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ABSTRACT

This document consists of the two 2000 issues of the newsletter of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education (ERIC/EECE). Each issue contains a feature article and one or more short articles on topics related to early childhood education, calls for papers, announcements about Internet resources, news items about and lists of publications from ERIC/EECE, and articles from the Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Child Care. The feature articles are: "Meeting State Standards through the Project Approach" by Ann-Marie Clark (Spring) and "Readiness for School: A Survey of the States" by Gitanjali Saluja, Catherine Scott-Little, and Richard M. Clifford (Fall). (HTH)

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Meeting State Standards through the Project Approach

Ann-Marie Clark

Educators are becoming increasingly concerned about meeting the performance standards of their respective states. Often, the idea of using the Project Approach as outlined by Katz and Chard (1989) seems at odds with these goals, especially if the Project Approach is viewed as an "add-on" to an already overburdened teaching agenda. However, if viewed as an opportunity to have children apply the basic skills usually listed in state performance standards, the Project Approach can become a valuable complement to any curriculum used to meet state goals. This article outlines how good project work can address major state standards. Examples are taken from projects completed by second-graders in Dot Schuler's classroom in Grafton, Illinois.

The Illinois Learning Standards (Illinois State Board of Education, 1997) discuss five cross-disciplinary skills to be applied to the major content areas: (1) solving problems, (2) communicating, (3) using technology, (4) working on teams, and (5) making connections.

Solving Problems

Recognize and investigate problems; formulate and propose solutions supported by reason and evidence.

One student chose to investigate the problem of water pollution. During fieldwork, she collected samples of dirty water from the nearby Mississippi River. She then chose to make a representation of the river on the classroom bulletin board, adding debris that she noticed might contribute to water pollution. She designed and distributed posters to area businesses in Grafton, reminding residents and visitors to use trash receptacles in order to help keep the river clean.

Communicating

Express and interpret information and ideas.

In the area of fine arts, the Illinois standards propose that "communicating in the fine arts means learning to translate ideas through dance, drama, music, and visual arts" (Illinois State Board of Education, 1997, p. 63). One student used the visual arts to express the idea of the idiom "water runs," illustrating graphically on posterboard that water cannot really get up and run away.

Using Technology

Use appropriate instruments, electronic equipment, computers, and networks to access information, process ideas, and communicate results.

During fieldwork for a project in which they investigated the Mississippi Waterway, students used a high-power telescope and state-of-the-art binoculars as they watched an estimated 2,000 white pelicans make their way north. As part of this project, students also used the Internet to access secondary sources of information and a word processing program to write about their topics. In a different project, one student used an overhead projector to trace a map of the continents to show where some types of worms are found.

If viewed as an opportunity to have children apply the basic skills usually listed in state performance standards, the Project Approach can become a valuable complement to any curriculum used to meet state goals.



These second-grade students watched an estimated 2,000 white pelicans as they made their way north.

Working on Teams

Learn and contribute productively as individuals and as members of groups.

Mrs. Schuler used cooperative learning structures, as outlined by Kagan (1992). The students had numerous opportunities to work together solving problems and sharing materials as they completed their projects. At the beginning of each project, small groups of students brainstormed their answers to questions about the topic. For example, one group addressed the question "What is good about water?" while another group was working on "What is bad about water?" Making models with papier-mâché offered opportunities for students to work together as they shared materials.

Making Connections

Recognize and apply connections of important information and ideas within and among learning areas.

The culmination of the projects was the optimal time for students to realize the goal of making connections. Students were able to show others what they had learned about

their topic. They were able to demonstrate how they used measurements to create scale models, wrote and solved their own story problems, wrote factual and imaginative stories and books, as well as prepared charts, bar graphs, Venn diagrams, and other visual displays of the information they had learned. Students were given opportunities to share their work in progress so that during the culmination of the project they were able to explain other students' work to their parents.

Conclusion

Clearly, Mrs. Schuler was able to use the Project Approach to meet many of the Illinois Learning Standards. She offered her students ample opportunities to apply their learning across several of the subject areas. From brainstorming questions to conducting investigations, and finally through explaining their representations, her students gained proficiency in problem solving, communicating, using technology, working on teams, and making connections. Through well-designed project work, second-grade students were able to strengthen the knowledge and skills outlined by the Illinois Learning Standards in the context of work that engaged their interests.

For More Information

Illinois State Board of Education. (1997). *Illinois learning standards*. Springfield, IL: Author. (ERIC Document No. ED 410 667)

Kagan, Spencer (Ed.). (1992). *Cooperative learning*. San Juan Capistrano, CA: Resources for Teachers.

Katz, Lillian G., & Chard, Sylvia C. (1989). *Engaging children's minds: The project approach*. Greenwich, CT: Ablex. (ERIC Document No. ED 407 074)

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To learn more about using the Project Approach to meet state learning or performance standards, read the Spring 2000 issue (vol. 2, no. 1) of Early Childhood Research & Practice (ECRP) at <http://ecrp.uiuc.edu>.

Call for Papers

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• Resource Lists (No cost or shipping charges.)

- Native Americans: Recommended Books and Resources*. September 1999.
- Bullying in Schools: Resources*. September 1999.
- Developmentally Appropriate Practices in Primary Education*. November 1999.
- The Project Approach*. September 1999.
- Scheduling at the Middle Level*. November 1999.
- Resources on Brain Development*. November 1999.

• Major Publications

- Resilience Guide: A Collection of Resources on Resilience in Children and Families* (1999). B. Cesarone, ed. Cat. #223, \$15.
- Proceedings of the Families, Technology, and Education Conference* (1998). Anne S. Robertson, ed. Cat. #222, \$15.
- The Best of Parent News: A Sourcebook on Parenting from the National Parent Information Network* (1998). Anne S. Robertson, comp. Cat. #221, \$10.
- The Project Approach Catalog 2*, by the Project Approach Study Group (1998). Judy Helm, ed. Cat. #219, \$10.
- Rearview Mirror: Reflections on a Preschool Car Project*, by Sallee Beneke (1998). Cat. #220, \$10.
- REVISED!** *A to Z: The Early Childhood Educator's Guide to the Internet* (Rev. 1998). Cat. #214, Loose-leaf pages only, \$10.
 \$15 with binder.
- Child Development Knowledge and Teachers of Young Children*, by Lilian G. Katz (1997). Cat. #217, \$10.
- Reflections on the Reggio Emilia Approach*, a collection of seven papers (1994). Cat. #215, \$15
- Helping Others with Their Teaching*, by Lilian G. Katz (revised 1993). Cat. #213, \$5.
- Distinctions between Self-Esteem and Narcissism: Implications for Practice*, by Lilian G. Katz (1993). Cat. #212, \$10.

Dispositions: Definitions and Implications for Early Childhood Practices, by Lilian G. Katz (1993). Cat. #211, \$5.

• ReadySearches

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- School Readiness*. (Cat. #108).
- Developmentally Appropriate Programs for Young Children*. (Cat. #109).
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From the National Child Care Information Center (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Child Care)

Improving Child Care in Hispanic Communities

As the fast-growing and young Latino population enters the workforce in increasing numbers, Latino families are faced with significant child care challenges. Like many parents, Latino parents experience difficulty finding affordable, high-quality care for their children. Latino families also encounter unique difficulties, such as fewer child care and preschool slots, often conflicting differences in child-rearing beliefs and practices, and providers who may not be able to communicate effectively with Latino families. As researcher Bruce Fuller and his colleagues (1997) note, these and other factors contribute to "participation [rates] in preschools [that are] substantially lower for Latino families, relative to other ethnic groups" (p. 7).

While many parents face barriers regarding the availability, affordability, and quality of child care, these concerns are particularly important for the Hispanic community," said Charlotte Brantley, Associate Commissioner for the Child Care Bureau. There is an urgent need to assess child care delivery to families of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. In response to this critical issue, the Child Care Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, Department of Health and Human Services, convened the national *Leadership Forum on Child Care Issues of the Hispanic Community* in November 1999.

The Leadership Forum assembled nearly 200 participants from across the country to explore issues, showcase successful initiatives, and develop key recommendations. Forum participants focused their efforts on

formulating strategies that federal, state, and community agencies and national organizations can use to improve the quality, affordability, availability, and cultural/linguistic appropriateness of child care in the Hispanic community. These suggestions have been synthesized by the Child Care Bureau into the following "Summary of Recommendations":

- The Child Care Bureau should form a technical assistance program to bring providers in touch with the Hispanic community's needs. This effort may involve engaging partnerships with the public/private sector and involving families and communities to develop culturally/developmentally appropriate practices for Latino children.

There is an urgent need to assess child care delivery to families of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

- The Child Care Bureau should develop a research agenda to examine what is happening in the Latino communities and how best we can serve this growing population. This research will allow the child care community to evaluate and assess the unique supply and demand issues of the communities to influence policy development.
- The Child Care Bureau should form a national advisory leadership committee to develop a deliberate, collective, and planned process for

meeting the needs of Latino children and families. This committee may be involved in developing a political agenda that is family- and community-based.

- The State Lead Agencies for Child Care should attend to the unique and growing needs of the Hispanic communities and use technical assistance in these Hispanic jurisdictions to address such needs as outreach to informal providers and Latino parents.
- National organizations and foundations should begin a deliberate, collective, and planned process to focus on Hispanic representations within their own structures. This strategy can allow for committed and persistent leadership at the national level by those who know and understand the needs of the child care community.

The forthcoming *Child Care Bulletin* (Issue #24) will feature these recommendations and other highlights from the Leadership Forum, including information on issues of linguistic and cultural competency for child care providers, examples of programs serving Latino children and families, and a listing of resources to support child care providers in their efforts to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate care. For additional information, please contact the National Child Care Information Center at 800-616-2242 or on the Web at <http://nccic.org>.

For More Information


Bruce Fuller, et al. (1997, November). *An unfair Head Start: California families face gaps in preschool and child care availability* (2nd ed.). Berkeley, CA: Growing Up in Poverty Project.

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Day Care and Mother-Child Interactions

Working women, especially those with babies, sometimes worry that leaving their young children to the care of others will affect bonds with their child.

Researchers at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and elsewhere found that longer hours of child care did correspond with somewhat less sensitive interactions between mothers and children, at least up until age 3. They recommend that women try to set aside more high-quality time with very young children to make up for possible adverse effects of child care. The good news, they say, is that the quality of care had a positive effect on the mother-child relationship.

Dr. Martha Cox, senior scientist at UNC-CH's Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center, said: "This

study showed that infants and toddlers in better-quality care tended to have slightly better relationships with their mothers than those in lower-quality care."

"To put these associations in perspective, we found that the mothers' level of education was a much stronger predictor of the mother being sensitively attuned to the baby than either the length of time in child care or its quality," she said.

The study evaluated the effects of child care on mother-child interactions until the children reached 36 months. Early education experts consider it the largest and most carefully controlled research study of its kind. A report on the findings appears in the November 1999 issue of *Developmental Psychology*.

Researchers followed 1,274 mothers and their infants from birth, carefully observing interactions between them at home and at day care centers. They also evaluated youngsters with tests of language and mental development, and interviewed mothers about their levels of depression and their toddlers' behavior.

Other results from the study suggest that the small negative effects of child care were not big enough to disrupt secure attachments between infants and mothers.

For more information on this study, visit the National Center for Early Development and Learning Web site at <http://www.ncedl.org> or phone Loyd Little at 919-966-0867 or email him at loyd_little@unc.edu.

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- ERIC/EECE Web News

Readiness for School: A Survey of the States

Gitanjali Saluja, Catherine Scott-Little, and Richard M. Clifford

With the increasing demand for accountability in the preschool and early school years, states have struggled over the past decade to find ways to define—and measure—the condition of children as they enter school. Assessment of children’s status at school entrance can provide clues to help parents and teachers understand children’s performance later in their school career. States have been left to develop their own frameworks, with guidance provided by the National Education Goals Panel, National Association for the Education of Young Children, and other national efforts.

State-level efforts to assess children’s status at school entry can best be described as a pendulum swinging from standardized measures that did not meet recommended guidelines in the mid-1980s to limited readiness testing in the mid-1990s. To determine where the assessment pendulum moved toward the end of the 1990s, the National Center for Early Development and Learning (NCEDL) and SERVE (the Regional Educational Laboratory with an early childhood specialty area) conducted a follow-up study to collect information on how states are defining and measuring children’s status at school entrance.

This study found that in recent years many states have made efforts to move away from readiness testing by developing policies against the use of such testing, issuing publications on appropriate assessment in early childhood, or providing professional development opportunities on early childhood assessment.

Method

The purpose of the study was to report on current school entrance assessment efforts in all 50 states. The researchers were interested in learning how states have defined readiness and what approaches they are using to measure it. (Since readiness-related activities are a “moving target,” with policies in some states changing within a few months’ time, the descriptions of policies at the time of the interview may not reflect the most current information on policies and practices in each state.) Data were collected through phone interviews from a total of 71 respondents from October 1999 through January 2000. The researchers interviewed at least one individual in each state and, through a Web site, gave respondents an additional opportunity to make changes to the data collected from their states.

The following questions were asked: (1) How does your state define school readiness (or readiness for kindergarten)? (2) How does your state measure school readiness? (3) Is there a systematic way of pulling this data together at the state level? If so, please describe this process. (4) How do you deal with assessing children with special needs (children with disabilities, limited English proficiency, behavioral and emotional problems, parents with limited education and/or economic resources)? and (5) How do you use the data that you obtain on school readiness?

Results

In response to how states define school readiness, no state indicated that it had a formal, statewide definition other than an age of eligibility requirement. With regard to

Data from this survey indicate that perhaps the pendulum of readiness assessment is swinging back toward states implementing readiness assessment systems, but in a new way.

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measuring school readiness. 13 states responded that they conduct statewide screening or assessment of children entering kindergarten; 26 states responded that they do not mandate any readiness assessments; 16 states replied that they have readiness assessment initiatives in place; and 6 states indicated that they do not assess school readiness.

With regard to data collection, 12 states reported that they use the readiness data collected for instructional purposes; 7 states use the data for school improvement purposes; 6 states reported that the data are used for screening purposes; and 4 states reported that districts decide how these data should be used.

With regard to the question of how states deal with assessing children with special needs, because most states do not have statewide readiness assessment in place, the methods for dealing with children with special needs also tend to be locally controlled.

In response to the last question concerning the use of collected data, at least 8 states indicated that they collect data on readiness at the state level. The remaining states either do not have a system in place to collect data or have a system in place but do not collect data on readiness.

Conclusions and Implications

Data from this survey indicate that perhaps the pendulum of child assessment at school entrance is swinging back toward state implementation of readiness assessment systems, but in a new way. Rather than using readiness assessment for placement decisions, many states are developing readiness assessment systems to profile the condition of children as they enter school and to develop classroom curriculum activities to better meet the needs of children. Data from this survey also indicate

that efforts to minimize the misuse of readiness assessment tools may have had some impact at the state level. Respondents indicated an increased awareness of recommended early childhood assessment practices.

While the work that many states have done in the area of school readiness is significant, two fundamental issues remain largely unaddressed: the importance of schools being ready for all children and the role of local districts in readiness assessment. Responses to the survey suggest that the vast majority of work in school readiness assessment is taking place at the local district and individual school levels, but that many states are now moving toward more direction at the state level. This situation provides both opportunities and concerns.

If such systems are developed based on the most reliable knowledge about young children, on appropriate assessment practices for children at this point in their lives, and with the understanding that there are risks of substantial harm if systems are not designed to safeguard individual children and teachers, then the move to increase readiness assessment can have substantial benefits both for children and for schools. To make such systems a reality will require involvement of a broad array of professionals and families in a concerted effort to make schools a better place for young children.

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Editor's Note:

This article was adapted from "Readiness for School: A Survey of State Policies and Definitions," a paper that will be published in the Fall 2000 issue of the Internet journal Early Childhood Research & Practice (ECRP). Included in the journal will be a searchable database of state definitions of school readiness. The journal can be accessed at <http://ecrp.uiuc.edu>.

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- Early Childhood Research & Practice*: Available only on the Internet at <http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/>.

• Resource Lists (No cost or shipping charges.)

- Native Americans: Books and Resources*. September 2000.
- Bullying in Schools: Resources*. September 2000.
- Developmentally Appropriate Practices in Primary Education*. September 2000.
- The Project Approach*. September 2000.
- Scheduling at the Middle Level*. September 2000.
- Resources on Brain Development*. September 2000.
- Early Childhood Education Curriculum Models*. August 2000.

• Major Publications

- Resilience Guide: A Collection of Resources on Resilience in Children and Families* (1999). B. Cesarone, ed. Cat. #223, \$15.
- Proceedings of the Families, Technology, and Education Conference* (1998). Anne S. Robertson, ed. Cat. #222, \$15.
- The Project Approach Catalog 2*, by the Project Approach Study Group (1998). Judy Helm, ed. Cat. #219, \$10.
- Rearview Mirror: Reflections on a Preschool Car Project*, by Sallee Beneke (1998). Cat. #220, \$10.
- A to Z: The Early Childhood Educator's Guide to the Internet* (Rev. 1998). Cat. #214, Loose-leaf pages only, \$10. \$15 with binder.
- Child Development Knowledge and Teachers of Young Children*, by Lilian G. Katz (1997). Cat. #217, \$10.
- Reflections on the Reggio Emilia Approach*, a collection of seven papers (1994). Cat. #215, \$15
- Distinctions between Self-Esteem and Narcissism: Implications for Practice*, by Lilian G. Katz (1993). Cat. #212, \$10.
- Dispositions: Definitions and Implications for Early Childhood Practices*, by Lilian G. Katz (1993). Cat. #211, \$5.

• ReadySearches

Computer search reprints with 60 to 100 abstracts of ERIC documents and journal articles (\$8 each).

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From the National Child Care Information Center (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Child Care)

State Initiatives: Improving Quality and Expanding Services to Infants and Toddlers

Research on the importance of high-quality care for very young children along with documentation about the scarcity of such care has led to heightened attention to the need for quality- and supply-building enhancements for infant and toddler care. As the following examples illustrate, many states are investing resources in innovative initiatives designed to both improve the quality and expand the supply of infant/toddler care.

Training and Career Development

Georgia. The Infant and Toddler Quality Initiative is designed to increase the quality of infant and toddler care. The initiative provides individualized, on-site technical assistance based on an evaluation of program needs. The initiative will: (1) increase the availability and accessibility of training for infant and toddler teachers and family child care providers that advances their careers; (2) recruit and train accomplished teachers to mentor less-accomplished teachers; (3) provide T.E.A.C.H. scholarships to support infant and toddler teachers who wish to enroll in formal certificate, diploma, and degree programs at technical schools, colleges, and universities; (4) strengthen the relationship between community-based training and technical schools to allow the learning experiences to count as academic credit. This initiative will serve teachers and family child care providers caring for infants and toddlers in target counties. The focus will be on counties with high concentrations of infant and toddler programs and/or a high need for child care but limited availability. The initiative will

be a comprehensive, coordinated program that builds relationships and maximizes existing resources among community-based trainers, technical schools, resource and referral agencies, professional organizations, and state agencies.

Linkages with Health

Illinois. Health Care/Child Care collaborations between child care resource and referral agencies (CCR&Rs) and County Health Departments, with special emphasis on the health care needs of infants and toddlers, will be expanded. Collaborations with County Health Departments currently are operating in six CCR&Rs. Nine additional collaborations will be funded in 2000. In FY 2001, all CCR&R sites and selected satellite offices (22 locations in all) will have health care/child care collaborations in operation. The Illinois Network of CCR&R Agencies is collecting health and safety information and mailing it to all license-exempt providers throughout Illinois.

New Jersey. The Health Consultation initiative of the 1st Steps Infant/Toddler Quality Initiative is designed to create a statewide health delivery system for child care providers. The Health Consultant will be, at minimum, a Registered Nurse, preferably a Pediatric Nurse. The consultant's primary responsibilities will be to conduct needs assessments of child health concerns for child care centers and family child care homes, develop linkages for bringing the health community together to provide services to providers, and conduct training for child care providers.

Provider Compensation and Benefits

Wisconsin. The state Infant/Toddler initiative has been created to develop and sustain infant/toddler teacher training, scholarships, and an enhanced compensation system. This initiative will include the development of an Infant Toddler Teacher Credential, which will be awarded upon completion of a required number of academic credits in infant toddler teacher core knowledge areas. Training scholarships will be made available through this initiative. This initiative will be administered through the Department of Workforce Development. The Wisconsin Early Childhood Association (WECA) is the fiscal agent for this initiative and will share lead responsibility with the Office of Child Care. This initiative will be implemented through the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Project, and will assist teachers, directors, and family child care providers in going back to school to receive more education. The T.E.A.C.H. scholarship program will provide increased compensation as more education is received, and requires that participants agree to remain in child care for a set period of time following the training.


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This information is excerpted from Section 5.2 of the Child Care and Development Fund State Plans for the period 10/01/99 to 9/30/01. A report summarizing the State Plans is being prepared by NCCIC and will be available later this year. To be added to the mailing list to receive a copy, please call 1-800-616-2242 or send your name, address, and telephone number by email to info@nccic.org. For more information, visit <http://nccic.org>.

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ERIC/EECE Web News

ERIC/EECE Web Site

Three Digests are now available in Korean on the ERIC/EECE Web site at <http://ericeece.org/pubs/digests/korean.html>. These Digests are translations of the 1999 English Digests: (1) *Another Look at What Young Children Should Be Learning* by Lilian G. Katz; (2) *Helping Middle School Students Make the Transition into High School* by Nancy B. Mizelle; and (3) *Easing the Teasing: How Parents Can Help Their Children* by Judy S. Freedman.

ECRP

ERIC/EECE published volume 2 number 1 (spring 2000) of its Internet-only peer-reviewed journal *Early Childhood Research & Practice* (ECRP). ECRP is available at no

subscription charge at <http://ecrp.uiuc.edu>. The spring issue contains a special section on the use of the Project Approach in early childhood education.

Reading Pathfinder

Reading Pathfinder, ERIC/EECE's Web site to assist parents and educators in finding resources to help children learn to read well by the end of third grade, is now available in Spanish. Visit the English and Spanish home pages at <http://readingpath.org/> and <http://readingpath.org/spanish/index-sp.html>.

NCCIC

The National Child Care Information Center (NCCIC), ERIC/EECE's adjunct clearinghouse on child care, has prepared a searchable database

of child care and demographic information about states and territories. The database was added to the Web site (<http://nccic.org/>) during the summer of 2000.

CLAS

ERIC/EECE works closely with the Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) Institute to provide resources on working with young children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The CLAS Web site was recently redesigned to allow better keyword searching. Also, the search results are now "tagged" to identify whether resources are reviewed or described, and whether they are available in excerpts or full text. Visit the CLAS Web site at <http://clas.uiuc.edu/>.