Educating Children
for **Democracy**

Family and School Partnerships

Number 2, Winter/Spring 2002

Educating Children for Democracy, the professional journal of the International Step by Step Association, is intended for teachers of children from birth through grade eight, faculty who instruct preschool and/or primary school teachers, and other educational professionals interested in child-centered teaching methods. The journal emphasizes change and educational transformation, based on the experience of countries in transition, and addresses the continuing challenge for all democracies to provide the kinds of educational experiences that will ensure the continuation of open and free societies.

Educating Children for Democracy is published semi-annually, in English and Russian, and both in print and online.

The International Step By Step Association (ISSA) is a non-governmental membership organization established in the Netherlands to foster democratic principles and promote parent and community involvement in early childhood education. ISSA's vision is of an open society where the entire community helps children to reach their full potential, and where children are active participants in the learning process.

ISSA combines the strengths of twenty-seven organizations in as many countries, reaching over 150,000 preschool and primary teachers as well as caregivers, parents, school directors, psychologists, community leaders and local and national education officials. Step by Step programs currently reach well over 1 million children and their families. ISSA's members cooperate to advocate for equal access to quality education for all children; engage in national reform of early childhood education systems; develop new teacher resources, provide training and encourage research; implement national, regional and international projects; and provide a forum for educators, experts and policy makers to share knowledge and experience. To learn more about us, please visit our web site at http://www.issa.nl.

ISSA, P.O. Box 10018, 1001 EA Amsterdam, The Netherlands, email: info@www.issa.nl

Table of Contents

Welcome!

Welcome to the second issue of *Educating Children for Democracy*, the journal of the International Step by Step Association. If you are a returning reader, you will notice some changes in our appearance but not in our focus. The journal continues to provide a forum to share the experiences of teachers, parents, and faculty who are implementing child-centered educational practices. In child-centered classrooms, children are actively involved in their own learning—an approach that helps prepare them to be active members of open societies. The International Step by Step Association (ISSA) is committed to having a journal that is written for and by teachers, parents, faculty in institutions of higher education, and other interested educational professionals serving children from birth through eighth grade.

Returning readers may notice a change in the way in which articles have been organized within the journal. Based upon discussions of a task force that met in Sofia, Bulgaria, in June 2001, ISSA members endorsed an approach that reflects the journal's strong developmental foundations, as well as our commitment to practical applications of theory-driven research. The framework for *Educating Children for Democracy* is based upon Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979). Ecological systems theory views each child as an individual whose development is shaped through interactions with others. Bronfenbrenner described the child's environment as being composed of a series of concentric circles—with the child and family in the center ring and other important sources of influence surrounding them. The earliest and most potent influences on young children's development are interactions that occur within the child's family. As children grow older, teachers and peers in classrooms become increasingly important environmental influences. Schools and communities, which function within broader political and social contexts, are additional environments that influence how children develop into citizens of the world. Articles in this journal have been arranged to reflect these concentric circles of the child's environment.

As promised in the inaugural issue, the focus of the current issue is **Family and School Partnerships**, as reflected in five of the eight articles. "Leadership Parenting" describes different roles that parents (and teachers!) can take to foster independent thinking and problem solving in their children. Next, a Ukrainian father of a child with a disability shares his experiences and emotions in "What Every Child with a Disability Needs." Following that "Play at Home, Play in the Classroom" presents strategies to foster parental and professional collaboration across home and school settings for young children with disabilities. In "Families and Schools: In Search of Common Ground," the author provides a theory-driven model for increasing family involvement in schools. Finally, an initiative spearheaded by Catholic Relief Services that is increasing parent and community decision-making in schools is described in "Parent-School Partnerships: Building the Social Capital of Minorities in the Balkans and the Caucuses." Several other articles that are not focused on family and school partnerships round out the selections

for this issue. An account of an experience of a primary school teacher in Croatia is presented in the "First Democratic Elections in Class 3A." A first grade teacher from the United States provides a rich array of resources and ideas for "Growing Gardens and Mathematicians." And lastly, the evolution of early childhood educational services is presented in "Preschool Education in Albania: What Do Parents Want?"

In putting this issue together, we have balanced the contribution of articles from countries in which there are active Step by Step programs with articles that are being reprinted from organizations which are active in promoting child-centered educational practices. We have selected articles that demonstrate the variety of types of manuscripts that are of interest to our readership. Several of ISSA's 27 National Member Organizations have contributed updates on recent experiences of their Step by Step initiatives. (All 27 countries and contact people for these programs are listed on the back inside cover of *Educating Children for Democracy*.) In addition, by reprinting articles from journals published by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the Council for Exceptional Children, and Child Care Information Exchange, we are highlighting just a few of the many international partnerships that ISSA is forging as we grow and mature.

In the coming months *Educating Children for Democracy* will be completing its transformation. We gratefully acknowledge the participation of members of the Journal Task Force, who met in Sofia, Bulgaria in June 2001: Mira Kunstek (Croatia), Besnik Kadesha (Albania), Ilga Salite (Latvia), Irina Lapitskaya (Belarus), and Sanja Handzar (Bosnia) as well as the input we received from all the participants at the meeting in Sofia. We also wish to thank the Open Society Institute for supporting the development, publication, and distribution of *Educating Children for Democracy*. We invite you, our readers, to become active in the process of creating an international journal that showcases the best in child-centered practices, informs practitioners about

theory-based strategies, and promotes parent and community partnerships with schools. In Latvia, there is an expression "Don't keep the candle under your hope chest;" in other words, share your knowledge, experience, and success with others. We envision an infrastructure that will include editorial associates trained to cultivate articles from teachers, parents, faculty, and other educational professionals in Central and Eastern Europe, the Baltics, the former Soviet Union, Mongolia, and Hati. We are actively recruiting people to serve on an advisory board that can guide the future development of this journal. And we are developing partnerships with other organizations worldwide that seek to promote child-centered educational approaches.

As an organization, ISSA continues to develop and mature. Many of our members believe that the time is ripe for the seeds of child-centered practices to grow in the fertile earth of newly emerging democracies. Teachers trained by ISSA's National Member Organizations are implementing these ideas enthusiastically and creatively. We believe these methods are gaining visibility and acceptance because the Step by Step model of systemic educational change compliments the needs and government policy of educational reformers in developing countries. Our methodology also emphasizes the important role that parents and community partnerships play in improving access to quality educational services for all citizens in open societies. We hope that you will become an active member of ISSA at this exciting time in our growth and development.

Zenija Berzina   Deborah F. Perry, Ph.D.
President   Editor
International
Step by Step Association

Bronfenbrenner, E. 1979. *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Children and Families

Leadership Parenting

by David Elkind, Professor of Child Development, Tufts University

Every parent is a leader but not every parent exercises his or her authority with skill and effectiveness. Successful leadership can, however, be learned. There is a vast array of books on leadership that is aimed at those in professional and managerial positions. I believe that many of the principles of effective leadership described in this literature can be extended to parenting. In this article I want to suggest how three principles of leadership that Ronald A. Heifetz outlines in his book, *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Heifetz, 1994, p. 163), can be translated into the leadership parenting of young children.

> "Early childhood is a period when children construct their conception of parental leadership."

Training and Problem Solving

The first principle of leadership appropriate to parenting is the distinction between those childrearing issues that require the parent to act as a *trainer* and those which demand that he or she be a *problem solver*. Whenever parents instruct children in skills that are clearly defined and whose success is easily determined, they are acting as trainers. Teaching children to feed themselves, to toilet themselves, to tie their shoes, to say "please" and "thank you" at the appropriate times, and to ride a tricycle are all activities in which parents function as trainers.

On the other hand, there are many other childrearing issues that require problem solving, rather than skill training. Behavior problems are often of this sort. An infant who has trouble sleeping, a toddler who throws tantrums, a preschooler who bites or who has trouble separating from parents — each confront the parent with problem solving, rather than with training issues. For these behaviors, there is no clearly defined skill to be learned, and success is uncertain because the behavior can reappear. One of the mistakes many parents make is to confuse the problem solving with the training issues and to use training techniques where problem solving is called for.

A child who has trouble sleeping, to illustrate, presents a problem to be solved; this is not a matter of training the child to sleep through the night. Parents who attempt to train the child, say by ignoring her crying, often only succeed in prolonging the crying or making it worse. Parents, however, who view this behavior as a problem to be solved will take a different tack. They will explore the circumstances under which the child falls asleep and under which she awakens. If, for example, the child falls asleep in the playpen and awakens in her crib, the changed circumstances may frighten the child and keep her from falling back to sleep. Putting the child to sleep in the same place where she will awaken may resolve the problem. But it may not. Other possibilities need to be tried out. If the door is open, or the lamp is on, when the child falls asleep, awakening with the door closed, or the lamp off, may be upsetting and keep the child from falling back to

Educating Children for Democracy

sleep. Looking at the sleep issue as a problem to be solved, rather than as a skill to be learned, gives the parent the right mind set to test out different hypotheses and to find an effective solution.

Children who are "finicky" eaters provide another example. The most important first step is to view this issue as a problem to be solved and not a matter of training that can be handled with the use of rewards (often dessert) and punishments (often withholding dessert). Looking at it as a problem to be solved, parents will explore some of the possible reasons for the child's behavior. Have the parents pushed too hard to get the child to eat "healthy" foods or given him the idea that being finicky gains parental attention? To test this, parents might allow the child to eat as much or as little as he chooses of whatever food the family is eating, but nothing else. Other possibilities might include looking into child care or nursery school stresses, food allergies, and so on. Exploring many different possibilities gives parents a much better chance of resolving the problem than if they see it as a simple matter of habit training.

Responding to the Expectations of Parental Authority

Society confers authority on parents as the natural and legal guardians of their children. Parental authority is, however, also determined by children's expectations of their leadership. At all age levels, the extent to which the parent attempts to meet these expectations will determine the degree to which the parent exercises effective leadership. It is particularly important for parents of young children to respond to these expectations, because this is a period when the child's estimation of the parents' leadership potential is established. Preschoolers who come to trust in parental leadership will be more willing to follow parental direction when they are older than those who do not. Put differently, early childhood is the period when children construct their conception of parental leadership.

In talking about children's expectations, it is important to distinguish between those which are behavioral and those which are emotional. Sometimes, of course, they are both. Especially in young children, expecta-

tions for strategic assistance are almost always coupled with the expectation of emotional support. As children get older, the expectations for emotional support and behavioral assistance become more separate and distinguishable. Driving children to various activities is an example of behavioral support. Being sympathetic and reassuring to a child who has lost out in a competition illustrates meeting the young person's expectations for emotional support.

Young children, however, often disguise their expectations for emotional support by appearing to ask for the parent to take some form of action. Imagine a young child who wakes up in the middle of the night and shouts, "Mommy, Mommy, there is a bear in my room." If you assume the child is asking you for behavioral support, you might go in and turn on the lights, open the closet, look under the bed, and proclaim, "I guess he is gone — I don't seem him anywhere. Good night, honey." In all likelihood, the child will soon be crying out that the bear has returned. If, on the other

hand, you respond to the child's emotional expectations, you might take the child in your arms and say something like, "Sweetheart, I won't let anything hurt you." Responding to the child's emotional expectations not only helps the child in this particular situation, it also reinforces the child's sense of the parent's leadership efficacy, that the parent recognizes and responds to his emotional needs.

Sometimes, of course, the child's expectations for both behavioral and emotional support are quite clear and straightforward. In such instances, it is important to respond to both expectations. A young child who is

being bullied at school provides a case in point. Suppose a child complains to us with every expectation that we will both sympathize with his plight and give him some useful techniques for dealing with the problem. If we fail to do this and offer only a single behavioral solution — "Don't be a wimp, fight back" — we effectively ignore the child's expectations for emotional support and strategic help. As a result, the child may be reluctant to look to us for leadership in the future. Ignoring the child's expectations, like treating all problems as matters of training, are ways of undermining our parental leadership role.

On the other hand, if we understand the child's expectations for both emotional support and for behavioral guidance, our response will be different. We might respond to the child's emotional expectations with

> "The first principle of leadership appropriate to parenting is the distinction between those child rearing issues that require the parent to act as a trainer and those which demand he or she be a problem solver."

comments such as "Bullies are really cowards, but they do make you feel bad." In meeting the preschooler's expectations for behavioral guidance, we need to look at bullying as a problem to be solved, rather than as a matter of training a child how to fight — although this might be one option. From this perspective, we are able to offer the child a number of strategies. These might include staying away from the bully, telling the bully that what she does hurts, or confronting the bully with a group of peers. Involving the child in the problem solving and encouraging him to come up with additional options is an example of effective leadership parenting.

Integrating Training and Problem Solving

Many issues that parents and children face are ongoing and cannot be resolved in any simple way. Sometimes the most effective solution is to trans-

late some of the problem solving pieces into training. Behavioral routines take less time and energy than problem solving and are useful in resolving complex, ongoing problems. Scheduling issues are of this kind. Transportation is often the part of the problem that requires creative problem solving. Options to be explored would be car pools, public transportation, calling upon friends or grandparents. The behavioral problem is training children to be ready on time so that they can take advantage of whatever arrangements have been made. Breaking scheduling into problem solving and training components makes the issue seem less overwhelming and more manageable.

Another situation that can be broken up into routine and problem solving components arises when both parents work. If the parents can make wake-up time, mealtime, pick-up time, and shopping time as regular as possible, the more problematic aspects of both parents working can be approached with greater creativity. These are the problems of finding time to do fun things with the children, finding time for the parents as a couple, and finding time for oneself. Time management is critical in today's world and parents need to exercise leadership in order to find the time to keep the family harmonious. The more routines that can be built in, the more time there will be for creative ways of being together.

The third principle of leadership, then, involves transforming problem solving situations into those that can be resolved with training. That is why regularity is so important. Having regular eating, television watching, story and bed times transforms many problem solving issues by making them routines. And because young children welcome regularity and routine, using this principle of leadership reinforces their sense of parental know-how.

Parents have leadership thrust upon them, but they can benefit from the knowledge of leadership principles used in the professions and business. There are differences, of course, but there is much to be gained from the commonalities among different leadership roles.

What Every Child with a Disability Needs

by Mykola Swarnyk, parent, Lviv, Ukraine

Whenever I speak with parents who have just learned of their child's disability, I begin to feel anxious and somewhat helpless. I remember the quiet nightmare that ensued when I too received such unwelcome news: the shattered hopes of the future I had imagined for my son, the feeling that all life's plans had been abruptly dashed, and the fevered search for a miraculous cure. There was also the vicious cycle of alternately blaming myself and blaming the doctors. All of this brings out a great sadness in me, along with

> "Even the smallest thing that our child accomplishes becomes our reward."

compassion for the parents—and for myself. This article is written to the parents of children with disabilities and to the teachers and caregivers who are part of their growth and development.

Perhaps a month or six months or a year has passed since you first heard this news about your child. Remember—the

worst has already happened. If you are repeatedly reliving the shock of when the verdict was first delivered to you, it is time to somehow stop this. Perhaps it is worth analyzing and reflecting on this "defeat." Work, career aspirations, relative freedom—what in actual fact did we lose, and what have we managed to retain? Perhaps we were once able to be our own masters, and now we feel totally tied down. Maybe we had set an important goal that has now become unattainable or is just a distant memory.

More than likely, all of these are true, and we must come to terms with them. All in all we have not disowned our child nor abandoned him. We have not been

"Love is such a wondrous thing, because when it is divided, it does not become smaller but multiplies in volume."

defeated by the hardships that this unique parenting role has presented. We have not thrown up our hands, and we are doing our best to be a good mother or father. We are striving to give our child everything that is necessary for him to reach his potential. Even the smallest thing that our child accomplishes becomes our reward. We give our child all our love, and we sense our child's loving faith in us. I think that perhaps some of us for the first time have found a real goal and true meaning in our lives and have come to understand the real worth of love and freedom, goodness and honesty, generosity, and wisdom.

About Feelings

Each of us has the right to show our feelings, including anger, frustration, and hurt. It is no secret that a child with a disability can be a source of frustration that can lead to feelings both of guilt and of being wronged by the world. Sometimes with this comes the laying of blame on a family member. However, we must also think about how this affects others in the family—the husband or wife or mother or mother-in-law who is being made to take the brunt of our feelings of guilt.

Often we extend great latitude to the child with the disability, while at the same time placing unrealistic demands on other members of the family such as an older child. It is here that we must be extremely careful, even though it may be hard to imagine that a healthy child could be jealous of a sibling with disabilities. If a parent is delivering sweets, toys, and kisses only to the child with special needs and reserving the dustpan, mop, and dirty dishes for the sibling, it can lead to jealousy expressed covertly or through outright rebellion.

This is true for other family members as well. The father, eldest child, or grandmother who is not excluded from the tired mother's attention—but allowed to be part of the family—will be more likely to help care for the child with a disability and share in the love of the family. Love is such a wondrous thing, because when it is divided, it does not become smaller but multiplies in volume.

Learn to show your love. Love is primarily demonstrated through communication. A baby does not understand words, but it does understand the praise and encouragement it hears in the intonation of your voice, just as it understands handling which is tender or rough. In turn the child's reaction, even if at first glance the child appears unresponsive, tells you if the message is good or bad, if the clothing fits, if the food is tasty.

Remember that sometimes a child can have difficulty differentiating and expressing feelings because of a decreased ability to feel sensation, tranquilizing medication, or spastic muscles. It may be necessary for you to remain extra sensitive to your child's reaction not only

during the first year, but also for many years to come. Such "one-way" communication is extremely important for children. It is helpful to continuously talk to the child—use the child's name, describe what you are doing, tell stories and rhymes, and sing songs, even though sometimes it may appear that the child is not responding at all. Carry on your monologue, and sooner or later it will become a dialogue. I know one mother who only realized in her child's twelfth year that the child had been listening to her and understanding her all along, but did not have the physical ability to let her know that. What immeasurable joy it must have brought that mother and child to learn that after twelve years they could communicate with one another.

About "Building the Fortress"

It is important for you to reach out to others and build a network of support for yourself as well as for your child. Actively seek out kind and sympathetic people among close and distant family members and friends or acquaintances who are willing to help you with the care of your child. Many people have probably offered their help, which you have inadvertently turned down, or perhaps they want to help but do not know how to tell you for fear of offending you. Once you find these people, include them in your circle of relations. You will run yourself into the ground if you attempt to do everything yourself and don't let anyone come within a mile of you. The best thing you can do for your child with special needs is to make sure you get the help and support that *you* need.

Next, seek out other parents of children with disabilities. Sincere and open discussion with other families can help you to see the world with new eyes. Through these interactions you will receive a lot of information (about which you should be selective). A parents' organization can be of great help as well, from aiding you in locating an appropriate wheelchair to directing you to a rehabilitation program. Some of these organizations offer their own rehabilitation services that may be better than those provided by more traditional service agencies. All in all having contact with other

parents who share the same problems will give you a new lease on life. In turn you will gain new strength when you can provide that same help to another family.

Another source of support to you and your child are youth organizations in your area. Young people do not have old "hang-ups," have a lot of energy, and are eager to help when they see positive results emerging from their efforts. For example, young men's and women's Christian organizations and scout groups run camps and hold social gatherings and celebrations for children with disabilities. Often these young people can stay with your child when you have obligations outside the home or can take him for an outing when you have housework. They can give you an opportunity to go out for coffee, to a concert, or to visit friends. This kind of respite care is another way in which taking care of yourself is good for your child.

It is important to remain open to the world around you and to maintain normal contact with those in your community. The best outcomes for your child will occur

"No matter how disabled the child, you should give him the same opportunities as other children."

when your child has as much contact as possible with both disabled and "healthy" children, teens, and adults. No matter how disabled the child, you should give him the same opportunities as other children. Moreover, if ours is to become a better world, parents should crusade for the integration of people with disabilities in all parts of society.

About Trust and Distrust

With some luck, when your child was diagnosed with a disability, you had an opportunity to talk to a knowledgeable doctor. The vast majority of parents feel greatly offended by doctors, nurses, and therapists who proclaim that their children have no potential. Worst still, these specialists advise parents to give up the child for "your own good" and, even, for the "good of the child!" I personally know about the Ukrainian

experience: every single family with a severely disabled child was advised by a doctor or nurse—at any opportunity and often more than once—to send their child to an institution. In these instances, my best advice is to take such guidance with reservation. There are many examples of parents who did not heed the verdict of the doctors and were able to claim victory in the face of a frightening prognosis for their child.

On the other hand there are instances when doctors have missed important and obvious pathology or given false assurances, such as "Don't worry, he'll grow out of it." Therefore don't ever believe your child is "hopeless"

"The best thing you can do for your child with special needs is to make sure you get the help and support that *you* need."

or that the circumstances will eventually go away. You should have the child thoroughly assessed, and then realistically reassess the situation yourself.

The best course of action for the child comes from a combination of hard facts and the dictates of a parent's heart. Once you have the diagnosis, determine objectively what your child needs, and then put yourself in your child's place. Evaluate the nature of the love in your heart and the information you have gathered and heard. Take all the findings and opinions and weigh them against the advice of specialists and so-called specialists. If you sincerely want your child to live surrounded in love and truth, you will in time learn to heed the good counsel and ignore the bad.

About "Wasted Time"

Often one hears that it is very important to take advantage of the first few months following the diagnosis, because it is in this period that rehabilitation delivers the best results. And it is true that the nervous system is most receptive in the formative stages of life. Holding with this theory, many parents virtually drive themselves and their child into the ground in their passionate search for the

most effective treatments. Frequently, the end result of this is immense frustration if the child does not "justify" spent energy and invested money for treatment. Later these parents say, "We tried everything we could and it didn't help." Or they say, "They told us to try this or that, but we couldn't decide whether to do it — and now all is lost." Every new year of your child's development demands perseverance and innovation and new capabilities on your part. Every stage of growth demands specific methods of treatment.

The reality is that nothing works in the short term and you have to count on the long haul. You must not torture yourself with missed opportunities because every day may bring a new problem or a pleasant surprise. You must be ready for one or the other. Many parents told me about revolutionary and amazing achievements that occurred for the first time at 8 and even 14 years of age. Your continuous effort with your child can bring results in the most unexpected areas at the most unexpected times.

In Conclusion

Once, while riding on a bus, I overheard this conversation: "I so believed in democracy, and where is it now? They've stolen everything. I'll never believe in anyone as long as I live." To this an old man remarked, "Either your faith was misplaced, or it was too weak." I think the development of a child with disabilities is the same as the development of a democracy: you must continue to believe, no matter what, and strive every single day to make that reality better.

As the days and months pass after your child's diagnosis, I hope you will recognize that the life of this child is a priceless gift. We don't choose to take or reject this gift—we are chosen for it. What's left to us is how we use this gift. We see in our child his uniqueness. We see in our child his purpose—to bring out and receive our love.

Good luck to you as you travel on this road.

Classroom Practices

Play at Home, Play in the Classroom
Parent/Professional Partnerships in Supporting Child Play

by Michelle Buchanan, Assistant Professor, and Margaret Cooney, Associate Professor, Early Childhood Elementrary Education, University of Wyoming

Corey is a 30-month old child with cerebral palsy and a limited capacity for movement. He is not able to manipulate small objects effectively and he is unable to act out his thoughts in pretend play. His mother describes how she supports Corey's play by acting out what he is thinking in playful ways. Cory uses sign language to communicate what he is thinking and his mother makes up songs with actions to playfully act out his thoughts. She explains: "… if you can't move around and (act out) typical imaginative play situations and you can't tell others what you are pretending because you don't have the signs for it, then your pretending is going to be limited. So other kids pretend to be the postman … and we sing about the post office; he loves the post office. We go to the post office and we sing about what we do there and when we go shopping we make up songs about what we do in the store or what we have done in the past and who we go shopping with."

Corey engages in few of the play activities typical of other children his age. Rather, he

> "In play, children spontaneously and creatively explore their environment, act out their thinking, and assume the roles and perspectives of others."

engages in a novel form of dramatic play by signing to his mother and having her act out a play scenario. He participates by signing as his mother sings and by showing delight as she acts out his thoughts. Without knowledge of Corey's everyday play and the way that his mother supports that play, an educator observing Corey in the classroom may assume Corey lacks play skills.

In play, children spontaneously and creatively explore their environment, act out their thinking, and assume the roles and perspectives of others. Natural child play is motivated from within and is free of externally imposed rules. Children create their own

> ## "Play is not only a source of pleasure for children but also an important way for children to learn and practice new behaviors."

"meanings" in play; for example, a chair can become a car and a wooden spoon can become a paintbrush. Children focus on the act of playing itself rather than its goals and play is self-sustaining because it is satisfying (Rubin, Fein, & Vandenberg, 1983). Corey spontaneously initiates play with his mother, signs events he would like for her to act out, and his motivation for play comes from the pleasure he experiences in the play process.

Play is not only a source of pleasure for children but also an important way for children to learn and practice new behaviors (Christie & Johnson, 1983). Many early childhood programs include time for play in the curriculum and educators find that play is a rich opportunity for teaching cognitive, communicative, social, motor, and adaptive skills. Family members and other caregivers value play as a constructive way for children to occupy themselves and a way for children to make friends at school. And, play serves practical purposes for caregivers. Caregivers use play to gain cooperation in caregiving routines, to manage behavior, to help children recover from distress, and to teach desirable behavior.

However, some young children with special needs are delayed in their acquisition of play skills and they require support to develop the playful behavior typical of other children their age (Fewell & Kiminski, 1988). For children like Corey, the nature of the disabling condition prohibits certain kinds of play and play partners need to be creative in finding ways to engage these children in age-appropriate play. The development of play skills may be especially important for young children with special needs because play encourages and sustains social engagement with family members and peers and may contribute in unique ways to effective inclusion in caregiving, community, and early education settings. Given this, play is certainly a functional behavior that contributes to quality of life for both the child and family.

Children have their first play experiences in the home and in other caregiving environments, and family members are often the child's first play partners (Dunn, 1986; Whaley, 1990). Children enter preschool as experienced players. When educators understand how children play in the home and other caregiving settings, they are better able to provide familiar play opportunities to support children in developing those play skills in the classroom. Likewise, when parents understand how children are expected to play in the classroom, they can support their children in learning play behaviors common in the classroom setting. Parents and educators can share information about a child's play during the assessment process and work together to agree on goals and strategies for supporting the child's play development. This article provides suggestions for educators and family members who wish to work together to support a child's play development at home, in the community, and at school.

The Play's the Thing

In their book *The Play's the Thing*, Jones and Reynolds (1992) discuss ways for educators to support young children in becoming master players. Despite agreement in the field of early childhood special education that play is a significant child behavior, play itself may be neglected as a functional goal in program planning (Fewell & Kiminski, 1988). In program planning we recommend that Individualized Family Services Plan/Individualized Educational Plan (IFSP/IEP) team

members develop the habit of considering a child's needs in relation to play in order to include goals related to that aspect of development.

Kaitlyn's mother is in the kitchen making lunch and Kaitlyn is busy playing with pots, pans, lids, a strainer, and several utensils on the kitchen floor. Kaitlyn's play is exploratory. She picks up and examines the items, drops them, pushes them, and manipulates them in various ways.

For a child who plays as Kaitlyn does, encouraging exploration of a variety of objects and encouraging combining objects in usual ways (e.g., stirring with a spoon in a pot, putting a lid on the pot) would be developmentally appropriate IFSP/IEP goals. It is important for those who spend time with a child to appreciate that the simplest kinds of play provide a foundation for more complex kinds of play. Kaitlyn's exploration and manipulation of pots, pans, and utensils in the kitchen will likely lead to higher levels of play (e.g., pretending to cook dinner for a stuffed animal). Team members may find the following information helpful when assessing child play and choosing goals and strategies for intervention.

Looking at Play

There are two dimensions of play that are useful to consider in assessing the development of a child's play. The first consideration is the different forms that play takes throughout development from infancy through the preschool years (Fenson, Kagan, Kearsley, & Zelazo, 1976; Lewis, 1979; Piaget, 1962; Rubin et al., 1983). Forms or kinds of play include exploratory play, social

Table 1

Forms of Play	Age	Description
Exploratory/Manipulative play	Infancy – 24 months	Characterized by visual inspection and physical manipulation of objects, including mouthing, banging, shaking, throwing, pushing, pulling, or kicking objects.
Social Play Routines	Infancy – 24 months	Games with children that involve turn taking and reciprocal interaction, such as bye-bye routines, tickling, and peek-a-boo games.
Functional Play	15 – 21 months	Using two or more playthings together in conventional ways (e.g., putting things in a container, and dumping them out, putting a stuffed animal in a truck, putting a doll in a bed, rolling a ball to a partner). Giving children toys that go together encourages this kind of play.
Constructive Play	24 – 72 months	When children have a mental representation of what they want to create and use materials to construct that representation. Children may use blocks, PlayDoh, sand, or a variety of art materials to construct. Materials that can be combined in many ways are best for supporting constructive play.
Dramatic Play	24 – 72 months	Younger children assume the roles of familiar adults and act out everyday events. As children grow they often play together to act out imaginative and elaborate scenarios. Everyday objects, realistic toys, and theme-related props encourage dramatic play.

play routines, functional play, and constructive and dramatic play. For most children, play behavior develops in a predictable sequence throughout infancy and toddlerhood (Fenson et al., 1976). Early forms of play in infancy serve as a foundation for preschool play. During infancy, play is characterized as exploratory and manipulative. In this play, children use their senses and movement to explore and act on objects in play (e.g., mouthing, banging, visual inspection). From infancy children also enjoy social play routines such as "tickle" and peek-a-boo games.

During toddlerhood, children begin to play with two or more objects together and they use these playthings in everyday ways (e.g., putting animals in a barn, pushing a train on a track, fitting shapes into a shape sorter). This is called functional play, because children are discovering and experimenting with the functions of objects.

During late toddlerhood, and the preschool years, children represent their thoughts in constructive and dramatic play. In this play, children build or make something that they conceive of and they act out their thoughts by pretending.

Table 1 (see page 13) provides examples of kinds of play typical of infants, toddlers, and preschool children (Fenson et al., 1976; Lewis, 1979; Piaget, 1962; Rubin et al., 1983). In assessing a child's play, it is important for family members and educators to identify what kinds of play they observe. IFSP/IEP goals and strategies give direction for building upon the ways the child currently plays and supporting the development of more complex forms of play. In Kaitlyn's case, encouraging

exploration of many different kinds of materials at home and at school would be a way to build upon her current play. Providing her with sets of toys that go together (e.g., vehicles with riders, a doll with a blanket and bottle) would encourage functional play.

A second dimension of play is the social nature of the play. Parten (1932) describes three kinds of social play typical of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers: solitary play, parallel play, and cooperative play. A child exploring play materials in a sandbox alone is engaging in solitary play. Two children playing side by side in the sandbox with similar playthings but not playing together are engaging in parallel play. Two children playing together, exchanging ideas for play, are engaging in cooperative play. When infants and young toddlers are with their peers, they are likely to engage in solitary play. During later toddlerhood, children become more peer-oriented in their play. They engage in parallel play with peers and this serves as a bridge for the cooperative peer play that becomes predominant during the preschool years. During the preschool years, peers are primary play partners and support each other's play development. Dramatic and cooperative play with peers is the hallmark of the preschool years.

Family members and educators can discuss the social nature of children's play and find ways to help children learn to play together. For example, providing children with attractive and duplicate toys encourages side-by-side or parallel play. When children are playing beside each other an adult might suggest a way to interact with play materials to prompt cooperative play.

Some children are able to play with others cooperatively but may be overly dependent on family members others as play partners. Corey, in the vignette at the beginning of this article, for example, is highly dependent on his mother as a play partner and would benefit from learning independent play skills. When assessing children's play it is important to determine if they are able to play independently as well as cooperatively with others.

In conversations about play, family members and professionals can:

• Discuss how the child's play develops over time and how play contributes to development, quality of child/family life, and inclusion in caregiving/classroom settings. This discussion may include: the play the child engages in now and is ready to learn next; what children learn when they play in different ways; ways that caregivers and teachers use play to interact with and teach children; and how play supports children in developing social skills and making friends with peers.

• Discuss concerns family members, caregivers, or teachers may have about a child's play and whether there are certain kinds of play of which they would like to see more or less.

"In assessing a child's play, it is important for family members and educators to identify what kinds of play they observe."

• Be an advocate for play as a target for intervention. Give play the same consideration in IFSP/IEP planning as other functional goals. For example, include in the IFSP/IEP goals for supporting play in the home and caregiving/classroom setting. Include in the plan specific strategies for supporting play (e.g., using favorite routines or play materials to attract engagement in play, "bumping up" the level of play in familiar play routines, introducing novelty into the play to sustain engagement).

Contexts and Play Materials

Victoria's IFSP contains an objective that reads, "Victoria will wrap a doll in a blanket and put it into a crib, first in imitation and then spontaneously." At school, Victoria engages in brief sequences of functional play. She will pick up a truck and drive it along a road made of blocks or she will pick up a doll and

put it in a crib. Those at school are trying to encourage Victoria to expand upon her play by adding more steps to the play (e.g., wrapping the doll in a blanket before putting it in the crib). Victoria's mother reports that Victoria has a favorite doll that she plays with at home. Victoria spontaneously dresses and undresses

"When assessing child play, it is important that all who spend time with a child during the day talk about what the child's play looks like."

the doll, takes her outside for a walk in a stroller, pretends the doll goes to the bathroom by holding her over the toilet, and acts out elaborate routines in putting her doll to bed for her nap. Victoria is creative at home in her doll play and often devises new ways to pretend with her doll. Recently, her mother reported that Victoria had a tea party for her doll and pretended that her doll was an active participant in the tea party.

Victoria's play at home is much more complex and elaborate that her play in the classroom. Context, or the setting in which play occurs, influences the way children play. A child may play in more varied and competent ways when he or she is at home with favorite and familiar playthings and with a family member as a play partner. Or, a child may engage in his or her most competent play when playing with a best friend in the child care or classroom setting. Children with cognitive delays have been observed to play in more competent ways at home than in a classroom free play setting (Malone & Stoneman, 1990; Malone, Stoneman, & Langone, 1994). Malone and his colleagues believe that this is due to both the familiarity of the setting and playthings and the lack of distractions in the home environment. In the classroom, children may be easily distracted from play. When assessing child play, it is important that all who spend time with a child during the day talk about what the child's play looks like. This discussion

gives team members a more complete picture of the child's play repertoire. Goals for supporting play development in the home and caregiving/classroom settings may be different if the play in those contexts is qualitatively different.

Family members and educators also should share information about the child's favorite play activities and playthings. The types of play materials available and preferences of the child influence play. For example, Victoria may be able to play in more competent ways at school if she has her favorite doll and familiar props in the classroom. Educators may be able to prompt higher levels of play if they are aware of favorite play routines in the home (e.g., playing tea party). Discussion of favored play materials and routines can include how to use those items and activities to encourage higher levels of play across environments. Thus, team members should assess established and emerging play behavior based on information about the child's play in home, caregiving, and preschool settings. Ask, for example:

- When does the child play?
- What are the child's favorite play activities and playthings?
- How does the child play with different family members? Caregivers/teachers? Peers?
- What are some ways to encourage the child to play independently? With others?

Play Partnerships

Elizabeth and her mother are sitting on the couch together. Elizabeth pushes on her mother's shoulder and, much to Elizabeth's delight, her mother falls over sideways on the couch and then sits up again. Elizabeth repeats her action many times and each time her mother responds. Finally, her mother elaborates on the play by pretending to be a robot that creaks and moves stiffly when she sits back up after being "pushed down". Elizabeth continues in the play with new interest.

In an interview with a researcher who observed Elizabeth and her mother playing (Buchanan, 1995), Elizabeth's mother talks about how important it is to her that Elizabeth develop initiative in her play. She describes her role as that of follower during play: "It's very important to me that Elizabeth be able to take [the] initiative, to be able to be in control of the situation … that is not always manipulated or worked on but that she is the one [who] initiates the play and others respond to her" (Buchanan, 1995, p. 154).

Play partners may include family members, teachers, and other caregivers, and peers. Different play partners participate in children's play in different ways. The vignette describing Elizabeth and her mother's play comes from a study of the home play of mothers and their toddlers with disabilities. Mothers in the study often supported and sustained play by following their toddler's lead (Buchanan, 1995). Other roles mothers assumed included modeling play behaviors, elaborating on the child's play, commenting on and expressing approval for play, suggesting themes for play, and helping children in play when necessary. Children can benefit from a wide range of strategies for enhancing the quality of their play. When a child's play becomes rigid or repetitious, play partners may introduce novelty into the play to stimulate more flexible and creative play behavior. When a child becomes passive in play, play partners can themselves behave passively to prompt the child to take the initiative. Play partners can also "bump up" the level of child play. If children are engaged in exploratory play, partners can model functional play. When the child is engaged in functional play, partners can introduce a pretend character and a theme for pretending, thus initiating dramatic play. For example, Elizabeth's mother heightened the level of play by introducing a "robot" character into a simple social play routine. In this way she supported Elizabeth's participation in dramatic play.

Educators may use similar strategies in the classroom. They can become more effective in supporting child play as they learn about the specific strategies that work best for children at home through discussion with family members. Following are some ways that professionals and family members can share ideas about how to support play development:

- Discuss the roles of family members in participating in the child's play. Families value and participate in child play in different ways. Ask, for example, "How do you and others in your family view your role in your child's play? If you are a play partner, how do you start the play and keep it going?"
- Remember that different kinds of play are valued for different reasons. For example, parents may express that they like independent child

"Play for young children with special needs is an important aspect of their growth and development"

play because it eases demands on them to give the child constant attention. In this case, intervention may be directed toward supporting the child's independent play. Other parents may favor social play routines that are emotionally charged for the pleasure they bring and because they draw a less responsive child into social engagement. In such cases, play intervention would emphasize social play. Ask for example: "What kinds of play do you most enjoy with your child? What do you like to see when you watch your child play? When your child plays with siblings or peers, what kinds of things do you like to see him or her do?"
- Discuss how to help the child make the transition from social play supported by adults to social play with peers. Remember that peers do not provide the same level of support for play that adults do.

Conclusion

Play for young children with special needs is an important aspect of their growth and development; however it may be overlooked in assessment and program planning. During the course of the assessment and program planning process it is important that family members, other caregivers, and educators share information about how children play throughout the day. Goals and strategies for supporting child play can then be included in the IFSP/IEP. When family members and professionals discuss how children play in daily life and what that play looks like with different play partners, clear direction for setting goals and choosing strategies can be established. A partnership between family members and professionals in this process can provide a solid basis for incorporating meaningful play experiences into the child's everyday life.

References

Buchanan, M. L. (1995). *The home play of toddlers with and without disabilities*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Washington, Seattle.

Christie, J., & Johnson, J. (1983). The role of play in social-intellectual development. *Review of Educational Research, S3*, 93-115.

Dunn, J. (1986). Pretend play in the family. In A.W. Gottfried & C. Caldwell (Eds.), *Play interactions: The role of toys and parental involvement in children's development* (pp. 79-87). Lexington, M.: Lexington Books.

Fenson, L., Kagan, J., Kearsley, R. B., & Zelazo, P. R. (1976). *The developmental progression of manipulative play in the first two years. Child Development. 47*, 232-235.

Fewell, R., & Kiminski, R. (1988). Play skills development and instruction for young children with handicaps. In S. Odom & M. Karnes (Eds.), *Early intervention for infants and children with handicaps: An empirical base* (pp. 141-158). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

Jones, E., & Reynolds, G. (1992). *The play's the thing*. New York: Teacher College Press.

Lewis, M. (1979). The social determination of play. In B. B. Sutton-Smith (Ed.), *Play and learning* (pp. 23-33). New York: Gardner.

Malone, D., Stoneman, Z. (1990). Cognitive play of mentally retarded preschoolers: Observations in the home and school. *American Journal on Mental Retardation*, 94(5), 475-487.

Malone, D., Stoneman, Z., & Langone, J. (1994). Contextual variation of correspondences among measures of play and developmental level of preschool children. *Journal of Early Intervention*, 18(2), 199-215.

Parten, M. (1932). Social participation among preschool children. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 27. 243-269

Piager, J. (1962). *Play, dreams and imitation in childhood*. New York: Norton.

Rubin, K. H., Fein, G. G., & Vandenberg, G. (1983). Play. In E. M. Heatherington (Ed.), *Carmichael's manual of child psychology (Vol. IV): Socialization, personality and social development* (pp. 693-774). New York: Wiley.

Whaley, K. (1990). The emergence of social play in infancy: A proposed development sequence of infant-adult social play. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly. S*, 347-358.

First Democratic Elections in Class 3a

by Vesna Runac, Step by Step teacher, Croatia

It is the beginning of the second semester—election time in Croatia. Election posters are all over the place with slogans, messages, and invitations. Promises are in the air. Hopes for a better future have risen again. We just need to make the right choice—circle the right number or name—and our dreams will come true. "The choice of who will be your president for the next five years is up to you!"

Pre-election fever hasn't infected only adults; it has found its echo in the youngest Croatian citizens—those who are yet to become voters. During the first day of the new school year the children in Class 3a didn't talk only about their holiday adventures. Rather, you could hear very serious discussions about

"Would you like to have your own election for president of Class 3a? A resounding "YES!!" echoed throughout the classroom."

presidential candidates. I listened, aware of the great passion in these typical childlike dialogues. I was struck by the strong influence of the media (and of their families). Suddenly, the inevitable question was raised, "Teacher, who will you vote for?"

"That is private information," I reply.

"But won't you tell us, please?!" the children begged. And then the conversation veered off in another direction.

"I wish I could vote myself!"

"I would like to vote too!"

"I would give my vote to Mesić …"

"No, one should give one's vote to Budiša …"

There were voices from all sides of the classroom.

A Teacher's Decision

We were preparing for an oral communication exercise that was supposed to address how we had spent our winter holidays. But the intensity of the children's interest in the presidential election triumphed over their winter sports experiences.

In a moment, I had made my decision. "Would you like to have your own election for the president of Class 3a?" A resounding "Yes!!!" echoed throughout the classroom.

Together we outlined the process that would guide our election:

1. First, we would all have to decide what kind of president we wanted. We quickly decided that our president should be: honest, diligent, neat, serious,

and empathetic, as well as an excellent student and a clever person. The president also would have to respect our class constitution.

2. If students believed that they had these characteristics, they could nominate themselves for president.

3. Every presidential candidate would have to explain his or her reasons for wanting to be president and the advantages for the class of his or her election. Candidates would be given three minutes to make this oral argument.

4. The election campaign would last one week.

5. Candidates would make their own posters and programs.

6. Candidates would show their abilities through their words and actions.

7. On election day, each candidate would have to give a speech.

8. Because there were only a few electors, candidates could not vote for themselves.

9. Nevenka, a teacher, would be president of the electoral committee, which would be responsible for counting the votes.

The Election Process Begins

Once we had established the rules, the process of nominating candidates began. At first it appeared that every student in the class would be nominated, but in the end, there were 14 nominees out of 27 students. Each had three minutes to explain his or her reasons for running for the presidency. I confess, I was pleasantly surprised by my students' verbal ability to share their beliefs and convictions. It was the best oral exercise you could imagine. ("Winter holidays" is boring anyway.)

That week of pre-election campaigning brought a completely different atmosphere to our classroom: candidates drew posters and wrote slogans, some passed out pencils and calendars, and some brought cakes into the class. Girl candidates seemed to have a leg up on the boys. As soon as they finished their schoolwork, they would go to help other students. During breaks they offered their assistance with math, compositions, and other subjects. After classes were over, they would stay to clean the classroom.

But this is not a fairy tale—it is a very real story—and I soon discovered that my children imitated both the

Educating Children for Democracy

good and bad behaviors they saw in the adult world. In order to stop their public insulting and quarreling, I established something called "the Teacher's Post Office." Students could openly (or discreetly) share their observations with me, and after some time had passed, we might discuss some of the more serious issues with the whole class. I discovered that this process improved their awareness of and sensitivity to thorny issues.

As the week passed, our Croatian Studies lessons became the vehicle to learn a lot of new things: how to write a speech and a biography, how to communicate ideas in short and clear sentences, how to speak articulately, and, most importantly—how to listen to others and respect their opinions. That pre-electoral week felt very short and went by very quickly. And then, there it was—January 25, 2000—*the day of presidential elections in Class 3a*.

The Election

The classroom was very tidy, benches in a circle. Just one chair occupied the empty space in the middle for the candidates who were to make their final speeches. The voters' corner, a bench and two seats with a partition wall between them, was at one end of the classroom. Behind that was the electoral committee bench with the electoral box, electoral sheets, and lists. As the voters and candidates filled the room, you could sense a special atmosphere—a mixture of tension and expectation. That important box was living proof that it was very serious day. Everything was ready. But where was the electoral committee president? Without her it was impossible to start the elections.

"I think we should start having our science lesson," I suggested, "and when she comes in we will start." You could sense the children's exasperation. But there was nothing we could do—without the president we could not start the elections. As soon as we turned to our science project, in she came as excited as everybody. We quickly put our science books down. Presidential candidates gave their speeches, the committee took its position, and—the election started!

To avoid a rush to the ballot box, voters came up to vote in the order we had previously determined. When the voting was done, the committee went out to have time and peace in which to count the votes. We even had independent election monitors—two guest teachers, Vanda and Damir. As the committee counted our votes,

> "We taught children what are the real values in life and the characteristics they should appreciate in others and develop in themselves."

we all gathered again in the classroom to hear the results. The committee reported that 27 voters had participated in the election and that two voting sheets were irregular. Then it gave us the tallies for each candidate. Because no one had gotten more then half the votes, the three candidates who had garnered the most advanced to a run-off. We decided to vote again that very day. New ballots were prepared, and the second round began.

After the run-off, the outcome of the election was clear. The committee reported that Lucija had been elected president of Class 3a. Based upon the results, we had also selected Jerko, vice-president, Martina, secretary, Darko, treasurer, and Leo as health representative. At last our new president delivered her acceptance speech. And we were very proud of our new "government."

You may think what I have described was just a game. But believe me, it was something much more than that. This experience paralleled real life. Through this exercise, we taught children what are the real values in life and the characteristics they should appreciate in others and develop in themselves. We taught them to think, to analyze, to develop their criticisms and ideas, and to respect others. We taught them that we have rights and that they are worth fighting for, that nothing lasts forever, and that everything can be changed. We taught them to recognize real values and to understand that false ones can be changed for the better. We taught them to react and to make changes. We taught them democracy with the hope that it will never be denied again.

Growing Gardens and Mathematicians:
More Books and Math for Young Children

by Hilari A. Hinnant, first-grade teacher, Woodbridge, Virginia

Math is joy, wonder, excitement, and inquiry. It speaks a language we can understand and frees us from cultural bias. Can this be the same subject we all experienced in school? As your mind drifts back to those school days and hours spent on worksheets, flash cards, timed tests, the 9s, and never-ending algebraic equations, perhaps these statements seem unrealistic. You think of sweaty palms, holding back tears, and doing problems over and over again without knowing the meaning or understanding why. For many of us, just the thought of those math days sends shivers up our spines.

Let's return to the days of counting, just for the fun of it: walking along a quiet mountain path searching for berries, then comparing the number you have to that of a playmate. Remember holding tiny carrot seeds in your hand and counting ever so carefully, afraid of losing the one that might produce the biggest tuber of all; wandering through a field on a cold autumn day, trying to decide which pumpkin is biggest and has the best shape; or measuring pole beans by resting them inside your dad's hand and deciding if each one is longer than his strong, slender middle finger? How wonderful math seemed, grounded in a world of meaningful relationships. Now, as a teacher I can help children capture the wonder and joy of math: teaching them to think and problem solve by using programs such as Cognitively Guided Instruction (Fennema & Carpenter 1988) that stress making connections, asking them how they got their answers and thus fostering the formation of meaningful cognitive networks. I hope these children will never experience my chalkboard nightmares with math. In my first-grade classroom, the children work on interdisciplinar y projects, usually lasting several months, in which math becomes the vehicle for discovery. Math is often the tool that stitches all the other subjects into a quilt of connections: children write in their journals, use math vocabulary, work collaboratively, make hands-on discoveries, and compose in words their own math problems. One of the most motivating math projects that kindergarten and primary-school children can engage in is "gardens." They love all the aspects of the planting process and easily understand how mathematics relates. The web ideas (pp. 23–26) grew out of my reading and discussing with children Lois Ehlert's book *Planting a Rainbow*. I especially like this book because the author enjoys gardening, presents simple ideas about growing things, and helps children recognize the importance of planning prior to planting a garden. Ehlert 's rainbow metaphor evokes a wide range of aesthetic responses from young children and nurtures their enthusiasm prior to the actual planting

Using Lois Ehlert's *Planting a Rainbow*

"In boldly colored graphic prints, Ehlert illustrates a simple text loaded with key concepts about growing things. We see the colored bulbs, bright seed packages, bold early blossoms, a wagon filled with an array of seedlings, and finally the wide variety of flowers blooming in the garden" (Raines & Canady 1991).

experience. In the children's gardening, the math webbing ideas I try to explore are outlined. I usually begin the garden project several months before the ground is warm enough for planting. Gardens in all their colors, shapes, and sizes offer mathematical linkages with many books that support a wide variety of activities and of course more thinking, problem solving, and questioning. Why not give gardens a try and use math to motivate your primary-school children? You won't be disappointed.

A Garden Full of Math Webbing Ideas for Grades K–2

Mental math

the number of seeds in a package

the time it will take for bulbs to sprout and then to blossom

which plants will grow taller

how many flowers will bloom on each plant

which type of flower blooms fastest

which flowers will die sooner

the color that yields the most plants or flowers

the size of a garden needed to plant a given number of plants (children suggest the number of plants)

the weight of the plants carried in a wagon

how many hours of sun are needed by plants

the number of days in summer, fall, winter, and spring

the number of colors in a rainbow

Numbers and operation

how many flower seeds were planted

the stages of a garden from preparing the earth to flowers blooming

the number of days each group of flowers takes to bloom, and compare groups

the number of colors used in the book

the number of times the word *grow* is used in the book *Planting a Rainbow*

the amount of time carnations take to grow compared to marigolds

the number of petals on some flowers compared to the number on others

the number of leaves on new plants and later on mature plants

all the flower types used in the book

the number of plants of each variety in the garden

a database to keep track of seeds and bulbs ordered in one year

the number of weeds pulled in a week
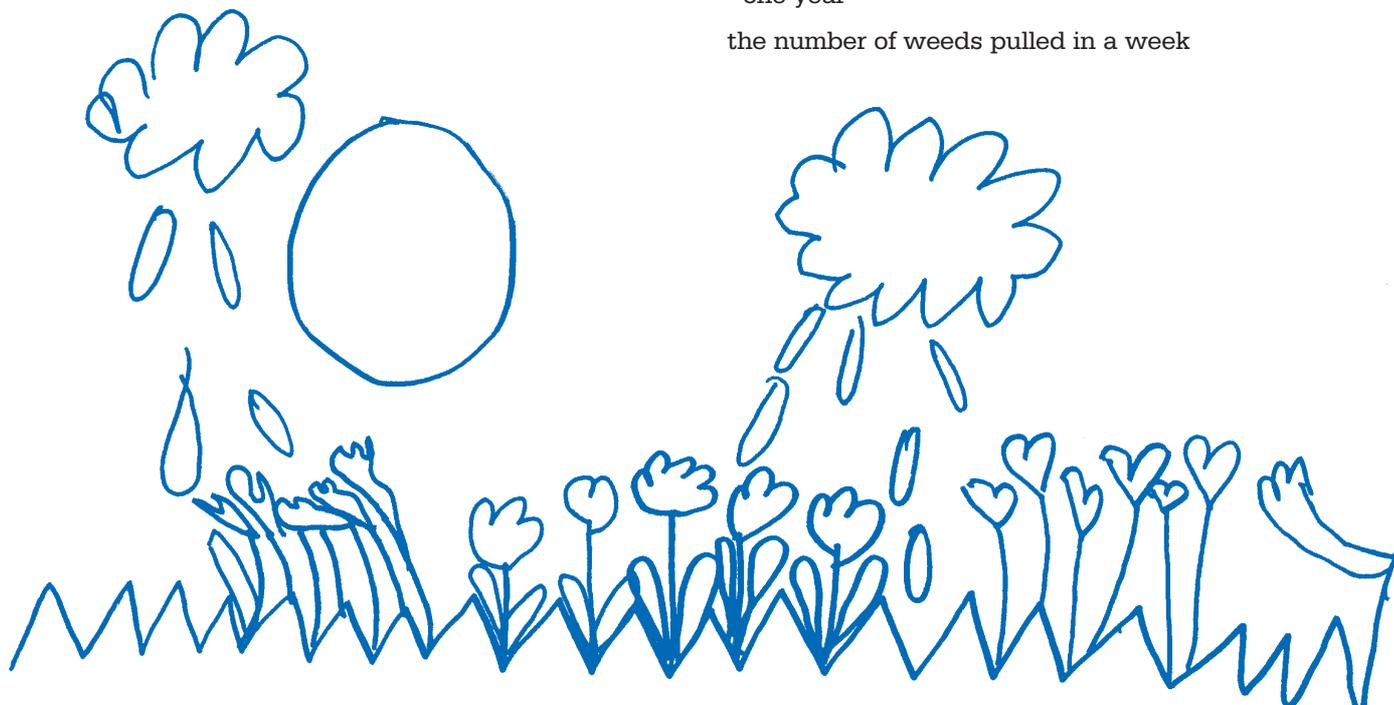
Measurement

size of plants

size of seeds

length of rows

area of the garden

circumference of a flower

heights of the plants

length of the wagon

distance to the garden shop

distance apart plants should be planted

depth in the ground that seeds should be placed

amount of water needed daily and weekly

water amounts needed for various plants, weather
   factors included

amount of plant food needed in weight or volume
   (use two systems and compare)

Geometry and spatial awareness or sense

How far under the ground were the seeds placed?

Did the depth vary by seed size or other factors?

Draw a garden.

Construct a map of a garden using Unifix cubes,
   pattern blocks, or other shapes.

Design a new type of wagon.

Design a dress or shirt based on flower symbols.

Use carpet squares to plan a garden.

Make a quilt that represents a garden.

Arrange artificial or pretend flowers in rows any
   direction or configuration to invent a garden of
   the future.

Design a solar greenhouse.

Invent a new system of irrigation and draw the plan.

Use the computer to draw parts of a garden.

My Plant: Wednesday, June 6 — My Plant: Wednesday, June 13
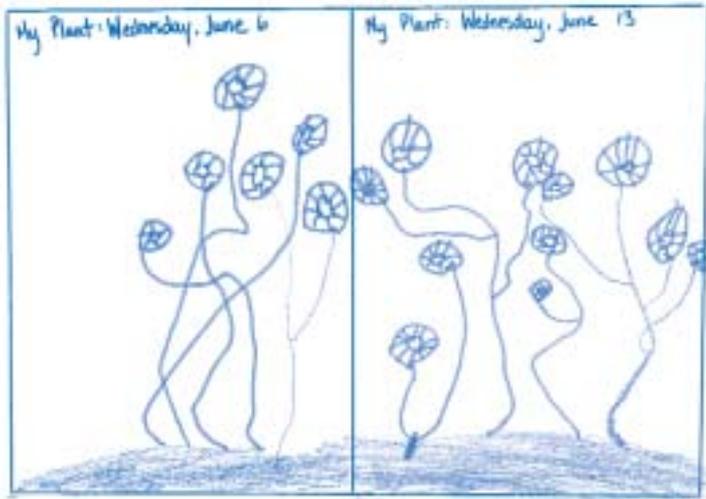
Patterns and relationships

growing times

different flowers and plants for blooming and growing

colors of rows of flowers

the values of colors of flowers and plants in
  relation to time of day and weather

how flowers are planted—differences in other
  regions or countries

differences in sizes, shapes, and colors of
  garden plants and flowers

order of planting and blooming

Time and money

How long did it take each type of plant to sprout?

What time did the majority of the plants take to
  first blossom?

What is the length of a season—months, days,
  hours, minutes?

How long did it take to plant each part of the
  rainbow garden?

When should we start our garden each year?

Why do people plant gardens at different times
  of the year?

How much did our garden cost us?

Compare the cost of bulbs to other seeds.

How much time did it take to plant the ferns?
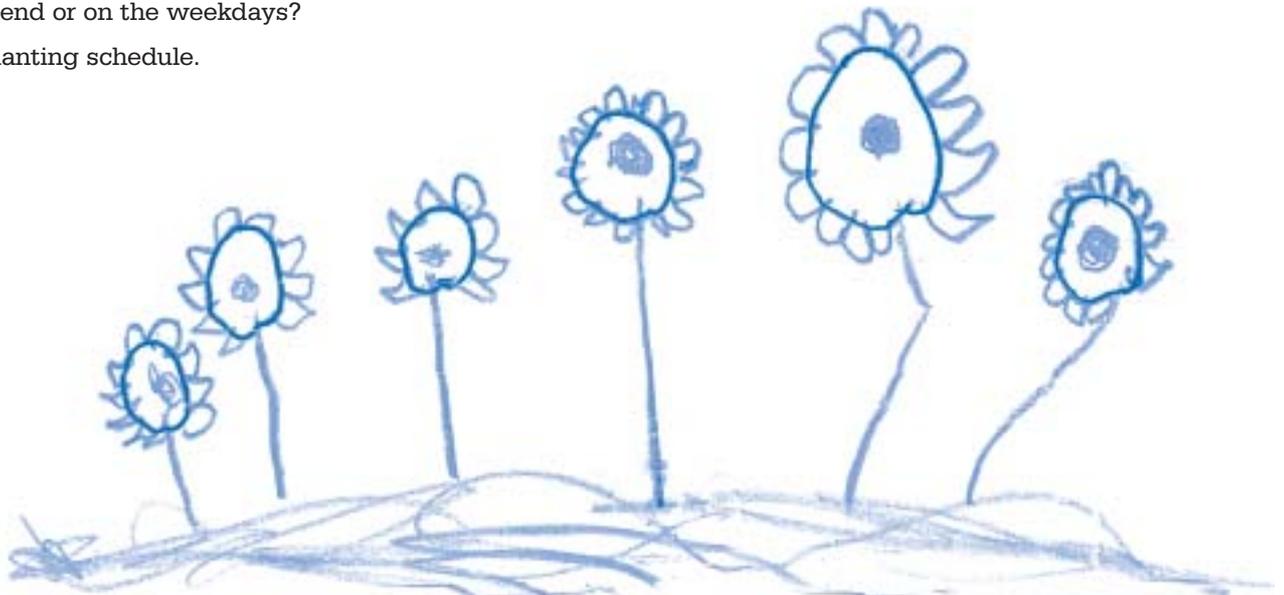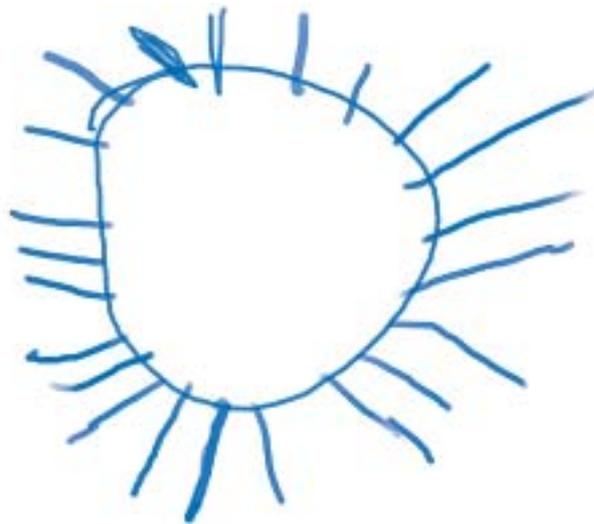
Do some plants require more sun?

How much do most farmers earn per
  hour of work?

Did you spend more time in the garden
  on the weekend or on the weekdays?

Outline the planting schedule.

Statistics and probability

Graph the attributes of flowers.

Chart seed sizes and shapes.

Outline weather patterns.

Graph the growth of the garden, charting each set of flowers and plants.

Predict how many flowers will bloom from the seeds planted.

Predict which variety of plant will produce the most flowers.

Foretell which color will have the most flowers.

Predict the frequency of pulling weeds.

Graph the types of bugs found in the garden.

Estimate the number of days it will rain in a month, a season, a year.

Judge the drying time for soil.

Chart the time it will take for seeds to arrive from Michigan.

Predict how many flowers and plants will grow in each row of the garden.

Other Books for a Math-Using Gardening Project

Another wonderful book teachers can use in the garden project is *Growing Vegetable Soup*, also written and illustrated by Lois Ehlert. This book is a good one for after the seeds are planted and the garden is started. Teachers can discuss with the children the amount of time needed to grow a variety of plants and when vegetables will be ready to eat. Then before children make vegetable soup, they can weigh and measure their produce and make predictions about how cooking might change these figures.

Anna's Garden Songs, poems by Mary Q. Steele and pictures by Lena Anderson, is a charming book that invites mathematical connections, especially counting and spatial awareness. My favorite is picking cherries, "Twenty, thirty, forty more, cherries on this tree galore!"

Pierrot's ABC Garden by Anita Lobel is just one of her wonderful books that connects gardens with math. This book lends itself to asking questions like, "How many strawberries were there?" and simple joining problems.

Apples and Pumpkins by Anne Rockwell, with pictures by Lizzy Rockwell, is a good book to use in the fall and provides many measurement linkages. It can also be read in spring to make comparisons between size and shape and where fruits and vegetables grow.

My Hand Rake by Joanne Barkan, illustrated by Jody Wheeler, is a useful book for discussing sequence and the number of different plants grown. The book is shaped like a rake, and with younger children you might discuss the number of prongs on the rake and have them measure the length and thickness of each prong. Children will often ask questions about different tools and their function, which they have seen at home.

The Sunflower Garden by Janice May Urdy, illustrated by Beatrice Darwin, is an older book written about an Algonkian Indian girl and how her tribe used the sunflower. Children enjoy counting sunflower seeds and find it amazing how high the plants can grow. Last year I brought in a large sunflower head from my garden and photos showing the plants growing up to our roof.

The last book I usually read to my children during our garden project is *Solomon's Secret* by Savior Pirotta, with pictures by Helen Cooper. The book is beautifully illustrated, and its magical qualities help children dream of new gardens in far-off lands. And, so off the children go, asking more measurement questions, counting, comparing, and doing more mental math.

References

Fennema, E., & T. Carpenter. 1988. *Cognitively guided instruction readings*. Madison: Wisconsin Center for Education Research, School of Education.

Raines, S.C., & R.J. Canady. 1991. *More story stretchers*. Mt. Rainier, MD: Gryphon House.

For further reading

Baratta-Lorton, M. 1976. *Mathematics their way: An activity-centered mathematics program for early childhood education*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Conrad, J. 1996. *Discover nature in the garden*. Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole.

Dodge, D., J. Jablon, & T. Bickart. 1994. Mathematical thinking. In *Constructing curriculum for the primary grades*, 290–327. Washington, DC: Teaching Strategies.

Harcourt, L. 1988. *Explorations for early childhood*. Menlo Park, CA: Addison-Wesley.

Hart, A., & P. Mantell. 1996. *Kids garden: The anytime, anyplace guide to sowing and growing fun*. Charlotte, VT: Williamson.

Hohmann, C. 1991. *Mathematics*. High/Scope K–3 Curriculum Series. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope.

Hohmann, M., & D. Weikart. 1995. Classification: Recognizing similarities and differences; and Seriation: Creating series and patterns. In *Educating young children*, 447–63 & 465–73. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope.

Katz, L., & S. Chard. 1989. *Engaging children's minds: The project approach* Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Payne, J., ed. 1990. *Mathematics for the young child*. Reston, VA: National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.

Peterson, P.L., E. Fennema, & T.P. Carpenter. 1988. Using knowledge of how students think about mathematics. *Educational Leadership* 46 (4): 42–45.

Pranis, E., & J. Cohen. 1994. *Grow lab: Activities for growing minds*. Burlington, VT: National Gardening Association.

Pranis, E., & J. Hale. 1994. *Grow lab: A complete guide to gardening in the classroom*. Burlington, VT: National Gardening Association.

Richardson, B. 1998. *Gardening with children*. Newtown, CT: Taunton.

Richardson, K., & L. Salkeld. 1995. Transforming mathematics curriculum. In *Reaching potentials: Transforming early childhood curriculum and assessment, volume 2*, eds. S. Bredekamp & T. Rosegrant, 23–42. Washington, DC: NAEYC.

Ward, C.D. 1995. Meaningful mathematics with young children. *Dimensions* 23 (2): 7–11.

Waters, M. 1988. *The victory garden kids' book*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Websites

GardenNet—**http://gardennet.com** —Provides free, interesting gardening information and many links to other websites.

National Gardening Association—**http://www.wow-pages.com/nega/** —Online teachers' newsletter, Growing Ideas: A Journal of Garden-Based Learning.
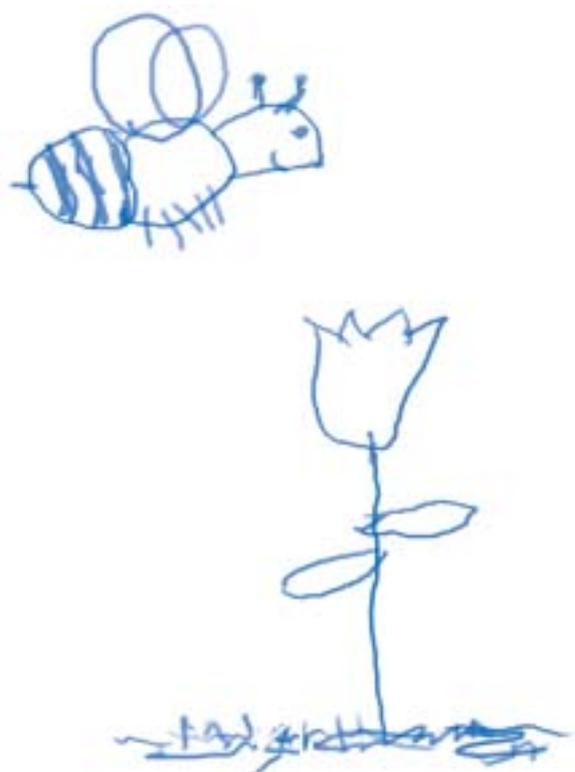
School and Community Partnerships

Families and Schools: In Search of Common Ground

by Mick Coleman, Associate Professor of Child and Family Development, University of Georgia in Athens

> "Children's development and education must be addressed within the total context of their family, school, and community lives."

Families and schools are widely recognized as the cornerstones of children's socialization and education. Not only do families and schools have a common responsibility for helping children understand the shared ideas, beliefs, and behaviors of society, but they also share responsibility for helping children acquire knowledge about their world and develop lifelong learning skills. Stamp and Groves (1994) refer to the unique relationship between families and schools as a "third institution" that is built upon the mutual support and reciprocal exchanges between parents and school staff.

Perhaps because of the importance we place on the mutual responsibilities of families and schools in preparing children for adulthood, establishing a consensus on the nature of family-school relations is not always easy. For example, although the education, support, and protection of young children are viewed as social functions of both families and schools (Caldwell 1990), the boundaries separating family and school responsibilities are ambiguous sometimes (Johnston 1990), resulting in family-school power struggles (Haseloff 1990). Even labels like "family involvement" can lead to disagreements. While some may prefer that family involvement reflect the diversity of family structures and lifestyles that must be accommodated in support of children's education, others may like better the title "parent involvement" that emphasizes the primary role of mothers and fathers in children's education. Some may prefer the label "parent participation" (Potter 1989) so as to focus on parents as coeducators and codecisionmakers, while others would choose "parent education" as the descriptive that focuses on the educational needs of parents and children. And still others may prefer to use "family-school involvement" to emphasize the mutual responsibility of families and schools in maintaining positive family-school relations.

This article presents a training model to guide parents and teachers in their reflections on family involvement. The model was developed to support community inservice training and a university course on family-school-community relations. The model is based on two assumptions:

- Families and schools share a common ground of interest and commitment to supporting the education of young children (Epstein 1991; Epstein & Dauber 1991).

- Children's development and education must be addressed within the total context of their family, school, and community lives (Bronfenbrenner 1979; Zigler 1989;

Comer & Haynes 1991; Powell 1991; Garbarino & Abramowitz 1992).

These assumptions have taken on increasing importance over the past three decades (Berger 1991) and represent an ecological view of family involvement (Comer & Haynes 1991).

Family involvement from an ecological view

Family-involvement models take a more proactive and comprehensive approach today than those used prior to the 1960s when family and school were viewed as having different child-support responsibilities (Berger 1991). Beginning in the 1960s, programs such as Head Start began to merge the caregiving and educational responsibilities of parents and teachers. Family-involvement programs today continue to expand their focus beyond the child, providing educational and social services to the entire family (Comer & Haynes 1991; Powell 1991). Community centers, advocacy groups, social services agencies, businesses, and civic and private groups are being asked to work with teachers and parents to help support and advance the school and family environments of children (Berger 1991; Comer & Haynes 1991; Cross, LaPointe, & Jensen 1991).

Ecological family-involvement models recognize the mutually supportive roles that families and schools play in children's growth and development (Berger 1991; Davies 1991). For example, Gordon (1977) suggests three family-involvement models: (a) a family-impact model in which schools reach out to the home through home visits and other communication strategies; (b) the school-impact model in which parents volunteer in the school and/or work with school staff to use most effectively the linkages between home and school environments; and (c) the community-impact model in which community resources are brought to bear on the needs of schools and families.

Swick (1984) likewise describes family involvement as a partnership between parents, teachers, and their helpers in the community. Equally important is the view of family involvement as a developmental process that is built over time through the intentional planning and effort of family members, school staff, and community representatives. Epstein (1987) lists five types of mutually supportive obligations through which to link families and schools: (a) child rearing and children's health and safety, (b) family-school communication, (c) parent participation within the school, (d) support and reinforcement of children's learning, and (e) leadership and advocacy efforts to advance children's development and education.

An ecological training model of family involvement

The family-involvement model that follows does not include specific solutions to those barriers to family involvement Rather, the model provides a structure for helping parents and teachers reach a common ground of understanding regarding family-school relations. Educators identify three reasons such needs for training models exist. First is a historical lack of family-involvement training (Greenberg 1989; Greenwood & Hickman 1991; Brand 1996), although educational institutions and conferences are increasingly addressing issues of family involvement. Second, translating family and school interest in family involvement into realistic practices that are reinforced by local school resources and policies is a persistent problem (Epstein 1987, 1991; Epstein & Dauber 1991; Nardine & Morris 1991; Powell 1991). Finally, a structure for addressing the needs and interests of all families, especially those considered "hard to reach," is lacking (Davies 1991; Powell 1991).

The following family-involvement model consists of two interrelated phases. The first phase involves the development of a philosophy, the need for which is based upon the recognition that a family-involvement program evolves over time and requires a shared vision between families and teachers (Epstein 1991). A shared vision is needed to guide discussions and decisionmaking. The second phase examines roles that teachers and parents of young children share. Identifying mutually supportive family-involvement roles reinforces a collaborative mindset that helps parents and teachers coordinate their efforts in building a meaningful family-involvement program.

Figure 1

Family-Involvement Theme Questions

Diversity

- What are some important values that all families share?
- What types of information do young children need to know about their peers who come from different family backgrounds?
- What are your child's most unique characteristics?
- What aspects of your culture do you hope to pass along to your child?

Family-school relations

- In what ways does our school currently support families?
- How is our family-school relationship characterized within the community?
- What family, school, and community barriers prevent families from becoming involved in school activities? How can these barriers be overcome?
- How can all school staff be involved in supporting family involvement?

Parent-teacher relations

- What are the characteristics of a good parent-teacher relationship?
- How do parents and teachers currently support each other?
- What additional supports are needed by parents and teachers in our school?
- How can parents and teachers improve their communication with each other?

Family empowerment

- What are the most important characteristics of a strong family?
- What are the most important sources of stress that families face today?
- What are the most important sources of stress that children face today?
- How can schools help to reduce child and family stress?

Child guidance

- What social behaviors should parents and teachers expect from children?
- What childhood behaviors are the most difficult for parents and teachers to handle?
- What child-guidance techniques are appropriate for teachers to use with young children?
- What child-guidance techniques are most effective with your child?

Child growth and development

- What types of learning activities do you use at home with your child?
- What types of information would you like to receive regarding children's early growth and development?
- What types of educational opportunities concerning children and families would you like to learn more about?
- How do you decide when your child has mastered a new skill?

Community involvement

- Which community services area is most important to advancing children's well-being?
- Which community agencies are most responsive to community needs?
- How do community agencies currently coordinate their services?
- How can our school accommodate community agency referrals and service delivery?

Developing a philosopy of family involvement

A three-step process leads to the development of a philosophical statement of family involvement.

Step 1—Brainstorming

This question represents the first step: What type of family-involvement program should our school follow? There is, of course, no one response to the question. The response is dependent upon the needs and interests of parents and teachers represented in a particular school. Nevertheless, teachers and parents can brainstorm responses to the question by considering examples of ecological models of family involvement such as those presented earlier. Some characteristics of successful ecological approaches to family involvement (Comer & Haynes 1991; Epstein 1991; Epstein & Dauber 1991; Olmstead 1991; Powell 1991; Gage & Workman 1994; Rosenthal & Sawyers 1996) include the following:

- reflect an understanding of and a respect for the diversity of attitudes about family involvement held by families and school staff;
- assess existing family-involvement strengths and barriers, along with hopes for the future;
- focus on family strengths, as opposed to family weaknesses, and respect for the choices families make regarding school polices and practices that affect their children;
- make a commitment to involving all families by adopting alternative program delivery schedules (e.g., mornings, evenings, lunchtimes, and weekends) and logistics (e.g., community-based, employer-based, and electronictype community meetings, as well as activities and meetings that vary in size from one-on-one to large groups; availability of transportation services; language interpreters; and

---
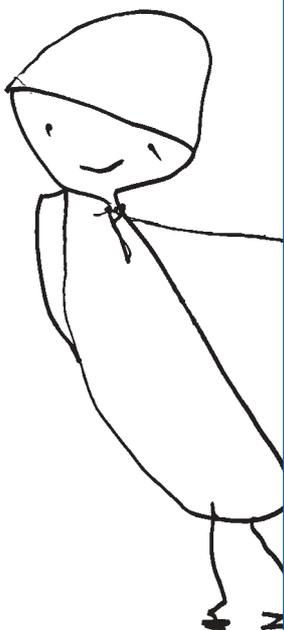
Figure 2

A Family-Involvement Philosophy

Importance

Family and school are two of the most important social institutions in the lives of young children. Within families and schools young children learn about their world, develop a sense of social responsibility, and acquire social-interpersonal skills. All are skills important for a healthy, productive, and enjoyable life.

Goal

The goal of the (name of school) family-involvement program is to establish family-school continuity by providing mutually supportive and inviting environments that challenge children to learn and practice positive life skills. This goal is based upon the following assumptions.

Assumptions

1. Children grow and develop best when parents and teachers communicate with one another on a routine basis.
2. Parents and teachers are most effective when they respect one another's views.
3. Parents and teachers have a responsibility to build upon children's learning experiences that occur in the home, school, and community.
4. Teachers have the responsibility to learn about children's lives outside the classroom so as to develop meaningful classroom learning environments.
5. Parents have the responsibility to share information with teachers about their child's home life that can support their child's classroom learning.

Objectives

Family-involvement objectives will be developed for each classroom. Parents, teachers, and children will work together to develop the objectives. All objectives will reflect the above family-involvement goal and assumptions. Parents, teachers, and children will evaluate their family-involvement objectives each year and provide a summary report to the parent-teacher advisory committee.

communication with families using face-to-face conferences as well as more innovative communication strategies like video- and audiotapes, radio and television, newspaper articles, and newsletters and pamphlets);

- use home visits or other nonschool sites (e.g., community centers, churches, workplaces) to involve parents who may feel uncomfortable entering a school environment;
- provide families with a variety of family-involvement activities based within the home, school, and community;
- involve parents and school staff of different cultural backgrounds in school governance;
- modify or delete existing school policies (and/or adopt new policies), while also allocating appropriate resources to support family-involvement strategies and practices;

> "The goal, assumptions, and objectives of family involvement provide greater detail about the type of family involvement sought by families and school staff."

- clarify family-school roles regarding family-involvement strategies and practices, while also allowing flexibility in modifying roles as situations demand;
- maintain close ties and open lines of communication with community agencies that serve children and families; and
- provide ongoing evaluation of the family-involvement program, including its impact on children, school staff, families, and the community.

Step 2—Identifying family-involvement themes

After the brainstorming session, parents and teachers are ready to identify key assumptions that they want to define their family-involvement program. Theme questions, such as those given in Figure 1, help in structuring group discussions. The purpose of the theme questions is fourfold:

- to identify and discuss different definitions, attitudes, and expectations regarding family involvement;
- to identify common concerns and values that can be used to build cohesion and help resolve disagreements;
- to focus on the unique needs of families and schools as well as their mutual responsibilities, helping parents and teachers to better appreciate their individual and collective efforts in guiding young children's development; and finally
- to allow parents and teachers to begin identifying specific strategies and activities for structuring their family-involvement program.

Step 3—Creating the philosophical statement

Writing a philosophy of family involvement begins with a review of the challenges, ideas, and assumptions identified during the previous two steps. Small groups of parents and teachers consider this information in drafting their versions of a family-involvement philosophy. The different drafts are compared to again reinforce common themes and maintain a sense of shared vision. Subsequently, numerous rewrites should be expected. One example of a family-involvement philosophy resulting from this process is presented in Figure 2. The example begins by explaining the importance of family involvement, which serves as a shared vision statement on the importance of family-school relations. The goal, assumptions, and objectives of family involvement provide greater detail about the type of family involvement sought by families and school staff. Some groups may decide to simplify this section by listing only the objectives. Also, some groups may choose to list schoolwide objectives or, as does the example in Figure 2, to allow each classroom to develop its own objectives.

Regardless of the approach taken and the time and energy devoted, developing a thoughtful family-involvement philosophy serves to build a common ground of support between families and schools. This philosophy

- sends a message throughout the school and community that family involvement is important;

- provides a guide to identifying strategies in support of a family-involvement program that reflects the shared vision of families and school staff;
- gives a rationale for developing training materials for new staff who will be responsible for carrying out the family-involvement program; and
- establishes a rationale for assessing the family-involvement program, implementing or modifying school polices to advance the program and identifying potential roles that parents and school staff can play in supporting the program.

Teacher and family roles in family involvement

Even the most thoughtful family-involvement philosophy is useless unless the school and families reach a consensus about who will be responsible for the implementation. Confusion can result when teacher and family roles are ambiguous. Role expectations, therefore, must be clearly defined and reflective of the family-involvement philosophy (see Figure 3).

Family-involvement roles go beyond traditional classroom activities. Increasingly, family-involvement philosophies are addressing the totality of children's lives within school, family, and community settings. Furthermore, following an ecological approach, shared parent and teacher roles are needed to reinforce the common ground that defines family and school responsibilities. The four roles that follow reflect these criteria. Although all of the roles are important, they may not be of equal importance in all situations. Families and teachers must ultimately decide how best to adapt the roles to reflect their particular family-involvement philosophy. Over time, families and teachers may progress from one role to another or may add additional roles.

Families and teachers as cultural ambassadors

Schools need families and teachers who can guide young children in developing an understanding and appreciation of our diverse society in which differences are respected and protected. At the same time, children must recognize and cherish shared human traits, such as

love, trust, empathy, and personal responsibility.

Families and teachers who are reflective observers of society are better able to help children appreciate the balance between human diversity and similarity. As a beginning point, families and teachers can reflect upon their personal, past and present life experiences. This reflection provides greater insight into the differences represented among even those individuals from similar backgrounds. Our religious and educational experiences, family structures, family rules and customs, interpersonal relationships, artistic and athletic endeavors, and travel experiences represent some of the factors that shape our individual cultures. Also, individuals from very different backgrounds almost always are able to identify similarities in their basic life experiences and feelings (see Figure 4).

Understanding differences and similarities among cultures need not be a formal process. The action merely requires a commitment to seeking out new life experiences. For example, this writer often encourages families and teachers to attend cultural fairs, art exhibits, and poetry and book readings to develop a better awareness of how such common human feelings as love, hate, and despair are interpreted by individuals from different backgrounds. Watching television programs and listening to the radio can provide insight into contemporary social concerns facing children, families, and schools.

Families and teachers as educators

Schools need families and teachers who are able to address the total educational context of children's lives. Continuity between children's home and school lives is essential in helping them to acquire information in new settings as well as transfer information between settings (Silvern 1988).

Parents need a range of educational roles for supporting children's early learning experiences. For example, parents may choose a traditional support role by assisting with field trips, bulletin boards, or such special events as bake sales. This traditional role continues to be important to some families for any number of reasons. In some cases work demands prevent parents from attending classroom functions. Others use the support role as a first step to taking on more active roles like

Figure 3

Family-Involvement Role Expectations

A listing of role expectations follows. All expectations support the family-involvement philosophy in Figure 2. Families and teachers have joint responsibility in selecting, defining, modifying, extending, and carrying out the roles.

Cultural ambassador
- conduct discussion groups on contemporary music, art, and literature
- conduct family cultural fairs within the school or organize field trips to cultural events
- provide instructional workshops on different languages and cultures
- create family banners, coats of arms, or songs share family customs and traditions during family days

Educator
- identify ways that families and teachers can provide supportive learning experiences at home and school
- increase the use of family life experiences and household objects in classroom activities
- develop family-involvement activity packets for children to take home arrange family-teacher workshops on topics of mutual interest (e.g., child guidance)
- identify new ways for families and teachers to communicate about children's development and education

Family services coordinator
- invite representatives of social services agencies to present information to families and teachers
- arrange role-playing sessions to help families and teachers communicate with social services agencies
- develop educational pamphlets about community social services for families and school staff
- arrange meetings with social services professionals to discuss challenges and opportunities for delivery of services within and outside the school

Advocate
- develop a family-teacher position paper to address the ways in which the community supports and challenges the well-being of children and families
- serve on advisory committees to improve family-school relations
- attend child-advocacy workshops
- develop a communication network for alerting families and teachers to pending legislation involving child and family issues

those discussed below. Still others have special social skills or creative talents that best lend themselves to expanded support roles.

Important in the offering of a support role is the assumption that teachers will do more to recognize parent contribution than simply acknowledge the time and work that was saved through parental support. Acknowledging the contributions parents make to supporting family-school relations in general and children's education in particular is also important.

Other parents may choose a more active role of helping children acquire at home the same concepts they are learning in the classroom. For example, teachers and parents can brainstorm ways to reinforce and extend home-classroom learning activities. Parents can work with teachers to develop classroom activities that are based on parents' special talents or interests or careers.

Families and teachers may also identify ways to jointly carry out their educational roles. For example, together they may lead a series of family-school cooperative learning workshops that address topics of mutual interest (e.g., childhood guidance, stress, or safety). Teachers and parents may also arrange a series of adult-oriented workshops aimed at improving interpersonal relations (e.g., communication skills, assertiveness training).

Families and teachers as family services coordinators

Schools need families and teachers who have an understanding of how family and community life outside the school can support children's growth and development (Zigler 1987). Families and teachers increasingly are working with social services professionals to design new strategies for providing families with financial, housing, nutritional, and employment assistance. In some cases such social services are provided within schools. In all cases one key goal is to help families become good consumers of community social services. This is especially critical for a growing number of families who face complex challenges in maintaining a state of self-sufficiency. These families may need help in understanding the terminology used by agencies or in completing the paperwork that accompanies social services delivery.

Families and teachers overcome these challenges by receiving two types of training. First, they need information about the services provided by community agencies and the eligibility requirements. Next, families and teachers need skill training to make effective use of a social services system, which at times can seem overwhelming. Such skill training could involve role playing, discussion groups, or presentations by agency representatives dealing with the culture of social services delivery. Specific strategies can be offered for making requests of agencies and managing services delivery requirements.

Families and teachers as advocates

Schools need families and teachers who advocate for policies that link family and school concerns. For example, families and teachers may serve on school task forces to help identify strategies for overcoming barriers to family involvement or to help school and community agencies cooperate in providing social services within a school.

Community agencies face the ongoing challenge of designing new programs or modifying existing ones to meet the changing needs of children and families. Families and teachers can help human services professionals remain responsive to the needs of children and families by serving on community advisory boards that address such issues as violence, substance abuse, and educational enrichment. They also can develop their own position papers on these and other issues.

Teachers and families learn advocacy skills by participating in workshops, joining child advocacy groups,

Figure 4

Identifying Common Behaviors, Values, and Responsibilities within Diversity	
Serving as cultural ambassadors challenges families and teachers to identify the commonalities underlying human diversity.	
Human diversity	**Associated human commonalities**
physical appearance	habits of personal hygiene, self-expression through dress and body language
language	interpersonal communication, public-speaking skills, creative expressions of feelings and ideas
lifestyle	sharing and cooperation, honesty, productivity, self-respect, demonstrations of caring and love
values	reflection about the meaning and purpose of life, expressions of respect, acts of kindness, assistance to others
food	safety and production, social skills, creative expression, expression of concern and love
holidays	celebration of and reflection about significant events and people who have contributed to the culture/society

and reading child advocacy guides (see Goffin & Lombardi 1988; NAEYC 1996). First attempts at advocacy often are most effective when they deal with local issues, since teachers, and especially families, fre-

"Parents and teachers who identify a common ground for family-school cooperation are better able to maintain an open dialogue."

quently have a great deal of influence on community leaders and school administrators.

Assessment issues

Because this family-involvement model provides a structure for decisionmaking activities rather than suggests specific solutions, participants need criteria by which to reflect upon and assess their accomplishment. The following questions are useful as assessment guides during and following development of a family-involvement model (see Williams & Chavkin 1989; Brand 1996).

- Are the philosophical statement and role responsibilities clearly written? Are they easily understood by others?
- Is a family-school partnership clearly reflected in all philosophy objectives and role responsibilities?
- Are there mechanisms to help ensure that families and school staff maintain an active and open dialogue?
- Is there clear, administrative support identified for the philosophy objectives and role responsibilities? Does administrative support include adequate resource allocation (time, space, finances)?
- Is training available for those philosophy objectives and role responsibilities that call for specialized knowledge or skills?
- How will the philosophy objectives and role responsibilities be evaluated?

Conclusion

Developing a mindset of seeking common ground reflects a positive philosophy of family-school relations that portrays parents and teachers as colleagues in promoting the best interests of young children. Parents and teachers who identify a common ground for family-school cooperation are better able to maintain an open dialogue so that energies are directed toward identifying opportunities for families and schools to work together in supporting the development and education of young children.

References

Berger, E.H. 1991. Parents' involvement: Yesterday and today. *The Elementary School Journal* 19: 209–20.

Brand, S. 1996. Making parent involvement a reality: Helping teachers develop partnerships with parents. *Young Children* 51 (2): 76–81.

Bronfenbrenner, E. 1979. *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Caldwell, B.M. 1990. Educare: A new professional identity. *Dimensions of Early Childhood* 18 (4): 3–6.

Comer, J.P, & N.M. Haynes. 1991. Parent involvement in schools: An ecological approach. *The Elementary School Journal* 91: 271–78.

Cross, C., R.T. La Pointe, & C. Jensen. 1991. The first grants: Federal leadership to advance school and family partnerships. *Phi Delta Kappan* 72 (5): 383–88.

Davies, D. 1991. Schools reaching out: Family, school, and community partnerships for student success. *Phi Delta Kappan* 72: 376–82.

Epstein, J.L. 1987. Parent involvement. Education and Urban Society 19 (2): 119–36.

Epstein, J.L. 1991. Paths to partnership: What we can learn from federal, state, district, and school initiatives. *Phi Delta Kappan* 72: 344–49.

Epstein, J.L., & S.L. Dauber. 1991. School programs and teacher practices of parent involvement in inner-city elementary and middle schools. *The Elementary School Journal* 91: 289–306.

Gage, J., & S. Workman. 1994. Creating family support systems: In Head Start and beyond. *Young Children* 50 (1): 74–77.

Garbarino, J., & R.H. Abramowitz. 1992. *Children and families in the social environment.* 2d ed. New York: Aldine.

Goffin, S.G., & J. Lombardi. 1988. *Speaking out: Early childhood advocacy*. Washington, DC: NAEYC.

Gordon, I.J. 1977. Parent education and parent involvement: Retrospect and prospect. *Childhood Education* 54 (2): 71–77.

Greenberg, P. 1989. Parents as partners in young children's development and education: A new American fad? Why does it matter? *Young Children* 44 (4): 61–75.

Greenwood, G.E., & C.W. Hickman. 1991. Research and practice in parent involvement: Implications for teacher education. *The Elementary School Journal* 91: 279–88.

Haseloff, W. 1990. The efficacy of the parent-teacher partnership of the 1990s. *Early Child Development and Care* 58: 51–55.

Johnston, J.H. 1990. *The new American family and the school*. Columbus, OH: National Middle School Association.

NAEYC. 1996. Public policy report. Be a children's champion. *Young Children* 51 (2): 58–60.

Nardine, F.E., & R.D. Morris. 1991. Parent involvement in the states: How firm is the commitment? *Phi Delta Kappan* 72: 363–66.

Olmstead, P.P. 1991. Parents' involvement in elementary education: Findings and suggestions from the follow-through program. *The Elementary School Journal* 91: 221–32.

Potter, G. 1989. Parent participation in the language arts program. *Language Arts* 66 (1): 21–28.

Powell, D.R. 1991. How schools support families: Critical policy tensions. *The Elementary School Journal* 91: 307–19.

Rosenthal, D.M., & J.Y. Sawyers. 1996. Building successful home/school partnerships: Strategies for parent support and involvement. *Childhood Education* 72 (4): 194–200.

Silvern, S. 1988. Continuity/discontinuity between home and early childhood education environments. *The Elementary School Journal* 89: 147–59.

Stamp, L.N., & M.M. Groves. 1994. Strengthening the ethic of care: Planning and supporting family involvement. *Dimensions of Early Childhood* 22 (2): 5–9.

Swick, K. 1994. Family involvement: An empowerment perspective. *Dimensions of Early Childhood* 22 (2): 10–13.

Williams, D.L., & N.F. Chavkin. 1989. Essential elements of strong parent involvement programs. *Educational Leadership* 47 (2): 18–20.

Zigler, E.F. 1987. Formal schooling for four-year-olds? No. *American Psychologist* 42: 254-–60.

Zigler, E.F. 1989. Addressing the nation's child care crisis: The school of the twenty-first century. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 59: 484–91.

For further reading

Akaran, S.E., & M.V. Fields. 1997. Family and cultural context: A writing breakthrough? *Young Children* 52 (4): 37–40.

Anderson, M., & D. Weinhouse. 1997. Learning disabilities—Twice blessed. *Young Children* 52 (4): 29–31.

Lakey, J. 1997. Teachers and parents define diversity in an Oregon preschool cooperative—Democracy at work. *Young Children* 52 (4): 20–28.

Murphy, D.M. 1997. Parent and teacher plan for the child. *Young Children* 52 (4): 32–36.

Phillips, C.B. 1994. The movement of African-American children through sociocultural contexts. In *Diversity and developmentally appropriate practices: Challenges for early childhood education*, eds. B.L. Mallory & R.S. New, 137– 54. New York: Teachers College Press.

Workman, S.H., & J.A. Gage. 1997. Family- school partnerships: A family strengths approach. *Young Children* 52 (4): 10–14.

Parent-School Partnerships: Building the Social Capital of Minorities in the Balkans and the Caucuses

by Mirjana Samardzic, Domaci-Association for Creative Development, and Margarita Doneva, Catholic Relief Services-Bulgaria

Using a community development approach to education, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and its local partners in the Balkans and Caucasus are addressing social intolerance in nations and provinces that are struggling to develop multi-ethnic, multi-cultural civil societies. This article profiles two such programs, one in Croatia and the other in Bulgaria, which are part of the effort to enhance inter-ethnic dialogue in those countries. Step by Step Programs in Croatia and Bulgaria provided training to teachers in strategies to foster parent-teacher partnerships.

Catholic Relief Services

Catholic Relief Services, founded in 1943, is the overseas relief and development agency of the United States Catholic Conference. It offers humanitarian and emergency assistance as well as sustainable development programming in microfinance, agriculture, and community health, as well as education programming in over 80 countries worldwide. CRS has been in Southeast Europe since 1991, initially in response to the Bosnian war but also addressing the human suffering resulting from the transition of centralized to independent states that is occurring throughout the region.

Catholic Relief Services-Europe Education Network's Parent-School Partnerships Program The Europe Education Network (EdNet) was established in 1997 as an education programming, learning, and exchange forum for CRS and partner staff from those countries and provinces in which CRS operates, with a focus on community involvement in education. EdNet's Parent-School Partnerships (PSP) program was inspired by the American system of parent-teacher associations in which parents and teachers work together on school activities. This approach has been expanded to involve all community members in decision making about their local schools, using models and approaches from Europe and other regions of the world. Through sharing and technical assistance, EdNet is building an international network of education groups, technical experts, foundations, research institutions, and governments to support these improvement activities and the community-based organizations that manage them.

EdNet's overarching education programming objectives are:

- *Strengthening civil society:* Empowering community members and engaging them in civic activities.
- *Promoting quality education:* Strengthening education systems and promoting child-centered, interactive learning approaches.
- *Building peace:* Uniting communities—and larger societies—around common goals.

Case studies of PSP programs Croatia and Bulgaria serve as illustrations of the many creative ways donors, NGOs, and communities can work together to augment the social capital of minorities.

CROATIA
Domaci, a CRS Local Partner

The strategic objectives of Catholic Relief Services' overall programming in Croatia are the return of

traumatized, displaced, and unemployed citizens to Croatia to resume productive and peaceful lives; revitalization of multi-ethnic communities on a sustainable basis; and the alleviation of suffering among extremely vulnerable individuals in Croatia where social and ethnic intolerance continues to hold back the development of democracy and obstructs the process of social healing. To strengthen this initiative, CRS formed partnerships with local non-governmental organizations such as Domaci, an emerging NGO in Croatia.

An active member of EdNet, Domaci encourages other similar organizations to engage in joint action to support the education reform process, strengthen civil society, and champion the needs of minorities across Europe. Building on current relationships and partnerships, Domaci encourages community groups to mobilize existing resources, thus strengthening local capacity. Each of the communities—large villages, small towns—has its own community groups. Some have vibrant youth clubs; others have active Parent-Teacher Councils or other potential volunteer groups. Supporting and activating civic initiatives that benefit children and youth contributes to the development of the transitioning society in Croatia. Domaci, CRS' local partner in Croatia, will continue providing support in building a society where all children and youth can live free, productive, and dignified lives and achieve their full human potential.

Promoting Inter-community Cooperation—Parent-School Partnerships

Displaced and refugee families cite the need for good basic education and a safe environment for their children as a requirement of return to their homes of origin. Educational opportunities and the ability of their children to safely access schools are as important factors in the final return decision as shelter and security. Unfortunately, schools often perpetuate the separation of different ethnic groups by segregating children in separate classes and offer-

ing inadequate or biased curricula, including the manipulation of historical facts.

Through its Parent-School Partnership program, CRS/Croatia supports increased parental and community involvement in the decision-making process in schools. The PSP program, which has been implemented in 22 primary schools throughout Croatia, is a tool for the promotion of tolerant, inter-community cooperation and social healing by fostering equitable

> "Unfortunately, schools often perpetuate the separation of different ethnic groups by segregating children in separate classes and offering inadequate or biased curricula…"

relationships among students, teachers, and parents in multi-ethnic communities. In addition to mobilizing parents and teachers to work for the benefit of their children and schools, PSP programming aims to empower families to struggle against injustices in their communities. Parents and teachers of marginalized and deprived communities now have the opportunity for their voices to be heard and to feel empowered. PSP philosophy as promoted in Croatia invites parents to accept their neighbors, adopt positive attitudes, and through that create safe and healthy communities.

Local Participation: Developing Parent-Teacher Councils

The PSP program has established successful models of strong and coherent multi-ethnic Parent-Teacher Councils and has promoted friendly schools that are open to cooperation. Prospective returnees weighing a community's potential acceptance of returning refugees look at the local school's acceptance of minority students. The ability of parents to set aside their ethnic differences in a cooperative effort aimed at the best interests of their children is an excellent and compelling indicator for return. These successes within school environments

lay essential groundwork for others to address structural and curricular intolerance.

The PSP program begins by working with county-level education ministries to target schools that may be interested in establishing Parent-Teacher Councils. In order to promote trust and cooperation with the central education system, PSP staff solicits the ministry's priorities and criteria, and the ministry is kept informed of each council's progress. After agreements are made with the ministry, PSP staff contact local school principals and organize a town hall meeting to which all parents of the school are invited along with the teachers and other interested community members. PSP focuses on being highly transparent with the community at all times. During the first meeting it is extremely important to have the program and its intentions presented clearly. In spite of fear of being criticized for ethnic interaction, communities recognize the value of a civic initiative that aims at improving their school and community. Community interest in developing a strong and responsible Parent-Teacher Council is just a first step in building a sustainable group of citizens that can work together democratically and bring benefits to the whole community.

Achieving a multi-ethnic council requires that PSP fieldworkers liaise closely with teachers and community leaders to convince parents that a multi-ethnic

from wartime destruction and the overall postwar devastation of the Croatian economy. An important method for overcoming fears based on ethnic tensions is the ability of the PSP program to provide technical assistance, training, and financial assistance, as multi-ethnic communities are willing to overcome differences and work together to ensure extra support for their school.

A Safe Forum for Inter-ethnic Dialogue

With regard to facilitating improved ethnic integration and reconciliation, multi-ethnic Parent-Teacher Councils do not take an overt or leadership role in their communities. However, they do have an inherently positive effect on inter-ethnic relations in the school and within their own organization. Even though their effect on improving inter-ethnic relations in their community is subtle, the very existence of a multi-ethnic council in a community where inter-ethnic hostilities are real is more than noteworthy. Because the councils are not explicitly political, and therefore are not scrutinized by local leadership in the same way that other prominent multi-ethnic initiatives are, these school-based groups present an excellent forum where inter-ethnic dialogue can re-emerge on a community level in a purposeful and constructive way without fear of

"School-based groups present an excellent forum where inter-ethnic dialogue can re-emerge on a community level in a purposeful and constructive way without fear of reprisal."

working group can function in their community. While it often takes time, patience, and lots of legwork, PSP staff has found that once a core group of committed parents has been established, concerns over potential tensions among ethnic groups in the council dissipate. The communities in which CRS has promoted Parent-School Partnerships are suffering economically

reprisal. In many communities the Parent-Teacher Council may represent the only formal multi-ethnic forum. As councils continue to grow, develop, and eventually become institutionalized, the benevolent effect they have on their overall communities will grow accordingly.

Helping To Create a Civil Society

Twenty-two PSP communities, like many other communities in Croatia, are just at the beginning of the long road to reconciliation—addressing social, ethnic, and economic injustice and returning to normal life. Even though they are just at the start, this does not diminish the importance of the valuable achievements of existing Parent-Teacher Councils that work not only for the benefit of their children but also for the common good, that promote children's rights as well as human dignity, and that take responsibility for and participate in creating their own future. CRS and its partners in Croatia see their roles as facilitating this process and supporting initiatives that contribute to the creation of a civil society and communities that support their vulnerable members.

BULGARIA
Catholic Relief Services-Bulgaria

Implementing the Parent-School Partnership program in regions and communities with ethnically mixed populations (namely ethnic Bulgarians, Turks, Bulgarian Muslims, and Roma) has helped CRS staff develop in-depth field knowledge and considerable insight into the intricate interactions among people belonging to different ethnic and religious groups in Bulgaria. Their history is not one of close contact and intermingling of ethnic groups, but rather there is a sustained pattern of mutual exclusivity and separate development.

Unfortunately many Bulgarian schools appear to perpetuate intolerance and prejudice. A school situated in the Karlovo region segregated Roma children from Bulgarian children and put them in separate classes. Often intoler-

ance exists in less open, less obvious ways and is, of course, more difficult to detect. There are still some teachers who still promote prejudice and are intolerant, either deliberately or unconsciously. Too many schools use old materials and books that promote discriminatory or racist theories. Many teachers still explicitly or implicitly teach their students that the dominant culture is superior to others instead of promoting intercultural education and cultural diversity.

Local Participation: Establishing Boards of Trustees

CRS-Bulgaria has chosen to center its work around the schools because in a region where ethnic identity has become a political tool to divide and destabilize, the school environment emerges as an important intervention point where people can be brought together around a common goal: to improve future prospects for the community's children. The CRS' Parent-School Partnership program uses a grassroots approach. It assists local communities to improve their schools through the creation and development of Boards of Trustees[1] made up of parents, teachers, school directors, and other community members representing all backgrounds. PSP programs provide extensive training that brings together teachers, parents, and board members to find common ground between parents and teachers, to enhance communication skills, and to provide knowledge and techniques

ed by municipal authorities was able to renovate its school using parents' labor and is now running a program to help children who have dropped-out return to school in their community.

CRS-Bulgaria's Goals

Based on an assessment of community interests and for building effective parent-school partnerships. Thus far the PSP program has been implemented in 40 ethnically diverse communities throughout Bulgaria, including many that are economically deprived.

Involving the Community in Identifying Issues

Increasing the organizational capacity of the Boards of Trustees is not enough to overcome intolerance. This realization led to the development of a new component to the program aimed at optimizing the relationship among ethnic communities through shared values and traditions. In order to design a program that will really have an impact on communities and on Bulgaria as a whole, CRS-Bulgaria has actively involved the communities they work with in identifying issues they want and need to address; that is, they use participatory research methods done *with* the residents rather than *to* them. A direct benefit from such an approach is that members of minority groups feel empowered to take action and begin to overcome isolation and negative attitudes. For example:

- After a successful project at the school level, one Board of Trustees in a Bulgarian Muslim village ran a general public awareness campaign aimed at controlling the spread of tuberculosis.
- Another Board of Trustees from the village of Zhultusha collected potatoes to send to other vulnerable children in orphanages and invited children from one of those orphanages to come to their homes for a three-day visit.
- A small Roma community that had been neglect-

the increasingly agreed-upon need for developing cross-cultural/multi-ethnic cooperation, CRS-Bulgaria will address three major areas this coming year:

- Providing Boards of Trustees and members of the community with methodological and technical support so they can improve communication among the different cultures. In this way, instead of trying to equalize all cultures and differences in the school population, the richness of other cultures will be promoted in a positive way.
- Starting a process for teaching history and literature using child-centered methodology in three schools in ethnically mixed regions in Bulgaria. It is hoped that this process will bring about increased cooperation among different ethnic groups while at the same time contributing to children's self-confidence and sense of both national and cultural identity.
- Supporting and encouraging the establishment of linkages among Bulgarian and neighboring Balkan communities to foster the development of inter-ethnic tolerance and assist in the peace-building process in the Balkans. Projects that include a degree of transnational cooperation and visits between pupils will contribute to intercultural learning and understanding.

[1] According to the current regulations and the proposed amendment to the education law, Boards of Trustees can register as legal entities, and their existence at the school level is mandatory, regardless of the type of school.

Preschool Education in Albania: "What Do Parents Want?"

by Ilir Kanini

This article describes the evolution of early childhood educational services in Albania and the struggles families have faced—and are still facing—in getting those services for their children.

Background

A rural country, Albania was historically known for its high birth rate. It was known also as one of the European countries where pre-elementary education lagged behind that in other parts of Europe. For example, in 1938 there were only two kindergartens in all of Albania. By 1950 this number had barely reached 155—even though there were more than 2,770 cities and villages in the country.

Not only infrastructure challenges made accessing preschool services difficult; there were also barriers created by the values and beliefs parents had about how to raise their children. Traditionally, Albanian families—mothers, grandmothers, and even older brothers and sisters—were responsible for educating young children—one reason Albania lacked professional education for preschool youngsters for many years.

The Start of Preschools

As Albania became more industrialized, patterns of work for mothers and fathers brought many changes, including a growth in the number of kindergartens. By 1960 there were 436 kindergartens, and this number tripled during the 1970s to 2,836 in 1982. But the growth in the number of kindergartens also brought about new problems. In many cases the physical locations chosen for preschools were unsuitable for young children (e.g., in a nearby warehouse or a dark, musty office room). Their child's attendance in the "school" provided parents with the opportunity to have their children safely supervised nearby for some part of the day, while for the teachers it was a way of earning money. In most cases preschool *education* existed in name only.

Anyone who worked as an educator during the 1970s and 1980s knows very well how difficult it was for headmasters to find children to enroll in their kindergartens. Most kindergartens lacked toys and appropriate space. Upwards of 25 children were required to sit in chairs for three to four hours at a time. Often teachers were recruited from students who were attending agricultural high schools because there was a lack of qualified applicants trained in contemporary pedagogical methods.

Difficult Transition to Modernization

It was with this history in pre-elementary school education that Albania entered the period after the fall of communism and the establishment of a market economy. Albania's educational reform program, drafted by the newly elected democratic government, chose to start its modernization of the educational system with preschool education. But this was not an easy road to take. Despite being the focus of reform efforts, pre-elementary school education saw a decline in 1991 and 1992, years of turmoil as one system of government gave way to another. School reforms were accompanied by widespread thievery of school equipment and supplies. Half the schools were burnt and

ruined. And the end result was sad.

I saw with my own eyes how the kindergarten of Piraj in the district of Lezha was destroyed. It was one of the most beautiful buildings in the region of Zadrima—built in 1979 by volunteers to erase the consequences of that year's earthquake. It was strange to see that none of the parents tried to protect this innocent building. In fact

"With these new methods has come a shift in philosophy. Learning for preschool-aged children is achieved through play. Children are seen as individuals, and their differences are respected."

many of them scavenged bricks and tiles alike, once the building was destroyed. So many buildings had that same end. Homeless families occupied other buildings. In the end, once a degree of political stability had been re-established, some of these buildings were saved and others were reconstructed.

The Door Is Opening

With renewed attention from the Ministry of Education and the cooperation of organizations such as the Soros Foundation, UNICEF, and Nations University, new educational alternatives have now started to operate. A variety of child-centered preschool initiatives such as Step by Step, Reggio-Emilia, and Montessori are being incorporated into our kindergartens. With these new methods has come a shift in philosophy. Learning for preschool-aged children is achieved through play. Children are seen as individuals, and their differences are respected. And an especially important change has occurred in the role families play in their child's kindergarten.

I had the opportunity to see these changes with my own eyes in the kindergartens that have been set up by the Albania Education Development Project (AEDP)—with support from the Soros Foundation—in Tirana, Gjirokastra, Shkodra, Korca, and other towns and also in some programs supported by UNICEF (e.g., Kindergarten No. 26 in Tirana). In these kindergartens parents can take part in

classroom activities. There are bulletin boards at the entrances with notes that share information with the parents about what's going on during the school day. Parents also learn about future activities in which they can participate. Because these schools involve and inform families, parents are able to make comments and suggestions about many different aspects of the preschool program.

Parents are also able to take part in activities such as children's birthdays and openings of exhibitions. In Shkodra's kindergarten the parents help prepare different materials. In Vlora the parents helped in the construction of the playground. Some parents who are dentists conducted check-ups for the children. These changes have occurred over a two-year period, and the results have been impressive.

Unfortunately, only a few kindergartens are using these new methodologies. Most of the programs continue to use outdated methods and inappropriate toys and games, and most suffer from an absolute poverty of material resources. Unqualified and irresponsible staff has been employed in some cases. Families are finding these practices to be unsatisfactory. For example, one parent complained that his child's kindergarten had no provision for meals. Furthermore, every time he came to pick up his child, the child's clothes were wet. In his attempt to address these problems, this father learned that his child's teacher was always an hour late, and as a result the children were spending this time unsupervised, playing with water and who knows what else. The kindergarten administrators did nothing to respond to the father's complaints.

Preschool education in Albania faces continuing challenges. New political and social upheavals threaten the progress that has been made in establishing child-centered, developmentally appropriate classrooms for young children. Regardless, we need to ask, "What do Albanian parents want for their young children?" And we hope more and more parents will answer, "Appropriate environments, qualified teachers, bountiful resources, and abundant, nutritional food." We must not deprive the next generation of a strong start to their education. Our children are our greatest riches.

National Member Organization News

Bosnia and Herzegovina

More than 1,000 people from across Bosnia and Herzegovina participated in an educational fair held in the Art Gallery in Sarajevo at the end of September 2001. The event was organized by the Step by Step: Center for Educational Initiatives with support from the Open Society Institute, and nearly 30 international and local organization working within the education field participated. Entitled "Sve je stalo samo djeca rastu" (Everything may be at a standstill, but the children just keep on growing), the purpose of the fair was to raise the visibility of positive initiatives and results and promote best practices. In bringing together both international groups (such as Save the Children, UNICEF, and Catholic Relief Services) and local organizations involved in a wide range of educational activities throughout the country, organizers hoped to begin to craft a vision for the future of education in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Round tables discussions were held on issues related to preschool, primary, secondary, and higher education, and the results of these discussions were shared with all participants. Representatives of Step by Step programs from Slovenia, Yugoslavia, Montenegro, and Macedonia also participated in this event.

Bulgaria

The Step by Step Program Foundation/Bulgaria was recently awarded two grants to promote access to quality educational services for Roma students. A three-year Socrates grant, "Teachers for Multi-lingual/Multi-Ethnic Europe," focuses on teachers who are working in multi-ethnic classrooms. This project involves a partnership between the Step by Step Program and two other European organizations — the Wide Open School (an ISSA National Member) in Slovakia and the Teachers Training and Research Center in Spain. The three goals of this grant are to: promote the integration of children of migrant workers, Roma, and other minorities; facilitate learning of the host language (for pupils whose native tongue differs from the language of instruction) so as to minimize educational and social exclusion; and, increase cultural knowledge and awareness in educational practices and curricula. The project has an evaluation and dissemination component that will include the development of training materials, a website, convening an international conference, and the establishment of a network of organizations operating in the three

participating countries. A second grant, funded by PHARE, was awarded to the National Council on Ethnic and Demographic Issues at the Council of Ministries. The Step by Step Program in Bulgaria was selected to administer this project and play an important consultative role in government policies concerning minorities. This 16-month grant is also designed to promote better access to Roma students in primary and secondary schools, and universities through working with teachers to provide positive examples of integration throughout the country.

Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan

The Public Community Soros Educational Step by Step Center in Kazakhstan and the Center of Educational Initiatives "Step by Step" in Kyrgyzstan have received funding from the European Commission for a two-year initiative to increase the opportunities for children with disabilities to be educated in inclusive settings. Citing growing numbers of children who are being left out of the educational process in both countries, these non-governmental organizations have partnered with the International Step by Step Association to address this problem. This goals of the project are to: increase the number of children with special needs who are educated in regular classrooms; train teachers, administrators, and parents to work in inclusive settings; and, build collaborative partnerships with other organizations and agencies who are serving children with disabilities. Expert round table discussions with international experts will be convened in each country and regional workshops will be conducted. Pilot sites will be selected and in-depth training will follow to ensure teachers, parents, and administrators have the skills needed to make inclusive education successful. Ten pilot sites per year in Kazakhstan and five pilot sites per year in Kyrgyzstan will be established during the project period. These sites will then serve as model programs for other sites where inclusive education practices will be introduced.

Slovenia

The Republic of Slovenia and Ministry of School, Science and Sport has given their major award in the field of education for 2001 to Tatjana Vonta, Director of the Developmental Research Centre for Educational Initiatives–Step by Step. She is being recognized for her exemplary and innovative educational and organizational work in the field of early childhood education.

Tatjana Vonta is a researcher at Educational Research Institute in Ljubljana and a professor of Pedagogical Faculty at the University of Ljubljana. All of her professional energy has been focused on early childhood education and improving quality services for children as they transition to primary school. In partnership with teachers from across Slovenia, she ensured that good theoretical and rational ideas about child-centered approaches have been infused into existing public educational institutions over the last 15 years. Through her leadership of the Step by Step program, she has consistently demonstrated vision, personal commitment, and enthusiasm. In the words of one of her colleagues, "we gained a lot over the years working with Tatjana. She stood beside us professionally and personally; she trusted and believed in us. And, we became rich."

Guidelines for Authors

Educating Children for Democracy

The International Step by Step Association publishes the journal, *Educating Children for Democracy*, on a semi-annual basis, in English and Russian, and both in print and online. *Educating Children for Democracy* seeks:

1. Practical articles with ideas for teaching children and administering education programs that are child-centered in philosophy and implementation.

2. Scholarly articles that link current research and theory to practice, where at least 1/3 of the article describes practical applications of the research. (Note: research studies should be written as articles rather than research reports.)

3. Articles about how an individual or group of people changed a program or a policy to become more child-centered.

4. Essays related to the experience of educational transformation, including such topics as cultural diversity, inclusion of minority children and children with disabilities, family involvement in schools, etc.

5. Reprinted articles from national journals with limited circulation with proper attribution and permission.

Article Format and Style

Interested authors are invited to submit articles of 3 to 6 pages (1,200 to 3,000 words) that meet the following criteria:

1. Ideas must be consistent with child-centered theory and research.

2. Articles should be written in a readable style that generates interest and enthusiasm. (Articles in languages other than English should be professionally translated to ensure accuracy of interpretation.)

3. Complete references must be provided for all citations in the text. [The concept of "fair use" of copyrighted material includes the right to quote briefly for scholarly purposes (up to 100 words) from most published materials, if the source of the quote is cited. More extensive quotations require written permission from the original source. This permission must be included with the article submission.]

4. Authors are responsible for ensuring that all persons photographed have given their permission for the photograph to be published.

Preparing the Manuscript

Articles should be typed, double-spaced, with at least 1.25 inch margins on all sides. All pages should be numbered. Include author(s) name and contact information (name, address, telephone, and fax and e-mail, if available) on the cover page. Submissions on computer disk (format Microsoft Word) or by email are preferred. Please indicate the kind of computer and the name of the word processing program used. Photographs or drawings related to the article are encouraged and should be included with the submission, along with descriptive information about the item sent for use in a caption.

Review Procedure

During the transition to our new editorial infrastructure, the Editor will review all articles and determine if the article merits publication in *Educating Children for Democracy*. Authors will be notified when their article is accepted and will be sent a brief agreement outlining terms of publication. All accepted articles are edited for style and content. Authors may be asked for assistance in the editing process. *Educating Children for Democracy* offers no payment for articles submitted. Articles and illustrations are considered a contribution to the early childhood profession.

We are currently establishing an editorial infrastructure that will cultivate original articles from teachers, parents, administrators, and faculty involved in early childhood programs and reforms in Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Baltics, Mongolia, and Haiti. During 2002, we will be identifying editorial associates in each of the 27 countries where active Step by Step programs are operating. These editorial associates will receive specialized training and ultimately will be responsible for soliciting and reviewing articles within each country; appropriate articles will then be forwarded to the Editor for blind, peer-review. If you are interested in becoming an editorial associate, please send an email to the Editor. We are also seeking qualified individuals to serve as regional Co-Editors and members of our Advisory Board. Please email your CV to the Editor with a letter of interest stating your qualifications for these positions.

Where to Send Prepared Manuscripts

During the transition to the new editorial infrastructure, authors located in countries with active Step by Step Programs should submit articles to the National Step by Step organization in their country in English or the national language. A list of National Step by Step organizations along with contact information is provided on the back inside cover of this publication, and is available online at the ISSA web site **http://www.issa.nl**. Authors from all other countries may submit articles for consideration to: *Deborah F. Perry, Ph.D., ECD Editor, Georgetown University Child Development Center, 3307 M Street, N.W., Suite 401, Washington DC 20007, Email: dfp2@georgetown.edu.*

ISSA National Members

ALBANIA
Albania Education Development
 Project
"Step by Step" Program
Contact: Gerda Tefiku
E-mail: gtefiku@aedp.soros.al

ARMENIA
Step by Step Benevolent
 Foundation
Contact: Ruzanna Tsarukyan
E-mail: ruzanna@sbs.osi.am

AZERBAIJAN
Open Society Institute-Assistance
 Foundation Azerbaijan
Step by Step Program
Contact: Ulviya Mikailova
E-mail: umikailova@osi-az.org

BELARUS
Belorussian Parents' and Teachers'
 League "Step by Step"
Contact: Irina Lapitskaya
E-mail: stbyst@open.by

**BOSNIA AND
HERZEGOVINA**
Center for Educational Initiatives
 Step by Step
Contact: Radmila Rangelov-Jusovic
E-mail: step@soros.org.ba

BULGARIA
Step by Step Program
Foundation/Bulgaria
Contact: Emil Buzov
E-mail: emil.step@bitex.com

CROATIA
Parent Association-Step by Step
Contact: Mira Kunstek
E-mail: kunstek@attglobal.net

CZECH REPUBLIC
Step by Step Czech Republic
Contact: Vaclav Sneberger
E-mail: vaclav.sneberger@sbscr.cz

ESTONIA
Hea Algus
Contact: Ivar Männamaa
E-mail: step@kodu.ee

GEORGIA
Open Society Georgia Foundation
Step by Step Program
Contact: Eteri Gvineria
E-mail: eteri@mega.osgf.ge

HAITI
FOKAL
Step by Step Program
Contact: Evelyn Margron
E-mail: emfokal@hainet.net

HUNGARY
Ec-Pec Foundation
Contact: Judit Lafferthon/
 Eva Deak
E-mail: lafi@c3.hu/
deakeva@axelero.hu

KAZAKHSTAN
Public Community Soros
Educational Step by Step Center
Contact: Dina Aidzhanova
E-mail: daidzhan@sbs.soros.kz

KOSOVO
Kosovo Foundation for Open
 Society
Contact: Jehona Xhaferi
E-mail: jehona@kfos.org

KYRGYZSTAN
Center of Educational Initiatives
 "Step by Step"
Contact: Gulnur Sultanalieva
E-mail: step@kyrnet.kg

LATVIA
Center for Education Initiatives
Contact: Zenija Berzina
E-mail: info@iic.lv

LITHUANIA
Center for Innovative Education
Contact: Regina Sabaliauskiene
E-mail: regina@uic.lt

MACEDONIA
Association of Citizens "Step by
 Step"
Contact: Suzana Kirandziska
E-mail: skiran@soros.org.mk

MOLDOVA
Programul Educational Pas cu Pas
Contact: Cornelia Cincilei
E-mail: hs@moldnet.md

MONGOLIA
Open Society Institute – Mongolia
Step by Step Program
Contact: Enkhbaatar Demchig
E-mail: ebaatar@soros.org.mn

MONTENEGRO
Open Society Institute
 Montenegro
Step by Step Program
Contact: Saša Milič
E-mail: smilic@osim.cg.yu

ROMANIA
"Step by Step" Center for
 Education and Professional
 Development
Contact: Carmen Lica
E-mail: carmenlia@dnt.ro

RUSSIA
Russian Foundation for Education
 "Soobschestvo"
Contact: Galina Kozlova
E-mail: gkozlova@osi.ru

SLOVAKIA
Nadacia Skola dokoran (Wide
 Open School Foundation)
Contact: Eva Koncokova
E-mail: nsd@nsd.sk

SLOVENIA
Developmental Research Centre
 for Educational Initiatives
Step by Step
Contact: Tatjana Vonta
E-mail: step.si@siol.net

UKRAINE
Ukrainian Step by Step
 Foundation
Contact: Natalia Sofiy
E-mail: sofiy@irf.kiev.ua

YUGOSLAVIA
Centre for Interactive Pedagogy
Contact: Tatiana Pavlovski
E-mail: ciip@sezampro.yu

UNITED STATES
Open Society Institute
Contact: Sarah Klaus
E-mail: sklaus@sorosny.org

ISSA Membership Information

ISSA offers several levels of membership and welcomes applications for membership from individuals and organizations that promote child-centered community-based approaches to early childhood care and education.

Membership for Organizations
Benefits:
- Invitation to the Annual Conference and General Assembly
- 1-year subscription to *Educating Children for Democracy* (3 copies)
- Subscription to ISSA Member Newsletter (by email)
- Discounts on ISSA books, events, and trainings

Fee: $100 for one year ($50 for organizations from developing countries)

Membership for Individuals
Benefits:
- Invitation to the Annual Conference and General Assembly
- 1-year subscription to *Educating Children for Democracy* (1 copy)
- Subscription to ISSA Member Newsletter (by email)
- Discounts on ISSA books, events, and trainings

Fee: $50 for one year ($25 for individuals from developing countries)

For more information please contact us by e-mail at info@issa.nl or visit our website at www.issa.nl.

An invaluable resource for teachers, school administrators, professors, and families…

The Step by Step Program and Teacher Standards are a resource created to support the efforts of individuals, schools, and communities to establish quality educational settings for all children. Reflecting the inclusive philosophy of the Step by Step Program, the standards help ensure that programs include all children and their families and make the necessary accommodations for those with disabilities or other special needs.

Based on a commitment to develop "life-long learners," the Step by Step Program values ongoing professional growth. These standards are intended to be used by teachers, school administrators, program directors, ministry representatives, university professors, families, and community members to improve the quality of programs and teaching for pre-school and primary age children.

Program standards address these domains:
    Teacher-Child Interactions
    Family Participation
    Planning a Child-Centered Program
    Strategies for Meaningful Learning,
    Learning Environment
    Health and Safety

Teacher standards address these domains:
    Individualization
    Learning Environment
    Family Participation
    Teaching Strategies for Meaningful Learning
    Planning and Assessment
    Professional Development

Standards-based observation forms are provided and designed as working checklists to assess the current condition of both programs and teaching practices.

Step by Step Program and Teacher Standards
for Preschool and Primary Grades

ISSA

International Step by Step Association
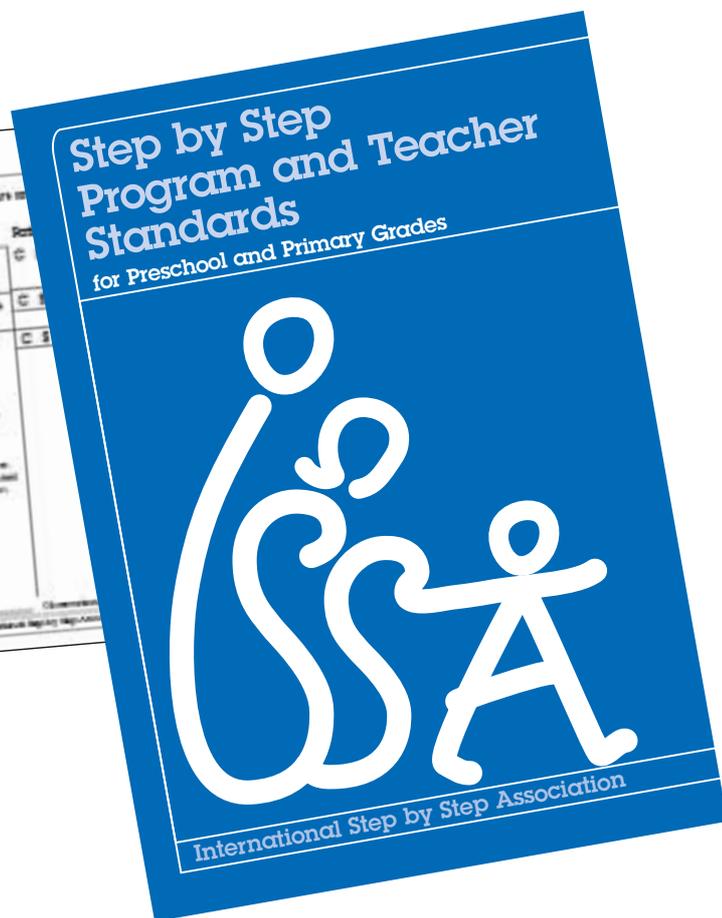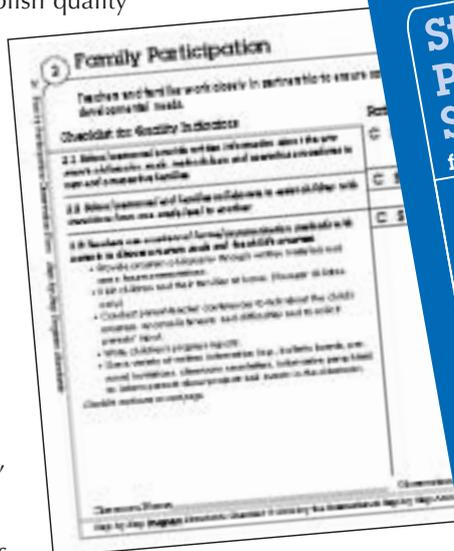
For more in-depth information about the Step by Step Program please visit our website at: http://www.issa.nl.

The Step by Step Program and Teacher Standards may be ordered from:

International Step by Step Association
400 West 59th Street
New York, NY 10019
Telephone: 1 (212) 547–6918
Fax: 1 (212) 548–4610
E-mail: info@issa.nl
http://www.issa.nl

International Step by Step Association
Rakoczi ut 22. IV./24.
H-1072 Budapest, Hungary
Telephone: (361) 266–3463
Fax: (361) 344–5947
E-mail: coordinator@issa.nl

INTERNATIONAL
STEP by STEP
ASSOCIATION