

# Educating Children for Democracy

The Journal of the International Step by Step Association



**Learning Through Play**

Number 4, Winter/Spring 2003

The International Step by Step Association 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 grade 8.



**E**ducating 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.



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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>.

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Number 4,  
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# Table of Contents

Letter from the Editor . . . . .	2
<b>Children and Families</b>	
Interest-Based Natural Learning Opportunities. . . . .	3
by Carl J. Dunst, Ph.D., Orelena Hawks Puckett Institute, and Family, Infant and Preschool Program, Western Carolina Center, Serena Herter, B.S., Orelena Hawks Puckett Institute and Holly Shields, M.S., Allegheny Singer Research Institute	
<b>Classroom Practices</b>	
Using materials from the environment to create teaching tools to enrich classroom practices . . . . .	13
by Rebeka Pali and Gerda Tefiku, Albania Education Development Project, Step by Step Program	
Creating Educational Toys from Local Resources: Toy Production Workshop “Little Rabbit” Kindergarten # 103 . . . . .	19
by Lkhagva Nergui, Director, Kindergarten # 103, Chengeltei district Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia	
Encouraging Early Literacy in Every Child. . . . .	20
by Larissa S. Vinogradova, Director of the Moskovsky Affiliate Russian Foundation for Education Development Soobchestvo	
<b>School and Community Partnerships</b>	
Children’s Creative Center . . . . .	24
by Suzana Kirandziska, Executive Director, Foundation for Educational and Cultural Initiatives Step by Step, Macedonia	
Effectiveness of Child-Centered Approaches to Primary Education in Montenegro. . . . .	29
by Saša Milić, Director of Pedagogical Centre of Montenegro, Podgorica, Montenegro	
New Partnerships and Approaches for Serving Children in Ukraine’s Internats . . . . .	35
by Natalia Sofiy, Executive Director, Ukrainian Step by Step Foundation	
ISSA Network News . . . . .	40
Guidelines for Authors . . . . .	42
Jounal Subscription Form . . . . .	43

ISSN 1531-2011

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*Educating Children for Democracy* is distributed free to ISSA members. Annual subscriptions are \$30; single copies are \$15 each, prepaid. Reduced prices are available for developing countries upon request. Additional information about membership is located on the inside back cover of this issue.

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Author guidelines for article submissions can be found on the last pages of this issue.

Published by the International Step by Step Association  
Coordinating Office: 400 West 59<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, NY 10019

Printed in Hungary by Akadémiai Nyomda. Cover illustrations by Popova Nastya (front), Lukas Radzvilavicus (back).

# Welcome

**W**elcome to the fourth issue of *Educating Children for Democracy*—the journal of the International Step by Step Association! 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 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 grade 8.

The focus of the current issue is Learning Through Play. In the first section—Children and Families—we have reprinted an article that was originally published by the Division of Early Childhood, Council for Exceptional Children. This paper **Interest-Based Natural Learning Opportunities** (page 3) explores the range of environments in a young child's world that can provide stimulating play experiences. The authors describe the theory and practice of identifying children's interests and matching these interests with opportunities to learn through play. Original articles from Albania, Mongolia, and Macedonia provide examples of how children are learning through play in a variety of settings. **The Children's Creative Center** (page 24), the first of its kind children's museum in Macedonia, provides a community-based setting for children to learn through play with their parents, teachers or peers. In **Producing Toys from Natural Materials in Mongolia** (page 19), a local kindergarten program describes their manufacturing of blocks from locally grown wood; authors from Albania describe their ideas about making teaching materials from recycled materials. Other original articles describe the results of a partnership between the

Ukrainian Step by Step Foundation and EveryChild organization, where changes are being implemented in orphanages serving children with special needs; changes in student achievement as a result of implementing child-centered practices in Montenegro; and strategies for promoting reading and literacy in young children.

In the coming months, *Educating Children for Democracy* will be developing a cadre of well-trained editorial associates to cultivate articles from teachers, parents, faculty, and other educational professionals in Central and Eastern Europe, the Baltics, the Caucuses, and Central Asia. We are completing the recruitment of people to serve on our Advisory Board that can guide the future development of this journal. And we are continuing to cultivate partnerships with other organizations world-wide that seek to promote child-centered educational approaches.

Become an active member of the International Step by Step Association at this exciting time in our growth and development by filling out a subscription form or going on-line [www.issa.nl](http://www.issa.nl)

Deborah F. Perry, Ph.D  
Editor

# Children and Families



Illustration by Tsibadze Nanuka

## *Interest-Based Natural Learning Opportunities*

by Carl J. Dunst, Ph.D., Orelena Hawks Puckett Institute, and Family, Infant and Preschool Program, Western Carolina Center, Serena Herter, B.S., Orelena Hawks Puckett Institute and Holly Shields, M.S., Allegheny Singer Research Institute

**M**any things influence the kinds of learning opportunities children experience. Where a child and family live often determines learning opportunities (Dunst, Bruder, Trivette, Raab, & McLean, 1998). Children living near the ocean may spend lots of time at the beach – playing in the sand, swimming in the ocean, and filling a bucket with water

Many things influence the kinds of learning opportunities children experience.

and dumping it into a hole the child has dug in the sand. Children living in cities often get the chance to visit the city zoo, go to children's concerts, and have hands-on science center. Living near a forest or woods provides children opportunities to take nature walks, collect stones and leaves, chase butterflies, and climb on rocks.

Parenting beliefs about desired behavior also influence children's learning opportunities (Gauvain, 1999). Parents with strong religious beliefs are likely to involve their children in different kinds of faith-based activities such as attending religious services, saying grace at family meals, and going to Sunday school. Sports-minded

## Some of the most important determinants of learning opportunities are children's interests and preferences, and strengths and capabilities.

ed parents are likely to introduce their children to activities such as T-ball, soccer, swimming, or karate classes. Parents who are achievement-oriented are likely to encourage their children's participation in activities emphasizing lessons and skill development such as dance or movement classes, music lessons, and art classes.

Some of the most important determinants of learning

opportunities are children's interests and preferences, and strengths and capabilities (Chen, Krechevsky, Viens, & Isberg, 1998; Guberman, 1999). Children who enjoy water often are provided opportunities to express their interests by engaging in backyard water activities, watering plants and flowers, going to the community swimming pool, and splashing in puddles of water after a rain shower. Interests in music and dance often are translated into learning opportunities such as going to children's concerts, taking dancing lessons, playing songs on a jukebox, playing ring-around-the-rosy at a play group, and playing musical instruments at a chil-

children's festival. Children who enjoy being around other children often are involved in activities like gym classes, baby swimming classes, neighborhood play groups, little league sports, and going to parties and other social gatherings.

Research and practice show that children's learning and development occurs rapidly when their interests engage them in social and nonsocial activities providing them opportunities to practice existing skills, explore their environments, and learn new abilities (Chen et al., 1998; Dunst, 2000; Gelman, Massey, & McManus, 1991; LeeKeenan, & Nimmo, 1993; Mandler, 2000; Nelson, 1999). Nelson (1999), for example, found that variations in child competence were "related easily

to the child's life activities and interests" (p. 2). According to Guberman (1999), "children's own interest and sense-making processes [are] a central formulation of supportive environments" (p. 207).

### Background

Procedures for identifying children's interests and using them to engage children in community-based learning opportunities are



described in this paper. They were developed as part of a model-demonstration project for children with disabilities or delays from birth to eight years of age and their parents. The purpose of the project was to promote participation in community-based activities and settings as sources of natural learning opportunities (Umstead, Boyd, & Dunst, 1995).

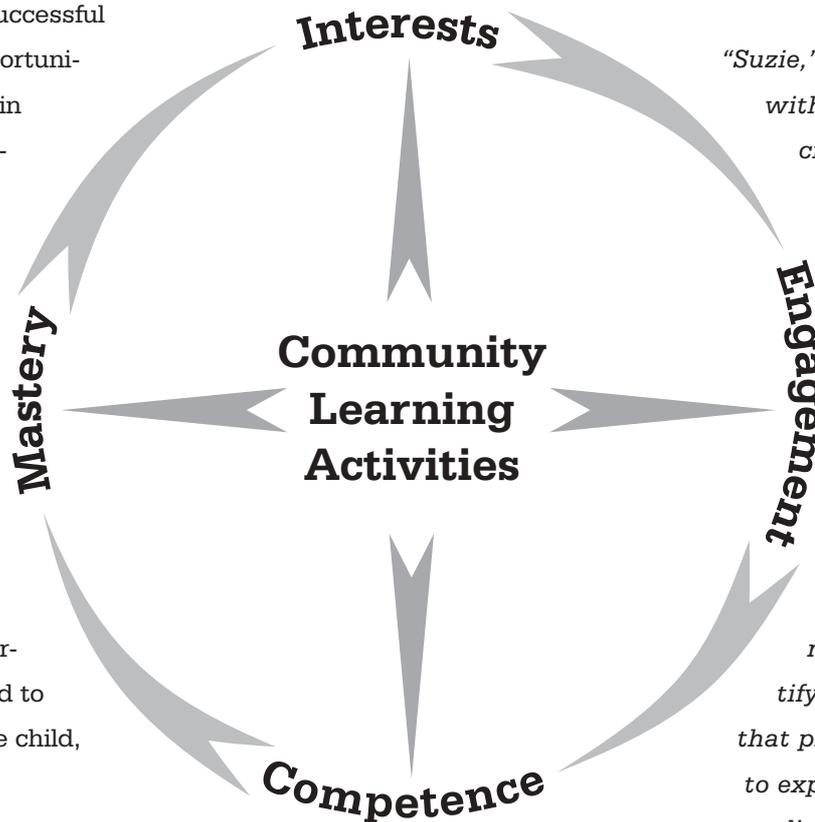
## Participation in activities that matched and built on children’s interests was consistently found to be associated with positive child, parent, and family benefits.

Children’s involvement in community-based, natural learning opportunities was evaluated in terms of the characteristics of activities that encouraged participation and the benefits that were gained from the learning opportunities (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). Observations of children participating in community activities, case studies, and surveys of parents and community members were used to identify the person and environmental characteristics of successful learning activities and opportunities (see especially Dunst, in press). Learning opportunities were considered successful if they were fun and enjoyable and provided a context for expression of both existing and emerging competence as opposed to just compliance. Participation in activities that matched and built on children’s interests was consistently found to be associated with positive child, parent, and family benefits (Dunst, 2000, in press).

Findings from our analyses of competency producing community learning activities were

used to develop the model shown in **Figure 1** (Dunst, 2000). People, objects, and events that interest children are the things that “get their attention” (Fogel, 1997) and encourage them to play, explore, and participate in interactions with people and objects (Göncü, Tuermer, Jain, & Johnson, 1999). Interest-based playing, exploring, and participation is called engagement

(McWilliam, & Ware, 1994). When children are engaged in everyday activities, they are able to practice existing capabilities and learn new skills (Farver, 1999). Expression of existing and emerging competence is influenced, in part, by how parents and practitioners respond to children’s display of competence (e.g., Field, 1978; Rogoff, Mistry, Göncü, & Mosier, 1993; Wolery, & Sainato, 1996). As children come to understand the relationship between their behavior and its consequences, their sense of mastery is strengthened (MacTurk, & Morgan, 1995). This in turn is likely to reinforce existing interests as well as promote new interests, setting the cycle of influence shown in **Figure 1** in motion once again.



**Figure 1**  
Community Learning Opportunities as a context for expressing child interest and competence.

*“Suzie,” a 2-1/2-year old child with cerebral palsy, especially liked music. Whether standing or sitting, she “bounced” up and down whenever music was played at home, in the car, or at the mall. Her mother called this “dancing.” Suzie’s interest in music was used to identify community activities that provided opportunities to express her interest and to display competence (standing without support, singing, “dancing,” walking, etc.). One activity was intent*



*on doing whatever the other children were doing. Walking on a balance beam while making arm movements in concert with music was one of these activities. At first, Suzie held onto two instructors' hands (one on either side of the balance beam) in order to make her way down the balance beam. As she became more competent and "sure of herself" (confident), she began to let go of the instructors' hands and started to make arm movements to the music like the other children. The very first time she traversed the balance beam on her own, Suzie radiated a sense of enjoyment, success, and mastery (she smiled, got excited, and communicated non-verbally "I did it").*

## Interest-Based Learning Opportunities

Involving children in community learning opportunities that are interest-based involves three steps: (1) identifying children's interests; (2) identifying community activities that provide opportunities for expressing those interests; and (3) involving children in learning opportunities that promote the flow of influence shown in **Figure 1**. Dunst, Herter, Shields, and Bennis (in press) describe methods and procedures for compiling information about sources of community-based learning activities that can be matched to children's interests.

## Identifying Children's Interests

Several different kinds of procedures are available for identifying young children's interests (Chen et al., 1998; Krechevsky, 1998; Moss, 1997). LeeKeenan and Nimmo

**Table 1** Questions for identifying children's favorite places, objects, and events.

Preference Indicators: FAVORITES			
<b>What are your child's favorites? How can you tell? Do you know why?</b>			
Outside	Foods	Games	Toys
Inside	Music	Smells	Touch, smooth, rough, etc.
Friend	Words	Sounds	Clothes
Structure	Being alone	Crowds	Being read to
Nonstructure	Being sung to	Activities	Place to go
Daytime	Movement	TV show	Animals
Nighttime	Color	Time of day	
Other favorites _____			

From J. Moss (1997). *The child preference indicators*. Oklahoma City, OK: University Affiliated Program of Oklahoma. Reproduced with permission.

(1993) noted that child-initiated and child-directed learning “begins with careful observation of children’s interests, questions, and ideas and then develops those ideas into concrete learning experiences... rich in possibilities for varied activity” (p. 254–255). Observation of children’s interests, abilities, and assets — individually and collectively — is a simple but powerful tool for identifying likes and preferences and the kinds of activities that provoke expression of interests. According to Chen et al. (1998), “when a child discovers an area of strength, enjoys exploring it, and feels good about him– or herself, the experience of being successful gives the child the confidence” (p. 63) to express strengths and abilities.

Moss (1997) describes a useful interest-based assessment process for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and older children. *The Child Preference Indicators* scale includes sets of questions for identifying:

- Preference indicators that identify a child’s favorites;
- Emotion indicators that focus on a child’s feelings;
- Socialization indicators that identify a child’s social world and relationships;
- Self-determination indicators that focus on child choices; and
- Physical indicators that identify body rhythms.

**Table 1** shows the portion of the *Child Preference Indicators* scale used to identify a child’s favorite activities, places, and times of the day. An assess-

ment of favorites provides a basis for identifying interests, determining what is engaging to a child, and involving the child in interactions that provide contexts for expressing interests.

We used a simple but effective procedure for identifying children’s interests in the model-demonstration project described earlier. The

questions listed in **Table 2**

were used to assess child affect, engagement, persistence, and competence in different places, routines, and activities and with different toys, materials, and people. The answers to the questions proved especially enlightening in terms of capturing a child’s interests, strengths, and assets.

The *outcome* of an interest assessment is a *profile* of a child’s abilities, strengths, assets, and preferences that collectively characterize his or her *interests*. The assessment itself can be very informal. Noticing that an infant prefers to be in an upright position and bounced up-and-down is an interest-based observation. Taking note that a toddler likes climbing into cabinets and onto a couch or chair is also an interest-based assessment.

**Table 2** Questions for identifying children's sand strength.

Preference Indicators: FAVORITES
• What makes the child smile and laugh?
• What makes the child happy and feel good?
• What kinds of things get the child excited?
• What are the child’s favorite things to do?
• What things are particularly enjoyable and interesting to the child?
• What does the child especially work hard at doing?
• What gets and keeps the child’s attention?
• What is the child especially good at doing?
• What behaviors does the child particularly like to do?
• What “brings out the best” in the child?
• What gets the child to try new things?

Experience from our model-demonstration project (Umstead et al., 1995) showed that parents were especially good at recognizing, noticing, and knowing their

## Involving children in community learning opportunities that are interest-based is accomplished by choosing those activities that best match child preferences and strengths.

children's interests. Parents were also good at involving their children in activities that provided opportunities for expressing interests.

### Community Learning Opportunities

Armed with information about a child's interests, the next step is to explore options that provide opportunities for expressing those interests. Community-based learning opportunities that offer inclusion experiences (Beckman et al., 1998) and everyday natural learning environments (Dunst & Bruder, 1999) are major sources of these kinds of experiences.

These procedures are equally applicable to everyday family life (Dunst & Hamby, 1999) and early childhood programs (Chen et al., 1998; LeeKeenan & Nimmo, 1993).

The procedure for identifying potential sources of community-based learning opportunities as contexts for expressing interests, displaying competence, and learning new abilities is as straightforward as that used for assessing child interests. Taking interests one at a time, a list of possible learning opportunities is generated for the child's immediate and extended community. We accomplish this in collaboration with parents by querying the informational database compiled using the mapping procedures described in Dunst et al. (in press).

Why this approach? Because experience tells us that communities are exceedingly rich in potential learning opportunities (Dunst, in press), and that parents and practitioners cannot possibly remember or invoke all potential learning activities from memory alone.

For example, a child's interests may include playing with, throwing, and kicking balls. Querying an informational database (as well as "thinking about" places and activities that provide opportunities to express this interest) might produce activities such as playgrounds, T-ball, soccer, ball pits, bowling, "playing catch," and kickball. Likewise, assume a child's interests included listening to stories and having books read aloud. Activities and places that might be potential sources of learning opportunities are libraries, library story times, bookstores, bookstore story times, children's plays, storytellers, and drama classes. Idea generation is the goal of this step. The outcome is a potential list of community activities that can provide opportunities for expressing interests.



Illustration by Christopher Herrmann

## Participation in Community Activities

Involving children in community learning opportunities that are interest-based is accomplished by choosing those activities that best match child preferences and strengths. This is a little more involved than might at first seem to be the case. Several lessons

The value and importance of serendipitous learning opportunities needs to be not only recognized but also highlighted.

learned help guide the process of choosing activities for an individual child to increase the likelihood that participation will be successful.

Evidence from our research indicates that birth to six-year-old children's type of participation in community activities varies according to age (Dunst, Hamby, Trivette, Raab, & Bruder, 2000). Simply stated, infant and toddler participation in community activities is often, but not always, more informal and nonstructured. In such instances the characteristics of settings, and people within settings, provide a basis for expressing interests (e.g., visiting a bookstore where a storyteller engages a child through hand and body movements and voice

inflection that the child finds interesting). In contrast, older children's participation tends to be more formal and goal-directed (e.g., attending twice-a-week karate lessons). Experience tells us that chronologically and developmentally younger children's participation in community learning activities is more likely to be successful

when opportunities are initially more informal and nonstructured. Learning opportunities often become more structured as children become more capable and competent.

Whether or not a child has previously participated in community activities matters in terms of the choice of learning opportunities. When a child has had few or no community-based learning opportunities, the likelihood of success is increased if you involve the child in low demand activities. For example, if a child likes kicking balls, but has little or no experience with any type of group learning opportunity, taking the child to a ball field and just kicking a ball around will probably work better than starting out with soccer lessons. Similarly, if a child likes playing in water, going to a community pool just to play in the water might be more successful than enrolling the child in swimming classes.

The *degree of freedom* of activities also matters a great deal if participation is likely to be fun, enjoyable,





Illustration by Blaž Oblonšek

and successful. Activities having a low degree of freedom require children to produce specific behavior; whereas, activities with a high degree of freedom provide lots of opportunities for expressing interests.

*A 3-1/2-year-old girl we worked with loved art activities and was enrolled in a summer art camp. During the first week of camp, an art instructor encouraged the child to express her interest by mixing colors, painting bold strokes, and expressing herself through painting. The little girl had a wonderful time. The second week, another art instructor insisted that the child “paint in the lines.” The girl was miserable and dejected.*

The value and importance of serendipitous learning opportunities needs to be not only recognized but also highlighted. Locations, places, events, and activities that make expression of multiple interests possible by happenstance rather than by planning have proven especially important sources of learning opportunities. Children's festivals, neighborhood and nature trail walks, playgrounds, animal farms and petting zoos, fish ponds and hatcheries, and aviaries, to mention just a few, provide all kinds of opportunities to explore and learn.

*A parent of two preschoolers, one with a disability, recently shared with us all the things that happened on a nature trail walk that became the foundation for learning. Picking flowers, collecting leaves, dropping*

*stones in a creek, feeding birds bread crumbs, rolling around in the grass, chasing butterflies, and talking about a rabbit that happened by were just some of the things the children got to do while on their walk.*

New experiences, even when they match children's interests, sometimes evoke unexpected responses (e.g., a child who likes being around other children becoming shy when taken to some type of group activity). A lesson learned from these experiences is not to give up too quickly. Persistence often pays off.

*A two-year-old child with autism who liked playing soccer “froze” when he first attended a toddler soccer camp. The mother noticed that although her son wouldn't join the other children, he intently watched the other boys and girls kicking the soccer balls. The mother took her son back three more times before he felt comfortable getting on the field with the other children. Soccer became one of the boy's favorite things to do, and he became a star player as he grew older. As he approached his sixth birthday, the coaches were choosing players for different teams. Every coach wanted this boy on the team. The mother commented that this made her feel especially good about her decision (several years back) to pursue this activity for her son. She also said that this was the first time anyone had paid so much attention to her son because of what he could do rather than what he could not do.*

## Summary

Strategies have been provided for identifying children's interests and using them as a basis for promoting participation in community-based learning activities. Together with the methods described in Dunst et al. (in press), these strategies provide parents and practitioners several different ways of supporting and strengthening existing and emerging child abilities.

## Children's full participation in community life should occur in ways that communicate ability rather than disability, commonalities rather than differences.

These methods and procedures address Urschel's (1998) challenge that children's full participation in community life should occur in ways that communicate ability rather than disability, commonalities rather than differences. Effective strategies are needed for children with disabilities and delays to realize their capabilities, and for community members to fully include these children and their families in all aspects of society. Interest-based participation in community activities is one such strategy.

## Note

The methods and strategies described in this paper were supported, in part, by grants from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (HO24B60119, HO24B40020). Correspondence should be sent to Carl J. Dunst, Orelena Hawks Puckett Institute, 18A Regent Park Blvd., Asheville, NC 28806, or [dunst@puckett.org](mailto:dunst@puckett.org).

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# Classroom Practices



Illustration by Ula Vehovec

## *Using materials from the environment to create teaching tools to enrich classroom practices*

by Rebeka Pali and Gerda Tefiku, Albania Education Development Project, Step by Step Program

**A**ll teachers, regardless of the subject they teach or the school that they teach in, seek to have as many teaching tools as possible available in their classroom. The quality of teaching and learning is closely linked to the use of these teaching tools. Contemporary teaching methods that view students as the creators of their own knowledge through their own experiences require the teacher to arrange their classroom spaces to encourage themselves

The quality of teaching and learning is closely linked to the use of teaching tools.

and their students to think and explore their environment.

These practices become even more imperative in pre-school since the learning processes for students at this age are predominantly dependent on their interactions with concrete objects. These concrete objects constitute the raw material for such processes, helping students to build perceptions of their own. For example, if a first grade student is asked to give the solution to a problem that requires a single arithmetical operation, first he prefers to

## The learning process using these steps cultivates in the students the abilities of critical thinking, judgement, and problem solving.

count the objects. Next he moves to counting using fingers, and later he is able to use more abstract representations like “tens” or “ones” to complete the adding operation.

While interacting with concrete tools and materials, students execute a number of very important processes such as: observe, classify, compare, experiment, draw hypotheses, discuss ideas with each other, and reach conclusions. The learning process using these steps cultivates in the students the abilities of critical thinking, judgement, and problem solving. It encourages them to develop a creative and inquisitive mind, helps them to find out in practice the meaning of the knowledge

they assimilate, and teaches them to cooperate with each other.

The enrichment of the classroom with the teaching tools that we describe in this article should not be viewed as intensive work designed to prepare a set of didactic tools related exclusively to one particular subject or topic. Many times our teachers discover that a tool designed to address a particular curricular goal has other uses. For example, a teacher in Tirana prepared a magnetic board to use during a language class. The idea was to help the students practice splitting a sentence in different groups of words. But at the same time, it can serve as a practical tool to help students understand and read different data tables or graphics.

Rather, preparing simple and original teaching tools should be seen as an ongoing process without a beginning or ending that occurs throughout the academic year. It is closely linked with the teachers' everyday teaching work and efforts to continually improve teaching methods.

The Step by Step Primary school project which has been implemented for six years in eleven schools located throughout Albania (in Tirana, Durresi, Vlora, Elbasani, Korca and Gjirokastra), has accumulated a lot of original and positive experiences in this area. Last year marked the beginning of a massive movement to encourage teachers to prepare their own teaching tools that have since become a part of their everyday work. This move-

ment was characterized by a high level of commitment and participation of the teachers involved. The models and tools they have prepared are numerous, of large variety, and amazing. Some of these tools have been documented in a recent publication of the Step by Step project “Teaching tools prepared by teachers” (2001), which serves to preserve such experiences and expand them to other schools



in Albania. Cooperation with parents is very important in providing recyclable materials or ideas for new tools. The involvement of parents in such activities brings them closer to the work of teacher and makes them more aware of the quality of their own child's learning.

## Tools and related activities are designed to strengthen the main objectives of child-centered teaching methods—learning through play.

### Characteristics of teaching tools

**A** main characteristic of the teaching tools that we are describing is that the materials used to prepare them are not produced specifically for these purposes, but are found in the surrounding environment, easily and abundantly. Therefore they are referred to as “tools from environmental materials.” Many times they are also referred to as “tools from recycled materials” since the component materials used to have other functions and now are being reused for another purpose. These are materials that we throw away, often without reflecting on whether they can be useful in some other way.

#### Recycled materials can be found everywhere:

- **In nature:** flints, sand, seeds, leaves, flowers, branches, shells, pine cones, sea shells etc;
- **In the home:** different packaging, plastic bottles, bottle corks, postcards, stamps, photos, illustrations from books and magazines, pasta, rice, beans, pieces of fabric, buttons, thread, thread spools etc;
- **In the child's environment:** toys or parts of broken toys;
- **At school or at work:** tools or parts of tools out of use; packaging of different sizes, polystyrene, pieces of veneer, cardboard, wood, batteries, wires, keys, film boxes, etc.

The teacher must develop an investigative and attentive eye toward the surrounding environment in order to exploit it for the benefit of the teaching

process.

These tools and related activities are designed to strengthen the main objectives of child-centered teaching methods—learning through play. Using only cardboard and string, for example, a teacher from Korca prepared a coordinates grid in a very interesting way. She cut a piece of cardboard into a square shape and attached 10 strings (or more) to the cardboard both horizontally and vertically. Smaller squares cut from cardboard were threaded onto the strings that can move easily along all their lengths marking different points in the coordinates grid. The teacher's idea was to use this tool to organize a game that combines mathematics with reading: letters that compose a famous expression are placed as points in the coordinates grid. The teacher writes down the coordinates in the appropriate order and the students should be able to discover the hidden sentence by correctly identifying the letters in sequence. Through this game, the students become skilled in identifying points in the grid when their respective coordinates are provided. Discovering the hidden phrase in this way will enable the student to better memorize the quotation than if he learns it by rote.

Many of these tools are designed by working together with the students reflecting the principle of engaging the active participation of the student with the teacher's role as a supporter and facilitator. This provides the opportunity to organize classroom activities that combine knowledge from different subjects. In addition, these types of activities involve a broad range of concepts from the same subject; this enables both teachers and students to reinforce related concepts, thus making these tools useful over a longer period. For example, students and their teachers have prepared many models. There is a common approach to preparing these models (of a house, school or an entire city) that combines activities and information from several subjects (i.e., civic education, figurative education, and mathematics).

*Math:* From model-making, students get to know different two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes,

geometric objects and figures; become skilled in switching from three-dimensional to two-dimensional figures; learn how to copy and reorder objects in three-dimensional space; understand the concept of decreasing scale; acquire skills of orientation in space; develop and reinforce mathematical concepts of ranking, comparison, computation, similarity, etc.

*Art:* The process of making a model constitutes a great part of children's creative work. Students learn hand-crafting, how to use a pen or scissors to accurately follow the lines of a figure, get to know more of the architectural styles of city buildings, and work with colors, play dough or tints, thus cultivating their artistic taste.

*Civic education:* In the case of a city model for example, students are required to know about the city buildings and other facilities, monuments of art, special objects and their characteristics, etc. In this way, students learn more about the history of their city and the functions of its main buildings. This cultivates a love and appreciation of their hometown.

Meanwhile, students not only have the opportunity to gain new concepts in different subjects, but also to investigate the interconnection between these new concepts and those concepts already learned. In some cases the teaching tools were entirely prepared by students. During art class, students can create symmetrical figures of various kinds through collages, coloring, working with play dough, or other applications. While doing this, students

enhance their understanding of such concepts as symmetry and symmetrical figures. These tools prepared by students can be further used during a maths lesson to find the symmetrical axes.



Illustration by Benjy Herrmann

## Advantages of Developing Teaching Tools from Recycled Materials

People often view the low cost of producing teaching tools from recycled materials as the only reason this practice is recommended—and that is wrong. Naturally, the very low cost is a positive factor; but there are other important reasons:

*The teacher should be capable of producing ideas and models. He needs to go deep into the meaning of the concept or phenomenon that is being modelled.* Without a clear understanding of concepts, phenomena, and their application, a teacher cannot produce an accurate physical model.

### The act of collecting recycled materials from students constitutes a practical lesson on environmental protection.

*Encouraging preparation of tools with recycled material develops intuition, imagination, and initiative in teachers.* The teacher will be encouraged in a natural way to investigate the environment around him in order to identify materials that can serve him in preparing a specific teaching tool. The development of the teacher's imagination will consequently be reflected in the targeted teaching activities and development of the student's imagination.

*Following the example of their teacher, students will be encouraged to prepare their own models* and indeed many of the tools were realised with the help and contribution of students. Many times, the preparation process of these tools by students is more important than the outcome itself. This whole participation process assists them in shaping clear concepts and ideas through practice.

*Tools prepared in such a way are dynamic,* a factor that affects the rate of students' acquisition of new ideas. It is often very difficult to achieve this level of mastery through ready-made and static didactic aids. Moreover, *tools prepared by the teacher are closer to the student and more reliable than tools produced far from*

*them.* The teacher prepares them any time she feels that students need a practical model that suits their developmental needs and interests.

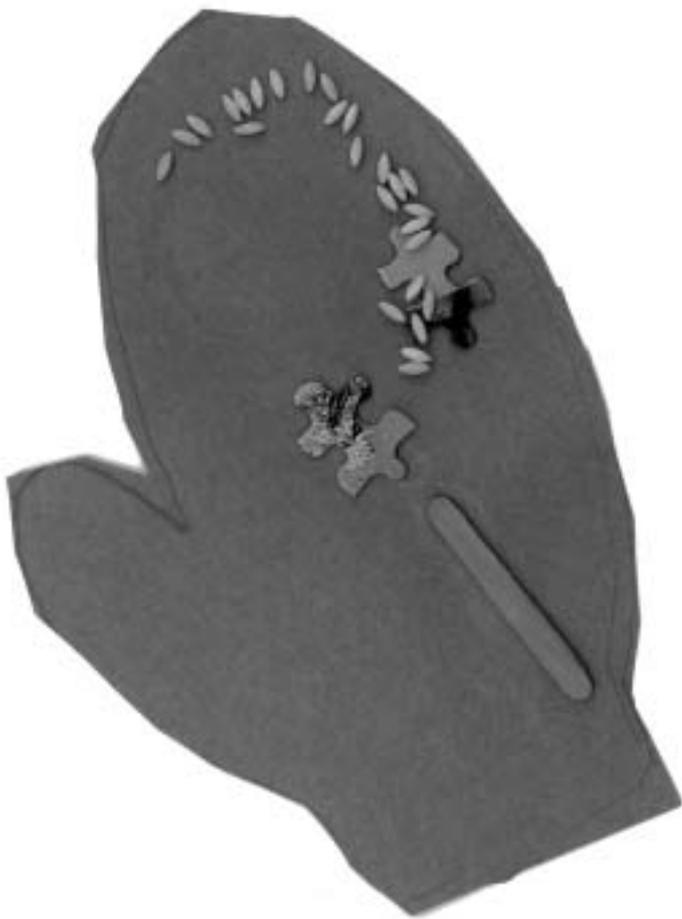
These activities constitute a real-life example of *environmental protection principles.* The act of collecting recycled materials from students constitutes a practical lesson on environmental protection.

## Considerations, Cautions, and Caveats

Despite the positive experiences gained through this initiative and the value of these tools in the continuous improvement of the teaching process, there are still some issues that need to be considered:

First of all, *these teaching tools are necessary in teaching every subject.* In abstract subjects like mathematics or the study of nature, their usage is intended to help students gain a clearer understanding of a concept or put the concept into practice in a given situation. In other subjects the tools may affect students' social development. For example, by using a simple mask during role-play, the student can possibly enter more deeply into the internal world of the character he or she is playing—even to experience the play in a completely different way. This type of activity provides the student with the opportunity to search for and gather more information about the character and the play. By going beyond those limits that classify subjects as "important" or "secondary," teachers can prepare teaching aids for all subjects. In addition to the many tools for math and Albanian language lessons, teachers have prepared various folk musical instruments, puppet characters, traffic signs, geographical and political maps, models for how blood circulates through the human body, how water circulates in nature, globes, aquariums, and many others.

Secondly, special attention should be drawn to the *tendency noted in some of the teachers to transform the classroom in an exhibition room of these tools.* Such exhibitions undermine the effectiveness of these tools in the teaching process. The more they stay exposed, the more students lose the interest on them. Instead, they can be kept in drawers, shelves, or a storage place



in the classroom.

*There are tools that can be found in almost final shape.* A teacher in Vlora, for example, is using such a tool to make a teaching-related game for her language class. She has gathered spools of thread and has put inside each of them a piece of paper that contains a question. Then she lines up the spools and asks the children to hit them with a small ball. The children have to answer the question found in the spool that they hit.

*The teaching tools have to be as simple as possible, easy for the children to understand and use.* Not only the composition but also the size of the tool has to be reasonable and in proportion to the students' height. Otherwise they will be hesitant to interact with the tool.

*The preparation of these tools should not become an aim in itself.* It should serve to increase the quality of students learning experience and not to fill the classroom with teaching tools. It is useful to provide one or two tools to illustrate a concept, but it would be excessive to constantly have students preparing their own tools. Such an assignment would not only become bor-

ing for students but could also interfere with the accurate presentation of a specific concept.

## Conclusion

Our experience with encouraging our teachers to prepare their own teaching tools has been adopted by teachers in other schools. However, it is still necessary to provide support to allow this expansion to occur in a high-quality way. Additional training and technical assistance must be provided in order to encourage this initiative and cultivate the teachers' desire to prepare their own teaching tools and infuse these activities into their teaching work. Publications can support the process of expansion, but primary education inspectors can play an important part in this direction as well through the organization of one-day roundtables or seminars on the subject, by exhibiting samples of such tools at the school or district level, attending model lessons, or through other means of promoting the preparation of tools as efficient instruments to enhance the quality of teaching process.



Illustrations by Benjy Herrmann

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# Creating Educational Toys from Local Resources: Toy Production Workshop “Little Rabbit” Kindergarten # 103

by Lkhagva Nergui, Director, Kindergarten # 103,  
Chengeltei district Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia



**K**indergarten #103 is one of twenty-one kindergartens chosen as initial pilot sites for the preschool education program, “Step-by-Step” in Mongolia. True to its mission of the program, the first steps of in setting up the program were directed at establishing a favorable learning environment appropriate for the development of children while efficiently using kindergarten and local resources. As Mongolia moved towards a market economy, effective fundraising and management of the kindergarten budget for the welfare of children and parents has become important and, as a result, the kindergarten staff decided to produce wooden toys for children as one of the ways to raise money.

Mongolia is rich in wood, therefore, we used available resources to produce the wooden toys for construction. The main principle was producing toys appropriate for children’s development. We designed the styles/forms of wooden toys that offered broad opportunities for creative work and started manufacturing two different sets of wooden toys: one for playing with on the floor and another one to be used on the table.

The table toys consist of 225 pieces of 14 different colored and varnished shapes, and can be played with by five or six children at the same time. The bigger toy set consists of 308 pieces of 41 different shapes and can be played with by five to ten children at a time. Because the toys are made of varnished pine trees, they are very light and easy to play with. In addition to these construction toys, we also designed a wooden train that can be assembled for the mathematics lessons and several other toys as well.

The workshop was established in 1998 and has been operating for four years now. During that period we have

supplied toys for forty-one kindergartens in the city and countryside, and the kindergarten staff—both teachers and other staff—have accumulated a rich experience. We feel highly satisfied that we deliver toys to all parts of the country and thus contribute to the development of young children.

In addition to the positive experience of the process of manufacturing toys we have also had some problems. For instance, the equipment often broke, the staff worked overtime, we had budget problems resulting from the need to pay compensation for overtime work or for transportation, etc. However, we succeeded in overcoming these problems and we will continue producing toys for children. We are looking forward to the opportunity to produce a broader selection of toys for children.



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# Encouraging Early Literacy in Every Child

by Larissa S. Vinogradova, Director of the Moskovsky Affiliate Russian Foundation for Education Development Soobchestvo

**A** language-rich early childhood environment, such as seen in our Step by Step classrooms, is an essential component in promoting literacy in young children. In these environments, a genuine respect for the child's first attempts to read and write is constantly present. Teachers make a point of "awakening" children's natural interest in printed text. When children hear adults read, or see them put things down on paper—using typewriters and computers—and send letters, they begin to understand the functional significance of reading and writing. Adults deliberately draw children's attention to such actions. For instance, at the end of the day, they write reminders—"things to be done in the classroom tomorrow"—together with the students.



## The Language-Rich Classroom

**T**hese classrooms are organized in such a way as to have students see printed text everywhere. Storage places for toys and materials, activity centers, and even pieces of furniture are labeled. All of the children's works are signed in printed letters. Books on the shelves are arranged so that their covers are turned toward the children. There are children's names on their lockers, on the folders holding draw-

It isn't difficult to notice that children try to imitate real writing when they "write" make-believe notes. Their first scrawls and scribbles are sweet and funny bids to write the real alphabet. In our literacy centers, we try to create an environment that allows them to write whenever they want to. The materials provided include cut paper, small notebooks, vocabulary books, pencils, and markers. We wouldn't like to scare off the children when they show a first interest in literacy.

That is why we never criticize their make-believe letters that do not look like real ones, but support the game by inquiring what the "note" says. In our classrooms, children often gather in the literacy corner and—very business-like—write pages and pages of scribbles, and then walk around the room demonstrating their products.

Over time, scribbles become more and more like letters. To encourage the process we provide clippings from full-color magazines and newspapers of different sizes. The children take pleasure in finding letters that look alike; they also like to cut and paste such letters on sheets of paper. Children like to copy letters as well. For that, teachers offer them models like plastic

*A language-rich early childhood environment, such as seen in Step by Step classrooms, is an essential component to in promoting literacy in young children.*

ings and on birthday boards. Such an environment directs the children's interest to letters and texts, develops their visual memory, encourages questions, and facilitates learning to read. This approach also helps adults master techniques of cooperation with the child, leading to the development and consolidation of the child's interest in reading and writing.

letters, cardboard letter-blocks and ABC-books. Children can also copy letters from the labels described earlier—those are a good support, because they are always available in the classroom. When children set their materials and toys in order, they are guided by

**It is the teacher's' job to create situations in which the potential and expertise of all of the program's participants can be utilized.**

labels on boxes and drawers, in which the corresponding materials are kept. Cleaning up thus becomes an interesting learning experience rather than a boring task. It helps children learn to classify things by usage, and later to find what they need on their own.

As for children who are starting to write, we involve them in activities like writing get-well cards to sick classmates, independently or with the teacher's help. We offer them fancy notepaper for their correspondence; or they can decorate their notes themselves. It

is possible to ask such children to copy the menu for the day posted by the nurse. Such teaching keeps children actively involved and should be led by their own initiative. They will have many questions about the dishes when they write down the menu, and there are many opportunities to find answers

by asking adults or classmates.

Cooking is very popular with our children. More is learned from this activity than simply how to make a meal. First, the necessary ingredients must be procured. Where can the child find out exactly what he or



she will need? How can he or she memorize the list? Children ask these and other questions of their parents. Mothers and grandmothers are eager to help—they put down their recipes and bring them to the classroom. We read them together and copy them to our recipe book. This helps the children prepare to make the dish

**It is the teacher's job to create situations in which the potential and expertise of all of the program's participants can be utilized.**

of their choice. Pancakes are very popular; we even use real griddles in the classrooms. As for making the batter, every family has



a recipe of its own. It is so interesting to read and imagine how tasty the pancakes will be and then cook together.

## Involving Teachers and Parents

The Step by Step program sets the goal of developing productive interactions among children,

families and teachers.

It is the teacher's job to create situations in which the potential and expertise of all of the program's participants can be utilized.

In our classrooms a wonderful activity is practiced: adults and children make books together. What is to be done to make them interested? For instance, the teacher can offer to write down the child's story as he



or she is describing an experience from the day before. "I could write this down for you since you don't know how to write yet, and you can make pictures. We'll have a real book." The teachers listen to the children's stories and write them down. It is easier for the child to describe what really happened than to retell

someone else's story. One of the teachers, L.V. Goreinova, told the children how she had been afraid of visiting the dentist. She then asked who also wanted to share a story about a visit to a doctor. It turned out that the children were eager to describe what they saw and how they felt visiting a doctor. She then wrote down several stories, and their authors made drawings. Soon there were enough pages for a big book. New pages were added as other children got interested in the activity. We also decided to involve the parents, and wrote the following note to be sent home:

*We decided to make a book "Visit to a Doctor". Please ask your child what he or she remembers of some visit to a hospital, and how he or she felt then. Choose a story and write it down for him. Please do not correct the child's speech, but put it down just the way he or she tells the story, only print — it is*

*important. If your child is learning how to read, advise him or her to read the story aloud in class. Tell him you will be happy to come and read the whole book when it is finished, because you are also interested in what other children will write. In such a way you help develop the child's natural interest in reading and writing.*

## Other Projects and Final Results

Other successful subjects for group book-making were "Mommy's Dress," "Our Babies," and "Visiting my Grandma." Children also benefit greatly from making whole products of their own, like



their own books. They can write about anything they choose.

Children like to bring their photos

to the classroom and tell each other what is pictured there. Such photos are also good for children's books, and it is especially fascinating to make them together with the parents. Then each child reads his or her own book and becomes interested in other children's books. Children also make funny books about their pets. Take, for example, the cat books! They are so different, so individual, and consequently so interesting to other children. They promote active verbal communication in class.

In our literacy centers, we provide various materials for making pictures and covers for children's books.



These include paper of different thickness and colors, cardboard, hole-punchers, staplers, laces and ribbons for bind-

ing, and glue. The parents eagerly replenish these supplies. Book-making is a very good activity in terms of preparation for primary school. In addition to the keen interest in reading and writing it stimulates, the child gains self-assuredness and a belief in his or her own success. The child develops a habit of trying until an attempt is successful and of carrying a project through to the end. Children learn to think critically, because they have to weigh the outcome against the initial idea. They also have to analyze what makes their project successful and what impedes success.

Book-making develops children's sensory potential, teaches them to be aware of paper size and to successfully lay out their text and pictures on the sheet. They also learn to plan their work. It is the task of adults to cooperate with children emphasizing the child's own initiative and actions, helping chil-



children to identify themselves as distinct personalities, as Authors, and to teach them to take other children's or adults' judgment gracefully. In each classroom, there is the Author's Chair, where the child can present his or her product—read the book he or she has made or tell the class what else he or she plans to do.

We also practice making boards—"Our Little Star" or "Student of the Week"—together with the children. Teachers and students write on it about the children who stood out in class for a certain period of time. We also "interview" those children and write down the food they like best, their favorite book, the name of their pet if there is one, etc. It is important that each child in class be in the spotlight at least once. For that, it is not necessary to give the best answer to the teacher's question, to read a book (best of all), or to make the best drawing. Not all children are gifted artists; but each has some quality that can be noted and encouraged.

# School and Community Partnerships



## *Children's Creative Center*

by Suzana Kirandziska, Executive Director, Foundation for Educational and Cultural Initiatives Step by Step, Macedonia

### Background

**B**ased on the positive impact of the Step by Step Program in kindergartens and primary schools in Macedonia, and on the great interest demonstrated by parents and children during the ten-day interactive art program implemented by Step by Step Program at the Museum of Skopje, in September 1997, the Open Society Institute (OSI) Macedonia in partnership with Youth Cultural Center, created a permanent Children's Creative Center (CCC). The CCC provides all children with the opportunity to experience interactive learning with their parents. By opening the CCC we were guided by our program's mission and made a substantial contribution to the learning process and intellectual growth of children. Children's Creative Center is open for all children and adults. Since it was open in 1999, children, parents, and teachers with their classes, constantly visit the center. In cooperation with several programs of OSI-Macedonia, the center was visited by refugee children, children from the street, Roma children and children with special needs. During one month



The CCC provides all children with the opportunity to experience interactive learning with their parents.

about 3,000 children and adults visit the Children's Creative Center.

## Rationale

Due to the fact that only 12 percent of children in Macedonia attend kindergarten, it was necessary to create an informal educational and cultural environment that would provide opportunities for all



children—including children who do not attend kindergarten—to have a chance to spend their time in a stimulating

space full of a number of different activities and exhibitions. Because we are convinced that the road to true knowledge is discovering the world through action, we were committed to ensuring that no one would be precluded from enjoying the Step by Step educational approach. This was the main reason we opened the Children's Creative Center in Skopje.

The CCC is the only cultural institution in the whole country, devoted solely to children and to their intellectual and creative development. The Children's Creative Center is a unique place that offers an attractive space for children and provides them with the opportunity to gain knowledge through active learning.

Children together with their families are encouraged to spend time together, to get to know each other better, to learn and to develop their creativity, and at the same time, to have fun. The center ensures that the activities are educational and fun, and at the same time support the intellectual and creative development of children with different cultural and social-economic backgrounds.

The center is also place where parents can share their everyday experiences connected with the care and education for the children. Parents are welcome to participate and to make contributions to creating programs, exhibitions, and activities connected with art

and science, keeping in mind the multicultural differences that we face in our region.

## Mission

*The Children's Creative Center was established with the mission to become a unique informal educational environment that welcomes all children from our multicultural country, from every neighborhood and different family background; to be a place where the children are valued, and encouraged to participate in exhibitions and programs that educate, engage, inspire, and entertain.*

## Goals

- To offer exhibitions, programs, and learning materials related to the arts, sciences, history, humanities, and life experience
- To provide a creative environment for children
- To be a family learning resource for our multicultural community
- To encourage family participation by offering parents





Cultural Center, financed by the Ministry of Culture, is covering part of the salaries and Open Society Institute Macedonia covers the other part. In addition to the human resources currently employed in the center, experienced professionals with different backgrounds—architects, artists, musicians, drama experts—are temporally engaged to integrate their diverse skills, in creating a kids' playground and devising activities that we are offering to the children.

New activities are planned for the Children's Creative Center including the

introduction of seminars and workshops for parents, exhibitions of dwellings, and a computer center. To achieve these expansions, we have committed to a broader range of exhibits, with more emphasis on the visual and performing arts for children.

and children to jointly make choices, imagine, create, pretend, and play

- To enrich children's lives by fostering the love of learning and appreciation of their own unique talents and skills

## Families should actively participate in the education of their children. Parents have both the right and the responsibility for their children's care and education.

- To help them develop their full potential through the visual and performing arts
- To provide opportunities to meet the needs of children of all socio-economic, physical, and emotional levels in our diverse, multi-ethnic community through exhibition content and programs
- To work with teachers to extend the philosophy of Step by Step and to be a creative resource for them
- To encourage corporations, foundations, and individuals to build partnerships for social change

During the last few years we have tried to make the CCC sustainable. With the amount from the entrance fees (about 40 cents) and the fees from organizing birthday parties, we can cover expenses for utilities. The Youth

## Promoting Parents as First Teachers

**D**uring early childhood, children are largely dependent on their families for their identity, security, care, and general sense of well being. Families should actively

participate in the education of their children. Parents have both the right and the responsibility for their children's care and education. Teaching does not begin when the child enters a formal educational setting.



Parents are children's first teachers. What the child will learn from his or her family at home is the foundation for the later learning processes. Parents affect children's values, attitudes, behaviors, health, self-esteem, and readiness for school and success in life. These seminars will *make parents more aware of their importance in the lives of their children.*

**Through the seminars we can provide information to the parents that will enable them to:**

- Understand and increase their knowledge of child development



- Increase their awareness of the importance of the parent-child relationship
- Observe children at work and play
- Increase self esteem of their children
- Show respect for children and value their ideas
- Encourage children to solve problems and respect each other
- Ask probing questions that encourage children to think about their answers
- Provide opportunities for discussion of beliefs, values,

attitudes and concerns about parent involvement in child rearing and early childhood issues

In addition to these topics, practical games and activities that parents can use with children in everyday life will be shared.



The content of the seminars will be decided by administering a survey. The seminars will be publicized through the kindergartens and schools, in the CCC, and on radio and TV.

Based upon the interactive model we use, we can accommodate twenty to thirty participants for each seminar. By participating in seminar activities, the parents become involved in discussing, questioning, developing, sharing ideas, and receiving information.

## Promoting Multi-Ethnic Tolerance

**T**he diversity we are facing today in our country and in other parts of the world in both urban and rural settings places a high demand on every citizen to make a greater effort to understand people around them and in the world. These new demands require us to increase our knowledge and understanding of cultural differences. We are all diverse. Even people with many similarities have diverse viewpoints and values. We all should understand that diversity is richness in our world.

Children must be aware of the diversity in their environment and in the world and come to understand that differences exist and that these differences are significant and valuable. From the early years they should know that each and every one of us is different from all



the others. We also like to remind all visitors to the CCC that each of us is a unique individual, different from all others, who deserves respect and tolerance from others.

Through models, outlines, and illustrations of different dwellings we strive to make clear to children the diversity of people that live in our community, country as well as in the world. These activities illustrate the diversity and richness of the tradition and culture around us. This includes ways of communication, beliefs, practices, values, customs, courtesies, rituals, manners of interacting, roles, relationships and expected behaviors of people that live in Macedonia—

Through models, outlines, and illustrations of different dwellings we strive to make clear to children the diversity of people that live in our community, country as well as in the world.

Macedonians, Albanians, Turks, Serbs, Roma, Vlaks and also people from around the world.

**Visitors can participate in collaboration with the staff of CCC by:**

- Collecting and presenting objects that represent different cultures or identities
- Presenting a list of celebrations, festivals in our community and around the world
- Discovering the importance that food plays in cultural celebrations
- Respecting the dignity of each family and its culture, customs and beliefs.

## Promoting Understanding of Technology

Computers are essential tools in the lives of today's children. We believe in the importance of all children to have an opportunity to learn with computers. The importance of this opportunity for the children and families becomes clear when considering the various benefits computers can provide. Finally, as children use computers in a developmentally appropriate environment, they become empowered to make choices independently, and experience real success in a risk-free environment. By introducing computers to children in early stages of their development and incorporating computers into the Children's Creative Center, children learn:

- To develop necessary cognitive, communication, and social-emotional skills
- To feel comfortable with technology
- To control their own learning
- To acquire skills important for living in the twenty-first century, such as, the ability to use and interpret information, image processing skills, and the ability to work in teams.

The impact of this technology is reflected in the recent three-year evaluation of including computers in the Children's Creative Center. These children were observed to have increased self-esteem and risk-taking confidence, expanded thinking, reasoning and problem solving skills, increased discovery, creativity, and exploration skills. The children also had an increased ability to share ideas. We noticed that these children were better able to wait patiently, ask for help appropriately, and follow a sequence of instructions. Finally, the appropriate use of the computer helped to create a positive attitude towards learning and technology. The computer learning center benefited parents as well. Parents seemed motivated to learn about the technology and to use it to learn new skills. Working with their children in the computer learning center was also seen to enhance parent-child interaction.

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# *Effectiveness of Child-Centered Approaches to Primary Education in Montenegro*

by Saša Milić, Director of Pedagogical Centre of Montenegro, Podgorica, Montenegro



Illustration by Bekoshuri Tinatin

## Background

Countries in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe entered the process of transition in the last decade, which initiated reforms to major state systems such as education. Some of these countries, like the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland, have already made significant steps forward in the transition processes, while others, like the countries of the Balkan peninsula, are mainly at the beginning of these processes. Montenegro, one of the six republics of former Yugoslavia, belongs to the latter category.

There are many reasons why transition processes in

the countries of the Balkan Peninsula are in their initial stage. Primarily, there is an unfavorable security and political environment burdened with numerous years of wars or national and religious conflicts with hundreds of thousands of dead, and millions of refugees that were an additional burden to the states they went to. The overall crisis and change from a socialist to a capitalist system has resulted in a negative economic environment that has caused a total decline of the living standard (the average monthly income is below \$100), collapse of the big economic systems, a large number of unemployed people or those who have been made

redundant, growth of a grey economy with the accompanying phenomena of corruption, smuggling, and illegal trade. Such conditions in the political and economic field have certainly caused a changed social and ethical environment characterized by an overall decline of moral values, the marginalization of the role of education in the lives of individuals, and a corresponding marginalization of the educational institutions in the society. Of course, the family, as a basic cell of the socie-

**There is a belief that strong discipline is the best way of educating children, despite the basic principles of democracy that innovative educational programs often rely on.**

ty, has not remained immune to the degradation of society. As a consequence, there are an increasing number of divorces, addiction illnesses (drug addiction), as well as deviant forms of behavior among young people.

## Innovations to Education

**I**n such unfavorable conditions, it is almost an illusion to talk about reforming the educational system.

However, despite everything, numerous innovative programs have appeared initiated mainly by international humanitarian organizations such as UNICEF, UNESCO, Open Society Institute, Save the Children Funds, World Vision, Catholic Relief Services, Cooperazione Italiana, Swiss Disaster Relief, and British Council. Some of the specific programs are: Active Learning Methods, Step by Step, Inclusive

Education, Development of Critical Thinking, Parent School Partnership, Creative Problem Solving, and Integration of Roma Population.

These educational programs/projects have each had very different effects on reforms and improvements of the educational systems. Most of them have neither made any deep impact nor caused any lasting improvement in certain segments of the educational system.

There are several key reasons why these projects have had little influence on changing the traditional way of teaching. One of the most important reasons can be found in the partial or short-term approach of these projects. In fact, many of these projects have often dealt with a narrow segment of the educational system or a small part of the teaching process, so that their effects have been small or lost. Also, these projects have been limited mainly to only a small period of a year or two for their implementation, which is not an adequate period to expect significant changes in a traditional educational system. The projects have had very small budgets, so the number of teachers included was also small. Numerous prejudices have also been big obstacles in carrying out these innovations, the most common of which refers to the foreign influence and "hidden" intentions of these



Illustration by Giorgi Tkholashvili

programs. There has also been a fear that introduction of these programs in the educational system would cause a reduction in the theoretical knowledge offered to students. There is a concern that pupils would just play in the innovated educational system, and not acquire the necessary knowledge. There is a belief that strong discipline is the best way of educating children, despite the basic principles of democracy that innovative educational programs often rely on.

A big obstacle in the quality implementation of innovative educational programs has often been pre-service education and preparation of future teachers at faculties of education and other departments. It is these kinds of university institutions that are the most conservative; they find their basic educational principles in the Herbart class-lesson organization of the teaching process, as well as in the obsolete communist-socialist view of education and development of society in general. The conservatism of these university institutions is reflected in a dominant, almost complete dedication to studying the more traditional pedagogical and psychological theories of education (Herbart, Komenski Pestalozzi, Roseau, etc.). There is a complete absence of recent theoretical views, as well as the absence of practical work and practical training of future teachers for their profession. Many students still graduate from a faculty of education without spending a single day during his or her studies in a live, real educational process in school.

## A Successful Approach

**A**lthough obstacles to the reform of educational programs are numerous and sometimes almost impossible to overcome, some of the aforementioned innovative educational programs have been successfully implemented in the educational system of Montenegro. One of these is the Step by Step Program, jointly created by faculty in the Georgetown University Child Development Center in Washington, D.C. and Open Society Institute in New York. Their executive partner in Montenegro has been the Pedagogical Centre of Montenegro. Step by Step is an innovative educational model aimed at reforms and improvements of the educa-

tional process at the pre-school, primary school and university level. Its goal is creating an educational process in which the child has a central role (child-centered approach). Step by Step is a well-thought-out and comprehensive response to the radical changes taking place in the society of Montenegro, in social relations, as well as in science and technology. In the Step by Step kindergartens and primary schools, development of children from their birth until the age of ten is encouraged by teaching:

- critical thinking and creativity
- problem-solving skills
- self-awareness and self-assessment
- independent decision-making
- developing awareness of the need for life-long learning
- understanding and accepting differences among people
- interest in the community, country and environment in general
- tolerance and respect for diversity.

Implementation of Step by Step has been successful in large part, because it has contributed to raising hopes that post-communist and transitional societies can live and work better. The program has also raised hopes among our children, teachers and parents, as well as all other stakeholders, that our educational system can become better, more humane, and happier. There is also the hope among experts and school psychologists that schools can look different and be places of healthy and joyful development for children. An important contribution of the program in countries in transition—especially in those countries in the Balkan region that have undergone a period of ten-year long wars, including Montenegro—is the development of a tolerant, multi-cultural and multi-religious approach. It has especially been important in Montenegro (populated by Montenegrins, Albanians, Muslims, Serbs, Croats, Roma, and others) to have quality educational programs which develop tolerance and understanding of those who are different from us.

The implementation of the Step by Step program in

Montenegro started in February 2000. So far, it has been successfully extended to more than 200 classes in pre-school institutions, more than 160 classrooms in primary

- physical environment in classrooms
- levels of acquired knowledge in mathematics, language, and science.

## The research looked into differences between the teaching process carried out in accordance with Step by Step and traditional teaching methods.

schools, 10 classrooms with active participation of the Roma population, as well as in 10 classrooms where inclusive education is carried out. The program involves intensive three-year in-service training of teachers through a series of eight seminars that cover the following topics: individualization and democratization of the teaching process; cooperative learning; interactive methods for studying language, mathematics, science, and art; cooperation between school and family; ongoing assessment; learning through games; thematic planning and integration of the school subjects; dynamics of a school day; work in centers according to interests or activities in the classroom; observing and monitoring progress of students; student's self-assessment, etc.

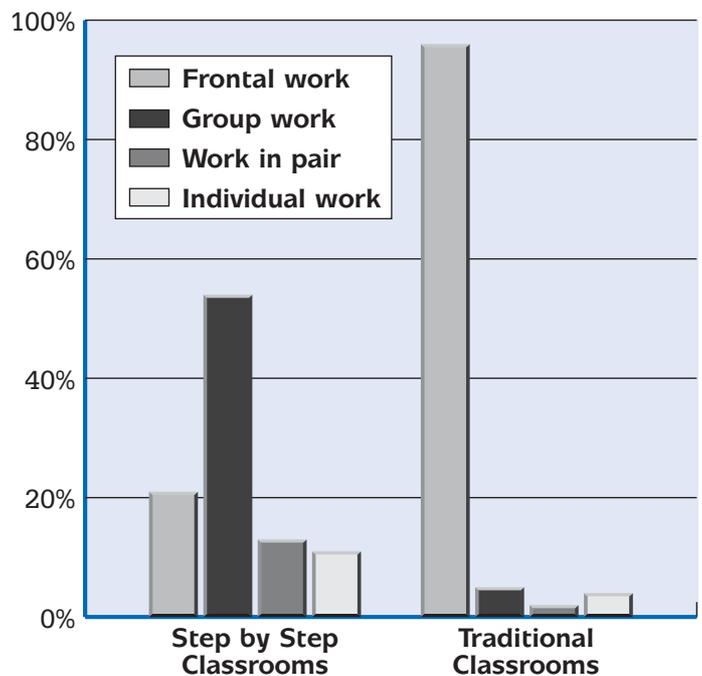
### Impact of Step by Step

After a two-year successful implementation of the program, the operational team of the Pedagogical Centre of Montenegro decided to carry out empirical research to study the effects of the program, and as to compare those effects with the results of the still ongoing traditional teaching process. Research was carried out in eight primary schools with a sample of more than one hundred teachers and four hundred students. The research looked into differences between the teaching process carried out in accordance with Step by Step and traditional teaching in the following fields:

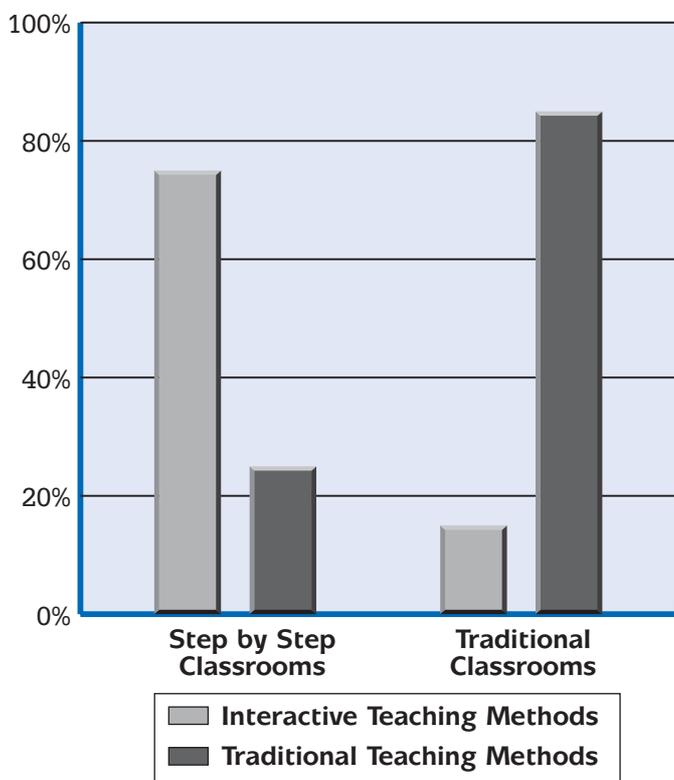
- differentiation and social organization of teaching
- teaching methods
- communication in the teaching process
- curricula and syllabi

The research was carried out from February to April 2002 and showed that the Step by Step teaching process had a significant advantage over traditional teaching according to all the measurement criteria. Some of the most important results of this research are summarized below:

- The dominant form of classroom organization of Step by Step teachers is group work, while other forms of social organization (frontal work, pair work, and individual work) are much less present. In the group of traditional teachers the results show exactly the opposite, i.e. the domination of the frontal way of work, while all other ways are much less prominent. The results are shown in the following graph:



- Regarding the application of the teaching methods, the research showed that the Step by Step teachers mostly use interactive methods of work (brainstorming, guided learning, debate, group and panel discussions, student projects.), while the other teachers predominantly use traditional teaching methods (lectures.) The results are shown in the graph that follows:



- The prevailing forms of behavior among teachers in the Step by Step Program are democratic (accepting children’s abilities and individualities; open questions; paying attention to all the students in the classroom; encouraging students to notice mistakes themselves.), while teachers using traditional methods predominantly use more rigid forms of communication (lack of tolerance to students’ suggestions; closed questions; strict and untactful objections to students’ knowledge; quick corrections of students’ mistakes). Communication among students is aligned with the ways their teachers communicate. Students participating in Step by Step classrooms showed a more liberal way of behaving such as free communication; an active student body; lively discussion; participation in all classroom activities; care-

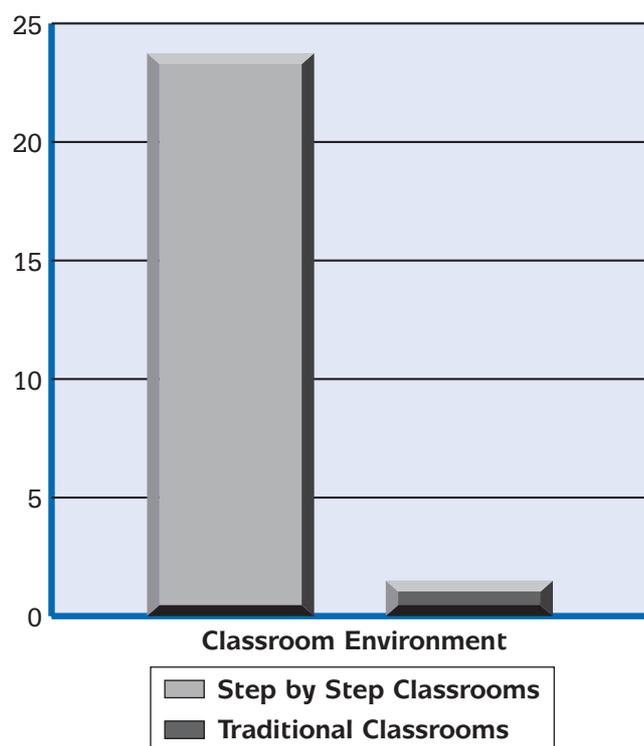


ful and concentrated work habits; and free expression of their own attitudes), while the students in traditional classes show more rigid forms of behavior: they are mainly

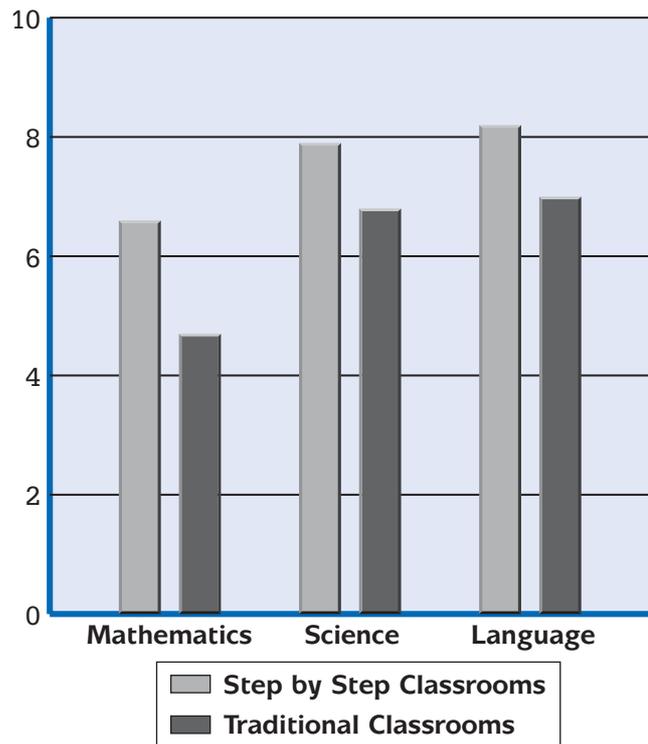
silent and worried, are not concentrated on their work; they give their objections noisily; do not participate in classroom activities, and they are not willing to express their own attitudes.

- The differences between teachers in the Step by Step Program and the traditional programs are not as visible, because both groups of teachers have to adhere strictly to the curricula and use the textbooks prescribed by the ministry. However, the results still showed that Step by Step teachers are much more prone to enrich the compulsory curricula with new content and occasionally take into consideration students’ interests, even when these do not fit into the curriculum. On the other hand, their colleagues in the traditional schools are much less ready to change anything in the prescribed curricula and syllabi and they plan and realize their teaching in the usual, routine way.

- Compared with traditional classrooms, Step by Step classrooms are better equipped with different forms of manipulatives, teaching aids, educational posters, works representing students’ individualities and achievements, and works encouraging higher and better understanding of different cultures. Using a checklist with more than thirty evaluation criteria, the data in the following graph show these results:



- Step by Step students showed a much higher level of knowledge compared to their peers in the traditional school. The exact results are given in the graph and in **Table 1**, below:



**Table 1**

Subject	Step by Step Classrooms	Traditional Classrooms	Difference in %
Mathematics	6,60	4,71	1,89 (18,9%)
Science	7,91	6,89	1,02 (10%)
Language	8,26	7,02	1,24 (12,4%)

## Pedagogical Implications of the Step by Step Program Implementation in the Educational System of Montenegro

- Our research showed that Step by Step represents a good basis for the application of an individualized approach in the educational process.
- The level of knowledge acquired by Step by Step students is much higher than that of students who attend traditional schools. Their knowledge tends to be more permanent, better understood, and functional. The basic principles of the Program (individualization, active learning, stimulating environment, possibility of choice) correspond to the demands of modern society

within which it is necessary to create not only a person who is rich in knowledge but also one who is ready to think and willing and trained to express an opinion.



- The program has significantly contributed to changing attitudes of teachers regarding their acceptance of the individualized approach in the educational process, as well as the positive dissemination of those attitudes and knowledge to other teachers.

• Only persistent, consistent, and years-long efforts to implement innovations in the educational system can lead to their incorporation and lasting acceptance by teachers and the system as a whole

- Step by Step has exerted a dominant influence on the process of reforming the educational system in Montenegro. All the key pedagogical principles have been incorporated into the reform document of the Ministry of Education and Science entitled "Book of Changes of the Educational System of Montenegro. The state must guarantee the equal right to education for each individual, regardless of sex, social and cultural background, religion, ethnicity, physical and mental abilities. Each student must be given the possibility to show his or her potential. In such a way, the young will become responsible citizens who will contribute with their activities to the democratization of the society. In order to enable students to make progress in accordance with their abilities and to meet their special interests, there must be the possibility of choice at all the levels of the system, while each segment must offer different contents, methods and forms of work."

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# *New Partnerships and Approaches for Serving Children in Ukraine's Internats*

by Natalia Sofiy, Executive Director, Ukrainian Step by Step Foundation



## Introduction

**H**alf a century ago, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) formulated the fundamental human rights and identified them as universal and inviolable. Those rights have been reaffirmed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which placed special emphasis on the child's development. In 1991 the Convention was ratified by Ukraine. But, unfortunately, these rights, especially for disadvantaged children, are breached in Ukraine.

A society's attitude toward disadvantaged people—their level of tolerance—is like a mirror, where our own values are reflected back without us having to confront them directly. In 1991 Ukraine declared its independence and chose to build an open, democratic society. How far have we progressed during more than ten years of independence in extending the rights of chil-

*A society's attitude toward disadvantaged people—their level of tolerance—is like a mirror, where our own values are reflected back.*

dren and their families? To assess this, we must confront several difficult issues: we have to speak about the practice of institutionalizing children, which is totally inconsistent with the values of openness and democracy; and we must discuss who is being institutionalized and why.

The new term nowadays for these institutions is "social orphanages." These children very often have parents but they do not have a home.

## Background

**C**ertainly, the phenomena of social orphanages appeared before now. There were families, who did not care for their children before. The research of L. Efgrafova (1987) shows the reasons that caused the termination of parents' rights: alcoholism—46 percent; an unmoral way of living—34 percent; criminal behavior—17 percent; incurable illnesses—3 percent. Transformational changes in the society sharpened the situation—the development of a market economy changed the balance of resources that provided for the well-being of families and children. The responsibility for educating children has been placed more on parents; however, the state authorities do not provide any adequate assistance to parents. The role of families has increased critically, but their financial level very often determines the opportunities available to them. That's why the most vulnerable families are families with children, especially single-parent families, families with more than two or three children, families with children with special needs, etc. For example, the level of well-being of families with three children is three to four times less than in families with one child.

Unemployment and poverty are two interconnected factors, which negatively impact all aspects of family life. Very often it leads to the child being torn from their family.

The future for such children might take different forms: they might be adopted or have their care delegated to some other family members, or they might be placed into a boarding school (internat). According to data from the State Committee of Statistics of Ukraine, at the end of 1999, 562 boarding schools of different types (including 345 boarding schools for children with special



needs) existed in Ukraine. Roughly 77,000 children including 55,431 children with

mental and physical disabilities stay at these institutions. Since 1991 the number of children in boarding schools has increased more than twofold, although the birthrate has essentially decreased. The number of children in internats is increasing because poor families use

**Material conditions in institutions have deteriorated—only 50 to 70 percent of children are provided with adequate clothing and they are generally undernourished due to an inadequate diet.**

these schools as the main source of care and food for their children. But, once being putting into an internat, the child very seldom comes back home.

The beginning of transformational changes in Ukraine affected the situation in the boarding schools themselves. The funding for internats has dramatically decreased due to an economic crisis in Ukraine. Material conditions in institutions have deteriorated—only 50 to 70 percent of children are provided with adequate cloth-

ing and they are generally undernourished due to an inadequate diet. About \$1 is allocated for food for one child per day!

Significant research by UNICEF has shown that providing support to families in order for



them to keep children at home and providing educational services in a regular school in their neighborhood is a far cheaper option for the country than to send such children with disabilities to residential institutions.

## Joint Project “Alternative Forms of Childcare”

The transformational changes in Ukraine have touched upon the educational system first.

Democratization and humanization are the two words that are repeated most often when we speak about educational reforms. But is it possible to combine the values of an open and democratic society with the closed nature of such educational establishments as internats?

Who are the main stakeholders that can promote or resist the changes? Looking for the answers, the Ukrainian Step by Step Foundation identified an organization—EveryChild Organization (formerly known as the European Children’s Trust—which works directly with the childcare system. It was a natural and logical “marriage”; working more with families and social workers EveryChild felt the need for improving the environment

within the internats themselves. We both needed each other. The project “Alternatives Forms of Childcare” based at the Lviv internat #2 was the beginning of our partnership and the first step in our experience of changing the quality of education in internats.

The general goal of the project was to demonstrate the ways of reforming the existing system of care and improving the life opportunities for children. The realization of this goal was possible through the following

objectives:

- To develop alternative forms of childcare directed at providing for children's needs;
- To avoid putting children into an internat;
- To return children to their families and assist in their early social rehabilitation;
- To develop new educational approaches to children who are staying in the internat.

## About the Partners

### *EveryChild Organization*

**EveryChild Organization** works in eighteen countries and is committed to working with children, families, and communities to eradicate poverty and social injustice. EveryChild helps local communities to identify their own needs and implement appropriate solutions. In all our work we aim for projects to be sustainable without ongoing support from EveryChild. We work to ensure access to basic physical needs, healthcare, education, social services, and community development.

EveryChild helps communities define their own problems and solutions. It is focused on the following operational areas:

- Mitigating the impact of poverty on children and families.
- Improving access to health, educational, and social services.
- Preventing family breakdown and providing family-based care alternatives.

In Ukraine, EveryChild focuses on supporting local initiatives in the reform of state child-care services and the prevention of the institutionalization of children.



EveryChild has developed strong relationships with local government departments and is actively supporting them to develop new skills and services for families and children. In Lviv and Kyiv oblasts EveryChild has developed social services for families who are at risk of placing their children in care. One of

the pressures on families is the lack of support for children with special needs, and a key need is to develop alternatives so that children do not have to leave home. In Kyiv and Lviv oblasts EveryChild works closely with an interdepartmental group of humanitarian organizations led by the Deputy Governor. Kyiv oblast is currently developing a child-care strategy for the oblast. Improving the educational opportunities for children with special needs should be an element of this policy document.

### *Ukrainian Step by Step Foundation (USSF)*

**Ukrainian Step by Step Foundation** aims to promote active family and community involvement in, and equal access to, high-quality education for all children, especially children with special needs, children of national minorities, children from socially unprotected families, and homeless children. Underlying the programs of USSF are the democratic values of an open society, a necessary condition for integrating Ukraine into the European Community. USSF goals and strategies reflect the political, social, and economic situation in Ukraine including changes in the educational policy of school reform; the needs of children, parents, teachers, and local communities in the inclusive educational models, and USSF's experience in educational field activities.



USSF mission is being realized through the following programs:

- Teacher Training on the Step by Step Program
- Inclusion of Children with Special Needs
- Education for Minorities
- Prevention of Child Abuse
- Children in Shelters

USSF has experience with promoting educational reforms at the grass-roots level by providing new approaches to teaching, which focus on individualized teaching methods, creating a safe and stimulating learning environment, and active parent and community involvement.

## First Experiences

Taking into consideration the number of children who are currently in the internats, we clearly understood that in spite of the best efforts of international and national partners, there will be a certain number of children who will continue to remain at these institutions. So, we needed to place maximum effort on

**While we were familiar with the specific work performed by regular schoolteachers, the work of the teacher in an internat is very different.**

improving the level of providing for the needs of children who remain in internats. Based on our experience and resources, we chose to focus on better meeting these children's educational needs.

Together with school administrators, four training sessions were conducted for internat teachers by the Step by Step trainers:

- Step by Step Program for Children aged 6-7 years old;
- Step by Step Program for Children aged 8-11 years old;
- Step by Step Program for Children aged 11-14 years old for secondary school teachers;
- Inclusion of Children with Special Needs.

Before conducting the trainings we had meetings with teachers, where we introduced the Step by Step philosophy and identified the main needs of teachers. As we expected, the questions that were of biggest interest to teachers were: how to develop the students' motivation to learn; how to work with children with disabilities; how to work with children with behavioral difficulties; how to work with families, etc. The last question was very important for us because it coincided with the general goal of the project—to help children come back to their families. Teachers seemed to play the crucial role in this process. *This meeting was really the first step in making us think about the following issues:*

**Trust.** There were surprises for us during the training itself, which started with identifying the expectations of the participants. Some of them wrote they did not expect to hear anything new and just would

like to see us working with their "difficult" children. Their message clearly showed they did not trust us, doubted our ability to understand the specific nature of their work, and did not have any expectations we could offer them something new. Besides, the training was conducted during the winter vacation time, because it was the only chance to participate without depriving the

children of the opportunity to study. Teachers felt they lost their time off. In the past when we have conducted trainings for the regular schoolteachers, we have been used to the fact that the teachers themselves, together with their school directors, were eager to obtain new knowledge and skills. We had

quite a different case in the internat. The teachers had been told by school administrators to come to the training without any previous work with them, except one meeting with us. We understood that to ask teachers about their needs was not enough. While we were familiar with the specific work performed by regular schoolteachers, the work of the teacher in an internat is very different. And to be successful at creating examples or connecting the Step by Step Program to their conditions, we had to spend more time in teachers' classrooms to observe them, to speak with them, to

establish some partnership relationships before conducting the training itself. We were sure training would then be much more successful. When we analyzed the evaluation forms following the training, more than 50 percent of the teachers we trained mentioned they would use obtained knowledge and skills in their work quite often. But now we

know that number could increase if we really achieved the trust of participants.

**Teachers' Attitudes toward Families.** As we mentioned before, we were happy to hear from teachers of their need for and interest in working with families, and



were sure that topic would be successful one. The biggest part of the work with families lies on the shoulders of social workers trained by EveryChild Organization. Their mission is to help families avoid putting their child into an internat. It was a big surprise for us when we heard from them that one of the main obstacles to EveryChild is the internat teachers themselves. We were sure that teachers who have about thirty “difficult” children in their classroom would be happy to see some children staying with their families and attending the regular school close by. The topic “Partnership with Families” gave us the possibility to speak deeper about it with internat teachers. We understood more when we heard teachers’ visions of a better future for the child. They were really sure that internats for children were much better than children staying at home, where parents can be drunk or be under the effect of drugs, and so on. “At least they have food and a roof above their heads,” said one of the teachers. Another teacher had the experience of looking for the child for three days after that girl was allowed to go home for a weekend, but did not come back to the internat on Monday morning. After hearing these stories, our trainers’ beliefs in what is in the best interest of the child were challenged. It was clear that we needed to know more about different families’ circumstances and to work with other agencies while addressing these complex issues.

## Parent Education

As mentioned before: “At least children in an internat have their food and a roof.” We were sure it was the main reason why parents put their children in such establishments, too. In official state documents unemployment and poverty are cited as the main reasons why families put their child into internats. We were quite surprised when we became aware of research conducted by the social workers in that internat. Only 3 percent of families put their children in because of poverty! Among the answers to the question, “What was the reason for putting your child in internat?” the majority of parents mentioned inconvenient schedules in school (e.g., the

school day ends about 1.00 p.m. and there is nobody to take care of the child). But the biggest surprise for us were such reasons as, “We want our child to learn to be independent;” “I want my child to learn to live in the collective,” etc. We were shocked at hearing these thoughts, but it was what some parents really did believe. It reveals that parents don’t know about the true conditions at the internats. For example, only one teacher stays at night to care for three hundred children. This teacher gathers all the children with enuresis in one room, not because she is prejudiced against them. She just cannot take care of all three hundred children including these thirteen who wet the bed at night. These realities need to be discussed openly, and we believe some parents who will hear it, will change their minds about the relative benefits of communal living.

## Future Steps

Our joint project is only a first step in providing a better life for children who are in these institutions. We were hopeful that through our work we could change the situation in one year. It did not happen. But we still believe in our Step by Step motto, “Who says we can’t change the world.” Starting and promoting changes in the regular school system, we can make another step in bringing the changes into the childcare and special education system, too. But we cannot do it by ourselves. We need more partners—other non-governmental organizations, state educational and social agencies, parents, and the whole community. But now that we have defined our vision, we can refine the steps we need to reach it.



Illustration by Kobaladge Sandro

## Children's Web Publishing Project: Update

**I**magine a place where teachers, parents, and children can find dozens of beautifully illustrated picture books available in twenty-seven different languages and accessible with the touch of a few buttons. Step by Step's Reading Corner, the creation of its Web Publishing Program, is just such a place. The program has selected thirteen stories from more than a hundred submitted by writers from most of the countries where Step by Step is active. This first batch of stories are from Albania, Kazakhstan, Armenia, the Czech Republic, Macedonia, Russia, Kosovo, Ukraine, Macedonia, Hungary, and Slovenia. And artists from Lithuania, Slovenia, Kazakhstan, the Czech Republic, Macedonia, and Georgia are being paired with these authors to provide illustrations for the thirteen stories. The finished picture books should be on-line early in 2003.

This is an on-going program, seeking original stories and art from all interested writers and artists in the Step-by-Step countries. Those interested can find tips on creating picture books and submission guidelines on the Reading Corner site (<http://www.soros.org/readingcorner/index.html>).

## Latvia

**T**he Center for Educational Initiatives (CEI) shared several activities and accomplishments, including the graduation of their first cohort of children who completed Step by Step through their primary grades. Through interviews with teachers, parents and the children themselves, a picture emerged of a group of children who are self-directed, creative, enthusiastic and flexible; they are not afraid to ask questions and take risks. These children are entering 5th grade eager to meet the educational demands that face them in the coming school year. Other news included a recent visit from mentor Josie Thomas, Director of the Parents' Place—a parent training and information center in Maryland, USA. During her visit in September 2002, Josie partnered with CEI staff to conduct three trainings for parents in several cities in Latvia. More than 170 parents and educators attended to these trainings and gained new ideas and good examples about parent involvement in education. Ms. Thomas also met with parents of children with special needs to encourage their advocacy efforts and took part in the Step by Step Parents Association's annual conference. Finally, CEI also reports that they have developed a new training module entitled "Learning Disabilities." It is a 30-hour training program that provides educators and parents with knowledge and skills to better recognize learning disabilities and support these children's needs. This training was piloted at a training for State Education Supervision. Many supervisors mentioned in their evaluations of the training that new information was provided including definitions of the different kinds of learning disabilities that children can manifest. One supervisor expressed it this way: "A child's destiny depends on teachers' professionalism."

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## ISSA Teacher Certifier Training

A new initiative for Step by Step teacher certification is being introduced in a series of regional, three-day trainings is being conducted during Fall 2002 by a team of early childhood professionals from two centers at the University of Colorado at Denver - Center for Collaborative Educational Leadership (School of Education) and Center for Human Investment Policy (School of Public Affairs) - and the Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation (CITA). These organizations formed a partnership to assist the International Step by Step Association (ISSA) with the professional development of trainers and evaluators for teacher certification based on the ISSA standards. The goal of this certification initiative is to ensure quality of teaching practices that are aligned with the Step by Step Standards for Teachers. The team developed a certification protocol for evaluating the work of teachers who apply to local non-governmental organizations for certification. The protocol includes several instruments: a checklist that observers can use to measure the extent to which a teacher is implementing the ISSA standards; and, a self-assessment instrument that the teachers can use to assess their performance. This protocol was developed to ensure that comparable data can be collected by observers in different countries, by different trainers and/or observers. The trainers also developed a basic training handbook and other resource materials for pre-observation preparation, observation, questions and answers, and reporting. The regional trainings will generate a pool of Teacher Certifiers in each country that can ensure the quality of the implementation of the Step by Step program.

## Ukraine

The Ukrainian Step by Step Foundation (USSF) was recently awarded a TACIS grant from the Institution Building Partnership Program of the European Commission to further their work on integrating children with special needs into inclusive educational settings. This grant provides funding to support the joint work of EveryChild Organization in the United Kingdom, the International Step by Step Association in the Netherlands, and USSF. The primary goal of the project is to promote the rights of children with disabilities to equal access to quality education alongside their peers and to support their families by developing best-practice sites of inclusive education. Project activities will include advanced training and mentoring of teachers who are currently working



with children who have disabilities in inclusive settings; developing local family support services; training for parents' organizations to develop their capacity to implement inclusive models; and researching the impact of inclusive education of children's achievement and development.

# 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 email, 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 pro-

gram 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](mailto:dfp2@georgetown.edu).*

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- Preschool and Primary School Teachers and Staff
- Early Childhood Experts



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