

The Berkley Buzz

June/July 2006

Volume 17

Upcoming Events:

Thursday June 8th Don't Miss out
Come to the Berkley Carnival!

Friday June 9th -Closed-PDD

Tuesday July 4th -Closed- 4th of July

Summary of our visit with Amelia Gambetti
And
Study of the Reggio Approach
By: Kelly Anson

There have been many wonderful opportunities in the past few months to study the influence of the Reggio Approach. The first was a conference in February where Mary Hartzel, from First Presbyterian Church in Santa Monica, spoke on the impact that the Reggio approach made in her center. Her presentation included a discussion and slide show of her pre-school. She shared with us all of the Reggio inspired ideas and items used in their building. A couple of examples included the naming of the rooms that allowed the children, parents and teachers to create a history in the classroom and school. Another example was the idea of leaving a legacy gift for the next group of children transitioning into a classroom. These are great ideas that I believe we may want to use at Berkley.

Our second opportunity was a visit from Amelia Gambetti to Berkley and surrounding centers. Amelia had a chance to tour the classrooms and spoke with several teachers. According to those who met with her, there were many wonderful thoughts to ponder and ideas to implement. One of the reminders was to make sure we are creating environments that encourage children to explore and interact. She also emphasized the importance of creating environments that show we trust

the children to make choices and not to always worry about being clean and having the room picked up. Amelia said "We need to respect the rights of children to explore". Another idea she gave us was the use of our time, "Do we take every minute possible to document and observe the children in the process of their exploring and learning?" "Do we take too much time worrying about the end product of our documentation, instead of concentrating on showing the process as the project goes along?" Amelia pushed us to think about the importance of displaying the planning process we go through with the children, families, and teachers when working on a project as opposed to only displaying the finished product. This is where we can do a lot of self-reflecting on our program and in our classrooms.

The third opportunity was to hear Amelia speak at the conference. She appeared to reiterate many of the ideas stated above. She showed slides and gave many stories about Reggio and the children. Amelia shared her thoughts of people's misconceptions of the Reggio Approach and encouraged us to be inspired by Reggio but to apply it to our own culture, schools and classrooms.

Amelia visits Berkley March 17, 2006



Overall many of the teachers at Berkley said the opportunities reaffirmed their interest in the Reggio Approach. We are mentally aware of the importance of

an open, honest and trusting relationship with our children, families and staff. Please always feel free to share your ideas with us.

Amelia shares stories with the staff over lunch (March 17, 2006)



Reggio Emilia Conference
Held in Chicago, May 1st and May 2nd

By Karen Hutchinson

As you remember, Amelia Gambetti visited Berkley and other schools in the Kansas City area in the month of March. In May, two teachers and Polly attended a Reggio Conference in Matteson (Chicago) at Governor's State University. It was called "Exploring New Possibilities for Teaching and Learning." Amelia Gambetti, Lella Gandini, and Karen Haigh were the key note speakers.

On the first day, they shared expertise in the principles of the Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Learning. We also explored the Reggio Approach within three different American contexts: social service setting, public schools, and university settings. During the afternoon, we collaborated with teachers, our thoughts and ideas on the Reggio approach. We were also given the chance to reverse our roles as teachers and become students in hands on activity that encouraged us to use new materials. On the second day, Amelia and Lella shared experiences with children based on observing them. They also spoke about working with parents and parent participation. We had the

opportunity to visit the child and family development center located on campus. The building was beautiful and we enjoyed the displays of all the children's work.

*... What Should We Do About Biting?
By Julia Prestidge*

It's not easy for a parent to pick up their toddler from school only to learn that they have gotten hurt during the day, and it can even seem more grisly to discover that the mark on their child's arm is a bite mark. But is biting really any different than other potentially aggressive behavior from children? Why do they do it—and when? This topic is important to bring up from time to time as it can be difficult for all parties involved: parents, teachers, and, of course, children.

Fortunately, we can all take a deep breath. For children under three, biting is actually a normal developmental stage. Toddlers, however, usually have much different motivation for biting than infants. If an infant bites either a caregiver or another child, it is probably due to one of a couple of reasons. They could be trying to relieve pain and pressure in their gums from teething, or using their teeth and mouths to explore. Infants could also be experimenting with cause and effect, curious about what kind of reaction will happen when they use their teeth. If an infant bites you or another child, let them know right away that it hurts: "Ouch!" They may also benefit from a teether, or something else safe for their gums.

Toddlers, on the other hand, have entered a new stage of development in which communication is a large focus. They have begun to learn social skills, and how to start managing their behavior. Their problem is that they usually lack the language necessary to control a situation, or are not accustomed to using it in intense or frustrating situations. This overwhelmed feeling can lead to biting, and it becomes their way to control others and the environment around them. When we realize this, it helps us know how to respond. Toddlers need another way to communicate. This is why the phrase "use your words" is so often used around Berkley! This saying isn't tossed around quite as simply with toddlers, however, because they may still be learning the words they need to use. Because of this we need to be ready to help them communicate both verbally and non-verbally. This is why it is important to respond immediately, and

to help the child take care of the one who has been hurt. Then, stress the importance of using words, giving some examples such as “Stop,” “Mine,” or even “Help!” As always, try to remain calm so as to not give the child any negative reinforcement.

If your child has been known to bite, it may be reassuring to know that this behavior is not “weird.” Since much of this tendency and other aggressive behavior can stem from a feeling of being out of control, a practical idea is to try and offer your child several choices to make on their own. This way the child is given some power and control through positive experiences throughout the day. Our goal is that with love, understanding, and respect, a child will eventually be able to inwardly control his or her feelings and actions.

Some information from this article was gathered from an article by Ron Banks and Sojin Yi at <http://ceep.crc.uiuc.edu/poptopics/biting.html>

INTRODUCING... DAN GARTRELL

By Lindsay Aven

On May 19, 2006, Dr. Dan Gartrell visited Berkley to work with the staff on Professional Development Day. Berkley teachers first became interested in Dr. Gartrell’s work after reading his book *The Power of Guidance: Teaching Social-Emotional Skills in Early Childhood Classrooms* and attending a conference in which he spoke about his book at the Francis Institute.

Dr. Gartrell is a professor of education at Bemidji State University in Minnesota. His work is centered on giving teachers practical techniques to help children develop appropriate social skills. This is seen as essential, because in essence these social skills are life skills that will assist children in becoming responsible and healthy adults. Dr. Gartrell feels strongly that education should not be just about academics and behavior management, but instead should be focused on helping children learn to make intelligent and ethical decisions. The

guidance approach presented by Dr. Gartrell teaches children to solve problems, to work with others in a group where differences are bound to exist, and to express even the strongest of emotions appropriately.

We as a staff have found that Dr. Gartrell’s ideas truly are practical and provide a unique and positive way to examine the behavior of young children.

Dr. Gartrell Presents: The Seven Principles of Developmentally Appropriate Guidance **May 19, 2006**



Part Time Staff for Summer 2006

It is that time of year where schedules change and you see some new faces at Berkley with our part-time staff. As we said good bye to some of our part-timers who graduated and moved one, we welcome new part-time staff to Berkley.

Please welcome:

- Brittany Casnar – closer in Trolley Room.
- Cindy Dover – closer in Royal Room
- Kate Waldron – floating sub
- Jaki Rogers – floating sub
- Robyn Umsted – closer in Fountain Room
- We welcome back Melanie Meyer, who worked for us last year, as a floating sub.

Classroom Instructional Specialist

Becky West, our new Classroom Instructional Specialist, first day of work is Monday, June 5th! The Classroom Instructional Specialist's basic responsibility is to provide support and act as a resource to classroom teachers in the areas of classroom management, child guidance and curriculum planning. Becky will play a critical roll in the professional development and on-going training of the teachers. Becky has a B.S. in child Development from the University of Missouri, Columbia, and a M.A. in curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis in Early Childhood Education from UMKC.

Becky has over seventeen years of teaching experience and says "teaching on a daily basis has provided me with an understanding of and appreciation for the challenges as well as the joys classroom teachers face each day as they plan curriculum for and manage their classrooms." When asked why Becky wanted this position she stated "I find that, through my course of study, and through the work I am currently doing with student teachers at UMKC and Penn Valley, the interconnections between the quality of staff development and the quality of curriculum, guidance and management at the classroom level have become a source of fascination and challenge for me."

We are all very excited to have Becky join our team. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Polly

Transitions

As the relaxed days of summer start Berkley begins the processes for "looping". July and August is the time of year where many Berkley preschoolers transition to kindergarten, River and Fountain friend's begin the transition to the toddler rooms, Roo and Trolley friend's transition to preschool and our Westport and Plaza friends move to new classrooms! While it is exciting to think about how much the children have grown it can be a challenging time for the children, teachers, and families.

We ask for your continued patience this summer as children make the transition from one classroom to the next, often with a stop in between. Also, this is a time when your children may experience some "issues" related to the changes occurring. Communicate any concerns with your child's teacher and please let us know if there is anything we can do to make these changes as smooth as possible. All of the classrooms will plan family meetings in late June and through July.

Have a wonderful summer!

Berkley Child and Family
Development Center