

The Berkley Buzz

April / May 2007
Volume 21

Upcoming Events

April 13th: Mark your calendars for the 4th annual Chris Cakes Pancake Breakfast held at Berkley!

Celebrate Month of the Young Child
3/30-FIP meeting 4:30 Berkley lounge, everyone is welcome.

4/13-PDD and Berkley's annual Chris Cakes Pancake Breakfast!

4/21-FIP and Berkley's Spring Fling / Yard Work Day

4/25-Berkley Open House 3:30 - 5:30 P.M.

May 2007

PDD in May is the THIRD FRIDAY (May 18th)

5/4-FIP meeting 4:30 Berkley lounge, everyone is welcome

5/18-PDD (this is the 3rd Friday) Judy Harris Helms will present on Project Work.

5/19 Early Childhood Institute: visit our website to view the brochure.
<http://education.umkc.edu/Berkley/>

Something to Think About

....One is in a position through teaching to pursue questions about the development of understanding that one could not pursue in any other way. If as a researcher one is interested in how people build their understanding, then the way to gain insight is to watch them do it and try to make sense of it as it happens.

A Note from Polly:

Ah the feeling of spring is in the air! The pancakes are on their way, the children are able to play outside and soon the smell of sunscreen will permeate the halls of Berkley. I hope all of you are enjoying the beautiful spring days we are having. I know April 21st, FIP Yard Work Day, will be a blast! FIP is planning to add a "Bean Pool," "Gourd House," bamboo plants, raspberries and blackberries along the back fence, on the playground, and enhance the Butterfly Garden out front. We also need to plant flowers in the large pots out front. See you on Saturday, April 21st.

During the month of April early childhood professionals celebrate the Month of The Young Child (MOYC). The theme for MOYC is Investing in children and building better futures. "Early learning experiences are crucial to young children's growth and development," said Mark Ginsberg, Ph.D., NAEYC Executive Director. "Week of the Young Child is an opportunity for all of us to recognize the importance of the early years, and work together to ensure all children have safe care and quality learning experiences that will help them succeed in school and beyond." With that, I think it is important to celebrate families as well. Parents and families are the most important teachers in a child's life. The wisdom and understanding we can gain from families is extraordinary. Thank you, Berkley families, for all you do in helping us to provide your children with quality learning experiences.

All year the teachers worked on deepening their project work. Have you had a chance to read all the documentation around the school? Many of the classrooms are exploding with exciting projects. The Roo and Zoo rooms presented their current project work to the staff during the February and March PDD. Look for an article from the Zoo room in this edition of the Berkley Buzz. On May 18th Judy Harris Helms will present "Deepening Project Work: Strategies for extending and enhancing project experiences" (this is the third Friday, May 18, 2007). Judy is also our guest speaker for the Early Childhood Institute on Saturday, May 19th. Go to the URL below to view our brochure and more details about Judy Harris Helms. <http://education.umkc.edu/Berkley/documents/BrochureECI2007.pdf> Judy is well known for her work in the area of project work and documenting children's play.

Celebrating Families and Children,

Polly Prendergast

Eleanor Duckworth, The Having of Wonderful Ideas and Other Essays on Teaching and Learning

A Farm in the Fountain Room?

By Kathleen Cross and Mallory Kendall

In the Fountain room, “Baa” is one of our favorite words. It means both *ball* and the sound a sheep makes. Our interest in sheep began with a farm puzzle we’ve had since September that features a sheep, a cow, and a rooster.

Then, about a month ago, we received a book featuring the song “Old Macdonald Had a Farm.” Many of the children have been highly interested in the book, bringing it to us to read or tugging at it to get it from friends already reading it. When we begin to sing it, the children turn to watch us, smile, and move their bodies to the tune. Some of them have also begun saying “Baa” and “Moo” when we show them the sheep and cow and make those noises ourselves.

Besides looking at the animals, the children often point out Old MacDonald himself, and they’ve recently noticed a picture where he’s riding a tractor. Also, Ethan pointed out some photos of animal babies recently, and he and Lydia said “Baa” to the lamb.

We’re working on building the children’s interest and adding to their concept of a farm and farm animals. The illustrations in the book look like cut paper and felt, so we found actual photos of the animals to hang up in our room. We also added more farm books, and we’d like to find some toy farm animals. Additionally, we’re looking for a recording of the song the children recognize: We have two recordings, but we’d like a simpler one. Perhaps soon we’ll be able to take a trip with our families to a farm or petting zoo. We’ll keep watching to see where the children’s interest takes us!



FIRE! A Look Into Project Work **Danica Love, March 2007**

“Using authentic materials for investigation and research based curricular approaches, project based learning emphasizes the creative aspects of learning and encourages discussion and collaboration to make meaning,” stated Mary Morris (2004).

So what is the project approach? Helms and Katz stated the definition of a project as: “A project is an in-depth investigation of a topic worth learning more about. The investigation is usually undertaken by a small group of children within a class, sometimes by a whole class, and occasionally by an individual child. The key feature of a project is that it is a research effort deliberately focused on finding answers to questions about a topic posed either by the children, the teacher, or the teacher working with the children,” (2001).

There are many benefits that come from implementing the project approach curriculum in the classroom. Some purposes/outcomes of the project approach include:

- Integrated across the curriculum, encompassing all the different curriculum areas and skills needed to be covered within the school year.
- Length of project determined by the progression of the project (varies with classroom).
- Topics negotiated between students and teacher with goals being integrated within the curriculum and depending upon the children’s interests.
- Teacher webs to assess children’s prior knowledge on the topic, then organizes the project based on what children want to know and involves them in the investigation.
- Teacher’s role is to observe children’s investigations and use their interest to determine the next step.
- Knowledge is gained by finding answers to questions; children are involved in determining how to investigate and find answers they seek. Activities are focused on investigating the answers to children’s questions.
- Resources are brought into the classroom to the children from the community: Expert speakers, books, materials to work with, etc.

- Children participate in field-site visits to a place or places in the community pertaining to the topic of study.
- Children represent their knowledge gained during the investigation in several different ways.
- Parents become involved as experts or resources for children and join them on field site visits.

(Helms and Katz. 2001. Young Investigators: The Project Approach in the Early Years.)

The project approach occurs in three different phases. During phase one, the topic of interest emerges as it is brought on by children, teacher or children and teacher. Once a topic is chosen, a web is then completed with the existing knowledge children have on the topic. A second web is then completed with curriculum opportunities, possible resources and field site visits. Children can assist in the construction of the web as they bring in questions they wish to seek answers to throughout the investigation. After the web is completed, activities and experiences are provided for the class based on the web. We saw an interest in fire from participating in a fire drill at the end of last summer. The children believed that Polly, the director, took pictures of them during the fire drills and looked at the pictures on her computer. They pointed to the fire alarm in the hallway and said, “That is Polly’s secret camera.” This statement led us to begin providing the children with books about the topic while watching their play and listening to their conversations. We first webbed fire, which we found to be a very large topic with too many areas of possible interest to focus on at once. We decided to focus in on one or two main topics and, with the children, realized Fire Trucks and Fire Fighters were of interest to the children as they demonstrated these topics through their dramatic play and conversation. We then found out what the children knew about the topic and developed research questions from what they wanted to know. Based on the questions children had, we webbed activities and field site visits around curriculum goals.

Phase two of the project includes re-examining the web to tie in skills and concepts to be covered within the school year. Teachers and children will also prepare for a field site visit or for visits to the classroom by experts on the topic. We had a fire fighter visit the classroom with all of his gear and we also took a field site visit to a local fire station. We had originally discussed visiting several fire fighters and different

stations, but timing for visiting the first fire station took longer than expected. Investigation of the topic continues as children are provided with resources such as books and activities to enhance their knowledge and answer questions they are seeking. We continued to provide materials and books in the classroom as children built a fire truck out of a large refrigerator box and blocks in the block area. Our house area turned into a fire station where fire fighters ate dinner and slept until they heard the siren. We were also fortunate to have a real fire hose and fire fighter coat along with children's dramatic play materials of fire coats and hats. When completing activities, listening to experts or visiting field sites, children represent their knowledge of what they learned through many different media: drawing on paper or clipboards, dramatic play, construction, writing, painting, through conversation, etc.) As teachers, we are able to use pictures, anecdotal records and summaries of activities to place in each child's portfolio. By capturing children demonstrating their knowledge and skills, we are able to assess children's skills and then provide appropriate activities or conversation to enhance their development. When children are assessed this way, embedded in the curriculum, the assessment is accurate and more individualized to each child's needs and skill level. Children and teachers also revisit the web, state what was learned and see if there are new questions children have to answer. If there are new questions, the investigation and representation process are repeated. This is a process that we did not complete because we saw the children losing interest in the topic as it had been investigated for four months already. We were left with the question of: Were the children really finished or did they need some inspiration to continue? How do we know children were really completed with the project investigation and do we need to continue just to complete some items from the original lesson plans?

The last of the phases for the project approach is phase three. During phase three, a culminating event or experience is planned for children to share information they have learned with others. Our children decided they wanted to write about their experiences throughout the project but also share our videos and pictures taken throughout the process. As a teacher, I saw the event coming more from the teacher as we would compile all the media onto a power point. I proposed this to the children and asked if they could come up with a way to share everything to the parents themselves. They chose to video tape themselves telling about their pictures to create a video book and then add the video from the fire

station to share with their families. Children also voted and decided to take turns taking the videos home to share with their families. We have been in the process of each family taking the videos home over the weekend or for a few days during the week on rotation by a list of children's names. Once the culminating experience is completed, teachers reflect upon the process, outcomes, and achievement of goals. As teachers and children reflect upon the completed project, we are learning ways to improve their teaching and learning for the next topic of investigation. In reflecting through our project we wondered where the original ideas from the fire drill went and if children should have been reintroduced to those ideas after studying the fire truck and fire fighters. We also realized we didn't cover everything in our lesson plans and children ended up taking activities to a different area. Although we followed the children, we did not accomplish all goals listed in the lesson plans because of the change in the outcomes of activities presented to children. We also had a question unanswered about the measurements (height, width, and depth) of the fire truck. Although children used measuring tape to measure the fire truck they built, we forgot to measure the fire truck at the fire station. We believe this could have been more meaningful for the children to have measured their own fire truck than to have answered the question by measuring the truck at the fire station, but this was still a question brought up in our reflection.

As to any type of curriculum, there are pros and cons to the project approach. Some of the pros of implementing the project approach are:

- Includes the children
- Connects information to what the children already know
- Children's minds need to be engaged
- Teachers help children make the connection between what is learned in school and experiences outside of school
- Children work together collaboratively to construct knowledge (growth in social skills)
- Creates opportunities for children to enhance their communication/language skills through interactive conversations
- Children become decision makers in their own learning process

- Children are intrinsically motivated to learn
- Multiple learning styles taken into consideration during activities and assessment
- Meets curriculum standards
- Teachers model lifelong learning to students
- Resembles “real-life” situations (Judy Harris Helm, Sylvia Chard, and Marilyn Flockhart, Yun Eunju, and Eileen Bryson)



Some of the cons are mostly teacher related in terms of having a teacher not familiar with the project approach curriculum take on the challenge of implementing it in their classroom. Project work requires a lot of interaction with children to know what questions to investigate and how to continue the project. For me, I think it takes practice in engaging in conversations and negotiations with children on a constant basis to feel comfortable in what is required of me as a teacher during the process of implementing the project approach in my classroom. Some of the cons for teachers are:

- Some teachers find the task of creating the list of questions with children difficult
- A change in instruction teachers may not prefer; adjustment to a new type of instruction can be difficult
- For teachers beginning project work, giving children choices (instead of only the teacher planning every activity) can be challenging (trusting)
- Responsive and ongoing planning that includes frequent negotiations with children can be difficult (Sylvia Chard, Marilyn Flockhart and Yun Eunjun)



Staff Spot Light Kathleen Cross

What classroom do you teach in: Infant teacher in the Fountain Room.

Where did you grow up: Rahway, NJ (born). Live in Liberty, MO.

Why did you choose this profession?

After college, I worked in graphic design and editing, but I realized after a while that I really wanted to work with children full time (I had been volunteering at church). I worked with three and four year olds at Citicorp Family Center for 5 years before coming to Berkley.

What is your favorite thing about young children?

Hmmm...I like to so many things! I guess I would have to say their innocence and joy about life.

What is your favorite children's book?

Again-I have a lot of favorites! I think I would have to say The Velveteen Rabbit and An Angel for Solomon Singer.

If you could give advice to children, what would you say?

Take your naps while you still can! ☺

What is your favorite childhood memory?

I have a few that come to mind: going to an apple orchard as a preschool field trip; riding a pony while wearing a pretty dress; my mom making dresses for me.

Share a favorite story about young children.

When I first started working with three year olds, one of the boys ran up to another boy and said, "Hey, Brady, let's run in circles!" Then, they did, and they were totally entertained!

What are your hobbies?

Reading, Scrapbooking, Drama, Yoga and Walking

Educational Background:

BA in English and French from Truman State University. Started the MA in Curriculum and Instruction Early Childhood emphasis, at UMKC, in January 07.

Congratulations!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Please help us congratulate Mallory Cox, Assistant Clinical Instructor in the Fountain Room. Mallory was recently accepted into UMKC's School of Education Graduate program for Curriculum and Instruction in Early Childhood. She starts Summer 07!



Vanessa's Corner

Some families have asked to see the recipes for some of the lunches Vanessa cooks for us. So in each Berkley Buzz we will spotlight one lunch recipe. This month we bring to you Chicken and Vegetable Casserole. **Remember, Vanessa cooks for over 90 people!**

In a large bowl, put two cans of mixed vegetables. Add 2 cans of cream of mushroom and black pepper. Prepare some casserole with chicken and some without. Put mixtures in cake pans and cover top with tater tots. Cover with foil and cook in oven for 1 hour at a temperature of 350 degrees.

Watching An Observation by Becky West

She stands a few feet from the entrance to the tunnel, its opening only a few inches shorter than she is tall. Her classmates squeal as they enter its gaping mouth and the echoes of their laughter drift back to her as they scuttle through on hands and knees. She watches, leaning forward to peer into the tunnel to see her friends for as long as possible. Giggling, another classroom's teacher tucks down, murmurs "Come with us!" and crawls inside. Once again she edges forward, leans over, and shakes her head as she scoots back.

Her own teacher sits down beside her, speaking softly until her arm is tugged by a small boy eager to crawl through the tunnel with his teacher. Gently, the teacher pats the hesitant child's arm and points to the opposite end of the tunnel. "We'll be over there!" the teacher says as she crawls into the tunnel.

One last time, she approaches the tunnel's opening, props a hand on the top and leans in, quickly pulling back. Then she smiles, squeals in excitement like her friends, and running her hand along the tunnel's side, dashes along it, keeping pace with her teacher and her classmate until they emerge and all three join in joyous laughter at an adventure completed.

It is only one of many risks she will take, many problems she will solve, and many relationships she will form as she journeys through childhood. A caring teacher watched, realized that it was too great a journey to undertake in one leap, and opened the door to other options. A little one watched, found a solution, took a risk, and celebrated her success in the company of a caring community. And an observer watched, privileged to be part of the journey.

Chicago or Bust!

The National Association For The Education of Young Children's National Conference will be held in Chicago November 7-10, 2007. This is a wonderful professional development opportunity for early childhood teachers. Usually the conference is so far away only one or two staff may attend.

However, this year the conference is in Chicago and our travel will be inexpensive. We are going to send all of our full time teachers to the conference! The conference falls on the November PDD so our plan is not to close in October for PDD. Instead we would close Thursday, November 8th. We are already closed on November 9th for PDD. All of the teachers could fly out Wednesday evening or Thursday morning and attend the conference Thursday, Friday, and Saturday.

NAEYC conferences bring together early childhood educators representing many roles -- teaching staff, program administrators, students, researchers and teacher educators -- to discuss the latest ideas and learn from one another. The NAEYC Annual Conference & Expo is the largest early childhood education conference in the world, where tens of thousands of educators choose from hundreds of presentations and exhibits. The 2007 NAEYC Annual Conference will be in Chicago on November 7-10.

We will keep you posted with details and please feel free to ask Polly or Becky if you have any questions. The teachers are very excited about this opportunity and we are thrilled to offer them the chance to attend a national conference.