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ABSTRACT

This document describes the development and content of five videocassettes used to depict diverse approaches to kindergarten education to preservice and current teachers and teacher educators. Developed under a faculty development grant from the University of South Dakota, the tapes range between 15 and 25 minutes in duration. The first tape, "Reading in Kindergarten: Memory to Decoding," shows a variety of techniques such as phonics, song charts, taped and text stories, illustrations, and labeled objects intended to guide children from memorizing words to reading them. The second, "Writing in Kindergarten: Skills and Process," differentiates between handwriting and creative writing, noting the developmental stages of both. The next video, "Science in Kindergarten: A Sense of Wonder," emphasizes the use of the environment. Children conduct and participate in experiments and are thus exposed to the scientific method. Some of the themes explored are Plants, Animals, Seasons, and Senses. "Kindergarten Mathematics: Hands-on Learning," depicts the use of class objects and events to learn number sense, measurement, categorization, addition, and subtraction among several other concepts. The final video, "Play in Kindergarten: A Process for Learning," affirms that play is a developmental process that helps to achieve learning and social skills. It shows how play can be integrated into reading, writing, mathematics, science, art, and computer use. The emphasis is on creative and constructive play rather than goal-directed or product-focused play. (BC)

Special Video Showcase:

Reading in Kindergarten: Memory to Decoding
Writing in Kindergarten: Skill and Process
Science in Kindergarten: A Sense of Wonder
Kindergarten Mathematics: Hands-On Learning
Play in Kindergarten: A Process for Learning

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Running Head: Video Showcase

Pre-service and in-service kindergarten teachers need to see positive role models---other teachers who are implementing developmentally appropriate practices in their classrooms in a variety of ways. Because it is difficult for many teachers to locate exemplary teachers and visit their classrooms, and because many students in pre-service programs don't have access to kindergarten classrooms, there was a challenge to bring kindergarten classrooms and teachers to these people. That challenge was met by producing five videotapes that depict real teachers in real classrooms doing appropriate activities with their kindergarten children.

In 1993, I received a faculty development grant from the University of South Dakota to produce a series of videotapes related to kindergarten education. During spring, 1993, I observed teachers and selected five teachers (two from Iowa and three from South Dakota) who were excellent examples of diversity in their approaches to appropriate kindergarten education. Two of the teachers taught in parochial schools and three taught in public school kindergartens. Children in their classrooms represented diverse populations---Caucasian, Native American, Hispanic, Eskimo, and Black.

I spent two full days in each classroom videotaping during spring, 1993. In addition to actual classroom footage, I interviewed each teacher on videotape to ascertain their philosophies and to question them about their implementation practices. During the summer, 1993, I spent many hours editing the videotapes into concise, viewable footage around the subjects of play, mathematics, science, reading, and writing in kindergarten. During fall, 1993, the videotapes were shown to a variety of audiences in South Dakota to ascertain their value to the viewers---current kindergarten teachers, pre-service teachers, teacher educators, and the cooperating teachers who appeared on the videos. The reviews were very positive from all audiences.

In 1994, I made an effort to expand the viewing audience to people from other states. That is why these videos were shown at the Midwest Association for the Education of Young Children.

The video: Reading in Kindergarten: Memory to Decoding is 24 minutes in duration. The video begins with an introduction that guides the viewer into the topic. Viewers are informed that kindergarten children come to school as readers because they can read some environmental print. It is the kindergarten teacher's role to build on these emergent literacy skills. Kindergarten teachers promote reading by reading stories that make use of illustrations, patterns, and meaningful context. Children learn to read by repetition and routine paired with enthusiasm and novelty. When teachers point to words as they read and employ props to enhance stories, students become motivated and begin to connect the spoken word to the written symbols. In kindergarten, teachers can immerse their students in a print-rich environment by using song charts, writing experience stories with the children, posting daily schedules, putting labels on objects in the room, writing blackboard messages, using action poem charts, and having a large variety of books available. Teachers also need to provide time for students to read books to motivate the children to read.

The first teacher on this video, Judy Feekes from Sioux Center Christian School in Sioux Center, Iowa, uses an eclectic approach in order to teach reading. She employs the Alpha-People along with a whole language approach to encourage reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Phonics, listening to stories, comprehension activities, using illustrations, reading stories together as a group, and reading stories in pairs are all parts of her approach. Her use of pattern books like Chicka Chicka Boom Boom by Bill Martin, Jr. and John Archambault leads to student produced and illustrated pattern books.

The second teacher is Ellen Bollig from Lincoln Elementary School in Yankton, South Dakota. Ms. Bollig explains how she uses "magic windows" (business envelopes with cellophane cut-outs) and sticky-wicky to frame out letters or words in a text. Phonics is integrated into her lessons by picking out one letter or sound on which to focus. Big books and songcharts are used. Children are seen reading books in a listening center.

Betty Mortenson from Horace Mann Elementary School in Sioux Falls, South Dakota demonstrates the use of the Impressions Whole Language Program which has taped versions of big books. As the group of children listen to the tape of the story, Ms. Mortenson uses a pointer to follow the words in the big book of stories and poems. Following the taped story, Ms. Mortenson builds in questions for comprehension and concepts such as rhyming. A library is available in her room to promote reading activities within her daily forty-five minute reading and language arts time.

No textbooks are used by our fourth teacher, Gera Jacobs of St. Agnes School in Vermillion, South Dakota. She selects high interest stories in a big book format to capture the interest of her students. Dr. Jacobs demonstrates the use of finger pointing as she reads a book published by the Wright Group with the group of children. She states that she believes that children first memorize the words to a book but eventually use decoding skills when a teacher points to the words as a book is read. We also see an interactive caterpillar puppet used to further engage the children in the reading of The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle. A classroom library with a check-out system is used to encourage reading at home as a parent involvement activity.

Reading through total immersion is the method used by Dianne Blankenship of Sioux City, Iowa. Her classroom is covered in print---the bulletin board is covered with things to read, there is a listening center with pre-recorded books, and books are readily available throughout the classroom. She uses a daily chart to give the calendar information, the weather information, and list the helpers. She writes a daily blackboard message to the students. Objects are labeled in the room. She employs integrated themes that are literature based. As part of her units, children produce take-home books. Ms. Blankenship demonstrates how she teaches about books as she names the title, author, and illustrator on the cover. She also points out the title page and the dedication page before delving into the story itself. On the video, we see children acting out a story using stick puppets while the story is printed on a story chart in the background. We also see how this teacher uses a pocket chart to have children construct sentences by adding one word at a time to the chart.

The second video: Writing in Kindergarten: Skill and Process is 22 1/2 minute long. The video begins with an introduction that emphasizes that writing takes two forms in kindergarten: penmanship and creative writing. Handwriting can be taught through modeling or through direct instruction that involves demonstration and practice. Creative writing is encouraged by having children write in journals or writing folders on a regular basis. It is important to realize that writing is a developmental process in which children progress from picture writing to scribbling to inventive spelling.

The first kindergarten teacher we see is Judy Feekes who demonstrates how she teaches handwriting. We see Ms. Feekes at the blackboard using a direct instruction method of modeling with the use of mistakes so that children can see common printing errors. Children gleefully correct her as her letter goes above the line or curves the wrong way. She also demonstrates having children form the letter with their fingers in the air, using a gross motor technique to emphasize the fine motor technique. Following her demonstration, children practice forming letters on paper. Ms. Feekes separates handwriting from creative writing. During creative writing children write in journals, use a writing center, or share their writings with the group at the end of playtime. Ms. Feekes shows us how she goes over the children's writing with them and how she writes the correct spelling under the child's attempts to model correct spelling; she does not correct the child's attempt.

Ms. Bollig tells us that she emphasizes printing both capital and lower case letters, using two-finger spaces between words, using punctuation at the end of sentences, and promoting a left-to-right sequence. Children write in journals and have access to a writing center with a variety of writing tools. She encourages children to read what they have written and then she writes her translation of the invented spelling on post-it notes so that parents can see their child's progress. She does not correct the child's attempts. Writing is shared at circle time. Ms. Bollig uses the computer as a tool for writing when students use either Kidwriter or Appleworks.

In Sioux Falls, Betty Mortenson uses the district's mandated Zaner-Blozer method of handwriting. She uses a modeling approach to teach this method of handwriting by having printed models around the room and demonstrating this method whenever she prints a message for the children. Ms. Mortenson demonstrates the stages of writing development for the viewer. She shows how she writes a message in cursive for children on the first day of school. She asks if anyone can read it. Most cannot read cursive, so she explains that that's OK because she's using her way of writing. She then shows a variety of ways that a child might write, from picture writing, to scribbling, to beginning sounds and scribbling, to inventive spelling, to standard spelling. She emphasizes that writing and reading are connected.

Dianne Blankenship connects writing to reading. Her students write in journals and use dictionaries. She also supplies cards that pair pictures and words for children to use as a reference.

In Gera Jacobs' kindergarten, writing is taught in a meaningful context. Instead of practicing forming a letter at a time, handwriting is encouraged through the use of tracing over whole words in stories or on erasable word cards. She also includes dictated stories in her curriculum to model writing. Creative writing is a regular part of Dr. Jacobs' kindergarten experience. She models writing and illustrating a story in front of the group of children. She introduces them to word balloons. Children each have their own writing folders; a date stamp is used to record the date of each entry for record-keeping purposes. Then the children are given time to write and illustrate their own stories and are provided with individual dictionaries to assist them. Children produce their own books and sometimes use the computer as a tool for book production.

The next video: Science in Kindergarten: A Sense of Wonder is thirteen minutes long. The introduction prepares the viewer to anticipate that both the teacher and the environment facilitate learning about science. Common science themes that are explored in kindergartens include colors, plants, animals, seasons, and senses. Young children in kindergarten can be exposed to the scientific method when they observe, predict, experiment, record, and discuss.

In Ellen Bollig's kindergarten, science is integrated throughout the year. One example of this is the daily graphing of the weather. At the end of the year, science focus units bring more emphasis to the subject of science. The viewer observes Ms. Bollig and her kindergarten students as they take plastic hangers outside and discover what kinds of animals might live within the confines of the hanger when it is placed on the ground. Children delight when they observe worms, ants, and insects within the triangular space of their hangers. Ms. Bollig emphasizes that all living things need a habitat, water, food, and space.

Seasonal field trips to the park, caring for classroom pets and plants, engaging in sink/float experiments, observing and charting, and recognizing the children as "young scientists" are all a part of Gera Jacobs' kindergarten science curriculum. The viewer observes Dr. Jacobs as she demonstrates viewing crystals with a flashlight and demonstrating the use of pole magnets. During playtime, we see the children replicating and further exploring the materials that have been demonstrated. The science curriculum here focuses around three major themes: Plants and How They Grow, Seasons and Changes, and Animals and Their Babies.

The science themes employed by Judy Feekes include "seasons", "weather", and "about myself". The viewer sees the children engage in the fantasy of being young scientists by pretending to put on lab coats as they are shown magnets by their teacher. Then children are given magnets and are asked to observe their properties, predict what magnets might stick to, experiment around the room, and then record on sheets of paper what magnets stick to and don't stick to. The final step of discussing the polar properties of magnets is demonstrated in a class discussion. This skillful kindergarten teacher demonstrates asking questions which she allows the children to answer as they observe the phenomena and offer explanations for it.

In Dianne Blankenship's kindergarten, the science curriculum focuses on nature. The viewers see young students exploring seeds and categorizing them. We also see a science table and observe young children using a balance scale.

Extending the whole language approach into the science curricular area, we observe Betty Mortenson's kindergarten students as they taste a variety of jams after reading the book Jamberry. We also see students planting seeds after reading the story Paddington Bear at the Garden. Ms. Mortenson tells us that her science curriculum consists of life science, physical science, and earth science. Units in her science curriculum include: Adopt a tree and record the changes from season to season, homes and families, tadpoles and frogs, seeds and flowers, and weather.

Kindergarten Mathematics: Hands-On Learning is the fourth video in the series. It is 25 minutes long. The introduction encourages the viewer to encourage emergent numeracy and promote the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics' standards by exploring a variety of topics in kindergarten mathematics that include number sense, measurement, patterns, graphing, categorization, shape recognition, addition and subtraction, and communication.

Mathematics is a part of Betty Mortenson's opening exercises in her kindergarten class. Daily attendance permits counting the number of boys and girls present and introducing concepts such as "fewer". Her bulletin board shows the number of birthdays that month so that when a birthday is celebrated, the children practice subtraction from the total number of birthdays that month. During calendar activities, Ms. Mortenson has the children count up to certain special days. She also employs a pattern on her calendar. She uses the concept of seven days in a week to observe the different combinations possible to add to seven. A daily tally of the number of days in the month is written on the board and played on the xylophone. She also employs a domino pattern for the first nine days of the month. Children use counting sticks to count the number of days in school such that they learn to count by 1's, 10's, and 100's. Concepts such as yesterday, today, and tomorrow and more and less are also incorporated daily in the opening exercises. A graph of the weather integrates math and science. The viewer observes the children in a number sense activity as children are grouped to explore addition combinations for the number five. One group of children uses red and white beans; another group uses pattern blocks; a third group uses two colors of ceramic tiles; a fourth group uses unifix cubes in two-color combinations to produce "five"; the final group uses jewels. A Math Their Way approach is used.

In Gera Jacobs' classroom, children explore mathematics in learning stations during playtime. We observe children working with unifix cubes to develop their number sense. We also observe children measuring with rulers and with non-standard centimeter cubes.

A classroom aide assists Dianne Blankenship with her mathematics center during playtime. A computer with math games is one part of this center. Ms. Blankenship encourages problem solving during snack time as children decide how to cut the fruit so that each child will receive a fair share. Mathematics and reading are incorporated as Ms. Blankenship reads Lois Ehlert's Fish Eyes to the group and points out shapes.

A mathematics textbook is used as a resource by Judy Feekes. Her mathematics curriculum is activity-based with very little use of worksheets. Her objectives in mathematics include: classification, patterns, shapes, sizes, weights, non-standard measurement, addition and subtraction, fair sharing, fractions, counting by 5's and 10's, estimation, and money. We see the children exploring money under magnifying glasses and then discussing the value of the money. During playtime, the children are seen playing store and manipulating money.

While we observe Ellen Bollig's class, we see how to properly use manipulatives with children. During a money unit, children are given individual workmats and some coins. The first step in working with manipulatives is exploration, so children are given time to play with the coins and make noise with them before the actual lesson begins. Three-two-one learning is explained by Dr. Good, the producer of the video. Then Ms. Bollig's class demonstrates these stages. The first stage demonstrated is that of hands-on learning with manipulatives which is referred to as 3-dimensional learning. We see children using coins to add up to specified amounts to pretend to buy an item that Ms. Bollig offers for sale. The second stage, or 2-dimensional learning, takes place when Ms. Bollig gives the students a paper and crayon task of coloring pictures of money and then cutting the pictures out. The final stage of learning, or 1-dimensional learning, is demonstrated as the children discuss the value of the coins and count by 5's. We also observe the students in a measuring task as they use strings to measure cut-outs of their bodies and then make a graph with the strings. The concept of time is also demonstrated

when the children construct a clock out of 12 notecards and use an arrow to point to the hour. Using a kinesthetic approach to teaching about patterns, Ms. Bollig and her students demonstrate using snaps and claps to hear a pattern as she points to a pattern on a calendar. Math Their Way is the basis of this kindergarten mathematics curriculum.

The final presentation in this series is the twenty-one minute video Play in Kindergarten: A Process for Learning. During the introduction, the viewer is affirmed that play is a developmentally appropriate practice that involves all areas of development and meets the individual needs and interests of all children. Play focuses on doing; it involves changes so it is an evolving process; it is creative and imaginative; it is intrinsically motivating; it builds competence; it is success oriented; and it encourages problem solving. Play involves the components of imagination, cooperation, creativity, communication, and choice. Play is open-ended and process oriented, not goal-directed and product focused. In order to truly allow creative and constructive play, a teacher should allow 45 minutes to an hour for play and provide materials to encourage play. During playtime, teachers can authentically assess children's development. During kindergarten, children may engage in cooperative play, games with rules, or sociodramatic play.

In Ellen Bollig's kindergarten, play is a part of her center time. Her centers include a listening center, a math center, an art center, a puzzle center, a computer center, and a writing center. Children are assigned to centers by checking the center board for their name and the symbol of the center that they are assigned to. During the fourth quarter of the school year, a High/Scope model is used in which children choose their own centers on a planning sheet. While children play, Ms. Bollig carries post-it notes in her pocket to record their development. Her notes are then transferred to a record card.

A center approach for play is also used by Judy Feekes. She assigns groups of four children to a writing center, a math center, a toy center, and a housekeeping center. When a teacher controls the environment by deciding what to have available in each center, she can somewhat direct the children's play.

Dianne Blankenship believes that play helps to develop social skills and learning skills. She also feels that autonomy is important. Large blocks of time are given to play in her classroom. Children are assigned to a primary learning center in pairs and then may move into a secondary play center when they have completed the first center activity. Examples of her center assignments include: painting and science; computer and math; little blocks and house; drawing and writing. Center time is a work and play time.

Centers in Betty Mortenson's kindergarten are assigned by letting children choose a ticket. The color of the ticket determines where the child will play and learn. The center colors are rotated daily, such that if a child has an orange ticket, the child may spend day 1 in the reading center, day 2 in the housekeeping center, day 3 in the games center, day 4 in the mathematics center, and day 5 in the science center. Ms. Mortenson has developed a variety of role-playing kits so that children may act out the roles of firefighters, police, nurses and doctors, hairdressers and barbers, bakers, and pilgrims.

Children choose their own centers in Gera Jacobs' kindergarten. However, some centers are required so children must get to them once within a week's time and then check their own names off the participation list for that center. Occasionally a center will be required in a day's time if it is a messy art center. Centers in this kindergarten room include a block center, an easel center, a computer center, a sensory center such as a water table, a dramatic play center such as a post office, as well as science, art, math, and language centers. Dr. Jacobs also uses prop boxes to enhance dramatic play. Prop boxes include an archeology box, a Subway box, and a Dairy Queen box.

This video series is currently under consideration for international marketing and distribution.