



Children's Center

Bridgewater State College

February 2009

Lighting the Way to Literacy

by Elise McHugh, teacher with the Investigator Group

Of all the skills your child will learn, reading is perhaps the most important. It is one skill that will affect all areas of learning in school. Without a strong reading background, your child will be unable to understand history, science, social studies, even math. A literate adult becomes a contributing member of the workforce and society.

Literacy does not involve just reading. In fact, it encompasses four areas—reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Those “scribbles” your child makes are actually pre-writing. In the next step you will see letter-like markings. Soon you will see strings of letters that mean nothing to you, but your child is able to “read” them. Next, he will copy words and write short words on his own—Mom, Dad, cat. Soon he will move on to kindergarten and first grade and be writing up a storm!

In the same way that her body grows, so does a child's ability to speak. Those first babbles lead to first words (even though at first only Mom or Dad may understand them). Soon she strings several words together, then moves on to complete sentences. Soon we marvel at the vocabulary and ideas that emanate from such a small person!

While listening is definitely an acquired skill, it plays an important role

in literacy development. Listening is not just an important social skill. Interactions help children understand the structure of language and introduce them to new vocabulary.

Children first learn to listen and speak, then use these and other skills to explore reading and writing. Like child development in general, language development is interrelated. Children who have many opportunities to listen and speak tend to become skilled readers and writers. Children who can put their ideas in writing become better readers. Children who are read to often, learn to love reading and become better listeners, speakers, and writers.

Many play experiences support children's emerging literacy skills. Sorting, matching, classifying, and sequencing materials such as beads, a box of buttons, or a set of colored cubes, contribute to children's emerging literacy skills. Rolling playdough and doing fingerplays help children strengthen and improve coordination of the small muscles in their hands and fingers. They use these muscles to control writing tools such as crayons, markers, and brushes. As their language skills grow, young children tell stories, identify printed words such as their names, write their names on paintings and creations, and incorporate writing in their make-believe play. After listening to a story they talk about the people, feelings, places, things, and events in the book and compare them to their own experiences.

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Book Suggestions

Corduroy by Don Freeman
The Doorbell Rang
by Pat Hutchins
Lily's Purple Plastic Purse
by Kevin Henkes
Caps for Sale by Esphyr Slobodkina
Chicka Chicka Boom Boom
by Bill Martin Jr.
Good Night Moon
by Margret Wise Brown
If the Dinosaurs Came Back
by Bernard Most
My Visit to the Zoo by Alike
The Day Jimmy's Boa Ate the Wash
by Steven Kellogg
Planting a Rainbow by Lois Ehlert
Various Non-Fiction Titles
by Gail Gibbons
Silly Sally by Audrey Wood
If You Give a Mouse A Cookie
by Laura Joffe Numerof
A Bad Case of the Stripes
by David Shannon
Blueberries for Sal
by Robert McCloskey
*Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible,
No Good, Very Bad Day*
by Judith Viorst
Stellaluna by Janell Cannon

Self-portrait
by
Korrina



Dates to Remember

February 16 - Monday
Children's Center closed for
Presidents' Day
(no college classes)

Curriculum Notes - Investigator Group

by Jane Doyon, lead teacher



Winter was certainly upon us during the month of January. Due to very cold temperatures, there were several days we stayed inside. During these days we spent a good deal of time in the Burnell gymnasium playing with hoops, stepping stones, romper stompers, balls and the parachute. When temperatures allowed, the children went outside and had a wonderful time playing in the snow. Many snow angels were made as well as snowballs! Check out some of the pictures on the hallway bulletin board.

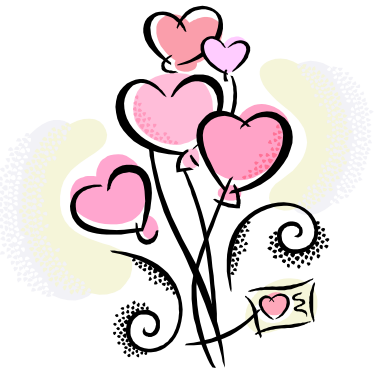
Most of the children didn't return to the Center until January 20th, after the College winter break. For those who came earlier, we had an "Anything Goes" theme where the children enjoyed participating in a variety of language arts activities. They also enjoyed creating many art projects through the use of finger paints, water colors, collage materials and more.

Once the spring semester began, our curriculum focused on music. We learned that music can be made by whistling, singing, or by playing instruments. Throughout the week, we made our own music by playing drums, cymbals, xylophones, rhythm sticks, triangles and more. During group activities we learned that music has both high and low *itches*, loud and soft sounds, and slow and fast *beats*. We also discovered we could

feel the *vibration* of a triangle after it was played and that we could make rice move on a drum when it was tapped. As always, we enjoyed our weekly visit from Professor Sarah McQuarrie from BSC's Music Department. She continues to teach us new songs and movement activities each week. This semester she will only be coming on Wednesdays (and not every other Tuesday) due to the change in her spring schedule. Finally, we enjoyed many "sound" experiments in our science area throughout the week. One of the children's favorite experiments was hanging triangles that made different sounds when they were played. We were quite the musical group this week!

Next we turned our focus to "winter." We sure experienced all the signs of this season over the past month. The sign the children enjoyed most was the snow. During one of our large group lessons, we graphed our favorite snow activities. We discovered we liked sledding and building snowman the *most* and skiing and making snowballs the *least*. We also discussed the cold temperatures and learned that if we put a cup of water outside, it would turn to ice. We *estimated* how long we thought it would take the water to freeze. Some said one hour, some said two and some said all day. After one hour we observed it was frozen only on the top but not on the bottom. But after two hours, the whole cup of water was completely frozen. Another topic we discussed was what animals do in the winter time. We learned that some of them live in cold, snowy weather and will prepare for the season by gathering and storing extra food, building warmer homes, or growing heavier coats of fur. We also learned that some animals can't survive in the cold and will either *migrate* to a warmer

place or *hibernate* till the spring. In our small art groups we participated in some fun winter activities such as painting on snow, painting with colored ice cubes, and creating snow scenes with "snow glitter," shaving cream, cotton balls, and more. Winter sure has been a fun season for the children. However, I think some adults may be looking forward to warmer spring weather now!



As we start the month of February we will begin planning for Valentine's Day by focusing some of our curriculum on love and friendship. On Friday, February 13th, (yes, Friday the 13th) the children will be welcome to bring in Valentine cards for their classmates. A letter will be sent out shortly with a class list to help assist the children (and parents) with writing them out. We also plan to have a delicious snack of Belgian waffles with strawberries and whipped cream that day. We thank all of those who are offering to bring in special treats; however we want to limit the amount of sugar in the children's diet. Remember to keep checking your parent mailboxes for any further information on this special day.

We're looking forward to another exciting month of learning and investigating during February. As always, we'll keep you updated on all the activities taking place in our room.

Curriculum Notes – Explorer Group

by Angela Magnarelli, teacher



Happy Birthday:

Madelyn February 19

We began the New Year by spending the first two weeks of January combined with the Investigators. The first week of January, Angela, Jane and Debbie worked in the classroom while Eileen, Joanne and Elise were on vacation. The second week, Eileen, Joanne and Elise took over the classroom while Angela, Jane and Debbie enjoyed some time off. Our “Anything Goes” theme for these weeks included various literature activities such as listening to stories: *What I Like About Me*, *The Mitten*, *What I Do Best*, and *Polar Bear, Polar Bear*. The children also got creative at the art table finger painting, painting snow, and experimenting with “Goop.”

Once the new semester began, we had one large group for the first week and engaged in a “winter” theme so some of our new children could get themselves acclimated with our classroom routine. During this time we explored the many facets of the winter season. At times the extreme cold and wind chill prevented us from going outside but when we could not go out, the teachers brought the snow inside to explore and paint. When the

weather did permit us to go out, the children enjoyed the abundance of snow on the playground as they made snow angels, snow people, and even snowballs that they enjoyed throwing at the fence. During our group times, we had many discussions on the different changes that occur during the winter season, what makes snow, and what fun activities the children like to partake in during the season.

The last week of January we ventured back into our small groups and had many discussions about the ways animals behave during the cold winter season. They learned about hibernation, adaptation and migration. The children made snow men out of shaving cream and glue, painted with bubble wrap, and read numerous books about winter and animals.

A Look Ahead: In keeping with our belief that children learn best when they study things that they are interested in, we will be talking about transportation during the first few weeks of February. A lot of the children in our classroom have shown a great interest in trains, planes and cars so we will soon use our imaginations to travel to different locations using various modes of transportation.

Reminder

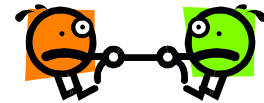
Please be sure your child is prepared for outdoor play with a LABELED snowsuit/snow pants, boots, hat, and mittens. We believe that exposure to the fresh, outside air is healthy for everyone. Thank you!

Workshop

Power Struggles: Decreasing Intensity while Getting Results!

Thursday, February 12, 2009
6 - 8 p.m.

Bridgewater State College
Crimson Hall,
200 East Campus Drive
Dunn Conference Rooms



On the surface, power struggles with your children can become a tug of war. Below the surface, they are about needs and emotions.

BRT Community Partnerships for Children is offering a FREE workshop for Parents & Caregivers that will explore these struggles as an opportunity to teach children important life skills and use of their power.

Local author and child behavior specialist, Jeanine Fitzgerald, is presenting valuable information. Together with Jeanine, you will receive tips on how to recognize power struggles, and the keys to preventing them. We'll also be discussing different ways to manage them when they do surface.

Pre-registration is required. To register, or for more information, please email Rita Celia at rcelia@triumphinc.org or call her at Community Partnerships for Children 508.823.2937 x214.

Funded by a grant from the Mass. Dept. of Early Education and Care, in collaboration with Bridgewater State College.

Parking is available in the Moakley Lot or in the Lower Great Hill Lot.

Lighting the Way to Literacy

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At the Children's Center, we support you, the parents, as your child's first teacher. Here are some simple ideas for activities you can do with your child at home. You don't have to spend money or time shopping; any materials needed can be found right in your home.

- ◇ Point out signs and symbols as you wait in the doctor's office, store, or bank. Look for letters in your child's name, his or her age on a sign, or have a contest to see who can be first to spot a particular letter.
- ◇ Play with language. While waiting in line or driving in the car, play rhyming games or teach your child tongue twisters. Be silly!
- ◇ Model reading for your child. Children imitate what they see. Provide a variety of reading materials in your home, from newspapers to cookbooks to comic books. Reading is reading, no matter the source.
- ◇ Read several books over and over again. Really! Repeated readings help develop listening skills, increase awareness of print concepts, and develop vocabulary.
- ◇ Make an alphabet book. Use old magazines, catalogs, or store flyers to find pictures of objects beginning with each letter.
- ◇ Read to your child every night. Children who are read to consistently will be more successful in school. Make this a warm and relaxing way to end the day.

You do not need to purchase flash cards or a reading program in order to teach your child to read. Reading readiness skills develop in the course of everyday activities—your child recognizes a store sign; he sorts and matches pairs of socks; she "reads" a book by looking at the pictures; you tell a story about when you were growing up.

In school we do not complete worksheets or drill phonics lessons. Reading readiness principles are embedded in our classroom setting and rou-

Websites for Parents

<http://literacyconnections.com/LiteracyBeginsAtHome.html>
<http://www.nea.org/readacross/parents.html>
<http://school.familyeducation.com/reading/family-learning/38301.html>
<http://school.familyeducation.com/reading/family-learning/38301.html>
http://www.ifg-inc.com/Consumer_Reports/LearnToRead.html <http://www.readwritethink.org/>

Interactive Websites for Children

<http://teacher.scholastic.com/clifford1/>
<http://pbskids.org/lions/games/>
<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/sesamestreet/?scrollerId=games>

tine. You can help develop your child's reading readiness and literacy skills at home in simple ways. Ask open-ended questions. Engage your child in songs and stories. Have your child complete a sentence you started or supply a rhyme. Read with expression. Place magnetic letters on the refrigerator. Help your child build background knowledge by providing a wide variety of experiences, e.g., visit a zoo, museum, or beach. Your child will be better able to relate to topics encountered in books if he or she can link the text to his or her own experiences.

By reading to your child you demonstrate book handling skills—top/bottom, front/back, left/right, one page at a time. You can add a few more steps to increase your child's readiness. Have your child "picture read" the book before you begin reading. Ask questions about the book as you read. "How does the character feel?" "Why did the character act that way?" Ask your child to predict what will happen next.

Excerpted from *On the Road to Reading* <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/RoadtoRead/part2.html>

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