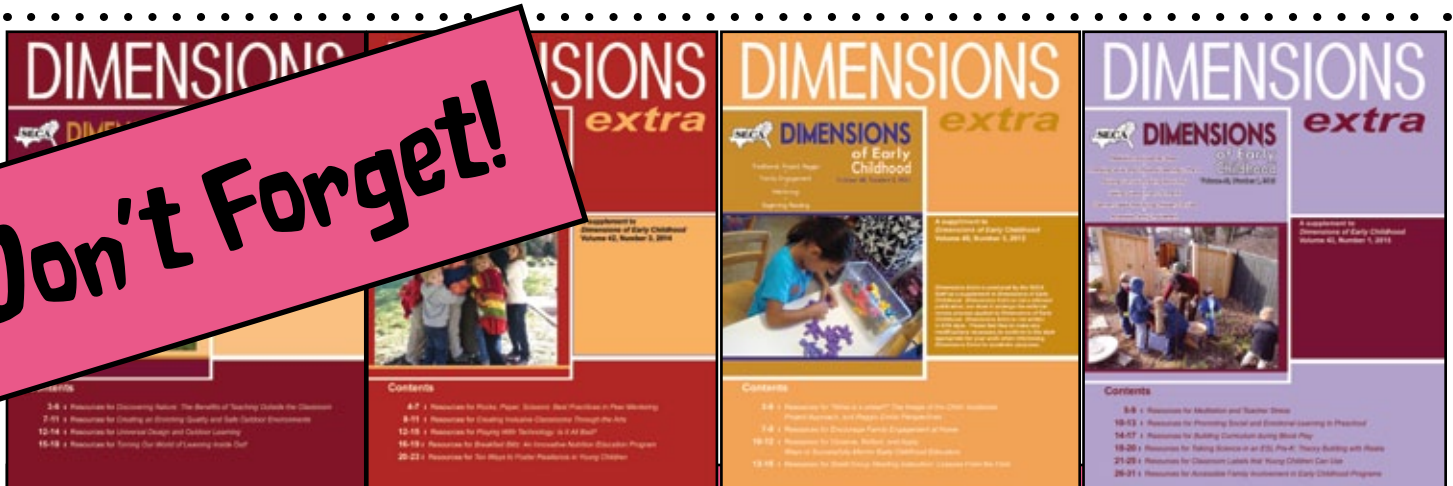
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The Leadership Secrets of Santa Claus!
Presented by Carrie Reilly

Designed to support administrators in the vital work that they do every day in early childhood programs, this year we're focusing on the topic of "leadership", a critical factor in your success as an administrator. This session is based on the 2006 book *The Leadership Secrets of Santa Claus: How to Get Big Things Done in YOUR "Workshop" All Year Long*.

You may or may not believe in Santa Claus – but the model that he provides and the management and leadership tips presented will be something we can all understand and remember. This hands-on, interactive session will provide a fun and practical leadership guide that will help you get big things done in YOUR workshop all year long!

Carrie's main focus is helping teams and leaders become more effective. A believer that people learn best when having fun and actively involved, she brings enthusiasm, activities and humor to her training programs. Carrie is the Program Director for Executive Training ~ Team Quest.



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Connecting Kids and Nature: Lessons to Ignite Learning and Appreciation of the World Around Us

Integrating reading instruction with science activities helped these authors to create a positive connection between children and nature.

**Ashley Campbell
& Judy Williams**

Children today are increasingly plugged into smart phones, tablets, and technology in general which in turn can contribute to an increasing disconnect between children and the natural world. With busy schedules, families may allot less time for free-structured play and learning about nature. An online report from the National Wildlife Federation (n.d.) cites recent studies (Hofferth & Sandberg, 1999; Juster, et al., 2004; Roberts, et al., 2005) which indicate that “the average American boy or girl spends just four to seven minutes in unstructured outdoor play each day and more than seven hours each day in front of an electronic screen.”

In an increasingly technological world, *nature-deficit disorder* remains an issue. Nature-deficit disorder has been described as “the human costs of alienation from nature, among them: diminished use of the senses, attention difficulties, and higher rates of physical and emotional illnesses” (Louv, 2005, p. 36).

The Project

To create a positive connection between children and nature, this semester-long project developed by the authors integrated reading instruction with science activities to emphasize the natural world in the lives of children. This intervention involved the authors visiting an elementary classroom five times over the course of a semester to teach nature and reading activities. Each lesson consisted of a literary component wherein students read and discussed a single issue of *Keeping Texas Wild*, a Texas Parks and Wildlife magazine for children. The purpose of these lessons was to emphasize activities that would necessitate student observation of animals indigenous to the area

where the students currently reside. Focusing on such animals increased the probability that students might encounter the wildlife during random outdoor experiences, thus increasing their interest in nature.

Each child was given a full color copy of the week’s magazine to take home and share with his or her family. Following the literary instruction, students participated in an outdoor activity or observation during which they recorded in a journal both written and illustrated field notes. The students wrote a conclusion of the observation based upon the field notes.

Nature-Deficit Disorder: The human costs of alienation from nature.

The intervention included 10 hours of instruction during 5 instructional sessions that were implemented 2 weeks apart. In addition, pre- and post- surveys were collected to assess students’ attitudes and knowledge about the natural world. Students were also asked to do nature journals. Twenty elementary students were surveyed before and after this intervention.

Even though this intervention focused on elementary children, similar activities could be done with preschool children. Reading to younger children about indigenous animals and providing hands-on experiences with nature

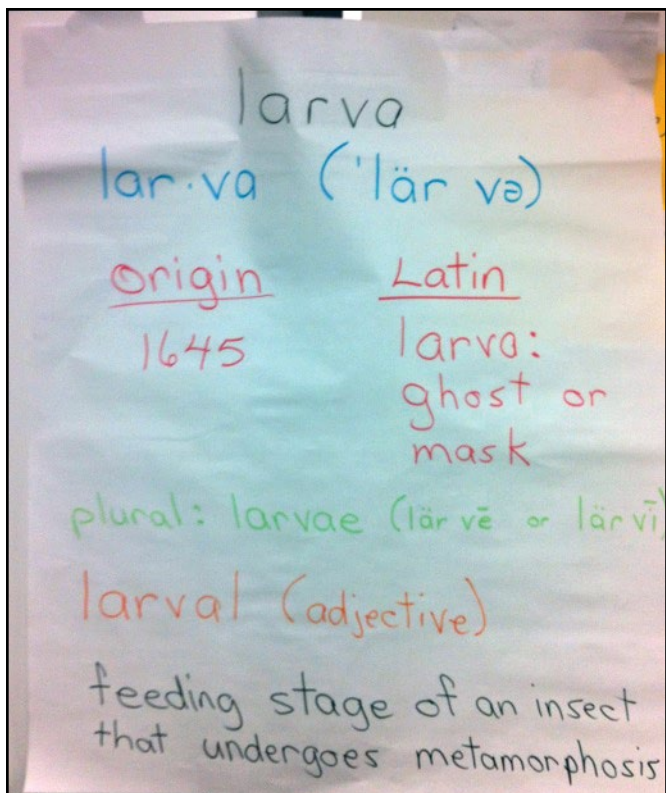


Photo 1

are ways to enhance their understanding of the natural world around them.

Many of the animals featured in the issues of *Keeping Texas Wild* can be found throughout the Southern United States and these issues can serve as helpful resources to any pre-school or elementary teacher. They are a great starting point upon which teachers can build their own collection of resources focusing on animals in their geographic area. Teachers may also wish to contact the parks and wildlife services in their state to determine if similar literature for children is available through their state agency.

The Lessons to Ignite Learning

Mysterious Monarchs

The *first lesson* focused on monarch butterflies. For the first

session, the second author began by teaching the English Language Arts portion of the lesson on key vocabulary associated with the reading, and she led students in reading the *Mysterious Monarchs* issue (Photos 1, 2, and 3).

The second portion of the lesson involved the authors leading the students in observations of actual monarchs. Live monarch butterflies were ordered in advance. When it was time for the lesson, each monarch was carefully placed in a magnified viewer. Each child was given a viewer with a monarch butterfly inside. Students then spent some time drawing and coloring pictures of their butterflies in a nature journal (Photo 4). While the students drew, the second author spoke about the times of the year that monarchs migrate through the students' home geographical location. She also shared with the students how to distinguish a male monarch from

a female monarch by the swollen pouches that resemble black dots on the hind wings of the male.

Once the students finished their drawings, each child took his or her butterfly in the viewer with them outside. Sliced oranges were provided to each student. Students then gently opened the viewers and released the butterflies. Some students put orange juice on their fingers or offered the orange slice to the butterfly so that it did not immediately fly away. The orange slices were helpful in keeping the butterflies around the school so that the students could continue to watch them. After the release, the students returned to the classroom and wrote about what they had learned from the reading, the drawing, and the butterfly release in their nature journals.

Bird Lips

Two weeks later, the authors returned for the *second lesson*. This lesson focused on common birds in the region as well as bird beaks and how they are adapted for specific types of food. The session began with the literary component as the second author introduced key words and their origins. She included vocabulary from the reading such as carnivore, herbivore, and omnivore. The first author followed up with the hands-on activity, *Fill the Bill*, from the *Flying Wild* curriculum guide. This activity emphasized the differences in bird beaks and how they are best suited for certain foods. This was followed by a PowerPoint slide presentation purchased from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology of different bird images that students would commonly see in their home geographical location. As students viewed the images, they took notes in their nature journals. At the end

of the slide presentation, students were challenged to keep a wild bird count from their own backyard. Each student was given a data collection page, and made a birdfeeder from recycled plastic and filled it with birdseed to take home.

Honor Roll

The *third lesson* focused on animals and some plants that are state symbols. Some of the animals highlighted in the reading lesson included the Texas horned lizard, the Mexican free-tailed bat, the armadillo, the Texas toad, and the longhorn. Plants such as the bluebonnet, the prickly-pear cactus, and the pecan tree were also discussed. For the associated activity, the authors asked the local zoo to present their *Texas Wilds* program. This is a zoo-mobile program in which the zoo brings animals to the school. The zoo selected animals that the students might see in the wild in their home geographical location, including a toad, possum, bull snake, and tarantula. Students were allowed to touch the snake with 2 fingers. Upon the conclusion of the program, students washed their hands and then wrote about the experience in their nature journals.

Hanging Around with Bats

The *fourth lesson* focused on bats and common misconceptions associated with these creatures. Insect control and pollination were shared as two positive functions of bats. Prompted by the emphasis in the magazine, the second author also focused the discussion on echolocation and the anatomy of bats. After the key vocabulary and reading lesson, students were given time to draw the anatomy of the bat (based on the picture from the magazine) in their

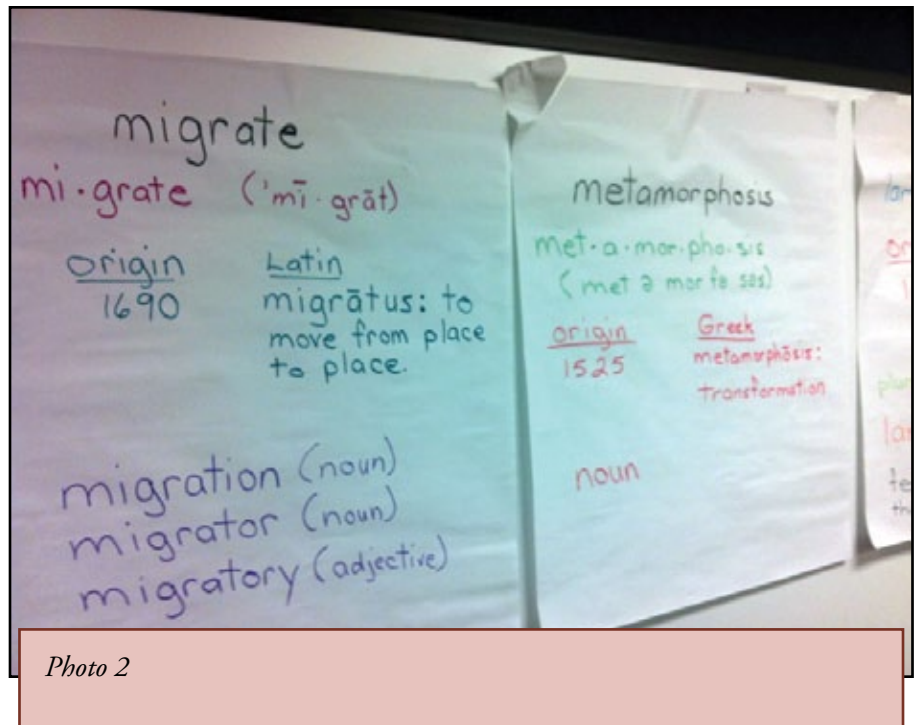


Photo 2

Photo courtesy of authors

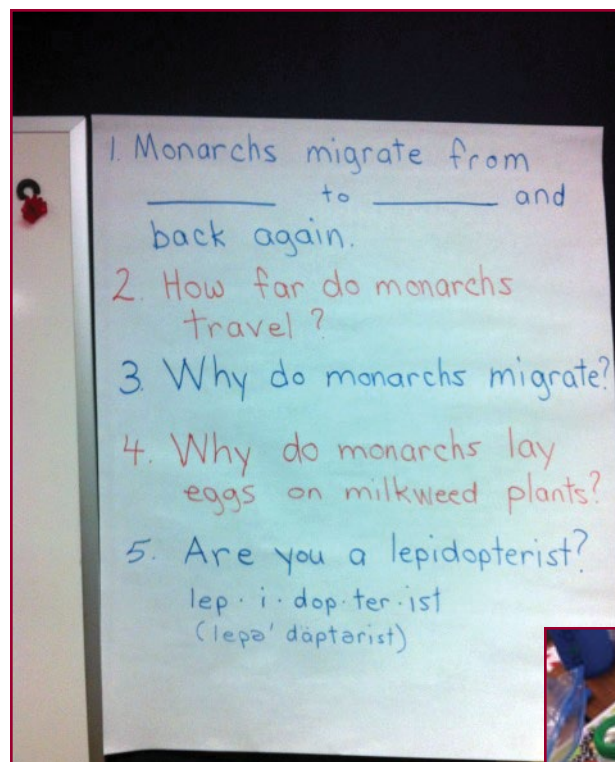


Photo 3

Photo courtesy of authors



Photo courtesy of authors

nature journals. Students then went outside to assemble and fly “Baby Bat” kites that had been purchased for them.

Awesome Ants

The *final lesson* focused on types of ants, the life cycle of ants, and ant anatomy. The lesson began with the reading and vocabulary associated with the magazine. Students were then given time to draw the anatomy of the ant in their nature journals. Three large harvester ant farms were purchased for the students to observe in their classroom. Each table group of students was given a different ant

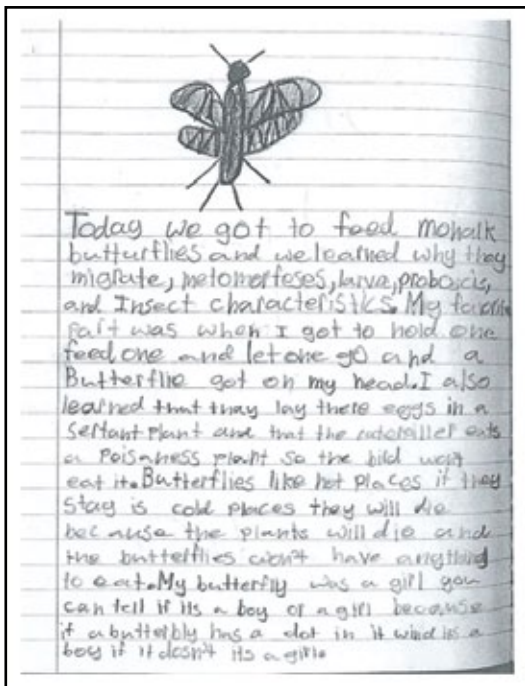
farm, and the ant farms were rotated so each group could make observations of each farm. After observations, students wrote in their nature journals about what they learned from the lesson.

Findings and Discussion

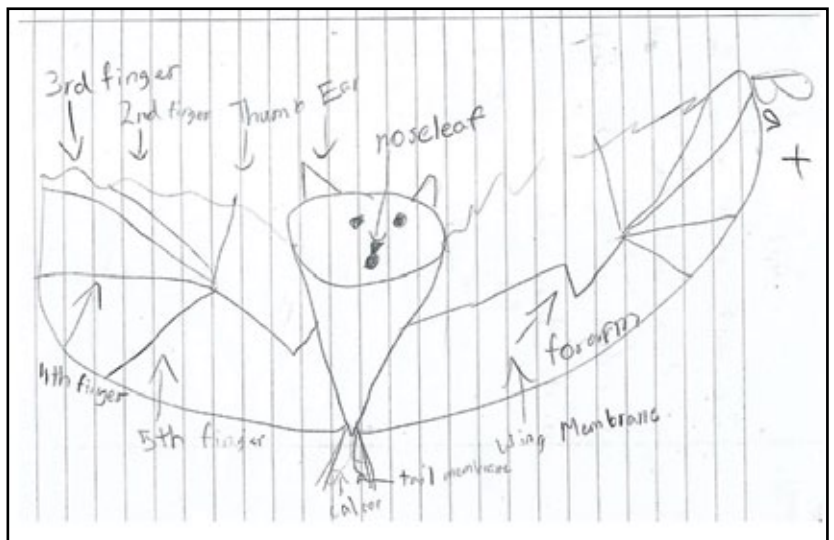
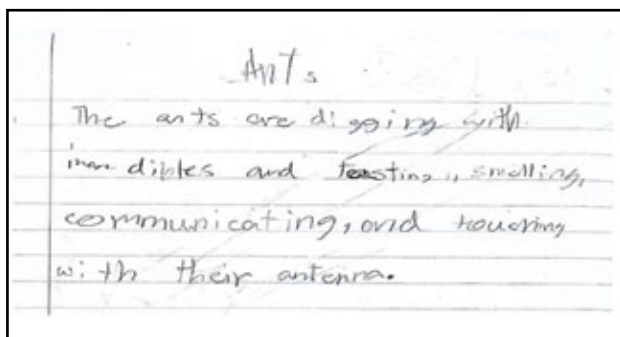
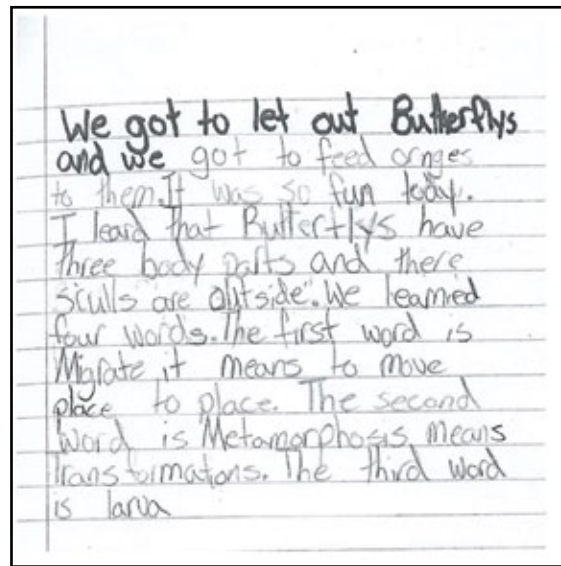
Surveys








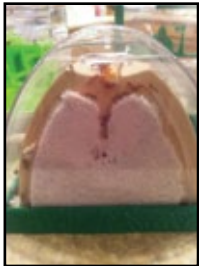
Students were asked to complete the following sentence: “I would play outside more if...” The responses to this statement varied. Examples of the responses included “if I had no video games,” “if the weather was warmer,” and “if I had a treehouse.”

Students were asked to name the animals that they have seen while playing outside or while hiking or camping. By the end of the study, fourteen students could list more animals than they could at the beginning of the study. In addition, fourteen of the students reported that how they spent their time outside had changed since completing the nature activities. Student statements in response to this item included “I look for different animals and bugs.” Another said, “Yes, because I’m always looking for the animals.” A third student stated, “Yes, we have been doing lots of things that are really more fun than just riding a bike.” When the



Student Journals



Lesson topic	Reading	Activity
<p>Lesson 1: Mysterious Monarchs</p> 	<p>https://www.tpwmagazine.com/ktw/media/october-09-vol.2-issue2.pdf</p>	<p>Monarch butterfly observation and release</p> 
<p>Lesson 2: Bird Lips</p> 	<p>http://www.tpwmagazine.com/ktw/media/november-09-vol.2-issue3.pdf</p>	<p>“Fill the Bill” activity from Flying Wild Curriculum Guide - www.flyingwild.org/</p> <p>PowerPoint of regional bird images purchased from Cornell Lab of Ornithology www.birds.cornell.edu</p> <p>Bird feeders made from recycled plastic. Students were instructed to do a bird count at home.</p>
<p>Lesson 3: Honor Roll- Many state symbols represent the wild side of Texas.</p> 	<p>http://www.tpwmagazine.com/ktw/media/March-10-vol.2-issue7.pdf</p>	<p>Texas Wilds ZOOmobile Program – Local Zoo. The zoo brought a number of Texas animals for the students to observe up close.</p> 
<p>Lesson 4: Hanging Around With Bats</p> 	<p>http://www.tpwmagazine.com/ktw/media/oct-08-issue2.pdf</p>	<p>Drawing of bat anatomy</p> <p>Outdoor activity: Assembled “Baby Bat” kites that were purchased on line and flew them.</p> 
<p>Lesson 5: Awesome Ants</p> 	<p>http://www.tpwmagazine.com/ktw/media/June-11-vol.3-issue10.pdf</p>	<p>Observations and drawings of ant farms</p> 

students were asked what they had learned from the nature activities that they did not know before, one student reported, “I learned many things I did not know before like lots of vocab, and I learned about toads, ants, possums, bats, and tarantulas.” Another student’s responded to this question that he learned “About bats. Monarchs eat milkweed. How to tell a (bird’s) beak by how they use it. Different types of ants. How to make a birdfeeder.” In addition, when asked how often they played outside, six children reported an increase in the amount of time they spent outside at the conclusion of the study.

Student Journals

Students made journal entries consisting of writing and or drawings after each lesson. The journals show the children’s understanding of the hands-on experiences with nature.

Teacher Attributes

To ignite learning and appreciation of the natural world around us, it is important for the teacher to learn about the plants and animals in his or her area. Research can be done on the Internet or at a local library to learn more about indigenous organisms. In addition to factual information, trade books can be utilized to teach children about these animals. The National Science Teachers Association publishes a list of outstanding trade books each year, an excellent resource for selecting age-appropriate books about the natural world. A teacher who shares his or her own interest and passion for the natural world will help develop this interest in young children.

Conclusion

In Richard Louv’s *Science & Children* editorial (2012), he points out that “Schools that use outdoor classrooms and other forms of nature-based experiential education report significant student gains in social studies, science, language arts, and math” (p. 9). These gains, in addition to the possible gains to emotional and behavioral health, make these lessons and those like them a win-win for elementary and pre-school teachers and students. In addition, the lessons described in this article address the *Next-Generation Science Standards* or NGSS (2015). In order to adapt the lessons for younger children, teachers can engage children in conversations after a nature walk or after experiencing the animals and insects. Taking photos with an iPad while children experience nature can also help children recall their experiences. For this project specifically, the lessons look at the crosscutting concept of cause and effect as well as structure and function. The integration of these subjects and the hands-on nature of these lessons have the potential to positively engage children with a knowledge of and respect for the natural world around them.

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About the Authors

Ashley Campbell is the Helen Piehl Professor of Education and an Associate Professor at West Texas A&M University in Canyon, Texas. Her research interests include environmental education and pre-service teachers’ understanding of the nature of science.

Judy Williams is the Head of the Department of Education at West Texas A&M University in Canyon, Texas. Her research interests include reading in the elementary school and early childhood.

Notice of Annual Meeting

The annual Leadership Breakfast of the Southern Early Childhood Association is scheduled for Saturday, February 13, 2016 from 8:30-10:15 am. This meeting will be held on the last day of the 67th annual conference, scheduled for February 10-13, 2016 at the Hyatt Regency Tulsa in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

During this meeting, the Association will conduct any necessary business as dictated by the Association’s by-laws and recognize those individuals receiving awards from the Association. If you are interested in submitting an agenda item for consideration at this meeting, please forward the information in writing by January 2, 2016 to: Glenda Bean, Executive Director, gbean@southernearlychildhood.org or mail to:

SECA
1123 S. University, Suite 255
Little Rock, AR 72204

Conexión de Niños con la Naturaleza: Lecciones para Estimular el Aprendizaje y la Apreciación del Mundo que Nos Rodea

La integración de la lectura con actividades de ciencias ayudaron a estos autores a crear un vínculo positivo entre los niños y la naturaleza

**Ashley Campbell
& Judy Williams**

Los niños de hoy están tecnológicamente conectados cada vez más a través de los teléfonos inteligentes, tabletas y la tecnología en general, algo que a su vez puede contribuir a una creciente desconexión entre estos y el mundo natural. Desafortunadamente, con horarios ocupados, las familias apenas pueden destinar tiempo para jugar y aprender sobre la naturaleza. Un informe de la Federación Nacional de Vida Silvestre [National Wildlife Federation] (sin fecha) cita estudios recientes como los de Hofferth y Sandberg (1999), Juster et al (2004) y Roberts et al (2005), que indican que “en promedio diariamente el niño o niña estadounidense invierte sólo cuatro a siete minutos de juego al aire libre y espontáneo, y más de siete horas delante de una pantalla electrónica”.

En un mundo mucho más tecnológico, *el trastorno por déficit de contacto con la naturaleza* constituye un problema. *El trastorno por déficit de naturaleza* ha sido descrito como “el resultado en los humanos de la alienación de la naturaleza, entre ellos: un menor uso de los sentidos, dificultades de atención, y las tasas más altas de violencia física y enfermedades emocionales” (Louy, 2005, p 36.).

El Proyecto

Para crear una conexión positiva entre los niños y la naturaleza, los autores desarrollaron un proyecto de un semestre de duración donde integraron la enseñanza de la lectura con actividades de ciencias para acentuar la presencia del mundo natural en la vida de los niños. Esta intervención llevó a los autores de este artículo a visitar un aula del nivel elemental en cinco ocasiones durante el transcurso de un semestre para ofrecer actividades de

lectura y sobre la naturaleza. Cada lección consistía de un componente de lectura en el que los estudiantes leían y discutían un tema de la revista *Texas Wild*, una publicación para los niños de la agencia Parques y Vida Silvestre. El propósito de estas lecciones era hacer hincapié en actividades que conllevaban la observación de los animales autóctonos de la zona en la que los estudiantes actualmente residen. El enfoque en la vida animal local zona incrementaba la probabilidad de que los estudiantes pudieran verlos durante experiencias al aire libre, aumentando así su interés por la naturaleza.

**Síndrome de déficit
de la naturaleza:
El costo humano
de la alienación
de la naturaleza**

A cada niño se le entregó una copia a color de la revista de la semana para llevar a casa y compartir con su familia. Luego de la lección de artes del lenguaje, los estudiantes participaron en actividades al aire libre o en observaciones durante el cual ellos anotaban en un diario sobre la naturaleza sus observaciones tanto por escrito e ilustrada. Los estudiantes escribieron una conclusión de sus observaciones basada en las notas tomadas durante las actividades al aire libre.

La intervención incluyó 10 horas de lecciones ofrecidas durante cinco sesiones de clases que se implemen-

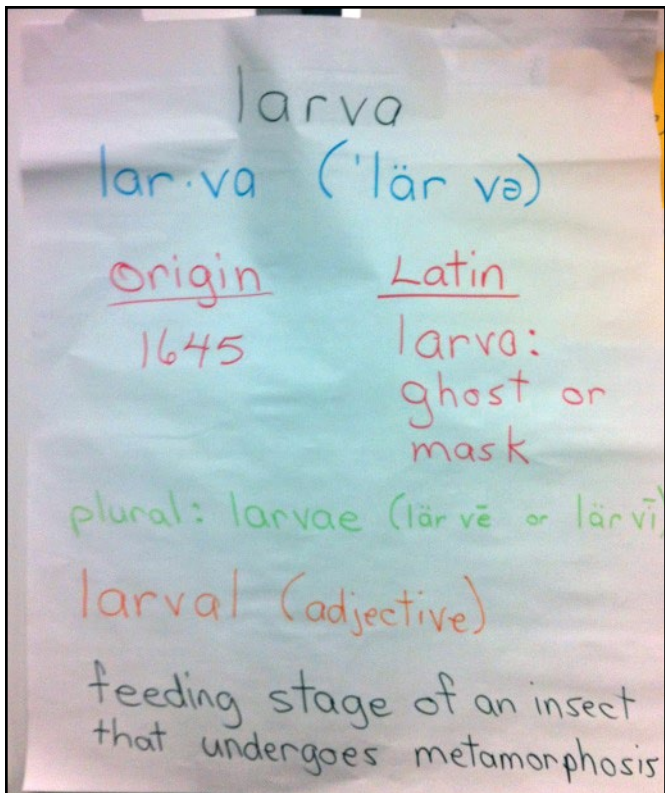


Foto 1

taron en un periodo de cada dos semanas. Además, se recopilaron datos a través de encuestas tanto antes como luego de las intervenciones para evaluar las actitudes y conocimientos de los estudiantes respecto al mundo natural. También se les pidió a los estudiantes que llevaran un diario sobre sus experiencias con la naturaleza. Veinte estudiantes de primaria fueron encuestados antes y después de esta intervención.

A pesar de que esta intervención se centró en los niños del nivel elemental, actividades similares se pueden realizar con los niños del nivel preescolar. Leer a los niños más pequeños sobre animales autóctonos y proporcionar experiencias prácticas con la naturaleza son maneras de mejorar su comprensión del mundo natural que les rodea.

Muchos de los animales que aparecen en la revista *Keeping Texas Wild* se pueden encontrar en todo el sur

de Estados Unidos y su contenido puede servir como recursos útiles para cualquier docente del nivel preescolar o elemental. Ellos son un gran punto de partida para que los maestros puedan crear su propia colección de recursos relacionados con los animales en su área geográfica. Los maestros también pueden ponerse en contacto con los servicios de parques y vida silvestre en su estado para obtener información sobre la disponibilidad de recursos y literatura similar a través de su agencia estatal.

Las Lecciones para Estimular el Aprendizaje

Monarcas Misteriosas

El tema de *la primera lección* fue sobre las mariposas monarca. Para la primera sesión, el segundo autor comenzó enseñando la parte sobre el vocabulario asociado con la selec-

ción *Monarcas misteriosas* [*Mysterious Monarchs*] (fotos 1, 2 y 3).

La segunda parte de la lección los autores participaron junto a los estudiantes en la observación de una muestra de mariposas monarcas que fueron previamente ordenadas a través de un suplidor de estas. Durante la lección, cada mariposa monarca fue colocada cuidadosamente en un envase que sirvió como visor. Cada niño recibió un envase con una mariposa monarca en el interior. Luego, los estudiantes tuvieron tiempo para dibujar y colorear dibujos sobre sus mariposas en una revista de la naturaleza (Foto 4). Mientras que los estudiantes dibujaban, el segundo autor habló sobre la época del año en que las mariposas monarcas migran pasando por el área geográfica en donde viven los niños. También compartió con los estudiantes cómo distinguir una mariposa monarca macho de una mariposa monarca hembra por los sacos hinchados de polen que parecen como puntos negros en las alas posteriores del macho.

Una vez que los estudiantes terminaron sus dibujos, cada niño tomó su mariposa monarca y salieron al patio. A cada estudiante se le proveyó con rodajas de naranjas. Luego, cada uno abrió cuidadosamente los envases y liberaron las mariposas. Algunos estudiantes pusieron jugo de naranja en sus dedos o les ofrecieron la rodaja de naranja a la mariposa monarca para que esta no volara inmediatamente. Las rodajas de naranja sirvieron para mantener a las mariposas monarcas alrededor de la escuela para que los estudiantes pudieran continuar observándolas. Después de liberar las mariposas monarcas, los estudiantes regresaron a las aulas y escribieron en sus diarios sobre lo que habían aprendido de la

lectura, los dibujos, y al liberar a las mariposas monarcas.

Labios de Aves

Dos semanas más tarde, los autores regresaron para ofrecer **la segunda lección**. El tema de la lección fue sobre las aves comunes de la región, así como los picos de las aves y la forma en que están adaptados para tipos específicos de alimentos. La sesión se inició con el componente de lectura donde el segundo autor introdujo palabras clave y sus raíces lingüísticas. Ella incluyó vocabulario de la lectura como carnívoro, herbívoro y omnívoro. El primer autor siguió con la actividad práctica titulada *Llena el Pico [Fill the Bill]* de la guía curricular *Flying Wild*. Esta actividad destacó las diferencias en los picos de las aves y la forma en que son más adecuados para ciertos alimentos. Esto fue seguido por una presentación en PowerPoint obtenida a través del Laboratorio de Ornitología de Cornell [Cornell Lab of Ornithology] con imágenes de diferentes aves que los estudiantes comúnmente ven en su área geográfica. Los estudiantes tomaron notas en sus diarios según veían las imágenes. Al final de la presentación, los estudiantes tuvieron como reto contar las aves silvestres que llegan al patio de su casa. A cada estudiante se le dio una página para recopilar datos y también hicieron un comedero para pájaros con plástico reciclado el cual llenaron de alpiste para llevar a casa.

Cuadro de Honor

La tercera lección se centró en los animales y algunas plantas que son símbolos del Estado de Texas. Algunos de los animales destacados en la lección de lectura incluyeron la lagartija cornuda de Texas, el murciélago mexicano de cola libre, el



Foto 2

Photo courtesy of authors

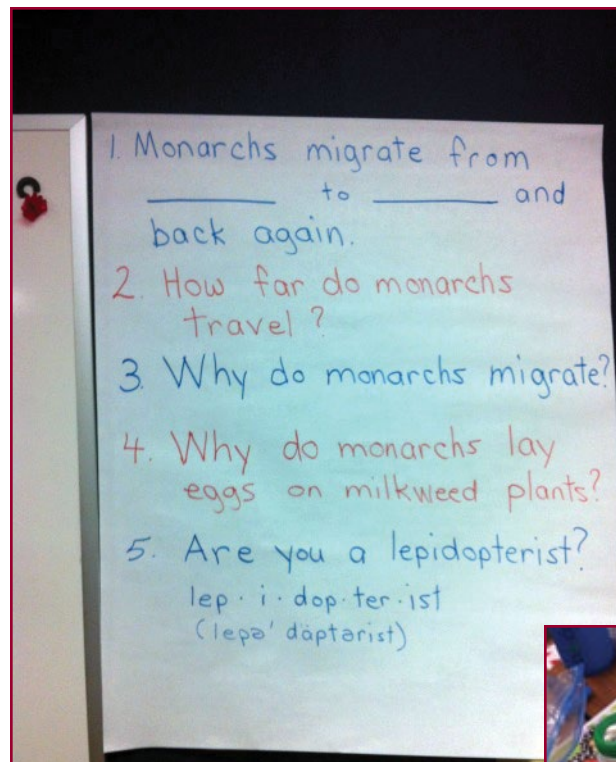


Foto 3

Photo courtesy of authors



Photo courtesy of authors

armadillo, el sapo de Texas, y el toro de cuernos largos. También se examinaron plantas como el *bluebonnet*, el nopal, y el árbol de nogal. Para la actividad asociada al tema, los autores pidieron al zoológico local presentar su programa de *Texas Wilds*, el cual consiste de un programa de zoológico móvil en el que el zoológico trae a los animales a la escuela. El zoológico escogió animales que pueden encontrarse en el área geográfica donde viven los niños como por ejemplo el sapo, la zarigüeya, la serpiente toro, y la tarántula. A los estudiantes se les permitió tocar la serpiente con dos dedos. Al concluir el programa, los

estudiantes se lavaron las manos y luego escribieron acerca de la experiencia en sus diarios de la naturaleza.

Compartiendo con los Murciélagos

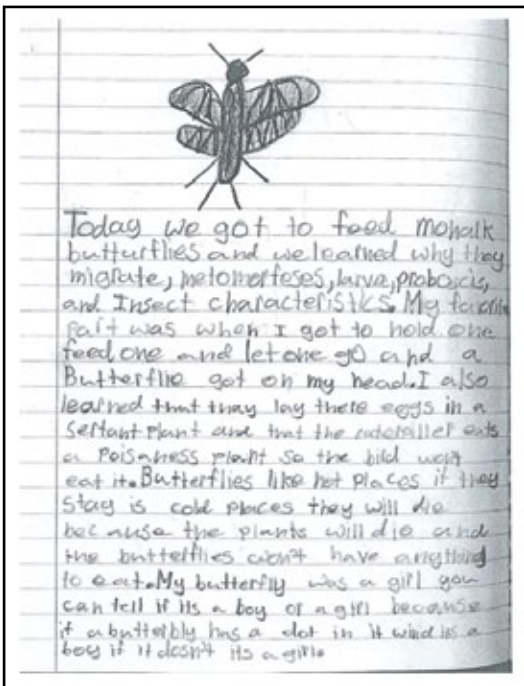
La cuarta lección fue sobre los murciélagos y los conceptos erróneos comúnmente asociados con estas criaturas. El control de insectos y la polinización fueron discutidas como dos de las funciones positivas de los murciélagos. Siguiendo el énfasis en la revista *Texas Wild*, el segundo autor también centró la discusión con los estudiantes sobre la ecolocalización y la anatomía de los murciélagos.

Después del vocabulario clave y lectura de la selección, se les dio tiempo a los estudiantes para dibujar la anatomía del murciélago (basado en la imagen de la revista) en sus diarios de la naturaleza. Luego, los estudiantes fueron al patio donde ensamblaron y volaron los papalotes o cometas de “Bebés Murciélagos” que habían sido comprados para ellos.

Hormigas Impresionantes

La lección final se centró en los tipos de hormigas, su ciclo de vida, y anatomía. La lección comenzó con la lectura y el vocabulario asociado con la selección de la revista. A los estu-

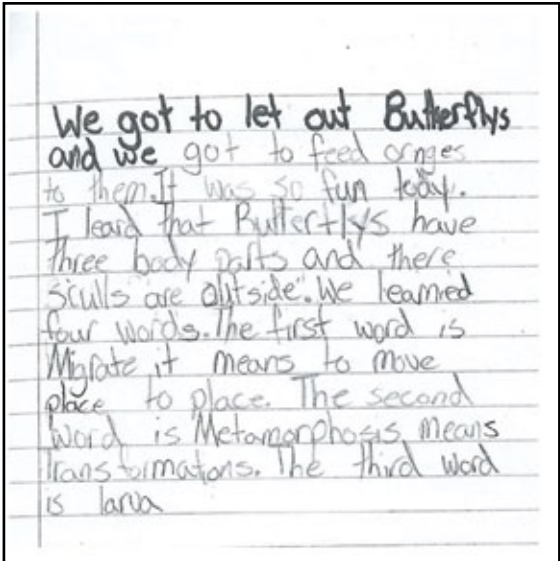
Diarios de los estudiantes

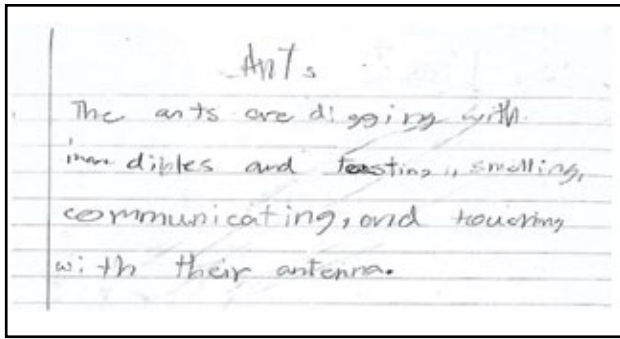


El párrafo es traducción literal del texto en inglés escrito por los niños por lo cual van a encontrar errores de ortografía y gramática.

Hoy pudimos darle de comer a las mariposas monarcas y aprendimos porque ellas migran, la metamorfosis, la larva, el probóscide, y las características de los insectos. My parte favorita fue cuando pude cojer y darle de comer a una y luego la dejé ir y una mariposa tambien se subió a mi cabeza. Tambien aprendí que ellas ponen sus huevos en ciertas plantas y que la oruga come plantas venenosas para que los pájaros no se los coman. A las mariposas les gustan los lugares calientes si se quedan en lugares fríos se mueren porque las plantas se mueren y las mariposas no van a tener nada que comer. Mi mariposa era una “niño” porque una mariposa que tiene un puntito en sus alas es un “niño” si no tiene puntito es “niña”.

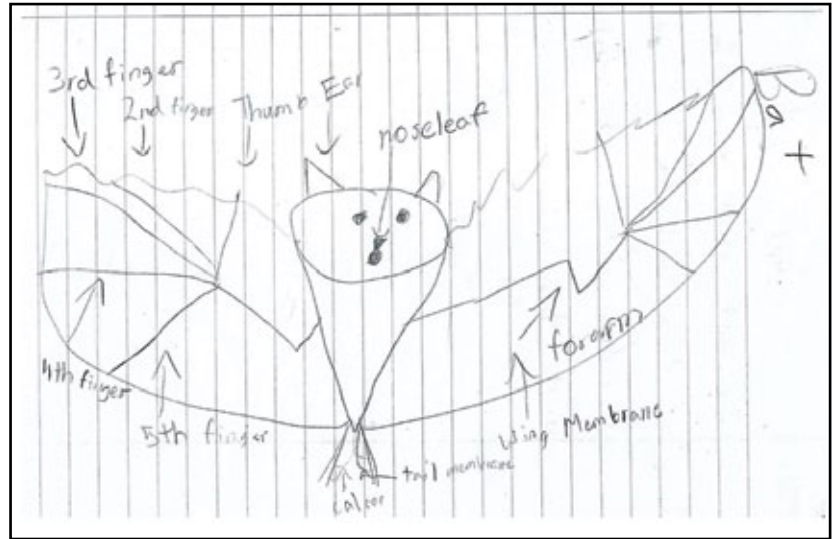
Pudimos dejar ir a las mariposas y les dimos de comer naranjas. Nos divertimos mucho hoy. Aprendí que las mariposas tienen tres partes en su cuerpo y tienen sus cráneos afuera. Aprendimos cuatro palabras. La primer palabra es migrar y quiere decir moverse de lugar a lugar. La segunda palabra es metamorfosis y quiere decir transformaciones. La tercer palabra es larva.





Las hormigas están escavando, probando, oliendo, comunicando y tocando con sus antenas.

- 3rd finger—Dedo tercero
- 2nd finger—dedo Segundo
- Thumb—pulgar
- Ear—oreja
- Noseleaf—nariz
- 4th finger—dedo cuarto
- 5th finger—dedo quinto
- Bat—murciélago
- Forearm—antebrazo
- Tail membrane—membrana de la cola
- Calcar—calcar
- Wing membrane—membrana del ala



diantes se les dio tiempo para dibujar la anatomía de la hormiga en sus diarios de la naturaleza. Tres grandes incubadoras de hormigas fueron compradas para que los estudiantes las observaran en su salón de clases. A cada equipo de estudiantes se le dio una incubadora de diferentes tipos de hormigas, y se rotaron las mismas de manera que cada grupo pudiera tener tiempo para hacer observaciones de cada incubadora de hormigas. Después de las observaciones, los estudiantes escribieron en sus diarios de la naturaleza de lo que aprendieron a través de la lección.

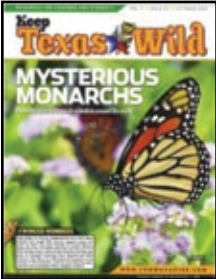


Resultados y Discusión

Encuestas

A cada estudiante se le pidió que completaran la siguiente frase: “Me gustaría jugar fuera mucho más si ...” Las respuestas a esta frase fueron

variadas. Algunos ejemplos de las respuestas incluyeron “si yo no tuviera los videojuegos”, “si el clima fuera más cálido” y “si yo tuviera una casa del árbol.” También se le pidió a los estudiantes que identificaran a los animales que habían visto cuando jugaron al aire libre, durante una excursión o acampando. Al final del estudio, 14 estudiantes pudieron hablar sobre más animales que lo que podían al comienzo del estudio. Además, 14 de los estudiantes informaron que la forma en que invertían su tiempo había cambiado desde que completaron las actividades sobre la naturaleza. Comentarios de los estudiantes en respuesta a esta pregunta incluyen “Ahora busco a diferentes animales y a los insectos.” Otro dijo: “Sí, porque siempre estoy en busca de los animales.” Un tercer estudiante dijo: “Sí, hemos estado haciendo un montón de cosas que son realmente más divertidas que simplemente correr

en bicicleta.” Cuando se les pidió a los estudiantes hablar sobre lo que habían aprendido de las actividades en la naturaleza que no conocían antes, uno de los estudiantes informó, “Yo aprendí muchas cosas que no conocía antes como un montón de vocabulario y me enteré sobre los sapos, hormigas, zarigüeyas, murciélagos y tarántulas.” Otro estudiante respondió a esta pregunta diciendo que aprendió “Acerca de murciélagos. Las mariposas monarcas comen algodoncillo. Cómo se le dice a un pico (de pájaro) por la forma en que lo utilizan. Los diferentes tipos de hormigas. Cómo hacer un comedero para pájaros.” Además, cuando se les preguntó con qué frecuencia jugaban afuera, seis niños reportaron un aumento en la cantidad de tiempo que pasaban afuera a la conclusión del estudio.

Tema de la leccion	Lectura	Actividad
<p>Lección 1: Monarcas misteriosas</p> 	<p>https://www.tpwmagazine.com/ktw/media/october-09-vol.2-issue2.pdf</p>	<p>Mariposas monarcas: observación y su liberación</p> 
<p>Lección 2: Labios de las aves</p> 	<p>http://www.tpwmagazine.com/ktw/media/november-09-vol.2-issue3.pdf</p>	<p>“Llena el pico” actividad de la guía curricular Flying Wild Curriculum Guide - www.flyingwild.org/ PowerPoint sobre aves regionals adquirido a traves de Cornell Lab of Ornithology www.birds.cornell.edu Comederos de aves hechos con material plástico reciclable. A cada estudiante se le pidió que hiciera un conteo de las aves en su hogar.</p>
<p>Lección 3: Cuadro de Honor – Muchos símbolos estatales que representan el aspecto silvestre en Texas</p> 	<p>http://www.tpwmagazine.com/ktw/media/March-10-vol.2-issue7.pdf</p>	<p>Texas Wilds ZOOmobile Program – Zoológico local . El zoologico trajo un número de animales autoctonos de Texas para que los niños los observaran.</p> 
<p>Lección 4: Compartiendo con los murciélagos</p> 	<p>http://www.tpwmagazine.com/ktw/media/oct-08-issue2.pdf</p>	<p>Dibujos de la anatomía de un murciélago Actividad al aire libre: Montaje de las cometas “Bebes murciélagos” que fueron compradas en el Internet y que los niños volaron en el patio.</p> 
<p>Lección 5: Increíbles Hormigas</p> 	<p>http://www.tpwmagazine.com/ktw/media/June-11-vol.3-issue10.pdf</p>	<p>Observación y dibujo de las incubadoras de hormigas</p> 

Revistas de los Estudiantes

Los estudiantes hicieron entradas en los diarios que consistieron de comentarios escritos y dibujos después de cada lección. Los diarios demuestran lo que aprendieron los niños a través de las experiencias prácticas con la naturaleza.

Atributos del Maestro

Para estimular el aprendizaje y la apreciación del mundo natural que nos rodea, es importante que el maestro aprenda acerca de las plantas y animales en su geografía en donde viven.. Para conocer más sobre la fauna y flora local se puede investigar a través de Internet o en una biblioteca local. Además de la información sobre datos específicos, se se puede utilizar la literatura y cuentos relacionados para enseñar a los niños acerca de los animales. La Asociación Nacional de Maestros de Ciencias publica anualmente una lista de los libros la cual es un excelente recurso para la selección de libros apropiados según la edad de los niños con temas sobre el mundo natural. Un maestro que comparte su propio interés y pasión por el mundo natural ayudará a desarrollar este interés en los niños pequeños.

Conclusión

En el editorial de la revista *Ciencia y Niños*, Richard Louv (2012) señala que, “Las escuelas que utilizan aulas al aire libre y otras formas de educación experiencial basadas en la naturaleza alcanzan logros significativos en el aprovechamiento de los estudiantes en los estudios sociales, ciencias, artes del lenguaje y matemáticas” (p. 9). Estas ganancias, además de los posibles beneficios para la salud emocional y conducta, hacen que estas lecciones y

otras similares que sean una oportunidad de gran beneficio no solamente para los maestros de primaria y pre-escolares sino también para los estudiantes. Además, las lecciones que se describen en este artículo integran los *Estándares de ciencias para una nueva generación* [New Generation Science Standards] (2015). Para adaptar las lecciones para los niños más pequeños, los maestros pueden estimular a los niños iniciando conversaciones después de un paseo al aire libre o después de conocer a los animales e insectos. Tomar fotos con un iPad, mientras que los niños experimentan la naturaleza también puede ayudar a que ellos recuerden sus experiencias. Para este proyecto en particular, las lecciones tuvieron como enfoque el concepto transversal de causa y efecto, así como de estructura y función. La integración de estos temas y la naturaleza práctica de estas lecciones tienen el potencial de ayudar a los niños a desarrollar conocimientos y respeto por el mundo natural que les rodea.

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Sobre los Autores

Ashley Campbell sirve como la profesora de Educación Helen Piehl y es profesora asociada en la West Texas A&M University en Canyon, Texas. Sus áreas de investigación incluyen la educación ambiental y el estudio sobre la comprensión de la naturaleza de las ciencias para los candidatos a maestros.

Judy Williams es la jefe del Departamento de Educación en la West Texas A&M University en Canyon, Texas. Sus intereses investigativos son la lectura en la escuela elemental y en el nivel infantil.

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Intentionally Changing Dramatic Play

Become intentional when organizing your classroom environment so that a variety of opportunities for dramatic play are readily available for children.

Alice Hall

The dramatic play, or home living, learning center is one of the basic learning centers in preschool and kindergarten classrooms. Unfortunately in many early childhood classrooms, the dramatic play center rarely changes. In the fall, teachers set it up with the “home living” theme and it remains “home living” for the entire year. While “home living” is an appropriate dramatic play theme and offers valuable learning, there are many more options. Copple and Bredekamp (2009) emphasize how early childhood teachers should be intentional when organizing the classroom environment so that opportunities for dramatic play are readily available for children.

In this article I would like to share some ideas that were developed and implemented by my undergraduate students. These students are learning to be intentional as they increase their understanding of how appropriate classroom arrangements such as the dramatic play center can increase children’s learning and enhance academic skills.

When teachers intentionally change the dramatic play center, children’s development is enhanced socially, physically, emotionally, cognitively, and linguistically. Keep in mind that setting up the dramatic play center is only one of the many ways intentional teachers enhance children’s development through dramatic play.

Dramatic Play and Development

Early childhood research has documented the developmental benefits of pretend and/or dramatic play, such as in the classic work of Vygotsky and Smilansky. Vygotsky believed that play makes important contributions to higher level thinking (Berk & Winsler, 1995). Smilansky believed that dramatic play enhances social skills, cognitive growth and creativity (Schwartz & Copeland, 2010).

Following Vygotsky’s and Smilansky’s stance on play, studies have found the connection between dramatic play and the different developmental areas. For example,

dramatic play allows children to express thoughts and feelings as they act out themes and stories which facilitate emotional regulation and emotional competence, both important components of emotional development (De-Souza & Radell, 2011; Hatcher & Petty, 2004; Lindsey & Colwell, 2003). Sociodramatic play, which involves several children interacting with each other in dramatic play, facilitates social development and improves self-regulation skills in preschool children (Bodrova & Leong, 2005; Prairie, 2013; Schwartz & Copeland, 2010). Dramatic play also requires children to use abstract thinking to create pictures in their minds based on past experiences, thus assisting in cognitive development.

Be intentional when organizing the classroom environment.

In addition, math, problem solving, and other cognitive skills also used during dramatic play further contribute to cognitive and academic competence (Bergen, 2002; Schwartz & Copeland, 2010). Hatcher and Petty (2004) explain that children operate at more advanced cognitive levels and exhibit a longer attention span during dramatic play than in non-dramatic play. Similarly, language development is enhanced as children use language in a meaningful context by learning and practicing new vocabulary words. Signage in dramatic play centers also facilitates emergent literacy skills, reading and writing (Bodrova & Leong, 2005; Hatcher & Petty, 2004). Physical development occurs through dramatic play when children practice reaching, bending, stooping, balancing and lifting among other motor skills (Strickland, 2004) within the play scenario.

Intentional Planning for Dramatic Play Centers

Intentionally planned dramatic play centers that are culturally relevant motivate children to engage in a variety of play scenarios relevant to the children's lives and should be changed regularly in order to be relevant for children. Relevancy may include an eye-catching entrance with words and logos that entice children to self-select. In addition, the intentional teacher must dedicate at least 60 minutes of uninterrupted playtime in the play centers (Kostelnik, Rupiper, Soderman, & Whiren, 2014) to see the impact on children's learning. For full day programs, the 60 minutes of sustained uninterrupted play can occur more than once in a day.

Changing the dramatic play center purposefully, on a schedule, is time consuming, but the contributions to children's development justify the investment of time and resources. A theme related dramatic play center should include literacy materials, costumes or clothes, and enough props for the scenarios to develop. Props should be open ended and stimulate a variety of dramatic play.

The following examples of theme-specific dramatic play centers are relevant in rural South Georgia. I hope that the examples provided allow the readers to identify themes that are relevant to their geographical location (Table 1) and the children's culture so that children benefit in different developmental areas.

Dramatic Play Center Ideas for Language and Cognitive Development

During theme specific dramatic play, language and cognitive development are enhanced as children



Photo courtesy of the authors

Raccoon masks for nocturnal animal theme. Logs were cut for dramatic play as well as fake green turf.

learn new words and concepts related to the theme. Adding print-rich materials to the dramatic play center promotes early literacy, including concepts of writing. Math, social studies, and science knowledge are also enhanced as a result of varied themes. The following theme-specific dramatic play center examples emphasize practice of language and cognitive skills:

- **Camping:** Offer a hammock as a place to rest and relax and an opportunity to use new as well as familiar vocabulary. Signs such as "fishing license required" teach children about real rules and regulations.
- **Nighttime Forest:** Expose children to uncommon vocabulary such as names of nocturnal animals.
- **The Farm:** Hatching live eggs can introduce vocabulary dealing with biology and embryology.
- **Space:** Introduce children to the names of stars, planets and constellations.
- **Recycling Center:** Reinforces math concepts by identifying

numbers in the middle of the recycling symbol on plastic containers.

- **Restaurant:** Support numeracy, math skills and economics with items such as menus, cash register, and play money.

Dramatic Play Center Ideas for Social Development

Children learn to develop play skills, improve friendship skills, and cooperate. In addition, children learn about each other's cultural practices that go beyond food and traditions, and children learn to value their differences. Having enough children in the dramatic play area is crucial for social development as interaction increases. Examples of social skills promoted through different dramatic play themes include the following:

- **Restaurant:** problem solving, negotiating, oral language, vocabulary
- **Fire Station:** self-regulation, problem solving without teacher intervention

Table 1

Theme	Scenery	Costumes	Literacy	Props
Landfill and Recycling Center	Fake Green Grass	Worker Vests Lab Coats	Recycling Center Sign Recycling Symbols Bin labels	Lots of Recyclables Recycling bins Wagons
Camping	Fake Green Grass Plastic Pool Wooden Trees Fire Circle with real Logs	Hats Backpacks Fishing Vests Raccoon Costume Bear Costume Skunk Costume	Local State Park Sign No Swimming Sign Fishing License Required Sign	Flashlights Hammock Sleeping Bags Fishing poles Kayak Life Jackets Paddles
Farm	Barn Sheet Chicken Coop Farmer's Market Vegetables	Horse, Cow, and Pig Pillow Case Costumes Overalls Sun hats	Local Farm Name Farmer's Market Logo	Saddle Shredded Brown Paper for hay Cardboard John Deere tractors Pumpkins Wagons Plastic Food and Vegetables
Pizza Place	Brick Front	Server Shirts and hats Name tags Wallets/Purses Clothes	Local Pizza Logo Menus Order Pads	Paper products from local Pizza Place Cash Register Dishes Play Money Plastic Food
Zoo	Brick Front Sheets of Cages with Animals Brick Path	Lion, Elephant, Zebra pillow case Costumes Zookeeper shirt Hats	Zoo Name Pet Exhibit Signage Do not feed the animals Signage	Upside down laundry baskets with stuffed animals caged
Sports/Baseball	Baseball Stadium Sheet Concession Stand Sheet	Fan Wear Hats Uniforms	Concession Stand Price List Baseball logos Cheer Signs	Baseballs Bats Cash Register Concession Cups Cardboard Lockers Plastic Food
Backyard	House Sheet Green Grass	Dog and Cat Costumes Bumble bee Butterfly and Cocoon Costumes Garden Gloves Sun hats		Wheelbarrow Bird bath Flower beds Rakes Watering Can Gardening Tools

- **Stores:** rules of society, following directions (stores have a schedule), use of money
- **Family:** family roles, promotion of non-biased gender roles, practice of cultural skills

Dramatic Play Area Ideas for Emotional Development

Children need practice to be able to identify and express emotions in appropriate ways. Dramatic play helps young children learn to regulate emotions, control behavior, and practice coping strategies. In addition, it allows for more practice in developing empathy for others as well as care and respect for classroom materials. The following theme-specific center ideas may help to promote socioemotional development:

- Pet Store: taking care of animals feeding, bathing, and caring
- Nursery: feeding babies, comforting children, singing and talking for comfort and nurturance
- Sports: promoting self-esteem through imagination and fantasy through dramatizing a sport

Dramatic Play Area Ideas for Physical Development

While engaged in dramatic play, gross and fine motor skills are used in multiple ways as shown in the following examples of centers:

- Recycling: moving trash from the landfill to the recycling center by pulling a wagon
- Pumpkin stand: picking pumpkins and placing them in big crates
- Restaurant: picking up boxes, walking to serve the food to the customers



Photo courtesy of the author

Restaurants, recognizable logos and a painted brick back drop

- Doctor or dentist office: brushing teeth
- Grocery store: learning about food, grocery shopping, and nutrition.

Dramatic Play Props and Costumes

After brainstorming themes and ideas for dramatic play based on your geographical location and children's cultural backgrounds, interests, and needs, generate strategies for collecting dramatic play props and costumes. Some basics include a play phone and cash register, blue tarp, a large square of fake green grass, and homemade back drop sets such as a brick building and trees.

- A blue tarp can become a body of water in a camp ground, fishing pond, or the ocean.

- A large square of fake green grass can become the grass at a camp ground, wetlands, a backyard garden, golf range, or a pumpkin patch.
- Large pieces of cardboard can become brick walls by dipping a large rectangle sponge into red paint to look like bricks. A brick building front can become a police or fire station, a doctor's office, florist, pizza store, art museum, pet store, and/or home improvement store.
- Phones and cash registers are needed and used in almost all business establishments. Old phones are easily acquired but a play cash register might need to be purchased.

Help Gathering and Making Props

After collecting the basics, start asking for donations. Send a class newsletter requesting needed items. Such an opportunity will provide families a way to become involved in their child's education. In addition, local businesses and other neighbors may be willing to help with the donations. Think about the dramatic play learning centers as mini sets for a dramatic production.

For example, white sheets can be used to paint backdrop scenes that can be reused.

Motels or hotels may be willing to donate old white sheets. Artistic parents can paint the sheets for various themes such as shelves for a grocery store theme or giant trees for the rain forest theme. Children can help decorate and paint sheets too. Scenes painted on sheets are much more versatile than painting a permanent scene on the wall.

In addition, theme specific costumes can be made out of pillowcases with the arm and head holes cut out and painted or decorated.

Families may be happy to donate pillowcases to be used for costumes and some may be willing to decorate and paint the costumes at home. The sheets and costumes can be used year after year, rotated among differing age groups and classrooms, and take up very little storage room.

Old clothes, costumes, purses, wallets, and shoes can be used in a variety of themes. Used phones, laptops, key boards, and appliances can become realistic props in many dramatic play themes. Computer keyboards can be used by a "weather station" and on a "space ship". Old blow dryers and curling irons with cords removed extend play at



Photos courtesy of the author

Swamp with blue tarp water



Lake



Backyard



Zoo

the “hair salon”. Empty shampoo bottles, suntan lotion, food boxes, ketchup and mustard containers are free props for a variety of themes. Some props may only be used for a short time and can be returned. For a sports theme, sports shirts can be borrowed, used, cleaned, and returned when the theme is over.

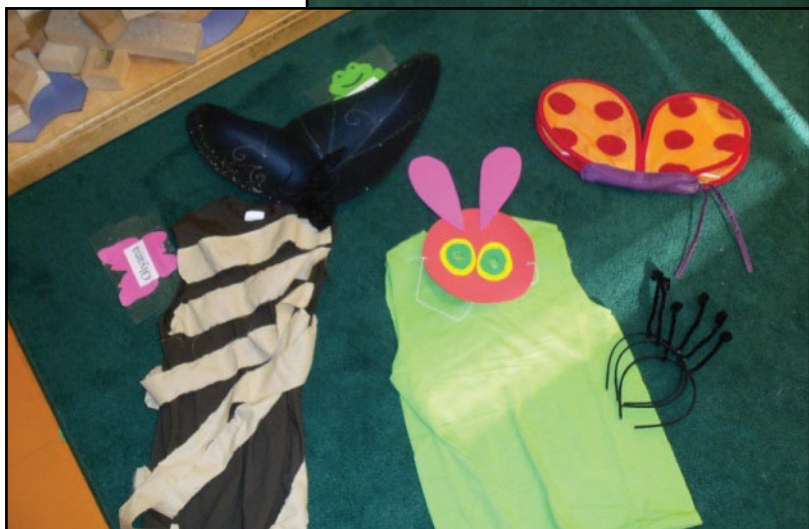
Smaller cardboard boxes can be painted to add another dimension and prop to a child’s play. Take the bottom and top off of a box, add heavy cord to make shoulder straps, and the child can be riding on a train, tractor, police car, or even paddling a canoe. Cardboard can be cut in the shape of wings so the child becomes a Macaw in the rainforest or have the wings of an eagle. Cardboard can be cut in the shape of a goldfish to swim in an aquarium made by wrapping blue cellophane around the top of the loft above dramatic play. Cardboard boxes can become lockers in a gym or gas pumps. Children can help paint cardboard props, as well as help to make other props. Remember to use culturally relevant items but also use those that will help children learn from other cultures and places (such as the case of the rainforest).

Adding Literacy and Logos as Props

After teachers have intentionally brainstormed possible themes, backdrops, and costumes, they can think of ways literacy can be added to dramatic play. Adding signage to dramatic play enhances literacy and also signals to the children and parents that the theme has changed. Reading and understanding signage is an important life skill. We need to know which aisle has dairy products at the grocery store, what food we want to order at a fast food restaurant,



Photos courtesy of the author



Dramatic play costumes made from t-shirts.



Photo courtesy of the author

Train box



Gas station



Lockers

where the bathroom is located, and how much items cost at a concession stand. Instead of creating fictitious names for the dramatic play scene, use the real name of a local business, restaurant, or campground thus promoting cultural relevance. Real logos from businesses in your com-

munity allow children to read the signage and make it easier to role play in businesses they are familiar with in their everyday experiences.

Children can read familiar logos before they can read books. Their excitement at recognizing a logo highlights their emerging literacy

and knowledge of the community. Technology and the Internet make it easier for teachers to reproduce real logos. Artistic parents may also be willing to paint logo signage. Logos are not limited to restaurants but also include home improvement stores, grocery stores, sports teams or stores, and many other locations in your community. Be sure to use the copyright symbol as part of the created signage. Contact your local business to ask for donations and invite guest speakers.

Community helpers such as firefighters, police, and doctors, among others are always willing to visit the center to educate the children on safety issues but other businesses are also willing if asked. Don't be afraid to ask visitors to talk to the children. We have had pharmacists, pet groomers, massage therapists, bus drivers, and college athletes, cheerleaders, band members, and members of the flag corps as visitors. In our case, since we are in a rural area, the John Deere business often brings a tractor to the center and then children create miniature John Deere tractors from cardboard boxes.

Prop Boxes

The most efficient way to organize theme related dramatic play props is to create a collection of prop boxes. A prop box is a teacher created collection of age appropriate props and scenery associated with a central theme (Hommerding, 2007; Myhre, 1993). Large plastic storage bins labeled with the theme name make it easy to store and access prop box items. In addition to collecting items from parents and staff, Myhre suggests going to the source, local businesses, and asking for donations. Myhre also suggests thrift stores and garage sales as places to accumulate



Photos courtesy of the author

Tractor box

items at low prices. Ask a local grocery store to donate nametags and aprons with the store logo. A “Grocery Store” prop box would also include a cash register, purse, wallets, play money, grocery bags (disposable and reusable) and lots of empty food containers. Empty food containers do not last long with continued use but are easily replaced. Prop boxes are easily shared by all the classrooms and age groups in a program or school. The painted sheets, mentioned earlier, can also be stored in the prop box. Big backdrop items like trees, plastic pools, and brick fronts require larger storage space. Flat poster board signage and logos require less storage space. Storage, or lack of, is one of the keys to rotating and changing a dramatic play center.

Conclusion

Intentional early childhood teachers can be committed to making dramatic play more than home living by changing it frequently and purposefully throughout the school year. Start with some basics, ask for help, seek donations, add literacy, store items as prop boxes, and be innovative. Pick themes that enhance STEM learning, social studies, and art. The dramatic play center facilitates learning in all developmental domains and improves language, literacy, science and math skills.

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About the Author

Alice H. Hall, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor in Child and Family Development at Georgia Southern University in Statesboro, GA. She teaches courses in preschool teaching methods, diversity, parenting, and youth development. Alice is the Secretary of the National After School Association Board of Directors. She is passionate about educating undergraduates to plan and implement high quality early childhood classrooms. She acknowledges that many, if not most, of the dramatic play ideas in this article have been implemented by her undergraduate students as they learned to become the lead teacher in a preschool classroom.

Safety Considerations to consider when setting up dramatic play.

- Make sure teachers have a visual line of sight to supervise the inside of dramatic play areas. Big window cut outs are a great way to see inside.
- Make sure sheets and fronts are securely attached.
- Consider the risk factors of objects placed in dramatic play and educate children about sharp edges and correct use of objects.
- Make sure the fake grass and tarp are cleaned after each theme.

Making Sense of Children’s Drawings and Semiotic Explorations

Young artists use signs to stand for or to represent something other than themselves. Learn how children invest signs with meaning as they draw and write.

Cathleen S. Soundy

Picture books constitute the first format through which most children experience literature. Young readers respond positively to the visual images and written language of picture books that tell a story (Goodwin, 2009). While offered primarily for the pleasure of an implied child viewer, “reading picture books aloud can be an important contribution to children’s development of literacy, especially visual literacy” (Mjor, 2010, p. 179). In the process of listening to picture storybooks, children build up knowledge about semiotics, defined as systems of representation (including signs and symbols), as they observe how authors and artists share ways of making meaning.

Definitions

- **Semiotics:** the science that studies signs and their use in representation
- **Modality:** the way in which signs are transmitted (oral, gesture, written)
- **Mode:** method

Multimodalities and Semiotics

Children experience “multimodalities” in literacy, combining talk, drawing, gesture, writing, and dramatic play in multiple ways as they make meaning (Gallas, 1994; Kress, 1997; Kress, 2010). In some circumstances, meanings can be made from a single mode. But most children, when given the opportunity, tend to create multimodal texts. As young artists apply a multiplicity of modes to their representation and communication

activities, “meanings are made, distributed, received, interpreted and remade through many representational communicative modes – not just through language – whether as speech or writing” (Jewitt, 2009, p. 14). Within this multimodal ensemble, the freedom to blend drawing, writing and telling puts children in a position to select those features across modes that interest them and to extend opportunities for communicating meaning (Mavers, 2011).

Principles derived from the field of semiotics provide another useful framework for understanding children’s drawings in relation to their ideas and feelings. Semiotics is defined as “the science that studies signs and their use in representation” (Danesi, 2007). Social semiotics draws attention to the ways in which meaning is constituted within the context of social relations and processes. When a multimodal social semiotic theory is applied to the work of children, researchers can view how signs and messages are situated within the context of social environments and in social interactions (Kress, 2010).

Both theoretical positions view children as sign-makers who utilize the resources available to them in their respective socio-cultural environment. When children draw they are doing far more than producing graphics (Anning, 1997): they are purposely investing signs with meaning. Children experiment with basic visual signifiers – artistic elements of design (line, color, shape, and texture), layout, and choosing one design over another – when creating visual texts (Danesi, 2007). Young artists use signs to stand for or to represent something other than themselves. A line that zigzags might act as a signifier to express ‘lightning’. Several lines that zigzag may be a child’s way of indicating many bolts of lightning or a storm that’s growing in intensity. Meaning

The Classroom in Action

Leo the Lightning Bug

In this study, *Leo the Lightning Bug* is one of ten themed books chosen for a one-week unit on storms. After a teacher-led discussion about Leo's adventures, children participate in drawing a picture of the storm on the night that Leo got tossed by the wind and splashed by the rain. Within minutes of finishing the read-aloud and story discussion, the classroom hums with voices and laughter as children draw, gesture, and talk about storm related experiences. These children quickly transform a blank drawing space into scenes reflecting their interpretations and ideas about storms. Olivia, one of the participants, dramatically vocalizes what was on her mind, "CRAAACKKKK!!! Look, the entire sky lights up like daylight and there is a CRASH BOOM RIP-PING sound!" She alternately slaps her hands up and down on the table top, increasing the intensity, to imitate the sounds made by the rumbling of thunder. She proceeds to draw cloudbursts and a lightning bolt that traverses the entire length of the drawing space. Olivia uses curved lines to create loops and spirals to show wind-like characteristics. She also draws narrow lines of rain streaming down from the dark clouds. The rain is depicted in straight lines, according to Olivia's written text, because it is raining very hard.

Katie and Austin, two classmates seated at Olivia's table, create storm images and weave in written text features and storytelling to support their drawings. Katie enhances the fury of the storm by overlaying the words 'Whoosh' and 'Boom' in heavy black letters across the image



Photo by Elisabeth Nichols

Rich understandings of the artwork and the artist arises when teachers learn to observe the child's verbal, visual, spatial, and other forms of representation as they unfold.

can also be made by the positioning of elements in space as well as by elements of color or texture (Kress, 2010). Raindrops on one side of the page may suggest that a storm is approaching and a red door might signal a prominent point of entry. Children purposely shape and order their experience by choosing available visual-graphic forms to make intended meaning (Tutchell, 2014).

In the classroom featured below, children are involved in the interpretation of text and pictures as they listen to the two different picture books. During read-aloud sessions with *Leo the Lightning Bug* (Drachman, 2001), children are exposed to

multimodal forms of expression that draw upon written language, visual image and graphic design to tell the story. This experience with multiple means of communication uniquely positions children with a framework for drawing and writing in response to literature.

Reading picture books aloud can support children's development of literacy.

in her drawing. She increases the font size from the left to right side of the page and capitalizes the initial letters to give increased salience to these key words. Austin produces a glaring white streak of lightning and surrounds it in a threatening dark night sky as he tells a personal experience in the form of a story:

“One time me and my dad went to get ice cream, and there was a storm with lightning and thunder. It came out of nowhere! I stopped eating my ice cream like this. (He dramatically gestures a scared facial expression and repeatedly reenacts a pulling away motion of the ice cream cone from his mouth, then returning the cone to his lips, but never getting close enough to eat the ice cream). I say “Daaaaddddddd, let’s go home . . . NOW!”

For many children, meaning-making within the medium of drawing is an active, playful experience, one in which talk, movement, and writing are closely linked. When children

are seated in small groups in close proximity, what is drawn or written is observed by or shared with others. Their different dialogues co-exist and seep into the drawing event. Sometimes exchanges of ideas occur solely through the images appearing on another child’s drawing. At other times, a child’s written response sparks opportunities for communication between children. When working in collaboration on drawings, “Children are regarded as meaning-makers, in that they pull on a diverse collection of ideas, experiences, imaginings, and information to form their opinions, learning and relationships with the world” (Knight, 2013, p. 23). In any given instance, however, only some aspects of the meaning potential are selected for signification.

During the drawing event, each child works alongside, but not identically with the other drawers. Children choose the defining attributes they want to include in their artworks (Mavers, 2011). When young artists use drawing as a way of

conceptualizing an idea, they often select different symbols and decide where to locate the image on the page. One child might focus more on artistic elements as he draws trees bending in the wind, while another might work diligently to position a lightning bolt diagonally across the page. But as all children observe and participate in image and text making activities, they engage in multimodal communication. With every encounter with artwork over time, young children build knowledge, add to their schema about storms, and develop assumptions about the world (Albers, 2008). Within this rich context, children can work on producing visual and linguistic text of what they each think about storms.

Careful observations give rise to teachable moments.

Educators are beginning to understand that children’s drawings can be regarded as a process for thinking and communicating. But there is a clear need to provide early educators with an understanding of how children navigate their rich and multi-layered visual-textual worlds. In this article drawing is presented as part of children’s broader, intentional, meaning-making activity. In order to reach a far wider variety of intentions than could be inferred from the finished drawings themselves, the author relies on both end products and field notes from the work in progress as important sources of information. The main objectives are to show teachers how to use a semiotic perspective to gain access to children’s multiple modes of think-



Photo by Elisabeth Nichols

Children experiment with basic visual signifiers – artistic elements of design (line, color, shape, and texture), layout, and choosing one design over another – when creating visual texts.

ing and to acquire insights that will help them to understand and support children's visual and linguistic modes of learning.

The Bears in the Bed and the Great Big Storm

After showing the cover page and announcing the title and author, practicum students read *The Bears in the Bed and the Great Big Storm* (Bright, 2008). Students conducted a brief post discussion of the story using the same three questions they co-developed about the character's adventures during the storm. Following the post discussion, students invited children to draw, write, and talk about thunderstorms. The pre-service teachers observed closely and took notes on drawing, writing and talking behaviors. Their notes included simultaneous talk during the drawing event as well as talk about their drawing after completion.

After analyzing the data, the researcher identified two contrasting styles of artwork to serve as exemplars for showing how meaning is communicated through a mixed-media of language, image-making, and writing. Each work of art is presented below as a separate analysis in order to highlight important components of the visual and verbal meaning-making systems found in the respective child's multimodal productions. The goal is to focus on each multimodal ensemble (combination of speech, gesture or action, and writing) by studying the dynamic interplay between creating images on the page and related interactions with others during the process of production.

The Children's Work

The following interpretative analysis contains a brief description of the

content, a glimpse of the rich and multilayered visual-textual meanings, and a concise identification of some compelling features. The use of art elements, as well as the content in vocalizations and written language, is examined as part of the semiotics of the total event.

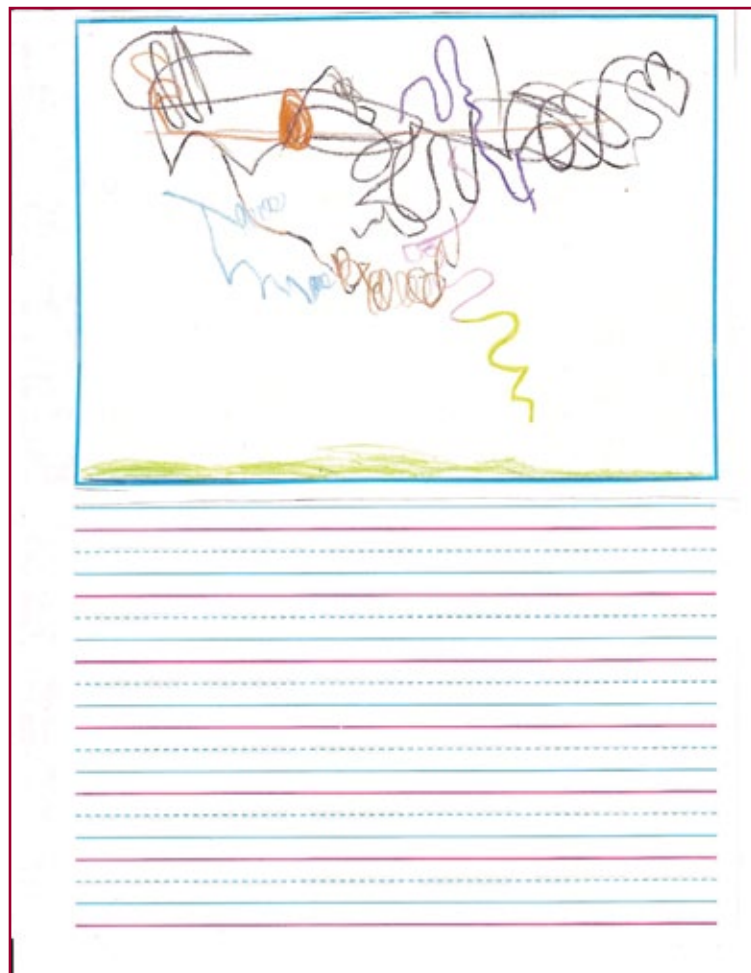
First Drawing – Tristan

Tristan, a 4-year-old, listens to an oral reading of *The Bears in the Bed and the Great Big Storm*. After the post-discussion, Tristan's preservice teacher specifies the reader-response task by asking the three children in her small group to draw and write about the storm. As Tristan sets to work, he chooses a black and brown colored pencil. This young child conveys the effect of swirling winds with a tangled web of curving lines.

Thunder is depicted with an orange circular shape and lightning appears as a yellow curving line that descends diagonally into open space on the right hand side of the page. Tristan then picks up the green crayon and says, "I am going to put in grass." Having already selected the most significant features of the event, Tristan completes his drawing by signifying the storm's location in reference to the ground (*Figure 1*)

The majority of Tristan's message is carried by the structure of the composition and the selection of visual referents associated with storms. Using a limited range of graphic schema, Tristan invents his own way of representing the disturbances in the upper atmosphere, characterized by howling winds, a crash of thunder and a flash of lightning. He selects

Figure 1



attributes that serve as apt bearers of meaning. Equally important, he uses the top of the drawing space, the thematic part of the text, to demonstrate a point of interest, i.e., the dynamics of the wind. In the process of rendering lines, colors, and shapes and fusing them into the spatiality of the page, he creates a unified composition.

The beginnings of symbolic language are well underway. This child is learning to arrange elements such as lines, shapes and colors in a visual composition, attending to how the component parts combine, and how the emergent representational forms communicate meaning. Although the finished product lacks photographic or true-to-life representation, Tristan demonstrates knowledge of visual signs to signify the actions and elements of the storm. When the context is known, the viewer can begin to see this child's link with visual referents in the environment. Tristan's image, while representationally constrained, is a meaningful piece of art and a unique form of expression.

The sources of inspiration for this drawing are not apparent and it's unknown whether Tristan invests his image with the power of the wind and taps into his considerable knowledge of storms from picture books and life experiences as he adds yet another attribute to his storm picture. From an adult perspective, the compelling feature of this visual piece is the suggestive power, a layer of meaning that exists beyond the young artist's immediate realm of awareness. Tristan is not likely to be cognizant that his composition is not visually symmetrical, and that the lack of pattern clearly reflects the irregular rhythms of a storm and its own way of occupying

space. Such deep levels of possible meaning will remain invisible in a child's early work, but may surface again in later productions of storms and warrant discussion.

To view this artwork as merely representative of a child with undeveloped, fine motor movements would be a gross misunderstanding of the semiotic work Tristan invests in this drawing. His response includes sufficient visual information to communicate his ideas, albeit with far fewer and simpler conventional symbols and contextual features than older children. Furthermore, it's no surprise that Tristan chooses not to write about his drawing. He will be ready to engage in writing and exploration of an elementary plot level within a couple of years. For now, talking about a drawing with an

adult is a far more developmentally appropriate way to communicate. Even though Tristan uses a short, repetitive speech pattern for labeling items in the picture space, "This is the wind, this is the lightning." as he points to each respective entity on the page, his verbalizations allow him to share the most significant features of the event. The entire process, especially his work with early semiotic representation, is already intensely purposeful and personal.

Second Drawing – Jenna

Jenna, a 7-year-old, responds to the same structured protocol as Tristan. After listening to *The Bears in the Bed and the Great Big Storm* and participating in a post-discussion, Jenna begins to draw. She creates shapes and forms as she

Figure 2



utilizes the entire sheet of paper to prepare a contextualized setting for the storm (*Figure 2*). The various images in Jenna's illustration are instantly recognizable and readily interpreted. Bear's house is nestled serenely between two towering trees, each depicted with a brown trunk and green top. Two large bolts of lightning streak down the page; the one on the left side seems in close proximity to the house huddled low to the ground. The other bolt of lightning appears on the far right, positioned beside three columns of pouring rain. Seven dark clouds frame the top of the page and complete the composition.

Jenna's art is pleasing to the eye in terms of its color, line, composition and balance. The young artist applies her schema for trees and elements associated with a storm. Dark clouds, heavy rain and bolts of lightning provide a contrast to the otherwise peaceful and aesthetically pleasing scene. Jenna depicts the strength of the downpour by designing a vertical alignment of oblong shapes in a dense formation. She creates jagged bolts of lightning that suggest tension in the image and allude to the storm's power. Jenna, like many 7-year-olds, employs her own style of conceptual organization and utilization of symbols to express meaning.

At first glance, the door and window on the house seem to be a type of formula driven representation. But with closer examination, the viewer sees Jenna pushing the parameters of meaning as she adapts her established schema for drawing houses for people to one more appropriate for a bear family. She forms a cave-like shape for Bear's house and chooses attributes that she considers to be the most essential

features. Jenna may be experimenting with conscious decisions on how best to portray bear's habitat. But it is unknown whether the red door reflects meaning potentials often associated with colors. Knowingly or not, Jenna may have colored the door red to indicate energy, activity, danger or even the sense of fear Papa Bear felt when a knock was heard at the door. Undoubtedly, some aspects of deeper meaning will always remain invisible, but with older children, such areas of inquiry can generate talking points for further exploration.

Drawing is highly significant as a meaning-making medium.

Jenna links pre-existing images or ideas about what she wants to express with an intuitive sense about art and story making. This first grader balances the demands of visual and verbal tasks quite well. Jenna composes two written sentences that refer to the bedtime activity featured in the picture book, *"Mama Bear, Baby Bear and Little Bear and Young Bear were sleeping. Bear was awake."* She also becomes highly engaged in a spontaneous conversation with others at her table. *"Look,"* said Jenna, *"my storm is not scary. My pictures always have happy endings."* She combines both her narrative abilities and her depicting powers of pictures to bring about an illusion of calm after the storm.

Within this collaborative context, anchored within the setting of the story, Jenna's picture becomes more than a "here and now" moment with

her peers. Through active, playful speculation, the children work together to create a different ending to the story. Using a touch of mental imaging and poetic language, they verbally transform Jenna's storm setting into one in which the lightning is reduced to a dim flicker, the downpour slows to a drizzle and the bolts of lightning are replaced with shafts of sunlight streaming into the forest. As the children are pulled into joint narrating opportunities, they practice vocabulary and build hypothetical relationships between one picture and page in the text to the next, all valuable skills that may find their way into future compositions.

Discussion

For Tristan, and for many other emergent literacy learners, there is often more to their simple drawings than meets the eye. With the help of verbal mediation, this child succeeds in sharing his mental representations with symbols that were familiar to him (semiotics). Jenna brings her growing cognitive, linguistic and world knowledge to the reader-response task—a truly multimodal approach. Her stronger technical repertoire and verbal language competencies help turn her experience with this reader-response activity into more than just making a picture of the storm. The event becomes an important opportunity for connecting with friends on a topic of mutual interest. She actively experiments with the fittingness of other concepts as they innovate on the events in the picture book and her drawing to create a new ending. The spontaneous discussion provides a meeting place for children to play out alternative ideas, to invent future possibilities, and to provide a satisfying level of challenge.

To gain access to deeper meanings, teachers must witness the creation of children's drawings and spend more time tuning in as meaning is channeled through talk, gestures, and writing. The marks children make on paper hold all types of meaning and "listening to what they have to say about their artwork can give teachers insights into children's thoughts and feelings" (Tomlinson & Hyson, 2009, p. 177). If teachers are to fully understand the meanings produced, they must observe the interrelated way in which the visual, verbal, spatial, and other forms of representation unfold. Careful observations offer teachers that rare, but powerful opportunity to dialogue in ways that build new understandings of the topic being studied and to discover the life experiences from which children mine resources for their artwork. Careful observations give rise to teachable moments related to a child's drawing and the collaborative spirit that surrounds the creation of this joint activity.

Final Points

This study demonstrates how drawing is highly significant as an aesthetic, creative, meaning-making medium. Even when drawing in response to the same teacher directed prompt, the two children in this study experiment with very different meaning potentials in their choice and combination of resources. Each child invents his or her own way of representing ideas by mixing and melding picture book information, lived experiences, and a touch of imagination. The combination of image, linguistic expression, and interactions around drawing and writing in the two ensembles demonstrates, both poignantly and powerfully, the richness and complexity



Photo by Elisabeth Nichols

Children combine talk, drawing, gesture, writing, and dramatic play in multiple ways as they make meaning.

of children's ability to identify and select signifying features.

Viewing children's drawings from multi-modal and semiotic perspectives helps all early educators think more deeply about the unique texts children produce and the ways in which they weave principles of selection and arrangement, the semiotics of the total event. Being present during the drawing event promotes insights into this complex orchestration of meaning by providing traces of the semiotic work in which children are engaged. Future research and practice need to recognize that rich understandings of the artwork and the artist arises when teachers learn to observe the child's verbal, visual, spatial, and other forms of representation as they unfold.

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preschool teacher and later became an elementary classroom teacher and reading specialist. Her research focuses on early literacy development and visual literacy. She is currently serving as the principal investigator for the Jumpstart Philadelphia Project – Temple University.

About the Author

Cathleen S. Soundy is an Associate Professor of Early Childhood Education at Temple University, Philadelphia, PA. She began her career as a

The SECA Reporter Becomes a BLOG!

The summer 2015 issue of *The SECA Reporter* will be the last in the form of a newsletter. With the advance of technology, there are new ways to provide information that enhance the member experience and provide for interactive communication among our members throughout the SECA states. We'll continue to produce our e-newsletters such as *The Leadership Letter* and *Public Policy Notes*, but we think that changing *The SECA Reporter* to another information format will allow us to keep you updated more frequently and provide another avenue for you to participate professionally. ***The SECA Reporter will now come to you in the form of a BLOG post*** with a new post at least once a month.

During the last couple of years, we've moved from "print and mail" to 24 hour on-line access and in the process have increased the resources and content that we can provide. You can now go on-line and access your copy of *Dimensions of Early Childhood*, the e-mail archives, public policy information and other resources anytime it fits your schedule. You no longer have to wait for these resources to appear in your mailbox.

We're looking for innovative and creative ways to serve you better and to provide member value. You've probably noticed the change in the way the monthly member e-mail looks. That's just one of the changes that we've initiated to make our member resources more relevant and useful.

You'll receive notification when the posts are made and we hope you'll share your thoughts and ideas with your colleagues. *Let us know what you think about this new adventure at SECA!*

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**Making it HAPPEN
at the local level**



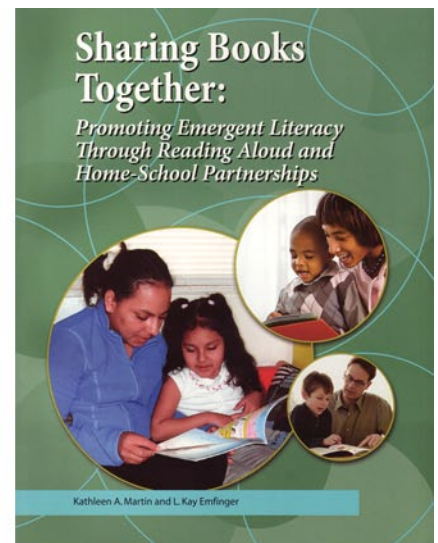
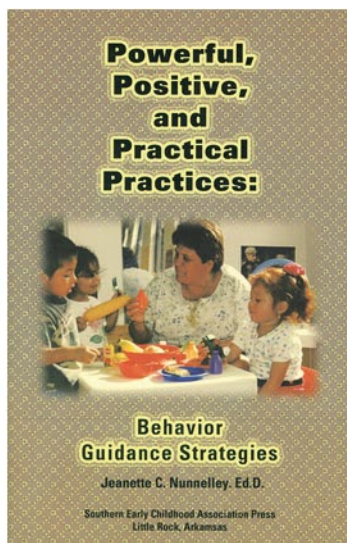
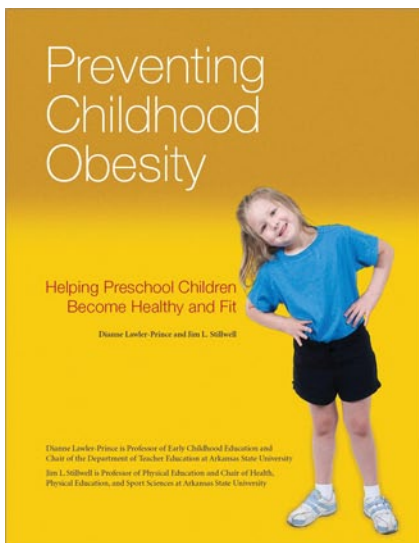
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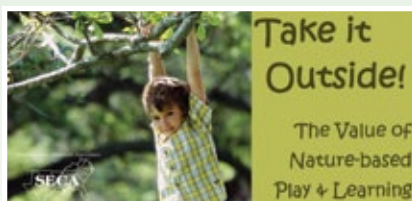
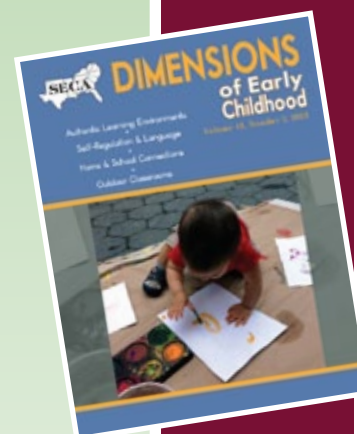
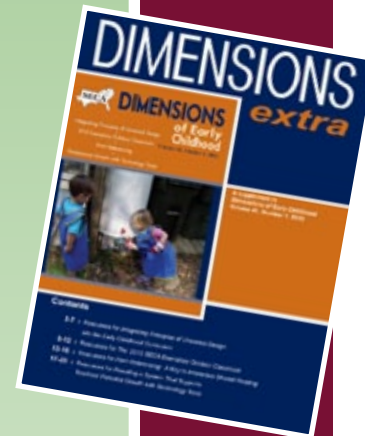
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