

Reflections from the Preschool

Fall 2012/Spring 2013

BRIDGES to LEARNING

BRIDGES TO LEARNING 2013

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MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

By Dr. Neal DeChillo

Associate Provost, Academic
Affairs, and Dean of the College
of Health and Human Services



Salem State was among the first of the then state colleges to establish an actual on-campus preschool that focused on the need of its students with children. It was considered a fresh, new idea then and, more than 40 years later, is now the norm on campuses throughout the United States.

Over the years, the preschool's mission evolved and adapted to the ever-changing times. Today, the preschool is open to all eligible members of the Salem State and surrounding communities. It is nationally accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC); and is licensed by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care.

The preschool is a valued contributor to our academic programs. On average, 50 graduate and undergraduate students incorporate the preschool as part of their coursework each year. It's a win-win all around.

So what's down the road? There is what seems to be the insurmountable task of replacing teacher Meg Zinn-Stasio. Meg resigned recently to follow other pursuits. I would like to thank her for her valued contributions over the years and wish her all the best with her new family. While it will be a challenge to replace Meg, I am sure Bev and Maureen find us another jewel for the little school on the hill.

Forest Fridays



By Alexandra Kirby (parent)

Grab the binoculars, pick up the nature books and let's hit the trails!

Beginning in January, preschoolers and teachers explored the trails of The Forest River Conservation that surrounds the preschool every Friday, better known as "Forest Fridays." The Gasper family (Katherine (mom), Michael (dad), and Michael and Chloe (children and preschool alumni)) and their dedication to the preschool also helped make these nature hikes possible.

Teachers and students kept a school notebook and individual nature journals to document their adventures. Children noticed an array of wildlife on their adventures. They named birds such as a belted kingfisher, a red-breasted robin, a black-capped chickadee (Massachusetts' state bird), a seagull, a mourning dove, and several crows.

They also spotted some dog tracks and possibly a deer track. Often, what children observed in the forest became rich learning experiences both outside and within the classroom.

Students also appreciated the value of science in their environment, noting physical changes in the forest. Children were excited to note the transition from winter to spring. This was detected through the change in walking conditions, as the ground turned from snow and ice to mud, as well as the growth of different plants and flowers. On one walk, Katherine Gasper and Atreiyio also made a profound discovery about ice:

Atreiyio: Some of the ice is cracking, but some of the ice is slippery.

Katherine: Why is some ice cracking and some slippery?

Atreiyio: Because that ice is crunchier and the other ice is slippery-er.

Forest Fridays also became the inspiration behind this year's "Week of the Young Child" annual poster. The poster included a beautiful array of birds in the forest, such as those observed on the walks. The experience of Forest Fridays, though roughly an hour-long adventure, remained with children throughout the week, and will continue to influence them in the coming years.



100 Hats:

Fall Project Work was a Hat-full of Fun!



By Alexandra Kirby
(parent) and
Dusty Smith
(teacher assistant)

This fall, preschoolers donned an array of hats and learned various ways in which hats are important.

The students learned about hats in different jobs and cultures around the world. They dressed up with hats and pretended they were all kinds of people, from a mail carrier to an astronaut. Students learned the difference between hats for work, hats for safety, and hats for fun. Students' curiosity merged with their imagination from the beginning, leading to a successful project.

The hat-play was in preparation for the Massachusetts Art Educator Conference (MEAC), held on November 9 and 10, 2012 where the Preschool Program displayed an exhibit. Professor Rholoff from the art education department at Salem State suggested that the Preschool participate.

The conference took place at Salem State University in the Central Campus Bertolon Building. The theme of this year's conference was "A Hat-full of 21st Century Skills."

The nearby Peabody Essex Museum also had an exhibit about hats, which further inspired the hat project.

In preparation for the conference, children wore a hat from home to school throughout the course of a week. Hats ranged in shape, size, color, and certainly, overall appearance. The kids were excited to show each other their hats.

In subsequent weeks, there was also a display of hats for children to wear and role play with. Through examining hats, children were able to conceptualize physical differences as unique, beautiful and worthy of conversation.

Specifically, students made celebration hats that allowed them to think about the meaning behind their hat with Teacher Assistant Sabrina Marchand.

Teacher Assistant Dusty Smith worked with the children to create a giant paper maché hat where students learned the process of making paper maché while also becoming designers and adding their special touches to the collaborative cap. With Dusty, the children also learned about hats from different cultures and used different hats in dramatic play. Students even made party hats when it was another student's birthday. The various hats created by the students became part of the exhibit showcased at the MEAC.

Children also created poetry and artwork related to hats, and they read informative stories about hats. Classroom Spanish teachers who visit weekly were on board with the hats and brought in images or actual hats in to show students hats from Mexico and Spain.

The preschool program's exhibit included children's "designer hats" that they created by first drawing their ideas, then constructing actual hats using paper bowls and other materials. Two documentation panels from the hat project were also displayed. Director Beverly Gerson and teacher assistants Dusty Smith and Sabrina Marchand constructed the exhibits and attended various conference sessions. A "school house" was also in the exhibit, with "school friends" (pictures of children included on figures) inside.

The hats at the conference were showcased to art educators from around the world. Everyone was amazed with how fun the hats looked and was impressed with the documentation behind each hat. The documentation panels allowed all of the art educators to see the process behind the work.



Salem State Preschool Staff Attend First Aid Training

By Alexandra Kirby (parent)

On October 12, 2012, the staff of Salem State University Preschool attended first aid training day. Presenting was Donna Hills, EdD, APN from Salem State's School of Nursing, the preschool's new health care consultant.

The presentation ensures the health and safety of the children at Salem State preschool and also offered a unique professional development opportunity for staff.

The event focused on various aspects of preschooler health and development, as well as general first aid information. All Salem State preschool staff were required to attend this training and benefitted from its rich content.



Topics included in the presentation were as follows: preschoolers in Massachusetts and Salem, growth and development, play and the preschool child, dealing with children's fears, preventing accidents, preschool emergency and health care policy, Salem State's disaster plan, transportation policy, child health today, health concerns, accidents, and confidentiality issues, health issues of preschool children, nutrition, Autistic spectrum-Asperger's, use of media and screen time, and bullying.

Salem State Preschool Donates Books to Local Agencies and Overseas

By Alexandra Kirby (parent)

Salem State preschool's annual book drive, February 11-20, 2013, was a success. Over 330 books were collected for local agencies, and some books will even travel overseas in March over spring break to Liberia.

Michelle Sedgwick, chairperson of the preschool community service committee coordinated the project. She received a warm welcome and tour from Clare Hayes from the Lynn Community Health Center. The books were also delivered to East Boston Health Center, where parent Natalie Pavia works as a pediatric nurse. Children from birth to adolescence going to see the doctor for a sick or well visit may take a book to build their home library.

Deac Michelsohn, a teacher assistant since September 2010 at the preschool, and a student teacher for the spring 2013 semester, was happy to share some of the books with children overseas. She travelled to Ganta Mission School in Liberia over spring break.

Children at the preschool learned the value of giving and literacy through collecting books to donate. Children were excited about helping others, expressing their

delight while counting and sorting the books with teachers. This year, students also benefited from the opportunity to learn about Liberia.



The book donations are part of a state and nationwide effort to improve literacy, focusing on children from birth to age nine. The organization, Strategies for Children (SFC), in their Early Education for All Campaign, defines three pivotal factors in childhood literacy: the home environment; early education, child care centers and schools; and the larger community.

The following are suggestions for supporting reading development: rich conversations, varied experiences to build knowledge, personal stories, songs and rhymes, word play, attention to letters and words, reading together and independently, writing, and lastly, excitement around books (strategiesforchildren.org). Having books available allows a greater opportunity for children to be engaged in literacy activities.

Winter Hat and Mitten Drive

By Stephanie Oxenford (parent)

This past December, the children all learned a little something about the gift of giving and sharing the holiday warmth with their neighbors.

From December 3 through December 7, Salem State University held their annual hat and mitten drive to benefit Salem HAWC (Healing Abuse Working for Change).

The purpose of HAWC is to create social change by taking action against personal and societal patterns of violence and oppression. HAWC provides services and support to victims of domestic violence residing in 23 cities and towns on Massachusetts' North Shore in order

that they may make informed, independent decisions about their futures. Salem State is proud to have been working with HAWC for over five years now.



The children of the preschool counted and sorted all the items that were donated, as the classroom all spoke of the need to help our neighbors stay warm this year.

This year, the preschool collected 88 items to be donated. We thank everyone for their contributions!

A History of Giving



Salem State Preschool Annual Food Drive

By Stephanie Oxenford (parent)

The week of November 12-16, the Salem State University Preschool held its annual food drive. This year the donations were to benefit Haven from Hunger in Peabody.

The preschool collected 250 items which were delivered to Haven for Hunger, which provides food to nearly 200 people a week in Salem and Peabody. Preschool teachers took the students around offices on South Campus to distribute flyers and later to collect the donations.

With the help of preschool staff and parent volunteers, the children counted all the items collected and made a graph to see how much they had in each "category" (pasta, peanut butter, jelly, canned fruits and vegetables, soup, cereal, and other items). They talked about why they were helping to collect these items, and about how the food was for people who didn't have enough to eat and didn't have enough money to buy food.

"The children were very empathetic. At one point a little boy said, 'I'm hungry right NOW!' We talked about how it would feel if he didn't have any food to eat even though he was hungry," said substitute teacher and parent, Emily Froeschl.

Parents Laurie Mulsman and Michelle Sedgwick helped pick up food from the offices on the south campus. The children were delighted to see so many people help with our food drive this year.

"Thank you all for your generosity and most important talking to your children about being a good neighbor," said Beverly Gerson, Salem State preschool director. "I am so thankful to be part of such a giving school community!"

Annual Civic Engagement Hall of Fame



On Friday, April 5, President Meservey and the Civic Engagement Committee held their annual program to celebrate and honor the community service work completed this year by the Salem State students, faculty and staff members. This year, the preschool was invited to create the table centerpieces. The children painted clay pots with nature themes with a planted flowering plant added. Inside each pot was a bookmark with self portrait drawings and the phrase: "Growing as a Community."

Adored Teacher Takes on New Role: Mommy!



By Cara Finnegan (parent)

The preschool was abuzz during the fall semester, watching teacher Meghan Zinn-Stasio's belly grow, anticipating the arrival of her new addition! On November 29, Meg and her husband Joe welcomed their baby boy, Jameson Elm into the world. The preschool was ecstatic with the news, and the children worked on a welcome book for baby Jameson.

After eight years of loving commitment to the children of the preschool, Meg decided that she would stay with Jameson full time. She certainly left her mark on the program. "I have professionally and personally grown so much, and have been taught so much by the preschoolers, the families we serve, the fieldwork students, and the staff," she said.

"I have had a very unique experience at the preschool where I first entered as an assistant teacher and went on to secure a full time position as the preschool's teacher. I also hold a special place in my heart for the summer nature program and very much loved being able to be both the director and lead teacher every year where some of my favorite summer time memories were made."

Meg has touched many lives and hearts in the preschool community. "I have loved them all and have learned something from every beautiful face I have met along the way," she said.

The staff and students at the preschool miss Meg terribly, but send her love and best wishes as she takes on the new adventure of mommyhood! Also, Meg and Jameson visited in April to read a story at the preschool and sing some favorite songs.

Reggio Approach Guides another Great Year



By Cara Finnegan (parent)

The Salem State University preschool program is grounded in the principals of the Reggio Approach, which aims to create a learning environment that promotes thinking through expressive, communicative and cognitive languages. Through project-based work and an environment of active exploration and discovery, children get time to be children as they explore the world around them.

This approach means that the classroom is a place of open-ended discussions, with teachers acting as guides and partners in learning. Children play a role in directing their own learning and activities by participating in the structured Choice Board Concept (choosing their areas of play), as well as long-term project-based learning, which brings together language activities, science, social studies, dramatic play, and artistic expression.

The projects are relevant to a child's own experiences, but allow them to explore a problem and see the interrelationships of concepts and ideas. This method allows teachers to observe and document each child's skills, interests and development.

This year, the children chose "hats" as their fall semester project where children learned about hats from other countries, made a giant hat sculpture, and played games and read books with hat themes. They each brought in their own hats and had fun exploring their classmates' choices, engaged in dramatic play, and even wrote poems about hats. Their spring project was based on "Forest Fridays."

THE VALUE OF PLAY



**By Beverly Gerson
(director)**

At the preschool we are dedicated to the field of Early Childhood Education and look forward to the new re-organization of the Salem State School of Education in fall 2013.

In a new NAEYC book, *From Play to Practice*, the authors summarize the work of many on the

importance of play. When teachers engage in creative, open ended play experiences, they learn firsthand the power of play. They also become more knowledgeable about the purposeful use of materials and intentional teaching strategies they can use to help children engage in open ended play. Chapter seven is devoted to "Intentional Play in Higher Education: Case Examples" with a focus of teacher preparation programs which must align and connect with course work and experiences the important use of intentional, hands on play to promote learning in the early years.

There is a growing movement of "defending the early years"- DEYproject.org. The information on this web site is highly recommended. There are concerns generated about recent standards that are not based on best practices and what we know about childhood development, and also the worry about the lasting negative effects that come from the loss of child-directed, hands on play. As you know, the Salem State preschool program, with our Reggio inspired based curriculum, promotes play-based learning.

"The push for standards and accountability has led to the development of academic curriculum and assessment practices that are inappropriate for young children. Trends at both the state and national level have led schools to focus on accountability rather than on meaningful learning experiences for young children. Excitement about learning and motivation have been replaced by drill on skills that is tedious and often meaningless to children." (NAEYC January 2013)

Most importantly, do we realize the critical role of early childhood teachers and do we value their work? We must change the assumption that the younger the child we teach, the less knowledgeable and competent the teachers need to be.

As we move forward to creating our new School of Education, I am deeply committed to working with the Salem State education faculty to engage and foster play based learning experiences not only for our education students and faculty but the campus as a whole. What is play and why is it important for us to see ourselves as creative, original and adaptable? When we empower ourselves to be creative, we will develop new ways to react to and solve our problems. In the newly revised Salem State core curriculum, is there a place for the development of play, policy and practice?

Can we create a play area in the lobby of the new Salem State Library and Learning Commons which will showcase the power of play with fun, spontaneous and interactive changing displays and experiences using open-ended materials? Can this space elicit a desire for further exploration of higher levels of understanding and self awareness? I would love the opportunity to explore this idea with those interested.



Thanksgiving Celebration

By Cara Finnegan (parent)

This year's Thanksgiving party at the preschool was a success! Together with their families and teachers, students filled Presidential Hall on a beautiful fall morning to celebrate.

The children enjoyed learning about Native American customs from the real Pocahontas herself (actress Carole Finn-Weidman). They joined her on stage to hear her tales and songs, and even helped her out by acting like their favorite woodland animals.

After the performance, everyone feasted on a scrumptious spread of sandwiches, snacks and desserts, and admired the poster the children drew showing what they were grateful for this Thanksgiving. It was also a very special day for classmate, Olivia, who announced she was headed off to Kindergarten!

It was truly a day to be thankful for.



Celebration à la Preschool

Events made possible with the help of Catherine Hennessey and the hospitality committee.

Holiday Cheer

By Alexandra Kirby (parent)

This year, the preschool celebrated the upcoming holiday season with fellowship and flair. On December 20, 2012, students, teachers and families gathered in the Presidential Hall.

Children had a wonderful time singing and dancing along to familiar tunes performed by former graduate assistant of the preschool (2011-2012), Leeny Altman. She performed classic holiday numbers, as well as "Ladybug, Ladybug, Ladybu-u-ug" and "The Penguin."

The latter song even became a homage to some local penguins when one child shared that he had recently been to the New England Aquarium, where the penguins had been on vacation rather than in their usual spot.

After working up an appetite, everyone enjoyed delicious food and desserts and each other's company. The children designed and painted wooden boxes to present to their families as holiday gifts.



Pride Day

By Stephanie Oxenford (parent)

On April 22, the Salem State preschool held their annual Pride Day. Not so coincidentally, it was also Earth Day.

The children learned about taking pride in the appearance of their school by planting flowers and cleaning up the gardens around the school. Many annuals, perennials and plants for the butterfly garden were added, along with new birdhouses, feeders and wind chimes all around.

All the plants and flowers I'm sure were very happy as the weather was rainy the next day! A big thank you to all the children, parents, and staff that helped out. Hopefully everyone has had a chance to go check out all the beauty that is now around the preschool!



Department of Early Education and Care Site Visit

By Stephanie Oxenford (parent)

On **December 13, 2012**, The Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) conducted a site visit. The new license is valid through January 17, 2015. The license is valid for two years.

To meet new EEC regulations, the following updates were made in program policies:

1. Revised transportation plan: new policy adds strong language to remind parents and teacher about car safety and no child to be left alone in a vehicle unsupervised by an adult. While the preschool does not provide transportation parents are responsible for the safe transport to and from school. Parents also complete an offsite permission form for all walking trips and field trips taken and the supervision which will be in place.
2. New attendance sign in and out by teachers
3. Additional staff trainings which include: new orientation, look before you lock, medication administration training. These training are on line at the EEC website (mass.gov/eec). Each training provides one hour of staff development hours as well. All staff have completed the new trainings.



Cooperative Preschool for Cooperative Learning: Parent Committees' Contribute to the Preschool

HOSPITALITY

Chair: Catherine Hennessey

Members: Kristin Goodrich, Katrin McManus, Katie Gauthier, and Eljonida Kurti

The hospitality committee helped to plan and execute several fun and family oriented events during the 2012-2013 school year. Most notable was the Thanksgiving event where people met the "real" Pocahontas and the Holiday party where children sang and danced to the fabulous music of Leeny! This spring, in conjunction with the preschool, the committee celebrated Pride Day, planting flowers and beautifying the school grounds. In May we will celebrate our wonderful teachers with an appreciation dinner and finally honor our "Moving On" children with a fabulous ceremony and luncheon.

CLASSROOM VOLUNTEER

Chair: Emily Froeschl

Members: Vivian Sparacio, Rebecca Hains, Pam Robbins, Chris Allen, and Stephanie Defreest

The parent volunteer committee has been very active this year. Our members have had a wonderful time in the classroom with the children. We've read stories, planned art activities and science experiments, and even celebrated 'Poem in Your Pocket' day.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Chair: Michelle Sedgwick

Members: Susanna Baird, Colleen Nial, Laurie Mulsman, Andrea French, Dean Michelini and Karyn Bedard

The community service committee took part in a number of projects during the 2012-2013 school year. Starting with collecting food for the hungry in November, to the annual hat and mitten drive in December, and ending with the book drive in February benefiting the Lynn Community Health Center, the East Boston Community Health Center, and some of our books and classroom materials were even taken with Deac, student teacher at the preschool, to Liberia. It is a wonderful service to be a part of! Thank you to all who donated and helped organize.



SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Chair: Scott Nowka

Members: Linda Girard and Theresa Johnson

The school improvement committee helped move preschool and parent resources into the new parents' resource room and took care of small projects like assembling and maintaining toys and laundering school costumes and materials.

RESOURCE

Chair: Natalie Pavia

Members: Michelle Jaworski, Jen Kantorosinski, Margaret McCarthy, and Erik and Mike Griffin

The committee was busy all year adding to and creating prop boxes for use in the dramatic play area. Prop boxes included a veterinarian kit, pizza shop, restaurant, babies and families, and a camping box. Parents collected and also made items to add to these delightful dramatic play resources. Make believe play is an important area of the Preschool curriculum fostering social skills, language, math, science, social studies and more. The Preschool's playhouse room is a very popular area for the children and requires choices to enhance and foster a diverse range of play opportunities.

PUBLICITY

Chair: Alexandra Kirby

Members: Cara Finnegan and Stephanie Oxenford

The publicity committee was excited to work together for the 2012-2013 academic year. Committee members helped get the news out about how wonderful the preschool program is at Salem State University through press releases detailing, newspaper articles, building an online presence, and the annual newsletter.



Building Connections

The Center for Child and Youth Studies

By Beverly Gerson (director)

The Center for Child and Youth Studies (CCYS) is an interdisciplinary center of academic and community professionals who work together to create positive changes for children and youth. Preschool program director Beverly Gerson serves on the advisory committee.

Monthly meetings are held in the center office located in the Horace Mann School. The preschool staff, parents and student staff and field work students are encouraged to attend these events. Resources were also collected for the CCYC and contacts made with local organization such as Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless, Art Program with Horace Mann Lab School

A wide variety of activities were planned during the 2012-2013 academic year which included a film and lecture series:

- Consuming Kids: The Commercialization of Childhood
- My American Girls: A Dominican Story
- Mighty Times: The Children's March
- "Mickey Mouse Monopoly- Disney, Childhood and Corporate Power"
- "Children, Religious Belief Acquisition"
- "Salem as A Safer Child Community Initiative"- an all day conference held on April 17



"Children are the most precious resource in any community. They are our most important investment in a good future. The Salem as a Safer Child Community Initiative aims to build policies and practices and relationships that will increase the safety and well-being of children in our community. On April 17, a program was held that brought Salem professionals together with State State faculty and staff for a conversation to address efforts taken to keep our children and youth safe and ways that we might better collaborate to protect our children in all aspects of their lives. The timing of the conference was only two days after the Boston Marathon bombing incident.

The conference agenda included a keynote address by Diane Levin of Wheelock College, whose work looks at the impact on children's development of violence and sexualization in the media and who directs a project in Northern Ireland on education in communities affected by violence. Three roundtable discussions engaged participants in a variety of issues, including, e.g., school violence, suicide, gang violence, child abuse, family stressors, access to health and mental health care, bullying, and CORI policies. The program also included a luncheon speaker and panel, and information on resources and research. CCYS will produce podcasts, post information on its webpage and host follow-up meetings to plan strategies and take action on priority issues. Our initiative here in Salem is especially meaningful in light of the Hebrew and Arabic roots of "Salem," which means "peace" in those languages. We hope that our Salem as a Safer Child Community Initiative will create a model for the 27 other Salems, from Alabama to Wisconsin, to undertake similar initiatives to make their cities safer, thus more peaceable, for their children.

Liberia Project Student Teacher Spring 2013

By Beverly Gerson (director)

The idea for project work can come from the children, from a teacher a parent or from a community event. The project selection needs to be one which is meaningful and relevant to the child's life experience and designed to assist the child in seeing the interrelationship of concepts and ideas. The idea of studying the western nation of Liberia came from our student teacher Deac Michelsohn.

She and a group of students from the interdisciplinary studies program at Salem State were participating in a study abroad to Liberia over spring term break from March 9-17. While there, the students worked on projects revolving around peace, conflict studies and education. With every project, everyone becomes involved. Collaborative learning is at the heart of project work. There is a sense of joy and belonging in becoming part of a community of learners. With the help of Salem State librarian, Jason Soohoo, books were researched and collected, the geography department donated maps and a globe and parents and other teachers collected books during the annual book drive to donate to the Ganta Mission School in Liberia where Deac would be visiting.

The preschool was practicing the beautiful philosophy of Ubuntu which means, "I am because we are." The children studied geography, designed and played a matching flag game, created clay beads and made passports to travel to other places. The children learned the beauty of bead making and that beads have many uses. Beads are used

to tell stories, worn as jewelry and in some places used as money. The children explored looking at beads from different countries and then created their own beads. The beads were strung together and used to create two large hanging sculptures in the classroom. When Deac returned from her study abroad, she visited the Preschool sharing some objects brought back from her trip and also presented a power point presentation at the staff monthly meeting in April.



Beautiful New Space for Parent Resource Room Draws More Participation



By Beverly Gerson (director)

After many years of requests, the preschool has been assigned new space in the Alumni House for the Parent Resource Room in February 2013. The old space was located in a small storage size area on the third floor of the Alumni House. Due to major construction expected soon, many areas of the Alumni House required re-assignments.

An open house was held in March and parents dropped by for coffee, to review the resources and to complete a survey on parent program topics they would be interested in participating. Topic ideas included: use of media and children, balancing work and family, questions about kindergarten, eating healthy and early literacy. The topic which generated the most interest was on media and children.

On April 23, the first parent program was held from 8-9 am during the morning drop off time. A light breakfast was provided and a lively discussion was led on this very important topic. Both parents and teachers attended.

"Many new technologies are fascinating to children, and

they impress parents and teachers by promising amazing learning opportunities. But, what are the effects on children who are spending more and more time with tablets, laptops, and smart phones? Do the increasing levels of screen time contribute to a decline in children's play and other essential childhood activities?"

Questions raised included the following:

- What media does your child use at home and when you go out?
- TV programs, DVDs, computer games and programs, Smart phone, iPads, other
- Do you limit the use of these devices? If so, how and when?
- Are you concerned about the impact of commercial culture and media linked toys on children's play, learning and behavior?
- Do you find yourself making the use of these devices as a reward for good behavior or a punishment for negative behavior?
- What other concerns do you have about the use of media with your child?
- Do you see a change in the way your child plays or interacts with others?
- Do you talk to your child about using media at home?

For more information regarding media and children, the following resources provide essential information: truceteachers.org, commonsensemedia.org, 1,000 Books before Kindergarten, Blog touch and go.

The 2013 Spring Psychology Colloquium: Howard Gardner, PhD Comes to Salem State

By Beverly Gerson (director)

Howard Gardner, renowned professor and author from the Graduate School of Education presented a lecture on March 6 on the topic of his new book, *Truth, Beauty and Goodness Reframed*.

Dr. Gardner is very familiar with the schools from Reggio Emilia in Italy and has made several visits there over the years. Their "Hundred Languages of Children" is very similar to his multiple intelligence theory. For this reason, it was an invaluable opportunity for the preschool program to showcase their Reggio Approach based curriculum with an exhibit from last year's project, Imagination and My Brain.

The panels were on display in the lobby of the Ellison Campus Center where the lecture was scheduled.

Dr. Gardner was excited to stop by and see the Preschool's exhibit and he praised the documentation panels, commending the preschool for their innovative teaching approach.



NCCCC: An Active Year



By Beverly Gerson (director)

The National Coalition for Campus Children's Centers (NCCCC) is a nonprofit educational membership organization, which supports research and activities affecting college and university early childhood education, family and work issues and the field of early childhood in general.

With members from all across the United States, Massachusetts also has an active group of campus child care directors from the Commonwealth who meet three times of year. Preschool director Bev Gerson from Salem State serves as the group's president.

The October meeting was held at Mt Ida College in Newton with the major agenda topic—an overview of QRIS (Quality Rating Improvement System) presented by staff from the Commissioner's Office of Early Education and Care Sarah Harding and Gwen Barbeau. In February, the meeting was hosted by Quinsigamond Community College in Worcester with topics ranging from EEC licensing up-dates, enrollment, and emergency planning and security issues. The third meeting was held May 3 at Wellesley College Child Study Center which celebrated its 100 anniversary this year and created a beautiful natural playground with a greenhouse, perennial gardens, sand and water play areas, and a hillside overlook with a slide.



The annual conference was held in March 2013 in Williamsburg, Virginia, and several members from Massachusetts attended and presented workshops. Howard Baker from Brandeis University led a workshop on "Strengthen Your School Community with ACT – a Parent Education Program." The program helps parents learn positive parenting skills and ways to support resilience in young children.

Another workshop was presented by Bev Gerson from Salem State, Maryanne Gallagher from University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and Sue Beemer from Smith College entitled "Introducing the Commissioner of Early Education and Care to Campus Child Care: A Cross-State Collaboration in Massachusetts".

Steven Hicks, special assistant on early learning from President Obama's Department of Education, attended and presented a workshop. He discussed the US Department of Education's focus on early childhood and the federal efforts to improve services to children and families.

From this session, a position paper from NCCCC was recommended and invited to have a seat at the table with other professional organization. This is a very important opportunity for NCCCC. The position paper was submitted in April 2013 and can be viewed from their website (campuschildren.org).

The Preschool as a Lab School: A Community of Learners



By Beverly Gerson (director)

We have a variety of students from many different departments participating with observations, field work and student teaching. The preschool also employs 12 part-time teacher assistants, six of whom graduated in May 2013.

Julie Ingraham, ECE major; worked at preschool since September 2010

"Working at the preschool has been so amazing for me. I have gained so much knowledge and skills from the students and other teachers. I am so grateful that I could work on campus doing something I love throughout my college experience."

Sabrina Marchand, art major; worked at preschool since September 2010

"The Preschool has helped me evolve into a dedicated and passionate educator. By believing in me and my ideas, Maureen and Beverly gave me new opportunities. This experience convinced me to work in the field of early childhood. The Preschool has been one of the best places in my life and I will be so sad to leave it."

Deac Lacey Michelsohn, ECE major, worked at preschool since September 2010

Patrick Ruelle, psychology major; worked at preschool since September 2008

"The preschool has given me the experience I need to

work with children in the field of psychology. I loved working there and will sorely miss it when I graduate."

Dusty Smith, ECE major; worked at preschool since January 2009

"The preschool has benefited me as a student because I have been able to play lots of different roles—as teacher assistant in the classroom to office assistant helping with accreditation, registration and enrollment and keeping the place well organized."

Taylor Wholley, ECE major; worked at preschool since September 2010

"Getting the great hands on experience working at the Preschool showed me I have chosen the right career path. I feel very comfortable dealing with parents and children. I received a scholarship which was amazing. Working here is truly a gift and I'm so thankful to have been given."

This campus based job provides these students with outstanding experience plus the ability to better balance their work and school responsibilities. Many of teacher assistants also become teacher qualified through the Department of Early Education and Care as a result of their teaching experience with us. We strive to provide a highly professional atmosphere for our students.

Students participating at the preschool have access to our many classroom materials, staff and curriculum resources, and the documentation room. They also have use of our unique and extensive collection of

books and videos on the Reggio Approach. We post campus and community events and they are encouraged to attend local conferences and workshops. We also notify them and encourage them to apply for scholarships and grants. Four of these Salem State students qualified and received \$7,500 a year in tuition from the Department of Early Education and Care Scholarships.

The Preschool Program also offers experience with state licensing, collaborative learning, social competency skills and research opportunities:

Active in the Field of EEC

Our Salem State students gain direct knowledge and experience with state EEC licensing requirements and what is involved in preparing for a site visit. They are becoming acquainted with the new state mandate of QRIS, national assessment tools using Teaching Strategies Gold, and the new STEM curriculum. The Salem State preschool is active in the field of EEC and keeps current of all new educational initiatives at the state and national level.

Last year, students were involved in our NAEYC re-accreditation process giving them first hand experience with the ten standards, moving through the self study process, seeing the classroom and program portfolios developed and preparing for the site visit.

Collaborative Learning

Our laboratory classroom environment supports and encourages collaborative learning. Everyday is carefully planned and balanced to meet the needs of our SSU students while also providing a high quality Reggio inspired program for our preschool age children.

From music Mondays with students from Lynn Shane's class, nursing students three days a week, Spanish language students two days, early childhood from a student teacher and EEC students from Premise of the School, a EEC student volunteer from North Shore Community College as well as our parent/family classroom volunteers, the preschool is buzzing with activity and excitement. We also have a graduate assistant student who works on project work and the documentation process.

Social Competency Skills

Research shows socially competent children are better able to learn and thrive in the classroom. Students training with us learn various behavior

management styles. Teachers at the preschool give high priority to helping children develop social competence. In this atmosphere of warmth, acceptance, respect and deep confidence in the child's capacity to grow and develop, it is most likely these social skills will be acquired and strengthened.

Working in this team teaching supportive environment makes us a community of learners. Our Salem State students benefit from working together in the classroom. Students placed at the preschool have first hand experience with best practices and learn effective and positive ways in classroom management techniques and the use of assessment tools.

Research Opportunities

We also invite faculty and staff to participate in research projects. During the spring 2013 semester we have a media literacy research project being introduced and students from the psychology department worked with children on a language and cognitive learning activity.

Rebecca C. Hains, professor of communications at Salem State University, is a parent of a preschooler. She is conducting research about girls' princess culture for scholarly research and a new book, tentatively titled *Confronting Cinderella*, which is slated for publication in 2014. Parent permission for this project was obtained and details of the research provided to all parents.

As part of her research, she is collecting information during story time with books related to princess stories then ask them simple questions about the stories. She also invited them to draw princess-related pictures and then ask them some questions about what they have drawn.

During these meetings, she would take notes about their conversations and also make a recording for transcription purposes. She then uses the notes and the transcribed audio recording to write about the children's reactions in her book and/or scholarly journal articles on the same topic.

Professor Andrea Zeren from the psychology department has students from her class working with children on a language and cognitive learning activity. The activities involve observing how children solve conservation problems or develop language-based skills.

Graduate Assistantship Position at the Preschool

By Mary McGinn (graduate assistant)

It has been a wonderful year working as the graduate assistant at the preschool program. As an elementary education major, it has been wonderful to see these active preschoolers develop in an environment rich with creative play and to assist their growth in so many capacities.

I've enjoyed my interactions with their parents who clearly care about and nourish their child's growth. I also have had the pleasure of working with a very talented, curious, creative and caring staff. Their insights and day-to-day interactions spark the minds and hearts of these children.

In this capacity, I have also had the fortune of learning first hand about the Reggio Emilio approach to early childhood education and the importance of documentation of the children's works-in-progress. Together with other staff, I was able to actively participate in documenting the Hundreds of Hats Project.

Hundreds of Hats grew out of the Salem community. The PEM was holding an outstanding "Hats: An Anthology" exhibit and the 2012 Art Educators conference's focus was on creative and unusual hats. Beverly Gerson saw this as a unique opportunity to take this community-based effort and integrate it into activities for the preschoolers that would span the curriculum: hats in occupations, hats in children's literature, and hats as an expression of self using a variety of materials, collecting hats during our winter hat drive. The children eagerly participated in a variety of creative activities that I then documented through a series of four panels.

In each of the panels I showcased pictures of the children engaging in the activities related to hats together with what they had said as part of their interactions – whether it was working with the new medium of creating paper maché hats or how their favorite hat from home made them feel.

The panels were then exhibited in the Massachusetts Art Educator's Conference as well as within the preschool for the children to reflect on what they had created and what it meant to them. This has been a great growing and gratifying experience and I hope I can continue to participate in these children's lives.



Supporting Early Literacy with the Word Wall



Through discussion, children teach one another. Many times, when a child identifies an unknown word, there are a few children who have an idea of what the word actually means. Before telling the children any formal definitions, the teacher allows the children to talk about the word and what they think it may mean. Students often make great connections to their own past experiences to help explain the meaning of words.

For students to really understand the meaning of a new word, they need to form some connection to their past learning experiences. "It's not enough to have students memorize one definition of a word; to develop full word knowledge, they need to learn more about a word (Stahl & Nagy, 2006).

By Haley Alix (teacher assistant)

It's story time at the preschool!

All the children and teachers gather in the rug room for a read aloud. Just before opening the book, the teacher pulls out the word wall and asks all the children to "Keep your eyes and ears open for any words you do not know. If you hear one, let me know and we will go back to it at the end of the story."

Children bustle with excitement while learning many new things at the preschool. Young children have a growing vocabulary and we as parents and educators must support that vocabulary acquisition early on.

Children of the Salem State preschool enjoy listening to books read aloud and identifying unknown words to put onto our word wall. The idea behind our word wall is for children to pick out words they do not know during a read aloud and discuss them at the end of the story to build meaning.

To invite children to dig deeper into the meaning of new words, we have set up a center called "The Word Wall Exploration Site!" In this center, children are encouraged to find a word on the word wall by matching a word card to the same word found on the word wall. Children are encouraged to draw pictures of what the word means to them. Some children even enjoyed writing out the words.

As they finished, students were encouraged to glue their pictures and words onto the class documentation board for each word. During the exploration, children and teachers discussed the word and all sorts of things about the word.

TECHNOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOM

By Julie Ingraham (teacher assistant)

Last semester I took a computer literacy class and one of our assignments was a service learning project where we were asked to incorporate the use of technology in a place of our own choosing.

After hearing the assignment I immediately thought about the preschool. I knew we had been trying to think of different ways to include more technology in the classroom, and I felt that using the iPad would be perfect.

The children loved using the iPad and many of them had already had some practice. It was fun for me to see how they used it and how much they already knew about it. Taking pictures was a big hit, especially using different options to make funny faces.

The children were so excited about working on the iPad that we borrowed it for the whole spring semester. I found some stories and educational applications to complement what we were doing in the classroom.

When we were working on the hat project, one of the games the children played was a matching game where they matched a hat to its appropriate job or activity of a person. It was important to me that the children didn't look at the iPad as something to play games on but as a way to expand their learning and be able to use it as a source of information.



"Technology shouldn't replace the great things happening in your classroom, but it can enhance, augment and improve the teaching and learning experience when used for a specific purpose" (Young Children). During our study about Africa we used the iPad to examine Google maps and find Africa and other places around the world that children would like to visit. We also watched some videos from around the world.

The newest applications that have been catching the children's attention are interactive stories. The children love to listen along to the words then press on the characters or objects to have a page or scenario acted out. Two of the stories we have been reading are "Pete and the Secret of Flying" and "Toucan, Tocan't".

Some would argue that using the iPad with young children is not appropriate because it is like "spoon-feeding" children with strong audiovisuals. I agree that some applications may not benefit children's young minds. Parents, teachers and other adults should be careful to not just download anything. Reading the reviews, and testing them out before letting a child use it are some ways to be sure that the activities support learning that the children are doing in other areas as well.

Children are always accompanied by an adult when using the iPad, and the applications are teacher approved. The iPad has become a popular commodity in the preschool and I feel it is beneficial to have in classrooms when used appropriately.

The iPad not only helps the children, but teachers too. We are able to find pictures and information very quickly to help answer questions, as well as look up new ideas, songs, or activities. The iPad has helped the preschool gradually integrate technology into it at the tips of children fingers.

A LOOK BACK...

By Taylor Wholley (teacher assistant)

Three years ago, I began college here at Salem State University, knowing I loved children, but unsure what to do as far as a career. I learned there was a preschool on campus that was hiring and jumped at the opportunity.

That was the best decision I could have ever made. Since working here, I have not only found a career, but one that I truly love, enjoy and am passionate about. Salem State Preschool has helped me to find both my voice and confidence as a teacher.

Maureen Delpero and Meghan Zinn-Stasio are amazing teachers and have been role models that I have continually looked up to through my time spent working here. I have really enjoyed learning and applying the philosophy of the program: the Reggio approach.

The experience and knowledge I have gained from this preschool has allowed me to step up and take on more responsibly in the classroom when needed. Working at Salem State preschool has been such an amazing experience for me and I highly recommend this job to future students in the education field or anyone who enjoys working with children.

I am finishing my education here at Salem State this May 2013, I am ready to take on a classroom of my own with all the confidence in the world.



ANNOUNCEMENT: New Teacher Hired

We are pleased to announce **Taylor Wholley** was offered and accepted the position of preschool teacher which will begin in June 2013. She will be director/lead teacher for the summer program as well. Her experience and credentials were an excellent match for the Salem State preschool program.



Salem State University Preschool Program Celebrates the NAEYC Week of the Young Child, April 14-18, 2013

Catherine, Charles, Christian, Delaney, Eleanor, Elsa, Ernesto, Evangeline, Gabriel, Jacob, Jake, Joel, Lily, Mallory, Mia, Nile, Owen,

Our Annual WOYC Poster

By Sabrina Michaud and Dusty Smith (Teacher Assistants)

“The Week of the Young Child” is an annual celebration sponsored by the world’s largest early childhood education association, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

As an NAEYC accredited program, the Salem State preschool program recognizes the importance of quality childcare so we celebrate this special week, the Week of the Young Child, by making a collaborative poster of children’s art inspired by the current classroom curriculum.

Since 2003, the preschool has created a WOYC poster and these have become very collectible among our families, teachers and campus faculty and staff. The posters are displayed in homes and offices across the country!



Incorporating Art and Nature

By Sabrina Marchand

For decades, great artists such as Leonardo DaVinci, Albrecht Durer and Claude Monet have been making artwork inspired by the beauty of nature. This year our preschool has decided to take on a similar task.

Over the past few months the children have been observing, manipulating, and exploring nature both in the classroom and outdoors. One of the things the children seemed the most interested in was observing the birds coming to our window bird feeder.

The idea for a collaborative collage project was inspired by our Forest Friday nature walks. A former preschooler, Michael Gasper, now eight years old, and home schooled, led these guided walks each Friday. With his nature books in hand, Michael helped us identify many varieties of birds such as the belted kingfisher, red-breasted robin, black capped chickadee and a morning dove crow. We also explored the ice cracking on the trail, spotted dog and deer tracks, and signs of spring peeking through the forest floor.

The Process

The children looked at books and photos of different birds from New England while thinking about what bird they would like to make. We used several iPad apps' such as Peterson's Field Guide to Birds to research the birds.

Jason Soohoo, education reference and instruction

librarian at Salem State, visited and shared more resources for us.

Using a large variety of precut shapes, the children chose different sized shapes to make a silhouette of their bird's body. This helped the children to identify the different parts of their bird's body that they would later be cut out of tissue paper.

Once the silhouette was completed, the children used their shapes as inspiration for their final collage. Based on where the child was developmentally, the child either traced or drew the shapes with pencil onto a piece of tissue paper. The children chose what colors they wanted to use for each shape before cutting it out.

Next the shapes were carefully cut out and glued onto a piece of paper, using a paintbrush to gently wipe the glue and water solution on top of the shapes, attaching them to the paper.

The next step was for the children to design and create a natural habitat for the birds. Each child made a different contribution to the picture. Some children ripped, cut and glued tissue paper for the sky and the grass. Other children used pencils and brown paint to make trees. Some children drew flowers for the poster.

The project was designed to be a very collaborative experience in which the children could explore what it felt like to work on a project as a team, just as the elements in nature work together.

2012 – 2013

The Class of 2013 – 18 children “Moving On” to Kindergarten

Our annual *Moving On* ceremony was on Friday, May 10, at 11 am and held in Presidential Hall of the Alumni House to a full house of over 110 guests. Dr. Neal DeChillo welcomed everyone followed by the awarding of certificates, musical selections by the graduating children, a We're Moving On video produced by Bryan Satter of Applepie Video Production and a delicious brunch contributed by all the parents. At the event, the children presented their mom's with a beautiful Mother's Day gift of bird baths made from clay pots which they carefully designed with a nature theme. Dusty artfully displayed all the gifts and these tied in beautifully with our Forest Friday's semester project.



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Educating you for life