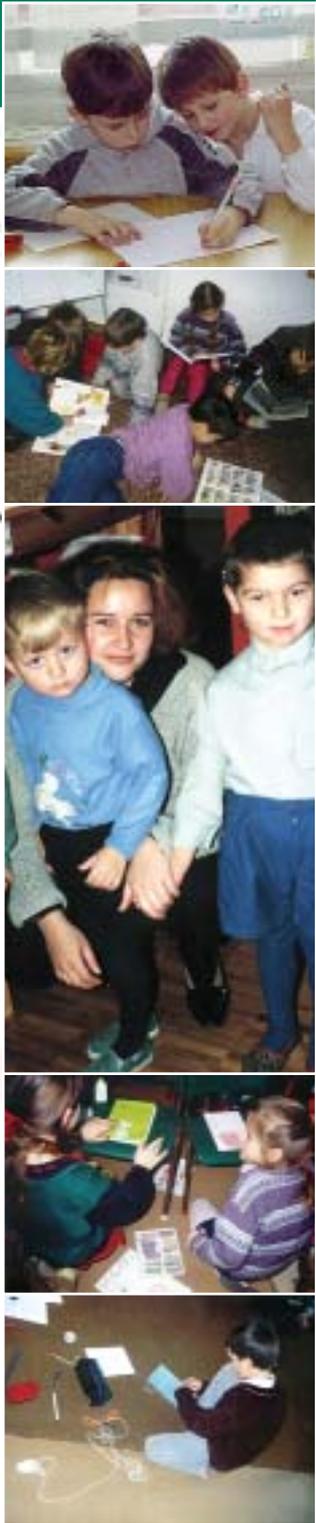


# Educating Children for Democracy

The Journal of the International Step by Step Association



**Child-Centered Education:  
Roots, Renewal, and New Growth**

Number 5, Summer/Fall 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, both in print and online, and in Russian online.



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

ISSA combines the strengths of twenty-nine organizations in as many countries, reaching over 200,000 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 one 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.

If you would like to know more about ISSA, please visit our web site at <http://www.issa.nl>. For membership information, please contact an ISSA Coordinating Office nearest to you at the address listed below, or by e-mail at: [info@issa.nl](mailto:info@issa.nl)

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# Welcome to Issue 5

## *Child-Centered Education: Roots, Renewal, and New Growth*

*"Oh! It's a Step by Step classroom!"*

When I recently joined the Step by Step Program to become the new *Editor of Educating Children for Democracy*, I learned that this statement of delight was voiced often as Step by Step teachers from around the world toured child-centered classrooms in the United States. Teachers from Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States, Mongolia, and Haiti, expressed a sense of kinship as they observed classrooms in the Washington, DC, area similar to their own.

I, too, felt a sense of kinship when I became a part of the Step by Step network, on behalf of Georgetown University's Center for Child and Human Development. At my first meeting with Deborah Perry and Kate Walsh, I learned about the historic founding of the International Step by Step Association and its commitment to implement educational reform in countries in transition to democracy. We talked about the Step by Step Program breaking new ground and, at the same time, sustaining and building upon traditions of child-centered practice that began in America with the progressive education movement in the early twentieth century. In this, my first issue as editor, I wanted to capture the excitement of Step by Step as a bold and innovative venture and also to acknowledge and affirm its foundations. All of us at Step by Step are part of, and can draw strength from, a community of educators—past and present—who support individual development and open societies. Hence the theme for Issue 5 of *Educating Children for Democracy*, "Child-Centered Education: Roots, Renewal, and New Growth."

### Roots

To explore the roots of Step by Step, and to introduce myself to the readers of *Educating Children for Democracy*, I have selected three articles for Issue 5 that mark my own "rite-of-passage" into the community of child-centered education. As an

undergraduate I attended Mills College of Education, whose mission was to prepare early childhood educators within a child-centered framework. I studied child development, took methods courses in math, reading, and social studies, and student taught in both a pre-primary and primary classroom. I learned the importance of bringing a developmental perspective to teaching and educating the whole child and gained an appreciation of the power of experiential learning in mastering basic skills. I benefited from practical experience in managing group meeting time, planning neighborhood field trips, and working with parents. And I learned how to organize activity areas so that children could choose to build with blocks, paint, read, write, compute, and engage in dramatic play on their own and in interaction with others.

It was not until I went to graduate school that I encountered the heated debate about different approaches to early childhood education. There were supporters of child-centered practice, but there were also advocates for teacher-directed programs that emphasized rote learning of basic facts to increase children's academic achievement.

I was fortunate at that time to study with the late Professor Lawrence Kohlberg at Harvard University's Graduate School of Education and to work with him on "Development as the Aim of Education."

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This experience brought intellectual rigor and conceptual clarity to my deeply felt commitment to the aims and methods of child-centered education. I have included in this issue an excerpt from “Development as the Aim of Education,” first published in 1972, which outlines three broad streams of educational thought and the psychological theories underlying each. As complex as these theories are, they become readily accessible through the metaphors of development used to describe them: the child as a plant, the child as a machine, and the child as a philosopher or scientist-poet.

I have also included an excerpt from “The Having of Wonderful Ideas” by Eleanor Duckworth. First published in 1972, this article dared to question the relevance of Piagetian theory to classroom practice. I had wondered, myself, how a theory based on broad and universal stages of development could be of practical help to a teacher whose daily challenge is to understand and respond to individual children with a wide range of differing abilities and interests. In this regard, I found Professor Duckworth’s hard-won insights both refreshing and useful. She writes, “Through my experience with Piaget...I had gained a wonderful background for being sensitive to children in classrooms...I had a certain skill in being able to watch and listen to children and figure out how they were really seeing the problem.” The ability to appreciate a child’s perspective, in turn, offered clues for how best to stimulate learning with the right question or by providing varied materials.

“Watch the child” is a lesson I have taken to heart. It has formed the core of my work as an educator

and as a parent. It inspired work on classroom observation tools that I developed as a doctoral student and later as a Research Psychologist at Bank Street College of Education to study teacher-child interaction and to evaluate early education programs. It also inspired work on my book *Beginning Together: A Diary of Discovery for You and Your Baby*. As I embarked on parenthood, I wanted to develop for myself, and for other parents, a guided baby journal. It was with deep conviction that I wrote, “By looking at and listening to the behavior of one unique human being, parents learn how best to do their job.”

I have also included “Play as a Growth Process” by Barbara Biber, first published in 1951. My appreciation of Dr. Biber’s seminal contribution to early education theory and practice deepened after I joined the Research Department at Bank Street College where Dr. Biber, then in her mid-seventies, continued to be a dynamic presence. In “Play as a Growth Process” Biber uses her analytic insights and sympathetic understanding of the child to examine the fundamental role of play in fostering children’s security, strength, and mastery of reality. In a phrase that will resonate with readers of *Educating Children for Democracy*, Biber writes that the child at play “is building the feeling that the world is his, to understand, to interpret, to puzzle about, to make over. For the future, we need citizens in whom these attitudes are deeply ingrained.”

## Renewal

Such roots nourish the vitality of today’s work, as exemplified by articles that describe the rich and varied experiences of our Step by

Step Program. Issue 5 includes four articles—three representing the Step by Step Program and one that was presented at the ISSA annual conference in Vilnius, Lithuania, in 2002—that demonstrate the continuity and extension of child-centered practices in today’s classrooms. In “Enriching the Play Environment,” Dr. Dimitar Dimitrov from the Step by Step Program in Bulgaria observes children at play. He notes the difficulties children may encounter and suggests ways in which teachers can intervene and, through the choice of materials, optimize the conditions of play. His cogent article offers present-day evidence that informed observation is the teacher’s most powerful tool in creating an environment rich with opportunities for learning.

Two articles on literacy education highlight the power of experientially-based learning. In “Gathering Community Stories: New Ways to Involve Parents and Teachers,” Dr. Bird Stasz describes a methodology that uses the neighborhood as a source of stories, as well as the far-reaching benefits of building partnerships with parents, teachers, and children. In the engaging and beautifully illustrated “Child-Made Books: A Pathway to Literacy,” Daiga Bernaua, a Step by Step primary school teacher in Latvia, describes her first-hand experience in using child-made—and family-made—books successfully in primary education. Both Bird Stasz and Daiga Bernaua help children and parents notice and record the extraordinary in their every-day surroundings, recalling Eleanor Duckworth’s advice to teachers to reach out and make use of the things that surround them.

Issue 5 also presents “Evaluation

of the Step by Step Program in Azerbaijan.” Using multiple methodologies—classroom observation as well as interviews and questionnaires with stakeholders—a team of four researchers report on the impact of Step by Step in-service training on teachers, children, parents, and the community. The summary of classroom observations draws sharp contrasts between the child-centered practices observed in Step by Step classrooms and the teacher-directed practices observed in non-Step by Step classrooms. Perhaps most compelling is the Step-by-Step teachers’ description of children as “explorers” and “researchers,” recalling the metaphor of the child as a philosopher or scientist-poet.

## New Growth

Issue 5 also features two articles that showcase innovative programs designed to foster child and family well being. Originally presented as papers at the ISSA annual conference in November 2002, these articles address challenges beyond the classroom. In “With a Little Help...: Home-Start International,” Tanya Barron describes a program that promotes and protects the development of the youngest children through home visiting and parent-to-parent support. Headquartered in London, Home-Start International offers friendship and practical help to families in 12 countries. Alfia Mirasova’s article, “A Community-Based Model of Care and Education for Young Children in Rural Areas of Kyrgyzstan,” features a strategy to provide education in the early years to all children. It describes the creation of centrally located kindergartens that reach out to remote communities through a network of satellite home-based day

care centers. The program also includes the development of income-generating activities to support the costs of program operations. It is exciting to chart the growing momentum of programs that recognize the interdependence of healthy children, strong families, and economically secure communities.

It is also gratifying to note that parents appear prominently in a variety of roles in many of the articles in this issue. They provide peer-to-peer support, serve as partners in literacy education, participate in classroom activities, and bring child-centered values and approaches from school to home. They are also key members on community councils that design and operate programs and create solutions to the problem of sustainability. One can draw strength and hope from signs that parents—an often unappreciated and underutilized resource—are increasingly recognized as a crucial force for child and family program and policy development.

## Looking Forward

Looking back to our roots and forward to new growth affirms our progress and, I hope, heightens our commitment to work together toward a promising future. For me, the theme “Roots, Renewal, and New Growth” holds special meaning. Becoming Editor of *Educating Children for Democracy* has provided me a personal and professional opportunity for renewal. For the past 17 years I have been directing Georgetown University’s National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health—an organization whose mission is to provide leadership to the maternal and child health community in program devel-

opment, educational resources, and state-of-the-art knowledge. Believing that child development would remain the core discipline and goal of my work, I did not think when I joined the National Center that I was straying far from early childhood education. But I have learned that professions, as well as children, can engage in parallel play. Returning now to my roots in early childhood education, I feel the excitement and promise of new growth. As the articles from London and Kyrgyzstan demonstrate, early childhood education and maternal and child health are primed for a new stage of integration.

I hope readers will find the articles in Issue 5 thought provoking and the children’s artwork delightful. I want to thank the Step by Step Programs in Latvia and Slovenia, Home-Start International, and Save the Children for contributing art and photographs that visually bring to life the ideas expressed in words.

Now, as Issue 5 goes to press, my thoughts turn to Issue 6. Please contribute your suggestions for topics, articles, and artwork. Please also send your comments and reactions to Issue 5, and share with us—to share with others—the articles, experiences, and ideas that influenced your own professional development. We also welcome your thoughts on the future of *Educating Children for Democracy*. I look forward to meeting you and hearing your ideas at the ISSA 5th annual conference in Prague in October. Together we can make the Step by Step journal and network as vibrant and full of promise as the children, families, and teachers we serve.

Rochelle Mayer, Ed.D.  
Editor

# Children and Families

## *“With a Little Help...”: Home-Start International*

by Tanya Barron, Director, Home-Start International, London

### The Origins of Home-Start

**W**e knew we couldn't take on the world, and so it seemed important to focus on families at the beginning of family life, because, after all, the formative first years of a child's life are vital to their future well-being. Yet it is just at that time that parents so often experience particular difficulties and frustrations



of their own—lower income, sleepless nights, relationship problems, and the task of endlessly nurturing and giving of themselves to their young children.”

So said Margaret Harrison, a voluntary work organizer who drew up the plan to begin Home-Start in the early 1970s. This statement sums up the basic aims of Home-Start: to offer support, friendship, and practical help, primarily in people's homes; to prevent family crisis and breakdown; and to help parents enjoy family life.

Home-Start promotes and protects the development of the youngest children through home visiting and parent-to-parent support. Margaret's plan was to start a scheme, with the help of an Urban Aid Grant, to offer support, not just to individual children, but also to the families of these children; families with at least one child under school age. This scheme, which began as Home-Start Leicester,

was launched in 1973 and was run and developed by Margaret over the next eight years.

### The Growth of Home-Start

In 1981 the Home-Start Consultancy (now Home-Start UK) was set up to support an ever-increasing number of such schemes in different communities. The present director, Brian Waller, has helped this work grow to be the largest family support organization in the UK, with over 320 schemes throughout England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

Over the years social policy professionals from many different countries looked at the Home-Start model and felt that as the methods were fairly simple and the costs fairly low, it would be possible to adapt

Home-Start programs are in:

- Australia
- Canada
- Greece
- Hungary
- Ireland
- Israel
- Kenya
- The Netherlands
- Norway
- Russia
- South Africa
- United Kingdom

and adopt Home-Start for themselves.

After gradually developing in other countries over the past twelve years, Home-Start International came to be founded in May 1999 as a UK charitable trust. The mission of Home-Start International is to support and

The basic aims of Home-Start: to offer support, friendship, and practical help, primarily in people's homes; to prevent family crisis and breakdown; and to help parents enjoy family life.

promote the development of Home-Start in other countries and to encourage the exchange of ideas and information among Home-Start organizations around the world. An International Advisory Group, with representatives from each of the countries where Home-Start already exists, meets regularly to provide advice to the director. Home-Start International continues to flourish, with over 400 schemes across 12 countries.

## Underlying Values and Approach

Much of the success of all these schemes is due to the ethos and approach of Home-Start. The logo itself, the "Ancient Symbol of Friendship," denotes partnership, which is fundamental to this program.

Two words that ring loudly from this approach are "volunteer" and "choice."

A country or community will choose to have a Home-Start scheme. Non-paid volunteers who choose to work for Home-Start offer support. Families choose to have Home-Start support, so the relationship between the Home-Start volunteer and the family is established by choice. Another key to the organization's success is that a Home-Start volunteer does not represent authority. This eases the way for the essentials such as trust, cooperation, and good communication to play their part and for the parents themselves to have a genuine choice as to whether or not they wish to accept a Home-Start volunteer into their home. These volunteers are often parents from the same neighborhood, who are trained

and matched to families facing difficulties.

Common problems encountered by Home-Start families are isolation and exhaustion. These problems have been encountered, for example, in New South Wales, Australia, where many women live in rural areas, often



with a large number of children. Their husbands are away in the city looking for work, and their only contact and

conversation is with their children and no other adults, often for days on end. There are no support services, nor are there schools. This can often lead to the children being neglected, not because the women are terrible mothers, but because they are depressed. Volunteers may have to make very long journeys to visit each family. As well as the much-needed visits, Home-Start volunteers organize get-togethers where possible. These are often held in public spaces such as railway stations because of the lack of community services.

Other difficulties that many parents face are lack of self-esteem and self-confidence, feeling overwhelmed and unable to function, not being able to leave the house because of the number of children, being a single parent, or having children with special needs—sometimes all of these things combined.

## One Family's Story

One case study that illustrates these difficulties well is that of a two-parent family with six children, including a set of twins, living in a rented council house. The mother had not had a stable home life in her childhood, having been put into care several times. She was therefore worried about her own parenting skills. She had her first baby when she was nineteen and, on the advice of her social worker, attended a course on child development. She now chooses not to seek paid employment. The father, however, is in full-time employment. He is also a registered disabled. He works long hours, and the

mother feels very isolated. She has no family support and feels that neighbours are cold and unfriendly.

All the members of the family have had health problems, including whooping cough in the baby twins, and bedwetting in the nine-year-old daughter. The parents use the services of their GP, baby clinic, hospital, and social services but have great difficulty, due to expense and access, in reaching the hospital. It is over an hour's journey away, and they have no car.

A volunteer was introduced. During the first three months she spent a total of 57 hours with the family, with visits ranging from 3 to 4.5 hours. Each month the volunteer accompanied the mother to the baby clinic. Sometimes she took the children to school, sometimes to the park on an outing. She also took them swimming. Taking the children on outings gave the mother some time to herself. Instances of direct support for the mother

Social policy professionals from many different countries felt that as the methods were simple and the costs fairly low, it would be possible to adapt and adopt Home-Start for themselves.

varied but steadily increased. Each time the volunteer visited, she played and read to the children, helped with the babies, and changed nappies. She also began encouraging parental involvement in children's play, took toys for the children, and gently introduced some entertaining activities for the family to do together. Emotional support remained fairly constant and was the most frequent type of support throughout the period.

No one can say that without the volunteer's involvement, this mother would have found it impossible to cope and become a crisis case. It does appear however that a "dangerous corner" was passed and that underlying stresses that could militate against the well being of the family were being voiced and confronted.

## Cultural Adaptations of the Home-Start Model

Some problems dealt with relate to specific countries more so than others.

- In Norway people are sensitive about privacy, and so Home-Start helps people to share their problems with others.
- The work done by volunteers in Russia often helps to keep children at home, rather than automatically placing them in an institution or orphanage as a first step. They also help build confidence in parents of children with special needs, encouraging them to take the children out into the community and helping them make friends, rather than hiding them away, fearful of what people may think. This also benefits other children in the family, because they can then invite their friends home and lead a more normal life.
- In Hungary the program tends to concentrate on families with more than three children.
- Amongst the Druze community in Mount Carmel, northern Israel, it is unacceptable for a woman to go to a stranger's house unaccompanied, and so Home-Start volunteers usually take their husbands along. This produces the unexpected bonus of the fathers talking to each other and thereby providing an extra layer of support.

## Meeting Universal Needs

The late Mia Kellmer Pringle in her book, *The Needs of Children*, states that every child needs love and security, praise and recognition, new experiences and responsibility. Margaret Harrison found that to be exactly what the parents needed for themselves: the love and security of a volunteer who cares about them first, new experiences, ideas, and someone to acknowledge and support their responsibility as parents.

All over the world the most common reason why parents want help from Home-Start is loneliness and isolation. Home-Start succeeds because of one simple principle: to provide help and friendship to struggling families with very young children. With its low cost operation, sustainable even in low-income countries, Home-Start goes a long way toward helping families find the friendship and support they need.

# Classroom Practices



## *Development as the Aim of Education*

by Lawrence Kohlberg, Ph.D., and Rochelle Mayer, Ed.D.

### Three Streams of Educational Ideology

**T**here have been three broad streams in the development of Western educational ideology. While their detailed statements vary from generation to generation, each stream exhibits a continuity based upon particular assumptions of psychological development.

#### Romanticism

The first stream of thought, the “romantic,” commences with Rousseau and is currently represented by Freud’s and Gesell’s followers. A. S. Neill’s Summerhill represents an example of a school based on these principles.

Romantics hold that what comes from within the child is the most important aspect of development; therefore the pedagogical environment should be permissive enough to allow the inner “good” (abilities and social virtues) to unfold and the inner “bad” to come under

control. Thus teaching the child the ideas and attitudes of others through rote or drill would result in meaningless learning and the suppression of inner spontaneous tendencies of positive value.

Romantics stress the biological metaphors of “health” and “growth” in equating optimal physical development with bodily health and optimal mental development with mental health. Accordingly, early education should allow the child to work through aspects of emotional development not allowed expres-

**For progressives, the organizing and developing force in the child’s experience is the child’s active thinking, and thinking is stimulated by the problematic, by cognitive conflict.**

sion at home, such as the formation of social relations with peers and adults other than his parents. It should also allow the expression of intellectual questioning and curiosity.

## Cultural Transmission

The origins of the cultural transmission ideology are rooted in the classical academic tradition of Western education. Traditional educators believe that their primary task is the transmission to the present generation of bodies of information and of rules or values collected in the past; they believe that the educator’s job is the direct instruction of such information and rules. The important emphasis, however, is not on the sanctity of the past, but on the view that educating consists of transmitting knowledge, skills, and social and moral rules of the culture. Knowledge and rules of the culture may be rapidly changing or they may be static. In either case, however, it is assumed that education is the transmission of the culturally given.

In contrast to the child-centered romantic school, the cultural transmission school is society-centered. It defines educational ends as the internalization of the values and knowledge of the culture. The cultural transmission school focuses on the child’s need to learn the discipline of the social order, while the

romantic stresses the child’s freedom. The cultural transmission view emphasizes the common and the established, the romantic view stresses the unique, the novel, and the personal.

## Progressivism

The third stream of educational ideology which is still best termed “Progressive,” following Dewey (1938), developed as part of the pragmatic functional-genetic philosophies of the late nineteenth and early

twentieth centuries. As an educational ideology, progressivism holds that education should nourish the child’s natural interaction with a developing society or environment. Unlike the romantics, the progressives do not assume that development is the unfolding of an innate pattern or that the primary aim of edu-

cation is to create an unconflicted environment able to foster healthy development. Instead, they define development as a progression through invariant ordered sequential stages. The educational goal is the eventual attainment of a higher level or stage of development in adulthood, not merely the healthy functioning of the child at a present level. In 1895, Dewey and McLellan suggested the following notion of education for attainment of a higher stage:

Only knowledge of the order and connection of the stages in the development of the psychical functions can insure the full maturing of the psychical powers. Education is the work of supplying the conditions which will enable the psychical functions, as they successively arise, to mature and pass into higher functions in the freest and fullest manner. (p. 207)

In the progressive view, this aim requires an educational environment that actively stimulates development through the presentation of resolvable but genuine problems or conflicts. For progressives, the organizing and developing force in the child’s experience is the child’s active thinking, and thinking is stimulated by the problematic, by cognitive conflict. Educative experience makes the child think—think in ways which

organize both cognition and emotion. Although both the cultural transmission and the progressive views emphasize “knowledge,” only the latter sees the acquisition of “knowledge” as an active change in patterns of thinking brought about by experiential problem-solving situations. Similarly, both views emphasize “morality,” but the progressive sees the acquisition of morality as an active change in patterns of response to problematic social situations

The cognitive-developmental metaphor is not material, it is dialectical; it is a model of the progression of ideas in discourse and conversation...

The child is not a plant or a machine; he is a philosopher or a scientist-poet.

rather than the learning of culturally accepted rules. Morality is neither the internalization of established cultural values nor the unfolding of spontaneous impulses and emotions; it is justice, the reciprocity between the individual and others in his social environment.

## Psychological Theories Underlying Educational Ideologies

We have described three schools of thought describing the general ends and means of education. Central to each of these educational ideologies is a distinctive educational psychology, a distinctive psychological theory of development (Kohlberg, 1968).

Underlying the romantic ideology is a maturationist theory of development; underlying the cultural transmission ideology is an associationistic-learning or environmental-contingency theory of development; and underlying the progressive ideology is a cognitive-developmental or interactionist theory of development.

The three psychological theories described represent three basic metaphors of development (Langer, 1969). The romantic model views the development of the mind through the metaphor of organic growth, the physical growth of a plant or animal. In this metaphor, the environ-

ment affects development by providing necessary nourishment for the naturally growing organism.

Maturationist psychologists elaborating the romantic metaphor conceive of cognitive development as unfolding through prepatterned stages. They have usually assumed not only that cognitive development unfolds but that individual variations in rate of cognitive development are largely in-born. Emotional development is also believed to unfold through hereditary stages, such as the Freudian

psychosexual stages, but is thought to be vulnerable to fixation and frustration by the environment. For the maturationist, although both cognitive and social-emotional development unfold, they are two different things. Since social-emotional development is an unfolding of something biologically given and is not based on knowledge of the social world, it does not depend upon cognitive growth.

The cultural transmission model views the development of the mind through the metaphor of the machine. The machine may be the wax on which the environment transcribes its markings, it may be the telephone switchboard through which environmental stimulus-energies are transmitted, or it may be the computer in which bits of information from the environment are stored, retrieved, and recombined. In any case, the environment is seen as “input,” as information or energy more or less directly transmitted to, and accumulated in, the organism. The organism in turn emits “output” behavior. Underlying the mechanistic metaphor is the associationistic, stimulus-response or environmentalist psychological theory, which can be traced from John Locke to Thorndike to B. F. Skinner. This psychology views both specific concepts and general cognitive structures as reflections of structures that exist outside the child in the physical and social world. The structure of the child’s concepts or of his behavior is viewed as the result of the association of discrete stimuli with one another, with the child’s responses, and with his experiences of pleasure and pain. Cognitive development is the result of guided learning and teaching. Consequently, cognitive education requires a careful statement of desirable

behavior patterns described in terms of specific responses. Implied here is the idea that the child's behavior can be shaped by immediate repetition and



elaboration of the correct response, and by association with feedback or reward.

The cognitive-developmental metaphor is not material, it is dialectical; it is a model of the progression of ideas in discourse and conversation. In the dialectical metaphor, a core of universal ideas are redefined and reorganized as their implications are played out in experience and as they are confronted by their opposites in argument and discourse. These reorganizations define qualitative levels of thought, levels of increased epistemic adequacy. The child is not a plant or a machine; he is a philosopher or a scientist-poet. The dialectical metaphor of progressive education is supported by a cognitive-developmental or interactional psychological theory. Discarding the dichotomy between maturation and environmentally determined learning, Piaget and Dewey claim that mature thought emerges through a process of development that is neither direct biological maturation nor direct learning, but rather a reorganization of psychological structures resulting from organism-environment interactions.

As applied to educational intervention, the theory holds that facilitating the child's movement to the next step of development involves exposure to the next higher level of thought and conflict requiring the active application of the current level of thought to problematic situations. This implies: 1) attention to the child's mode or styles of thought, i.e., stage; 2) match of stimulation to that stage, e.g., exposure to modes of reasoning one stage above the child's own; 3) arousal, among children, of genuine cognitive and social conflict and disagreement about problematic situations (in contrast to traditional education which has stressed adult "right answers" and has reinforced "behaving well"); and 4) exposure to

stimuli toward which the child can be active, in which assimilatory response to the stimulus-situation is associated with "natural" feedback.

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# The Having of Wonderful Ideas

by Eleanor Duckworth

Recently, I reviewed some classic Piaget interviews with a few children, to show them to a friend. One involved a series of lengths. I had cut 10 cellophane drinking straws into different lengths and asked the children to put them in order, from smallest to biggest. The first two 7 year olds did it with no difficulty and little interest. Then came Kevin. Before I said a word about the straws, he picked them up and said to me, "I know what I'm going to do," and proceeded, on his own, to seriate them by length. He didn't mean, "I know what you're going to ask me to do." He meant, "I have a wonderful idea about what to do with these straws. You'll be surprised by my wonderful idea."

It wasn't easy for him. He needed a good deal of trial and error as he set about developing his system. But he was so pleased with himself when he accomplished his self-set task that when I decided to offer them to him to keep (10 whole drinking straws!), he glowed with joy, showed them to one or two select friends, and stored them away with other treasures in a shoe box.

The having of wonderful ideas is what I consider to

## The having of wonderful ideas is what I consider to be the essence of intellectual development.

be the essence of intellectual development. And I consider it the essence of pedagogy to give Kevin the occasion to have his wonderful ideas and to let him feel good about himself for having them. To develop this point of view and to indicate where Piaget fits in for me, I need to start with some autobiography, and I apologize for that, but it was a struggle of some years' duration for me to see how Piaget was relevant to schools at all.

I had never heard of Piaget when I first sat in a class of his in Paris in 1957; I had just received a bachelor's degree in philosophy, and it was as a philosopher that Piaget won me. In fact, he won me to such an extent that I spent 2 years in Geneva as a graduate stu-

dent and research assistant. Then in 1962 I began to pay attention to schools, when, as a Ph.D. dropout, I accepted a job developing elementary science curriculum, and found myself in the midst of an exciting circle of educators.

The colleagues I admired most got along very well without any special knowledge of psychology. They trusted their own insights about when and how children were learning, and they were right. Their insights

were excellent. Moreover, they were especially distrustful of Piaget. He had not yet appeared on the cover of *Saturday Review* or *The New York Times Magazine*, and they had their own picture of him: a severe, humorless

intellectual confronting a small child with questions that were surely incomprehensible, while the child tried to tell from the look in his eyes what the answer was supposed to be. No wonder the child couldn't think straight. (More than one of these colleagues first started to pay attention to Piaget when they saw a photo of him. He may be Swiss, but he doesn't look like Calvin! Maybe he can talk to children after all.)

I myself didn't know what to think. My colleagues did not seem to be any the worse for not taking Piaget seriously. Nor, I had to admit, did I seem to be any the better. Schools were such complicated places compared with psychology labs that I couldn't find a way to be of any special help. Not only did Piaget seem to be irrele-

vant, I was no longer sure that he was right. For a couple of years, I scarcely ever mentioned him and simply went about the business of trying to be helpful, with no single instance, as I recall, of drawing directly on any of his specific findings.

The lowest point came when one of my colleagues gleefully showed me an essay written in a first grade by 6-year-old Stephanie. The children had been investigating capillary tubes, and were looking at the differences in the height of the water as a function of the diameter of the tube. Stephanie's essay read as follows: "I know why it looks like there's more in the skinny tube.

Because it's higher. But the other is fatter, so they're the same."

My colleague triumphantly took this statement as proof that 6 year olds can reason about the compensation of two dimensions. I didn't know what to say. Of course, it should have been simple. Some 6 year olds can reason about compensations. The ages that Piaget mentions are only norms, not universals. Children develop at a variety of speeds. Some children develop slower and some develop faster. But I was so unsure of myself at that point, that this incident shook me badly, and all of that only sounded like a lame excuse.

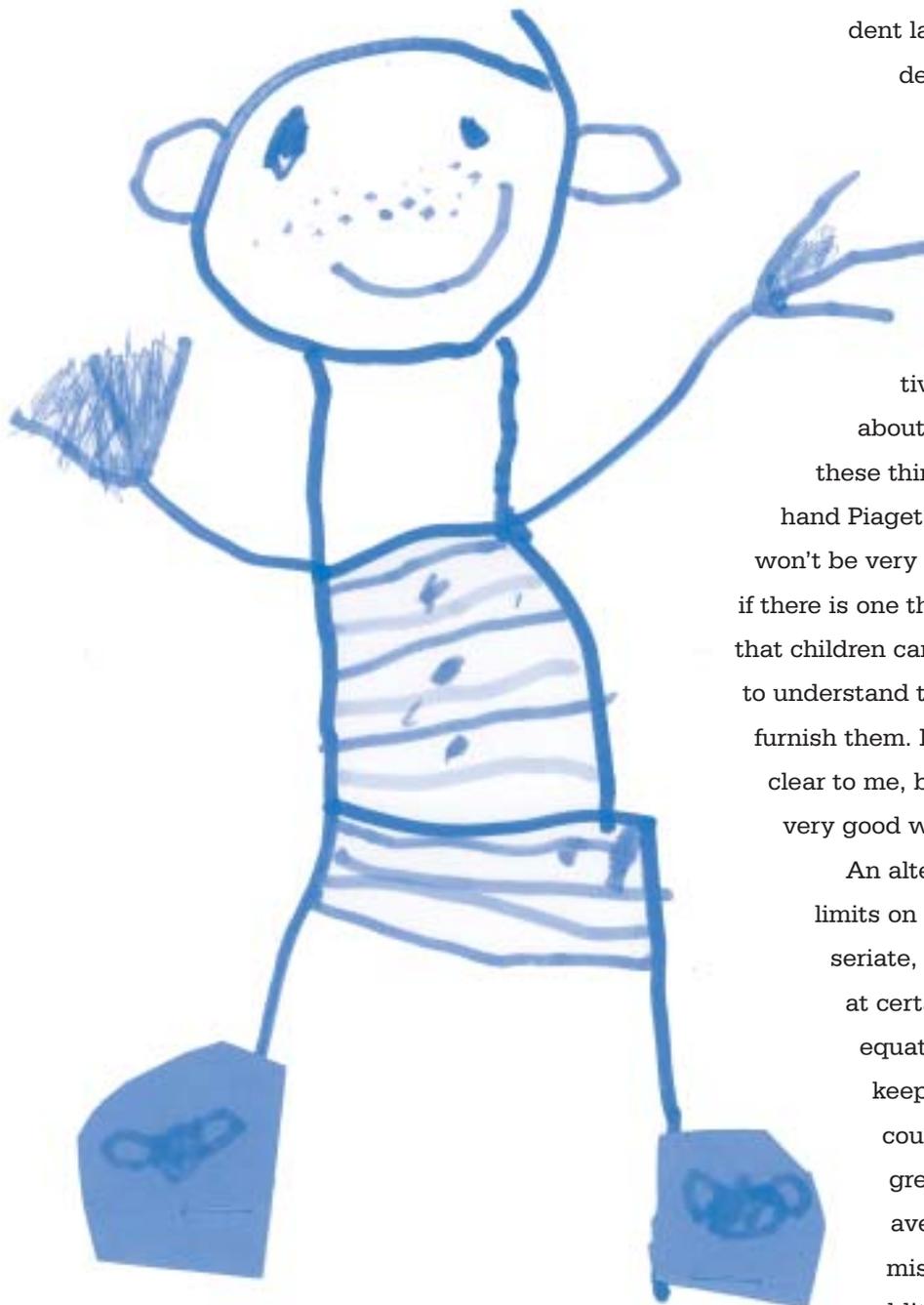
I do have something else to say about that incident later. For now, I shall simply try to describe my struggle.

Even if I did believe that Piaget was right, how could he be helpful?

If the main thing that we take from Piaget is that before certain ages children are unable to understand certain things—conservation, transitivity, spatial coordinates—what do we do

about it? Do we try to teach the children these things? Probably not, because on the one hand Piaget leads us to believe that we probably won't be very successful at it; and on the other hand, if there is one thing we have learned from Piaget it is that children can be left to their own devices in coming to understand these notions. We don't have to try to furnish them. It took a few months before that was clear to me, but I did conclude that this was not a very good way to make use of Piaget.

An alternative might be to keep in mind the limits on children's abilities to classify, conserve, seriate, etc., when deciding what to teach them at certain ages. However, I found this an inadequate criterion. There was so much else to keep in mind. The most obvious reason, of course, was that any class of children has a great diversity of levels. Tailoring to an average level of development is sure to miss a large proportion of the children. In addition, a Piaget psychologist has no



monopoly here. When trying to approximate the abilities of a group of children of a given age, able teachers like my colleagues could make as good approximations as I.

What I found most appealing was that the people with whom I was working judged the merits of any suggestion by how well it worked in classrooms. That is, instead of deciding on a priori grounds *what* children *ought* to know, or what they *ought* to be able to do at a certain age, they found activities, lessons, points of departure that would engage children in real classrooms, with real teachers. In their view, it was easy to devise all-embracing schemes of how science (as it was

## Sensitivity to children in classrooms continued to be central in my own development. As a framework for thinking about learning, my understanding of Piaget has been invaluable.

in this instance) could be organized for children, but to make things work pedagogically in classrooms was the difficult part. They started with the difficult part. A theory of intellectual development might have been the basis of a theoretical framework of a curriculum. But in making things work in a classroom, it was but a small part compared with finding ways to interest children, to take into account different children's interests and abilities, to help teachers with no special training in the subject, and so forth. So, the burden of this curriculum effort was classroom trials. The criterion was whether or not they worked, and their working depended only in part on their being at the right intellectual level for the children. They might be perfectly all right, from the point of view of intellectual demands, and yet fall short in other ways. Most often, it was a complex combination.

As I was struggling to find some framework within which my knowledge of Piaget would be useful, I found, more or less incidentally, that I was starting to be useful myself. As an observer for some of the pilot teaching of this program, and later as a pilot teacher myself, I found that I had some good insights into intellectual difficul-

ties that children encountered. I had a certain skill in being able to watch and listen to children and figure out how they were really seeing the problem. This led to a certain ability to raise questions that made sense to the children or to think of a new orientation for the whole activity that might correspond better to their way of seeing things. I don't want to suggest that I was unique in this. Many of the excellent teachers with whom I was in contact had similar insights, as did many of the mathematicians and scientists among my colleagues, who, from their points of view, could tell when children were seeing things differently from the ways they did. But the

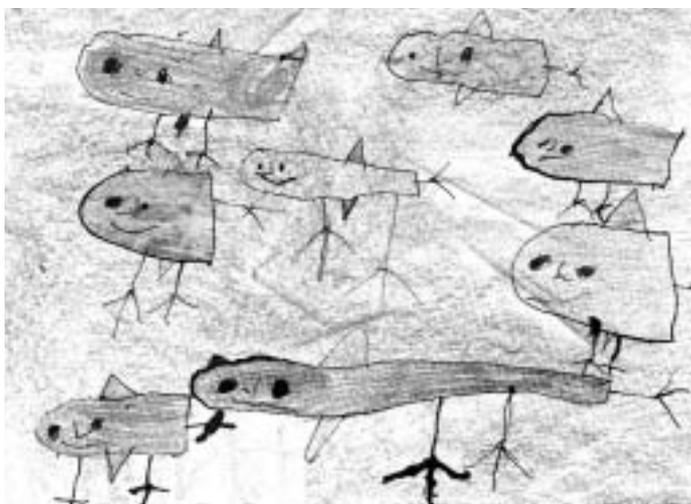
question of whether or not I was unique is not really pertinent. For me, through my experience with Piaget of working closely with one child at a time and trying to figure out what was really in his mind, I had gained a wonderful background for being sensitive to children in classrooms. I feel that a certain amount of this kind of background would be

similarly useful for every teacher.

This sensitivity to children in classrooms continued to be central in my own development. As a framework for thinking about learning, my understanding of Piaget has been invaluable. This understanding, however, has also been deepened by working with teachers and children. I may be able to shed some light on that mutual relationship by referring again to 6-year-old Stephanie's essay on compensation. Few of us, looking at water rise in capillary tubes of different diameters, would bother to wonder whether the quantities are the same. Nobody asked Stephanie to make that comparison and, in fact, it is impossible to tell just by looking. On her own, she felt it was a significant thing to comment upon. I take that as an indication that for her it was a wonderful idea. Not long before, she believed that there was more water in the tube in which the water was higher. She had recently won her own intellectual struggle on that issue, and she wanted to point out her finding to the world for the benefit of those who might be taken in by preliminary appearances.

This incident, once I had figured it out, helped me think about a point that had bothered me in one of

Piaget's anecdotes. You may recall Piaget's account of a mathematician friend who inspired his studies of the conservation of numbers. This man told Piaget about an incident from his childhood, where he counted a number of pebbles he had set out in a line. Having counted them from left to right and found there were 10, he decided to see how many there would be if he counted them from right to left. Intrigued to find that there were still 10, he put them in a different arrangement and counted them again. He kept rearranging and counting them until he decided that, no matter what the arrangement, he was always going to find that there were 10. Number is independent of the order of counting.



My problem was this: in Piaget's accounts of his subjects, if 10 eggs are spread out so they take more space than 10 egg cups, a classic nonconservator will maintain that there are more eggs than egg cups, even if he counts and finds that he comes to 10 in both cases. Counting is not sufficient to convince him that there are enough egg cups for all the eggs. How is it, then, that for the mathematician, counting was sufficient? If he was a nonconservator at the time, counting should not have made any difference. If he was a conservator, he should have known from the start that it would always come out the same.

I think it must be that the whole enterprise was his own wonderful idea. He raised the question for himself and figured out for himself how to try to answer it. In essence, I am saying that he was in a transitional moment, and that Stephanie and Kevin were, too. He was at a point where a certain experience fit into cer-

tain thoughts and took him a step forward. A powerful pedagogical point can be made from this. These three instances dramatize it because they deal with children moving ahead with Piaget notions, which are usually difficult to advance on the basis of any one experience. The point has two aspects: First, the right question at the right time can move children to peaks in their thinking that result in significant steps forward and real intellectual excitement; and, second, although it is almost impossible for an adult to know exactly the right time to ask a specific question of a specific child—especially for a teacher who is concerned with 30 or more children—children can raise the right question for themselves if the setting is right. Once the right question is raised, they are moved to tax themselves to the fullest to find an answer. The answers did not come easily in any of these three cases, but the children were prepared to work them through. Having confidence in one's ideas does not mean, "I know my ideas are right"; it means, "I am willing to try out my ideas."

As I put together experiences like these and continued to think about them, I started developing some ideas about what education could be and about the relationships between education and intellectual development.

David Hawkins has said of curriculum development, "You don't want to cover a subject; you want to uncover it." That, it seems to me, is what schools should be about. They can help to uncover parts of the world which children would not otherwise know how to tackle. All kinds of things are hidden from us—even though they surround us—unless we know how to reach out for them. Schools and teachers can provide materials and questions in ways that suggest things to be done with them; and children, in the doing, cannot help being inventive.

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# Play as a Growth Process

by Barbara Biber, Ph.D.

**W**hat do we have in mind when we think of play? What do children do when they play? Children's play has the quality of intense, absorbing experience, a bit of life lived richly and fully. There is zest and wonder and drama and a special kind of immediacy that is without thought for the passing of time. There is nothing to be accomplished, no sense of what is right or wrong to check the flow of spontaneity, no direction to follow. Whatever is at hand can become the suitable materials for play. The essence of the play experience is subjective, something within the child that may not necessarily become obvious to the one who observes the course or the form of his activity.

Play as an activity may take any one of numberless forms. It may be just physical activity, an overflow of energy, of exuberance. Besides running, skipping, hopping, children like to slide, seesaw and swing. Although these play experiences require a degree of patterning in coordination, they belong among the natural playful uses which a child makes of his body. If his play is as free as his energy is boundless, he is likely to embroider the basic patterns: he soon finds it more fun to hop on one foot, to slide down on his belly instead of his bottom, to swing standing up.

Playing may be something quite different from the lively expression of physical energies. It may take quite delicate forms such as playing with sounds and words. The chanting of younger children, the nonsense rhyming of the older ones are play forms.

The child is playing when, with his hands, he impresses himself on things around him. He pounds the clay and smears the paint. He creates with blocks even when he is only stacking them high or lining them up low. He makes the mud take shape. He fits things together and takes them apart. There is pleasure and



satisfaction in what one's hands can make of the physical world and the child, in his playful re-making of the world around him, lays the cornerstone of his feeling about himself in relation to that world.

## Play Fosters Security, Strength

Now we come to the world of play that is most challenging and enticing: dramatic play. Here the child can take flight. He needs no longer be a child. He can make himself over and be a wolf or an engineer or a mother or a baby who is crying. He can re-create the world not only as he really experiences it but even in the strange aspects that symbolize some of his deepest wishes and fears. It is this kind of play—or rather the values that it has for growth—that I would like to talk about most today.

What do play experiences do for child growth? If a child can have a really full wholesome experience with play, he will be having the most wholesome kind of fun that a child can have. For a child to have fun is basic to his future happiness. His early childhood play may become the basic substance out of which he lays down one of his life patterns, namely, not only that one can *have* fun but that one can *create* fun. Most of us as adults enjoy only a watered-down manufactured kind of fun—going to the movies, shopping, listening to a concert, or seeing a baseball game and do not feel secure that some of the deepest resources for happiness lie within ourselves, free of a price of admission. This is one of these securities that compose a positive attitude toward life, in general.

**Children's play has the quality of intense, absorbing experience, a bit of life lived richly and fully.**

In dramatic play, children also find a sense of confidence in their own impulses. There are no directions to follow, no rules to stick to. Whatever they do will be good and right. Wherever their impulses lead them, that is the way to follow. This is the freedom children should have in their play, an absence of boundaries and pre-

scriptions that we cannot grant them outside of their play lives.

Another important by-product of play is the feeling of strength it yields to the child, a relief from the feelings of powerlessness and helplessness that many children feel keenly as junior members of our well-ordered adult world. In play we give them an opportunity to counteract this powerlessness to a degree. It is the child's chance to lay the plans, to judge what is best, to create the sequence of events. Dramatic play is one of the basic ways in which children can try out their talents for structuring life. The fact that they deal with symbols rather than realities does not detract from the sense of mastery.

## Play Brings the World Close

**A**s you watch children playing, you see the ingredients of the child world spread out before you, differing in complexity and elaboration according to the level of maturity. When a two or three year old plays train, he does so simply. The train goes. It makes sounds. Just a block and a child saying "choo" may be Johnnie's idea of a train but very soon he meets up with Mary who has been very much impressed with the odd way that people sit in trains, looking at each other's backs. To another child in the group a train is not a train unless it whistles. Soon, a composite train emerges: it goes, it says "Choo," it whistles intermittently, people sit in it one behind the other. Children, at all levels, pool their ideas in free dramatic play, expose each other to new impressions, stimulate each other to new wondering and questioning. Can we fail to recognize this

process as learning? Can we neglect to notice that here is learning going on in a social atmosphere full of pleasure and delight? In re-living and freely dramatizing his experience the child is thinking at his own pace with other children. He is learning in the best possible way.

More than that, the ways of the world are becoming delicious to him. He is tasting and re-tasting life in his own terms and finding it full of delight and interest. He projects his own pattern of the world into the play and in so doing, brings the real world closer to himself. *He is*

*building the feeling that the world is his, to understand, to interpret, to puzzle about, to make over. For the future, we need citizens in whom these attitudes are deeply ingrained.*

## Play is Not Logical

**W**e would be seriously in error, however, were we to assume that all play of young children is clear and logical. Horses are more likely to eat lamb stew than hay and what starts out to be a boat often ends as a kitchen stove without any obviously clear transitions. Often when play violates the line of adult logic we can see that it has a special kind of coherence all its own—perhaps the coherence of an action rather than a thinking pattern. Playing dentist may take the form of sitting on a keg and whirling one's feet around because

**To understand children's play we must loose our imaginations from the restrictions of adulthood and the limitations of logic that is tied in within literalness and objective reality.**

the wonderful dentist's chair is the outstanding recall for the child. Teeth and drills may be altogether omitted while the child accentuates through his play what impressed him most. It makes sense in child terms even though it may not to the adult who is told that the children are playing dentist when what meets the eye looks like a crowd of whirling Dervishes. To understand children's play we must loose our imaginations from the restrictions of adulthood and the limitations of logic that is tied in within literalness and objective reality.

## Should Play Be Guided?

**I**f free play is to yield these values in terms of children's growth needs, it requires a skilled guiding hand, especially where children are collected in groups as they are in nursery schools. There is a way of setting the stage and creating an atmosphere for spontaneous play. Most important in this atmosphere is the teacher's sensitive understanding of her own role. Sometimes the

teacher needs to be ready to guide the play, especially among the fives, sixes and sevens, into channels that are beyond the needs of the nursery years. But she must guide only in terms of the children's growth needs. Her guidance may be in terms of her choice of stories, materials, trips, experiences. It may function through discussions. Without skillful guidance, a free play program for successive years can become stultified and disturbing to children.

One of the main problems with respect to play which we are working through as teachers is—How much shall the teacher (or parent) get involved in the children's play? Shall she correct, suggest, contribute, participate? I don't have the answer, but I hope teachers will continue to think about and talk about this problem. We have left behind the stage of education in which the teacher

was relegated to the background. We have still to discover what are the optimal points at which the adult can step in, offering new material, or ideas to enrich the play. In our teacher training institutes we encourage teachers to have imagination and use it but if you teach this too well, the teachers themselves (and this goes for parents, too) will be expressing themselves in the play, and before you know it they will have taken away the play from the child.

This, naturally, is closely related to the adult personality. Some people intuitively know when it is best to withdraw and take a passive role, when a new idea will not be an intrusion and when stimulation had best be indirect. It behooves us all to think: are we stimulating and developing the children by our active teaching or are we becoming so active that the children are overwhelmed and restricted by the flood of our bright ideas?

## What to Play With?

**D**ay in, day out, we affect children's play by the things we provide for them to play with. We choose equipment and materials with care and thought and have accepted the premise that a good share of play materials should be of the raw variety—things like clay, blocks, paper, mud which the child can freely shape to his own purposes and upon which he can impress his

own pattern. These are in contrast to the finished dolls and trains, trucks and doll dishes which come in finished form and are adapted, as established symbols, into the flow of the child's free play. One of the interesting questions in education today has to do with what balance shall be kept between raw and finished materials, recognizing that each kind serves a different function with respect to play and may meet varying needs of different individual children. This is an area for study and experimentation in which we have made only a fair beginning.

## Play and Feelings

To return briefly to the point that children's play cannot always be understood from the vantage point of logic and realistic accuracy. The inner coherence of play is as often based on emotion as it is on logic or action. If it seems incomprehensible, rambling or slightly insane it is because we cannot read the deep emotional life of children, because we do not understand adequately how feeling can transform thought, at all ages.

We know that children are full of feeling—deep and good, hard and strong feeling. They get mad and glad with intensity. Their feelings are as quick, as volatile as they are deep. This vital aspect of their life experience

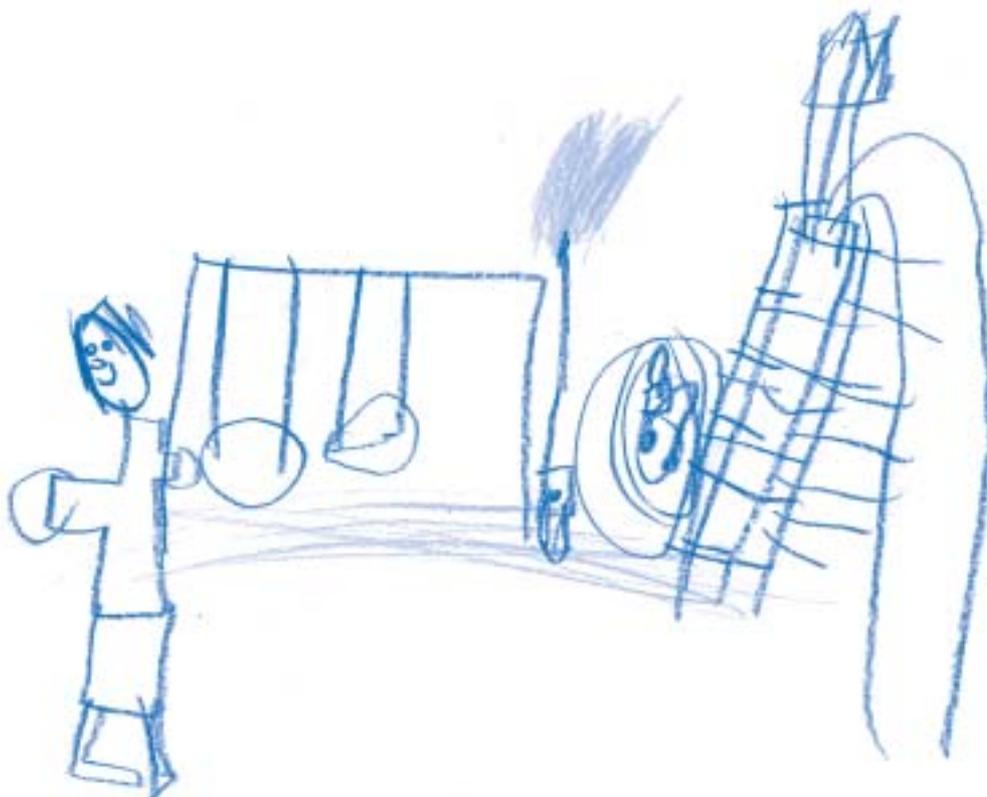
needs outlet through play quite as much as their developing curiosities and their effervescent energies. Many of us who can accept play as a child's way of interpreting life intellectually, often stop short at allowing children full freedom in expressing the feeling aspects of their lives. Or else we make the error of thinking of emotional expression of this kind in terms of negative feeling, of avoiding repression of hostility and such. This, to be sure, is an important aspect of wholesome growth. The chance to express negative feeling through play can save the child considerable anguish. The dolls he is allowed to hit leave him more able to face his real life problems successfully.

But there is the positive aspect of a child's emotional life which should not be overlooked. Covering the doll lovingly with layers of blankets is as deep and important an experience as the smacking and the spanking. What we must remember through all of this is that the child does not necessarily play out what his actual experience has been. He may instead be playing out the residue of feeling which his experience has left with him—quite another dimension, psychologically. It has been possible only to indicate this latter point briefly.

Summing up, we can say that play serves two different growth needs in the early years—*learning about*

*the world* by playing about it (realizing reality) and *finding an outlet for complex and often conflicting emotions* (wherein reality and logic are secondary). We, the adults, need to understand this process more deeply than we do and to continue to improve our techniques for providing experiences through play by means of which the child can freely express feeling and creatively master reality.

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# Enriching the Play Environment

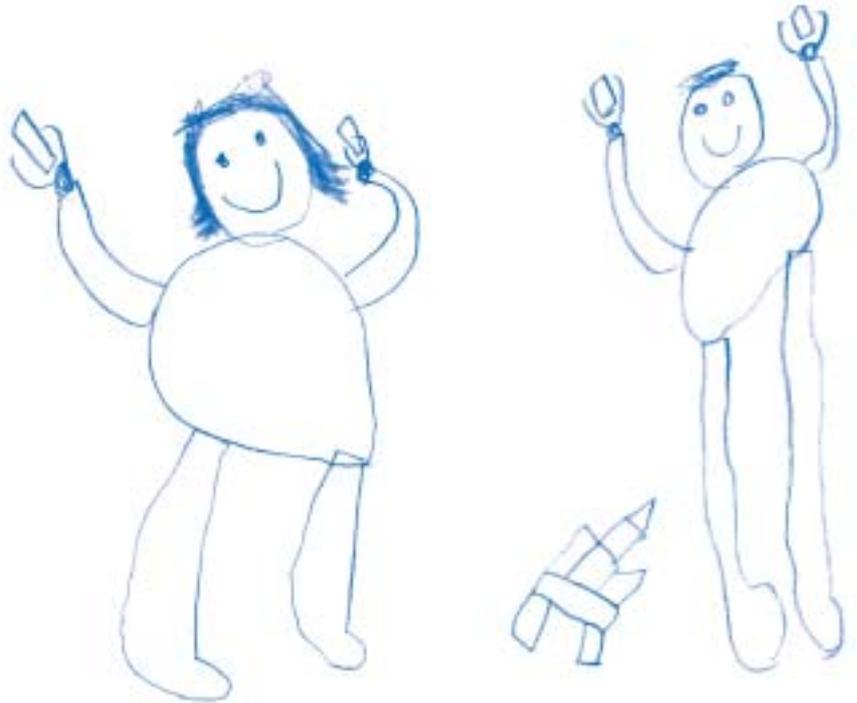
by Dimitar Krastev Dimitrov, Ph.D., Associate Professor, South-West University, Blagoevgrad, Step By Step Program, Bulgaria

**W**hat do we see when we closely observe children at play? It is not unusual to notice that children's play themes, roles, actions, and interactions are often repetitious. Sometimes a child who has had a specific experience introduces a new play theme. This child may want to bring his impressions of a visit to the doctor, the zoo, or a construction site to the classroom, but he may encounter difficulties. For example, the child may not know enough about the people who do these jobs to imitate their actions and ideas, or he may be unable to re-create the experience because of a lack of resources that represent the experience (i.e. zoo animals, doctor's equipment, or building tools). In some cases, specific children, usually the group leaders, impose one play theme in which they are especially successful and are not interested in what their partners wish.

## Understanding Children's Play

Through careful observation and intervention, teachers can help children overcome the difficulties they encounter in play and stimulate their development. A teacher who understands and is familiar with the wide range of children's interests and abilities can help guide the selection of themes and materials to introduce into play activities. In designing play activities, teachers seek to meet the children's interests so that they can enjoy re-creating their experiences and interacting with each other. Optimizing the play environment helps to foster children's cognitive, social-emotional, and moral development.

One of the most effective ways to promote optimal learning experiences is to enrich and vary the materials



in the environment. Activity centers—a hallmark of child-oriented classrooms—are designed to stimulate learning with age-appropriate materials and activities. Young children, ages three to four, enjoy using image toys (puppets, bears, rabbits, heroes from comics, stories, and TV serials) to imitate actions. Older children, ages five to six, more often use objects or substitutes for objects, which to an increasing extent are abstract. Teachers can, through observing children's play and the emergence of new competencies, enhance the learning environment by including more diverse and complex themes and materials.

## Choosing Play Materials

Suggestions for organizing and enhancing the learning environment, starting with the youngest children, are listed below:

- Early on, and for a short time (two to three months), include large building blocks, construction materials,

and toys that support real-life activities.

- Gradually change the ratio of materials in favor of plot toys such as puppets, plush animals, famous heroes, and other role models.
- Include a range of play materials that can be used for the same purpose and function. For example, include a play syringe, but also a pencil or a wooden stick that could be used to recreate an injection at the doctor's office.
- Create themes related to home (domestic) and work (professions) that can be enriched according to the growing knowledge and interests of the children and their surrounding social world (acting as the cook, the doctor, the carpenter, the driver, the sales woman, or the mother).

Through careful observation and intervention, teachers can help children overcome the difficulties they encounter in play and stimulate their development.

- Develop play themes that are open-ended so the children can use their imaginations with one material. For example, for traveling, the same chair or wheel can be used to represent travel by bus, train, ship, or airplane.
- Include materials that support a defined character role (mother, doctor, builder) as well as different objects that can be used for many roles (blocks that can be used as a hammer, step stool, or wood for a fireplace).
- Choose materials and toys that help children transition from concrete to abstract thinking. Include materials that can substitute for real objects and serve similar functions.
- Include toys and construction materials that children can use individually, as well as materials that invite cooperative play and interaction such as large-scale objects for building.
- Over time, increase the materials and play themes related to a variety of realistic professional spheres (services, trade, transport, and entertainment) and

decrease the materials dedicated to everyday life and the family.

- Add multi-functional materials that allow the children to create their own themes. Include pictures and models for children to use as a starting point.

## Promoting Development

By changing and enhancing play materials, the teacher does not need to engage in direct instruction but rather allows the children to create situations and experiences using materials from different activity centers in complex ways. Organizing the classroom with complex and different types of materials allows learning to take place through varied experiences.

As children continue to develop, they learn to organize and utilize the materials in the environment with increasing initiative and independence. To facilitate this process, it is important for play materials to become more complex, moving from real or like-real objects toward object substitutes and multi-use play materials. This change occurs gradually, taking into consideration the characteristics of the toys and of the objects that can substitute for them.

When children's interests and needs are recognized and their growing capacity to reason and develop social relationships are observed, the teacher has the information necessary to stimulate development. As children develop, they gradually transition from individual play to cooperative play and engage in role modeling. The first step is usually one-to-one interaction with two mutually supporting roles such as mother and child, child purchaser and vendor, or doctor and patient. As the play develops, other characters and roles are included, making the play more complex and interactive. The themes may be directed by one or two children and are often repeated to include more characters in a comprehensive story taken from well-known children's tales, comics, or TV programs.

By enriching the classroom environment with play materials, the complementary unity between the needs of children and the role of the teacher as a facilitator of children's development is achieved.

# Child-Made Books: A Pathway To Literacy

by Daiga Bernaua, Primary Teacher, Saulkrasti Secondary School, Saulkrasti, Latvia

**I** am writing! I can write!" Children expressed these excited and happy words on the first days of their journey as book writers. As a primary teacher in the Step by Step Program, I have first-hand experience using child-made books successfully in primary education. This method has not only made learning to read and to write

a successful and pleasurable experience for the children but also a gratifying experience for myself, as a teacher.

## Promoting Skill Development

**L**iteracy is a fundamental skill critical to the goal of helping children develop into open, creative, and productive citizens. It is important to lay a strong foundation for literacy in the early years. The

**Child-made books help children express their ideas freely and develop writing and reading skills with interest and enjoyment.**

method of child-made books helps children express their ideas freely and develop writing and reading



*My Holiday, Krista Limane, age 7*

skills with interest and enjoyment. The method begins simply, by asking children to observe their surrounding environment: the classroom, the yard, nature, animals. They share what they see, making logical and comprehensible observations appropriate to their age. Then they put their impressions on paper.

## Individual differences

**T**his approach does not proceed without spelling or other kinds of mistakes. Not at all. As their first books reveal, the children were shy and unsteady writers and readers at the beginning of the school year. Over the course of first grade their progress was uneven and individual. Some children used single words on a page, while others quickly

progressed to forming a sentence or short text. Some children used lines to organize their writing, while others wrote their words freely across the whole page. In some books the children's spelling was good or even perfect; in others, far from it. But by the end of the year, all of the children had turned into self-confident authors.

The main task for me as a teacher was to encourage the children to freely express their thoughts, master letter shapes, and develop their reading and writing skills without being afraid to make mistakes and without tears. Traditional methods of teaching reading and writing can be tedious, boring, and stressful as children try to decipher long texts with unknown words. In contrast, book making is not monotonous or tiring to children. The choice of topics

## Children's first experiences, emotions, and adventures are captured in "My Toy," "The Zoo," "My Friend," "My Cat," and "Christmas in Our Home."

appropriate to the children's interest is of great importance. The language children use is simple, original, and based on their experience. Children are also encouraged to make illustrations and appliques. The book-making process promotes children's fantasy and self-esteem. If a child does not excel in writing, he or she still has a chance to succeed in drawing and making decorations. Over time, writing skills develop.

### Teacher and self-assessment

I gained a lot of information from the child-made books about individual children's knowledge and about their skills to find the necessary information. I had the chance to follow and better understand the process of each child's development. Throughout the year children could observe and assess the development of their own writing skills. When the children were ready, I paid more attention to sentence formation and spelling. For some, this was sooner than for others.

## Creating Opportunities for Book Making

Throughout the year I varied the process of book making as much as possible. The children made individual books and each family made a family book. In the classroom we practised making books in large and small groups. I also created situations for children to develop their skills by trying out different roles in the group book making process: as a generator of new ideas, a corrector, a secretary, or an artist.

### Book making with parents

Each child enters school directly from the family—a world that is different and unique for each child. Each family made their own family book. Parents could write about their childhood and share experiences that made them feel closer to their children. Creating books together with their children provided an opportunity for parents to become engaged in their

child's learning beyond classroom festivities. Parents valued the opportunity to learn more about their child's interests and to gain knowledge about the development of their child's thinking, reading, writing, and drawing skills. At the beginning of the school year parents created large-size reading books with big capital letters and illustrations, interesting plots, and autographs. The children were really proud of



what their parents had created; they read the books themselves and showed them to other children. The family books helped maintain and strengthen the important link between parents and school, with the child in the center.



Cat, Ieva Krauze, age 8

## Book making in groups

One of the Step by Step classroom principles is to teach and motivate children to work cooperatively in groups to reach a common goal. Book making in groups helped children achieve this experience. The choice of group depended on the child's choice of topic and the needs of the group. They formed groups

The family books helped maintain and strengthen the important link between parents and school, with the child in the center.

in different ways—according to their interests, by choice of group members, or self-selection. By working together, children learned to evaluate their skills and to choose appropriate tasks. Throughout the year the children learned how to implement their interests and wishes, how to exchange inspiration and new

ideas, how to respect the other person's point of view, and how to evaluate their work. As a collective outcome, each book showed its creators how skillful they had been in cooperation, channelling individual interests and marshalling different skills to achieve a common goal.

## Engendering a Love of Learning and of Teaching

We used the child-made books in many different ways. Children read and re-read both their own books and those written by their classmates with great interest and love throughout the school year. As children read their books to each other, they realized that the text had to be written clearly and legibly, with attractive designs, so that others could understand their message. The books were used in reading lessons. As the number of books gradually increased, we started our own classroom library. We also used child-made books to create an exchange library with students from the other classes.

The first books will remain as memories about the first year at school. Children's first experiences, emotions, and adventures are captured in "My Toy," "The Zoo," "My Friend," "My Cat," and "Christmas in Our Home." The books about the adventures of Pika the mouse—our symbol of the Step by Step Program in Latvia—will always remain unforgettable.

I joined the Step by Step Program with the first grade in 1998. I stayed with this class until they graduated primary school in 2002. Now, after four years of experience in the primary grades, I am returning to first grade with the next Step by Step class. During these years my fellow teachers and I have experienced the positive results of different child-centered methods offered by the program. I have not only changed methods of work in the classroom, I have changed myself: I am no longer afraid to try new things and do "something wrong." The everyday progress of children encourages us, as Step by Step teachers, to be active, creative, self-confident, and at the same time responsible for our work.

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# *Evaluation of the Step by Step Program in Azerbaijan*

by Elmina Mobilqizi Kazimade, Education Director, Open Society Institute-Assistance Foundation, Azerbaijan; Ulviya Mikailova, Step by Step Program Director for Preschools and Primary Education, Azerbaijan; Michelle J. Neuman, National Center for Children and Families, Teachers College, Columbia University; and Laura Valdiviezo, International and Educational Development Program, Teachers College, Columbia University

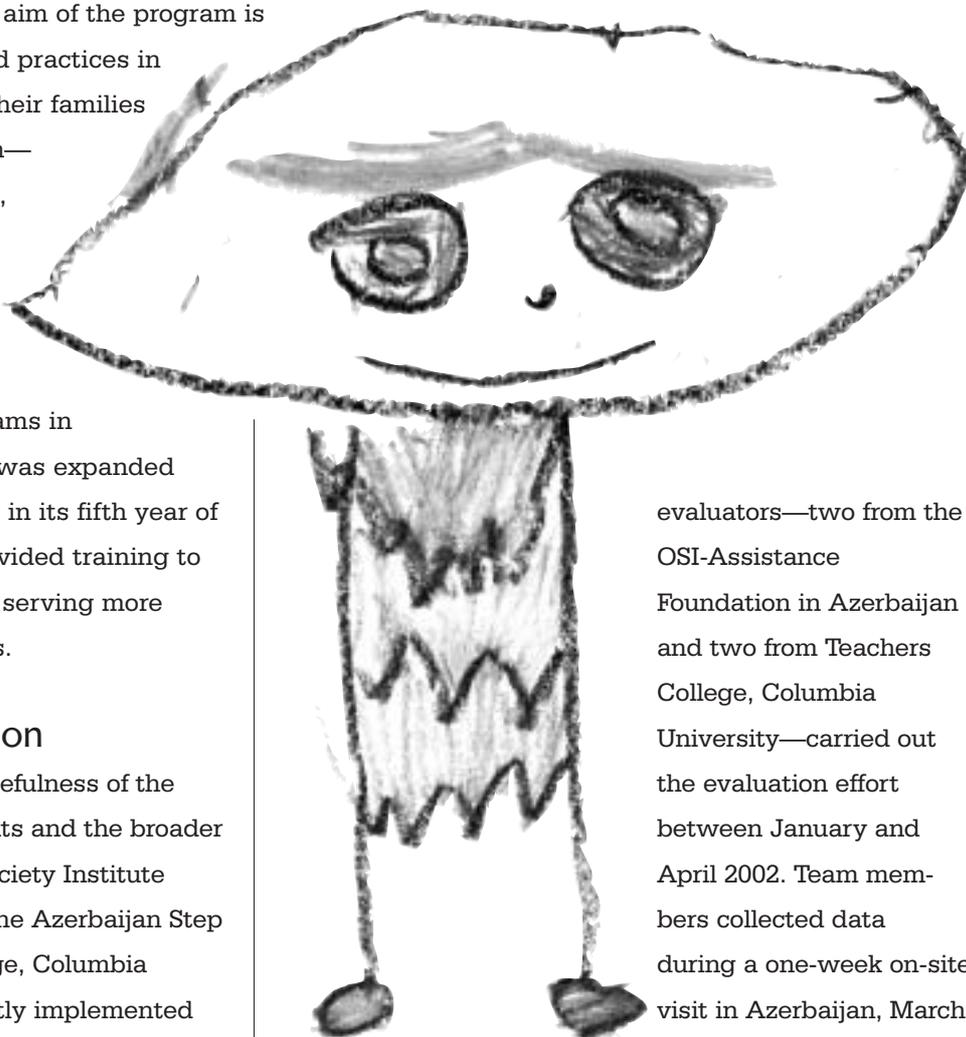
## Introduction of the Step by Step (SbS) Program in Azerbaijan

**S**tep by Step is an education reform program that introduces child-centered teaching methods and supports community and family involvement in preschool and primary school. Step by Step seeks to promote the development of students' critical thinking, creativity, and leadership skills that were perceived to be lacking from the traditional educational approach. The aim of the program is to engender democratic principles and practices in the education of young children and their families and to support the right of all children—including children of minority families, children with disabilities, Roma and refugee children, and the children of families living in poverty—to a quality education.

Step by Step began in pilot programs in preschools in Azerbaijan in 1998 and was expanded into the primary schools in 1999. Now in its fifth year of implementation, Step by Step has provided training to more than 500 teachers in 12 regions, serving more than 10,000 children and their families.

## Background of the Evaluation

**I**n order to assess the impact and usefulness of the Step by Step Program for participants and the broader community in Azerbaijan, the Open Society Institute (OSI)—the organization that founded the Azerbaijan Step by Step Program—and Teachers College, Columbia University in New York City, USA, jointly implemented an evaluation of the program in 2002. A team of four



evaluators—two from the OSI-Assistance Foundation in Azerbaijan and two from Teachers College, Columbia University—carried out the evaluation effort between January and April 2002. Team members collected data during a one-week on-site visit in Azerbaijan, March 17-23, 2002.

## The Evaluation Framework

### Step By Step In-Service Training as the Focus of the Evaluation

There are four main objectives of the Step by Step Program in Azerbaijan: (1) reform of teaching methods; (2) reform of teacher training; (3) strengthening partnerships with parents and the broader community; and (4) publishing projects. The focus of this evaluation was on the impact of Step by Step in-service training on teachers, children, parents, and the community, which falls primarily under the second objective, reform of teacher training.

In-service training takes place at training centers located near the capital city, Baku. The principal, vice-principal, and three teachers from each participating school form a team that takes part in the Step by Step training sessions. The training is in two stages—introductory and follow-up. Each stage lasts five days, for a total of 10 days of in-service training. The OSI-Step by Step Master Trainers and Step by Step teacher trainers lead the training sessions. During the training, participants observe Step by Step classrooms and take part in workshops and role playing exercises. Topics such as observation of students, assessment of student achieve-

### The focus of this evaluation was on the impact of Step by Step in-service training on teachers, children, parents, and the community.

ment, and parent involvement strategies are covered. Participants also learn the theory behind methodologies such as individualization and thematic planning, as well as practical strategies for their implementation. There is little lecturing; rather, participants are encouraged to share their opinions and reflect on what they have learned.

### Evaluating the Impact of Step by Step Training

The evaluation was designed to determine the impact Step by Step in-service training has had on the educational practices in primary schools in Azerbaijan. In undertaking this assessment, the evaluation team

attempted to answer five questions:

- 1) To what extent have Step by Step in-service training activities helped teachers implement more progressive practices?
- 2) To what extent have Step by Step in-service training activities been useful from the perspectives of different stakeholders?
- 3) To what extent have Step by Step in-service training activities supported the dissemination of Step by Step principles and approaches beyond the pilot classrooms?
- 4) To what extent have Step by Step in-service training activities fostered partnerships with community/parents to involve them in the educational process and make them accountable for the results?
- 5) What are the effects of Step by Step in-service teacher training on Step by Step classrooms compared to the effects of the state in-service teacher training on non-Step by Step classrooms?

### Evaluation Instruments and Sampling

An objectives-oriented evaluation was conducted to assess the extent to which training activities are meeting their main expected outcomes. Multiple research methodologies including questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observation were used to assess the impact of Step by Step in-service training.

- Questionnaires were distributed to approximately 35 primary school teachers and 150 parents to collect both quantitative (structured questions) and qualitative (open-ended questions) data. Fourteen teachers and 142 parents returned questionnaires.
- Evaluators interviewed a sample of five stakeholder groups: primary teachers (8), Step by Step trainers (7), parents (9), school administrators (4), and Ministry of Education officials (2). Individual interviews of approximately 45 minutes in length used both structured and unstructured questions to obtain descriptive information on the impact of the teacher-training component.
- Classroom observations were conducted in a sample of 4 schools (out of a total of 13). The schools

selected for observation contained at least two Step by Step classrooms with teachers who had been employing the Step by Step methodology for at least a two-year period and administrators who had been involved in Step by Step program activities such as training for school leaders. These schools also had non-Step by Step classrooms available for comparison observation and a group of parents who were familiar with the Step by Step program. Observations of approximately 45 minutes in length were conducted in eight Step by Step classrooms and four non-Step by Step classrooms. Observers used a checklist to record specific characteristics of the physical learning environment and the characteristics of interactions of teachers, students, and parents.

### Limitations of the Study

Optimal conditions for data collection such as privacy and adequate time for interviews were not always present during this study. In addition, American evaluation team members faced communication challenges and language barriers that may limit the validity of the data. Also, there may have been a conflict of interest

## Box 1

### Step by Step (SbS) in Action: A Summary of Classroom Observations

#### Physical Environment

While SbS classrooms vary in size, shape, and physical condition, similar features can be observed. A *morning news chart* displays the greetings for the class, the date, and the weather. The morning news also provides an opportunity for children to “show and tell” about something important to them such as a book or a picture. *Circle space* is arranged where the whole class discusses the morning news or students’ small group work. In most cases, a rug with pillows physically defines the circle space. Most of the classrooms have a *class schedule* displayed for teachers and children with picture or written activities, and, indeed, children are familiar with the daily routine. A board identifies *student rules and responsibilities* such as erasing the board, distributing materials, and updating the calendar. Children’s work in math, writing, art, etc. is displayed on the walls at their eye level. In about half of the classrooms, these works are based on a central topic or theme (e.g., planets, holidays, and apples). In addition, each child has a *portfolio* with a selection of work, such as math and writing worksheets and tests, and drawings. All materials, including books, are accessible to children and are labeled in either Azeri or Russian. [In contrast, in non-SbS classrooms observed, maps, pictures of historical and literary figures are displayed high on the wall, and books are in a cabinet.]

#### Teacher-child and Child-child Interactions

The SbS program encourages positive teacher-child and child-child interactions in a number of ways. During the school day, children have the opportunity to work in large groups, small groups, in pairs, and individually. *Activity centers* provide children with choices of activities for them to explore individually and in small groups. While children are working in the activity centers, teachers observe and probe children on what they are learning and answer any questions. Teachers watch children’s reactions and help guide them when they are having difficulties. When children work in small groups, they interact and communicate with other children. Another distinctive feature of the SbS classrooms is the *author’s chair*, which is usually located near the circle space or in a corner. In one classroom, children are given a special crown to wear when they sit in the author’s chair and read from the stories that they have written. Children have opportunities to share their opinions, tell about themselves, and talk about the topics studied.

#### Parent involvement

In several classrooms, evaluators observed parents in the classrooms who were helping the teacher and/or the students. In addition, parent bulletin boards near the classrooms provide information on the class/school activities and share examples of students’ work. One school created a parent room where parents meet over coffee to discuss various issues with one another.

issue between the Azeri evaluators and participants of this study because the Azeri evaluators represented the grant-giving organization of the Step by Step Program and are the supervisors of the participants in the evaluation. While these limitations need to be acknowledged, it should also be noted that the use of multiple methodologies helps validate the findings from each individual method.

## Findings

### 1) To what extent have Step by Step in-service training activities helped teachers implement more progressive practices?

*The lessons are beautiful and very attractive...The children learn without competing. Regardless of their strengths and weaknesses, all children are motivated to work and learn together.*

— Step by Step teacher

#### The major findings are:

- *Step by Step training supports methods of teaching that promote child-centered learning, creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, and leadership development.* Step by Step classroom observations confirmed that finding (see Box 1). In addition, a large majority of par-

## The children learn without competing. Regardless of their strengths and weaknesses, all children are motivated to work and learn together.

ents, teachers, and trainers who were interviewed discussed how children are free to express their opinions, reflect on their learning, take initiative, and make choices. All categories of interviewees noted that the learning environment in Step by Step classrooms is open and relaxed; children ask for help and make mistakes without fearing any negative repercussions.

- *Children develop positive social skills.* Interviewees repeatedly stressed that the Step by Step Program fosters children's communication, peer relationships, and social skills. Given that the Step by Step Program provides opportunities for children to share their feelings

and personal information about their lives—for example, during the morning meetings and circle time—children know their classmates well and develop strong friendships with their peers.

- *Step by Step training activities have changed teacher attitudes and behavior.* Trainers observed that teachers who have had Step by Step training are more independent, more reflective about their practices, and more open to expressing their opinions than are those who have not. Teachers themselves report that they have adopted many if not all of the facets of the Step by Step Program including taking an individualized approach, supporting children's learning through play, listening to and respecting children's opinions, encouraging the development of communication skills, and following children's interests.

- *Step by Step training has provided teachers with tools for implementing progressive practices.* The Step by Step approach to primary education is a radical departure from the traditional approach. Training is the main mechanism for supporting the implementation of these principles and methods. Teachers interviewed reported that training helped them learn how to organize morning meetings, activity centers, small group projects, and how to give children choices.

Both teachers and trainers noted that the training was valuable for them to learn about new strategies for teaching reading, writing, and language skills. Teachers also referred to their use of portfolios to document and assess children's learning.

#### There were also findings that suggested limitations on the implementation of Step by Step practices:

- *Some teachers combine aspects of Step by Step and non-Step by Step programs.* Several teachers and trainers mentioned that they combine Step by Step and more traditional approaches. This may occur for a number of reasons. Although Step by Step teachers are permitted to use Step by Step methodology, they are also judged on the extent to which they implement the official curriculum. In addition, some teachers may not be completely comfortable with the

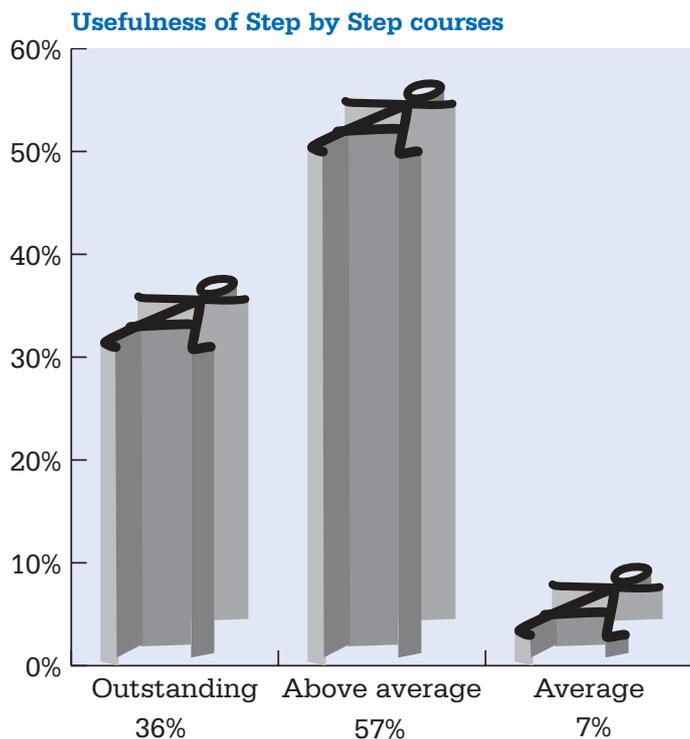
Step by Step approach or may not fully understand how to implement it.

- *Interviewees cite barriers to implementation of progressive practices.* Representatives from each of the stakeholder groups reported that organizational and logistical constraints (e.g., length of school day, classroom space, and available materials) limit the extent to which the Step by Step Program is fully implemented in the classrooms.

**2) To what extent have Step by Step in-service training activities been useful from the perspectives of different stakeholders?**

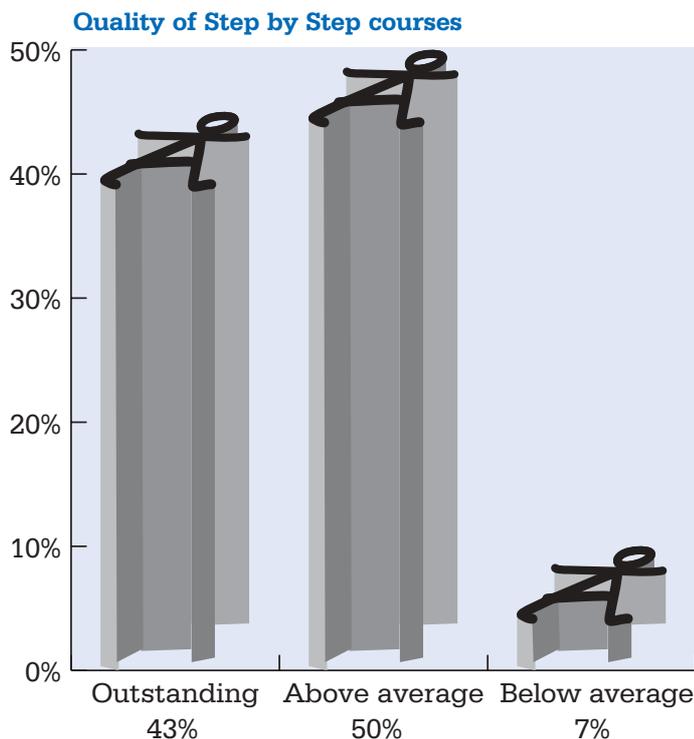
**The major findings are:**

- *Step by Step training helps teachers apply new strategies, methods, and content.* Overall, 36 percent of teachers surveyed rated the usefulness of the Step by Step courses for their work as “outstanding,” and 57 percent rated the courses as “above average” (see graph below). In particular, the teachers surveyed reported that the training is either “very important” or “important” for learning how to apply key aspects of the Step by Step program such as:
  - Individualizing teaching approaches (100 percent)



- Planning child-centered activities (93 percent)
- Promoting children’s creativity (86 percent)
- Organizing Step by Step classrooms (78 percent)
- Applying Step by Step principles in the classroom (64 percent).

In addition, 43 percent of teachers surveyed rated the quality of the Step by Step courses as “outstanding,” and 50 percent rated the courses as “above average” (see graph below).



- *Step by Step training helps stimulate children’s learning positive attitudes and behavior.* The vast majority of those interviewed found that these new teaching methods help children in Step by Step develop a lifelong motivation to learn, and many participants described children as explorers and researchers.
- *Step by Step fosters parent involvement in their children’s learning.* According to the different stakeholder groups, Step by Step training has been useful to strengthen relations between parents and teachers (i.e., respect, partnerships, and trust) and to promote interactive and cooperative work between teachers and parents.

- *Step by Step has a positive impact on professional and personal development of teachers.* A number of administrators, trainers, and teachers themselves noted that the Step by Step Program has stimulated teachers' professional development by encouraging them to attend seminars and observe other classrooms. Several teachers and trainers also gave examples of how the Step by Step training has changed teachers personally—for example, they have become more sincere, enthusiastic, patient, etc.

**Some participants identified less useful aspects of training and areas for improvement.**

- *Some respondents felt that the training was difficult to apply in their classrooms, especially in the beginning.* They used a trial and error process, because the training was not practical enough.

**[Parent involvement] is the strength of the Step by Step program. We learn how to involve parents. They learn how to work with us and the children. This experience resonates among the Education District community.**

—School Principal

- *About half the trainers interviewed suggested that the timing and organization of training could be improved,* for example, by having more frequent sessions.

**3) To what extent have Step by Step in-service training activities supported dissemination of Step by Step principles and approaches beyond the pilot classroom?**

**The major finding is that:**

- *Dissemination of Step by Step principles outside the classroom begins through parent involvement and support to the program.* This involvement transcends participation in school activities to what parents do at home.

With respect to the dissemination of child-centered practices to non-Step by Step classrooms, the evaluators observed visits by some non-Step by Step teachers to Step by Step classrooms and teachers and parents mentioned in interviews that Step by Step teachers were approached by their colleagues for advice. However, the interviews also revealed a sense of isolation experienced by Step by Step teachers, created by working under a different curriculum and techniques from those of regular classrooms. Step by Step teachers expressed the need to expand their network and communication with other teachers and to increase the number of teachers trained in the Step by Step methodology.

The evaluators also discovered an unexpected target group for the diffusion of Step by Step methodology among students from the teachers college. One student in particular told the evaluators that she found a new “world” in the Step by Step class-

room: openness, creativity, different relationships between teachers and children, and between teachers and parents. She decided to visit this class on a regular basis even though she had completed her practicum.

**4) To what extent have Step by Step training activities fostered partnerships with community/parents to involve them in the educational process and make them accountable for the results?**

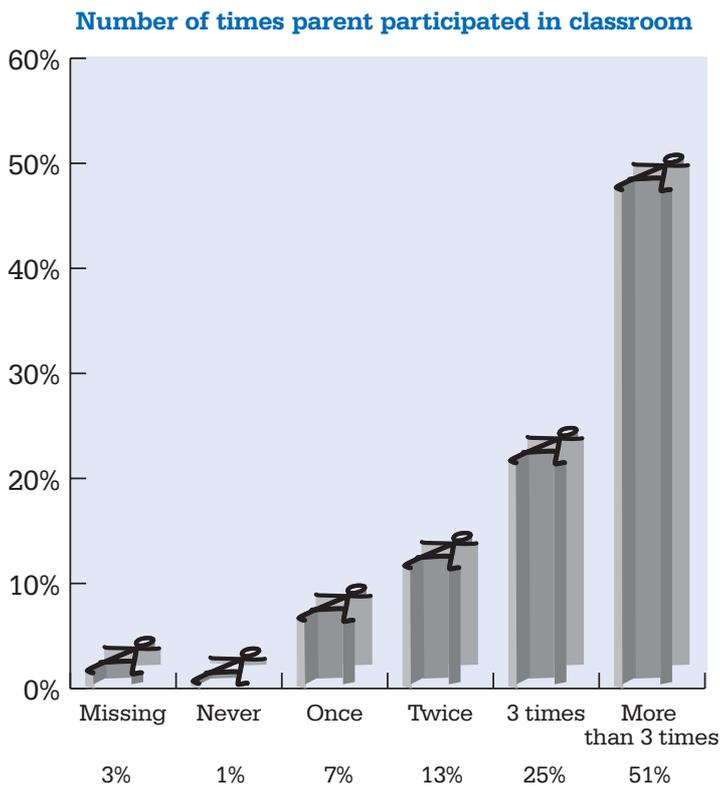
*[Parent involvement] is the strength of the Step by Step program. We learn how to involve parents. They learn how to work with us and the children. This experience resonates among the Education District community.*

—School Principal

**The major finding is that:**

- *Parents in Step by Step classrooms are involved in the children's learning process.* All interviewees mentioned examples of parent involvement in the classroom as the main feature of the partnership developed between parents and schools.

Questionnaires reveal that 76 percent of the parents had already participated three or more times in the classroom (see graph below) during the school year.



In addition, some teachers and parents mentioned that the Step by Step Program had influenced parents and made them more interested in their children's problems. The same group of stakeholders referred to the trust and understanding from parents to teachers when speaking about the new relationships between parents and teachers developed in the Step by Step classroom. It is also important to mention that several stakeholders (among administrators, trainers, and teachers) mentioned some barriers to parent involvement and difficulties in reaching parents and the community, especially when parents come from diverse backgrounds and levels of education. A parent also mentioned the fact that other parents were busy and could not participate in the classroom.

**5) What are the effects of the Step by Step in-service teacher training on Step by Step classrooms compared to the effects of the state in-service teacher training on non-Step by Step classrooms?**

**The major findings are:**

- *Step by Step teachers develop self-respect, a different work motivation and greater responsibilities than other teachers.* Teachers, trainers, and administrators noted that the workload for Step by Step teachers is greater than for other teachers. Many teachers often worked until late hours.
- *Children are active learners in the Step by Step classroom.* As observed during the classroom visits, children are actively engaged in the activities in the Step by Step classroom. The traditional classrooms were clearly teacher-centered, where students were mostly asked questions which could be answered in only one way (right or wrong). Students in traditional classrooms were called to participate individually in front of the classroom or from their seats, but there was no group or cooperative work observed among the children. Children in Step by Step classrooms worked in groups (small or large), asked questions to teachers, and communicated and helped one another to solve tasks. The physical environment in the Step by Step classrooms revealed children's participation in the learning process.

**Conclusion**

In summary, the outcomes of Step by Step training activities have met expectations in significant areas. As documented through classroom observation and interviews with teachers, administrators, trainers, and parents, Step by Step training has resulted in the implementation of child-centered educational practices in Step by Step primary school classrooms in Azerbaijan. There was also substantial documentation of the impact of Step by Step on parent involvement in the education process. However, evaluation findings indicated only limited dissemination of Step by Step principles and approaches beyond the pilot classrooms. Step by Step teachers expressed the need to expand their network and communication with other teachers, and to increase the number of teachers trained in the Step by Step methodology.

# School and Community Partnerships



The neighborhood is the best source of stories and opportunities for literacy where a partnership among parents, teachers, and children can be forged.

## *Gathering Community Stories: New Ways to Involve Parents and Teachers*

by Bird B. Stasz, Ed.D., Associate Professor of Education, Elon University

**I**t is easy to overlook and discount the extraordinary things we see every day, just because they are familiar. Sometimes the solution to a problem is right under our very eyes. It goes unnoticed because we think that solving a problem requires special circumstances or may need more resources than we currently have, and thus the solution appears to be out of our reach.

This is precisely the situation that occurs in many schools throughout the world when it comes to solving the dilemma of engaging reluctant parent partners and simultaneously promoting literacy education for children.

This article describes a methodology that is being used successfully in a variety of settings, from special schools in Hungary and Slovakia to under-resourced schools in

North America. It is based on the simple premise that the neighborhood is the best source of stories and opportunities for literacy and that a partnership among parents, teachers, and children can be forged to gather those stories. The outcome of such a project is that parents are engaged in a positive experience as experts and sources of information; children learn to read the familiar; and teachers gain new insights into the lives of their students.

## Theoretical Framework

**T**he methodology that makes neighborhood projects possible is a combination of community-based ethnography, which is a term borrowed from anthropology, and the documentary arts, which includes the fine arts of photography, narrative writing, and videography. From an anthropological perspective, ethnography, which literally means writing about people, is about stepping in and stepping out of our own culture and that of others.

Culture is like water in the gold fish bowl for the gold fish. It swirls around us, unnoticed, but directs our behaviors and thoughts with an uncanny degree of predictability. The job of the ethnographer is to distill that cultural perspective through observation, careful listening, gathering stories, taking notes, and honest analysis of the narrative. (Chiseri-Strater & Sunstein 1997)

The job of the documentarian is to tell "the story" through the arts of photography, drawing, narrative writing, and videography. Documentary work is closely connected to remembering, creating, and telling life stories and experiences. It is based on the premise that "Most of us share a need to recall and reconsider local memory, to revisit and renew our connection to place. Out of a shared telling and remembering grow identity, connection, and pride, binding people to a place and to each other. These ties form the basis of community life. The documentary process, and sharing the results of that work, provides a way for us to acknowledge and shape community life as we advance our understanding of these connections and how they inform our work in the present." (Rankin 1999)

When we transform the methodology and process of creating materials into a pedagogy for literacy instruction for teachers, students, and parents, we have moved into

the realm of Paulo Freire's popular education. (Freire 1985)

This methodology is intrinsically participatory and inclusive. It requires an equal collaboration among and between teachers, students, parents, and the community at large. The products (documentaries) that are generated from this methodology are not outsider accounts, portrayals, or reports but rather collaborative accounts written from an insider perspective. What that means is that the text is written in the voice or voices of the reader; the photographs or drawings are of the familiar, which in turn tell the story of some aspect of community life. Using these materials as a starting point for the language arts curriculum ensures that all children, rather than only those in the dominant group, can see themselves as part of the educational story.

## Mapping: Getting from the Classroom to the Neighborhood and Back Again

The best way to start a neighborhood project is with a mapping exercise. Students and teachers with the help of parents go out into the neighborhood and actually begin to draw maps of where they are. Small groups draw up these maps, which can focus on a city block, a single street, or around the corner. The purpose of the exercise is to get teachers, children, and parents working cooperatively, as well as to give everyone the opportunity to take a close look at where they live. Drawing maps supports visual and spatial orientation as well as attention to detail and graphic organization. From the standpoint of involving parents, it is non-threatening and can include those parents who have low levels of literacy or who do not speak the majority language.

Once the maps are complete, students and teachers spend time looking at, discussing, and writing about them. We have found that no matter how many times we do this exercise with parents, teachers, and children and no matter how many people map the exact same place, no two maps are ever identical. As a result, the mapping process gives a common starting point for the larger conversations about cultural differences, similarities, and perspectives. The mapping process also leads nicely into descriptive writing, work around directions, and place

names, to suggest a few options. The language arts products from this one exercise are many and can include little books of maps and text that can be done with the help of a parent volunteer. (See Figure 1)

## Questions that Organize the Inquiry

The maps serve as a global organizer for the rest of the project as students and teachers begin to think about the landscape as a place full of stories. From a practical standpoint, we have found it useful to begin our inquiry about a place through questions such as:

- Where do people work, play, and gather?
- What do people do for work and fun?
- When we go out, who do we see? Who do we know? What are they doing?
- What special events occur in our neighborhood?
- What are the artifacts that are unique to where we live?
- What are the names of places such as streets, buildings, or monuments, and what is the story behind the names?
- How has this place changed over time?

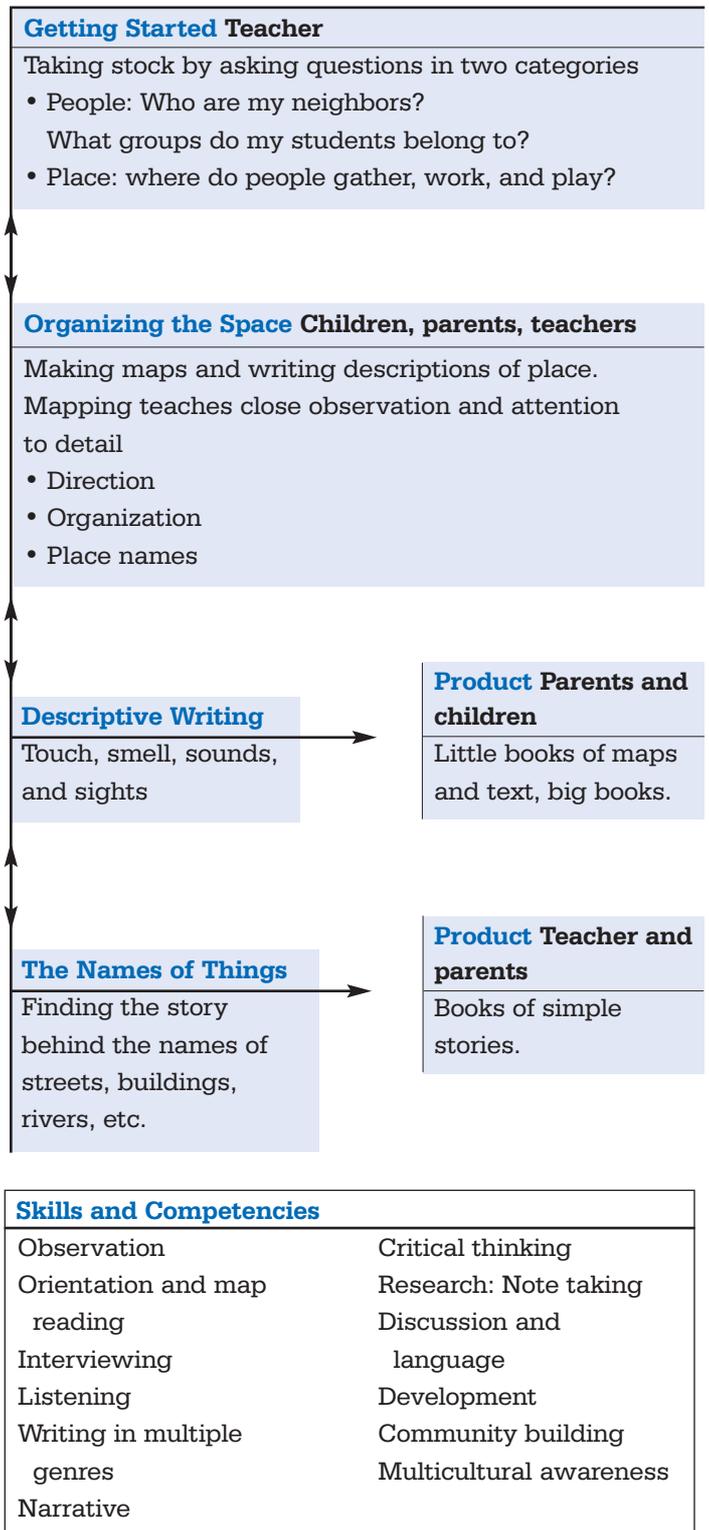
These questions reflect some general ethnographic themes such as work, family, social relations, and change over time. They also allow participants to focus on particular aspects of community life that in turn translate easily into larger discussions and conversations about the places that we live. These explorations almost always include locating and interviewing community members, family, and others. Embedded in the interview process is the ability to generate questions, engage in critical thinking, and understand narrative schema.

## Photography

Photographing places, buildings, people, and events, and using those photographs as illustrations for projects is another vital piece of this process. Taking photographs and choosing which ones to use and which to discard is part of developing visual literacy. The choices students make in the use of images automatically require a discussion around what the image represents. With older children, it can easily lead into conversations around stereotyping, accurate representation of groups and

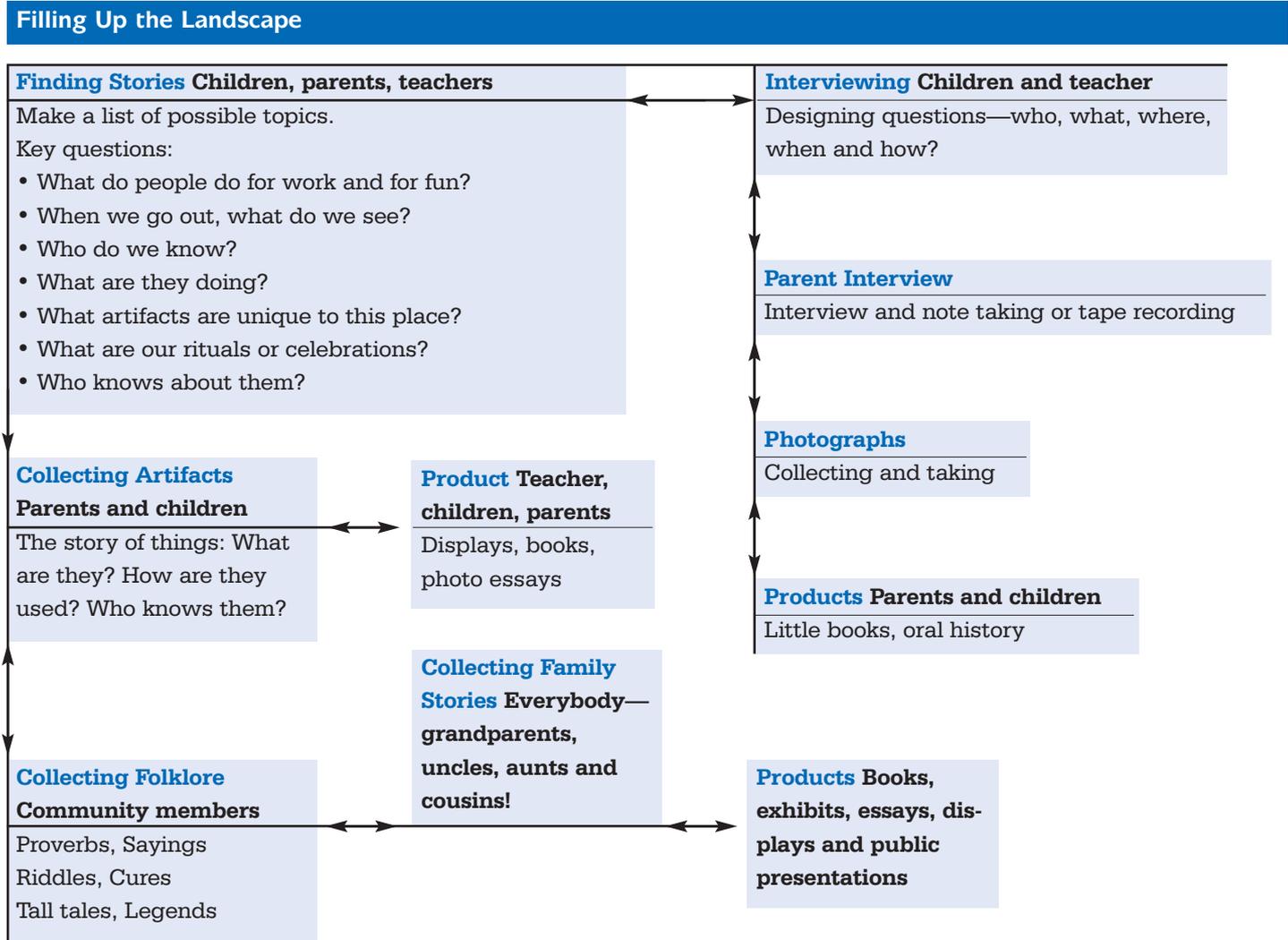
**Figure 1**

### Mapping the Process: Getting from the Classroom to the Neighborhood and Back Again



events, as well as thinking through biases and assumptions. The role of parents in this process can be as simple as helping students find and photograph places or as complicated as becoming part of the discussion around the choice of images.

Figure 2



## Artifacts

Collecting artifacts and locating experts in their use can be a focal point for a single project or part of a larger inquiry unit. For example, students in several classrooms explored the stories, process, and materials that supported unique handwork, furniture making, and cooking. One class developed a cookbook of Roma recipes; another classroom investigated the art of rug making and the use of natural dyes—an art form that was fast disappearing in their community. Another classroom became interested in violinmakers, another in woodcarvers, and yet another in musicians. All of these artisans were unique to the region and the community, and all were sources of interesting stories and information. Students easily located materials and people, often family members or friends, who made the work possible. These people were interviewed, photographed, and participated in the project as experts, providing abundant

information and opportunities for rich narratives. Clearly these inquiries blur the margins that separate school, family, and community.

The common thread that runs throughout this process and the projects that evolve from it is that language and stories are embedded in places. Those stories are an integral part of the fabric of community life. It is possible to mine those stories and transform them into materials from which students can learn to read, as well as celebrate the people and places that are closest to them. (See Figure 2)

## Resource Requirements

Doing neighborhood projects as a way to involve parents and promote literacy is relatively inexpensive. Interviews are best conducted using tape recorders, but, failing that, a notebook and two interviewers, one to ask questions and one to take notes, works almost as well.

Photography is important. If at all possible, teachers and schools can write a small grant for the purchase of a few cameras. We have found that digital cameras are better than conventional ones, although they are more expensive. The photographs are of better quality and using

## One class developed a cookbook of Roma recipes.

them is easier. For example, it is possible to select the best images using a computer rather than having to have prints made of the entire film. The dilemma of expense versus practicality is always a consideration. However, an entire school can get by with very few cameras. In fact, we have worked successfully on projects where there are only three cameras for a whole school. If all else fails, students can use simple “point-and-shoot” cameras to capture the necessary images.

The only other expense is the production and presentation of the material. One classroom made a book of images and text. Other classrooms designed an exhibit. Still another produced a whole series of little books that included everything from a collection of local proverbs and sayings to recipes. There is no one perfect way to pull a project to completion. What a class produces and how they use it is entirely up to the teacher, parents, and children and is limited only by human imagination. The process is as important as the product. More than likely, if parents have been partners in the process, they are likely to want to help with the production of products. Again, this is another opportunity for positive parent involvement.

## Pedagogical Shifts

The process of doing a “neighborhood project” as it relates to ethnography and the documentary arts may require a change in pedagogy and perspective. One of those dispositions is an overriding curiosity about the community, people, and places from which students come and a belief that the community is the source of text. (Gillis 1992) A second shift in pedagogy and practice requires the teacher to take on the role of facilitator and project manager. This approach is not only child centered,

it is community centered and inherently democratic. The teacher also must be willing to use the ethnographic stance of stepping in and out of culture as a springboard for larger conversations that are embedded in the experience. These questions inevitably concern cultural

differences and perspectives and can on occasion give rise to conversations surrounding the pressing issues in students’ lives as reflected in the community.

## A Final Word

Community-based ethnography and the documentary arts as they translate into pedagogy and curriculum are invitational and democratic. Using them also solves much of the problem that arises when “teaching other people’s children.” We essentially teach who we are, and who we are is often foreign to our students. As teachers and administrators we control the curriculum, and as a result we enact a curriculum and form of education that draws largely from our own experience and life history. The use of community-based ethnography and the documentary arts takes the approach “that to be human is to have a voice that names the world in relation to one’s own experience. To be human is to seize the right to one’s own voice and work for the rights of everyone to have a voice.” (Stringer 1997)

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# A Community-Based Model for the Care and Education of Young Children in Rural Kyrgyzstan

by Alfia Mirasova, Director, Osh Branch of Save the Children (UK) Kyrgyzstan Program

*“My daughter Gulchekhra felt bored at home. She did not play with other children; did not speak to anyone in the street. When she was at home, she would sit for hours doing nothing. After she started to go to kindergarten, she enjoyed playing with children and made friends with some girls. She did not talk much, but she learned to sing very well.*

*“Gulchekhra had some difficulties in writing and drawing because of her disability, but in the kindergarten she tried to hold a pen and pencils in her fingers. My daughter learned how to write elements of letters and numbers and can recite a lot of poems. Now she knows traffic regulations, and she loves to draw. She has become much more open and cheerful. Gulchekhra shares her feelings with us through songs, poems, and drawings, and she does not feel shy any more.”*

Sagyn kyzy Mairam, Nookat, Osh oblast, Kyrgyzstan



Following the break-up of the Soviet Union and the subsequent disintegration of its education system, young children like Gulchekhra in rural areas of Kyrgyzstan were unable to realize their right to an early start in education. Now, through the creation of centrally located kindergartens that reach out to remote communities through a network of satellite home-based day care centers, Save the Children (UK) in Kyrgyzstan offers a strategy to provide education in the early years to all children. The program is community-based—the communities themselves raise funds through income-generating activities to sustain the operational costs of the project. Save the Children (UK) provides training in business development and education. It also provides start-up costs (salaries, renovation, food) and grants for income generation activities.

## Background

Prior to independence, kindergarten attendance across Central Asia was widespread. But enrollment rates fell between 1991 and 1996, especially in pre-primary schools that were hardest hit by budget cuts. As a result, the number of kindergartens in the region sharply declined, and many preschool-age children missed out on schooling, especially in the rural areas. Declining enrollment in kindergartens in Central Asia is of particular concern, given the role that kindergartens can play in raising household welfare. Not only do they free parents to participate in other activities (especially paid employment), they also play a key developmental role in providing preschool education and nutritional and health interventions. (CA 2010 Prospects for Human Development, UNDP Report)



When the Save the Children (UK) project was launched, preschool-age children in the ten Kyrgyz communities served by the project were not receiving any services. There were no day care centers where children could have a safe place to stay while their parents worked in the fields, and there were no preschool or community programs to support the appropriate development of preschool-age children. Some school-age children with disabilities, unable to get to school due to lack of transport, either did not receive education at all or received poor quality education on an irregular basis. The project intended to address the educational needs of rural children and of particular groups of marginalized rural children—poor children, children with disabilities, and orphans—through participatory, community-based development initiatives.

## Support for Community-Based Change

In the Kyrgyz Republic a number of steps have been taken to encourage decentralization and local self-governance in order to facilitate independent and transparent institutional development at the regional level, with people in the communities participating in the decision and policy-making processes.

Furthermore, it is anticipated that decentralization

and self-governance can contribute to grass-roots participation of rural populations in managing and operating sustainable community development initiatives for the benefit of children, such as the early education project sponsored by Save the Children (UK) described in this article.

The model of community-based care and education for children was developed by Save

the Children (UK) and tested in ten rural, remote communities of Osh and Djalal Abad oblasts. These are mountainous, predominantly agricultural regions in southern Kyrgyzstan. Steps were taken to promote community mobilization, income generation activities, and the development of community education and care services for children. The ultimate goal was to support communities in providing inclusive care services and education for all children.

*The project's main activities were:*

- Development of Village Education Committees,
- Development of central community kindergartens and satellite home-based day care centers,
- Development of income-generating activities.

## Village Education Committees (VECs)

In each village an Initiative Group consisting of community members was organized through community mobilization. Their role is to plan and support activities that are then carried out by people in the community. The Initiative Groups formed and mobilized Village Education Committees (VECs) to oversee the preschool project. These committees are composed of five to nine men and women. They make decisions on the types of businesses that would be most suitable for income generation activities, that is, projects designed to raise

funds to sustain the operations of the kindergartens and satellite centers. VECs develop business proposals, sign agreements, contract with people for business purposes, budget for the needs of kindergarten and home-based centers, monitor the process, and report to the community. The finance group of the VEC is responsible for cash expenses, documentation, and financial reporting. Training by Save the Children (UK) for VEC members included budgeting, management, business development, and accounting.

The VECs, with support from other community members, lobbied village and state authorities to facilitate the acquisition of resources and establish financial arrangements that would help sustain the central community kindergartens and satellite home-based day care centers. VECs lobbied for and obtained various resources for income-producing activities to support the

## Declining enrollment in kindergartens in Central Asia is of particular concern, given the role that kindergartens can play in raising household welfare.

centers. In one community the VEC obtained salaries and land for growing cotton and potatoes. In other communities, the VEC obtained rent-free storage space for vegetables and cowsheds for cattle breeding. The VEC also attained tax reduction or exemption, the inclusion of teachers' salaries in the state budget, the inclusion of subsidies for electricity, and contributions of materials for building renovation.

### Income-Generating Activities

The operating costs of community-based centers are sustained largely through income-generating activities. Community-based training included budgeting and managing for the centers and the development of income-generating activities. These fundraising projects not only generate income for the centers, but also create jobs for the people who implement them, thus mitigating poverty. In one community 41 poor families who worked on a potato growing income-generating project were able to return 200 percent of their original

seeds to the project fund and keep 100 percent for their own use.

Each VEC proposed its own income-generating projects. In some areas an agricultural project was later replaced with cattle herding because of the high price of fertilizer, water, and taxes. In one community, the income-generating project realized 45 percent of the entire budget in only the second year of the project.

### Central Community Kindergartens

Each of the ten villages had kindergarten sites, but they were not operational when the community program started in 1997. Central community kindergartens were reinstated in the villages with the addition of several "satellite" home-based child-care centers. This system allows each central kindergarten to extend its education services to remote areas without having to transport children over long distances.

Central kindergartens operate on a full day, full week schedule and are led by a trained kindergarten teacher/head teacher.

Central kindergartens serve lunch. In some localities food costs are covered by parent donations. Each central kindergarten is able to accept 60 to 120 children. The kindergarten fee is from 5 to 40 soms per month. (US \$1 = 46 soms.) With approval of the VEC, and based on specific economic criteria, some parents are released from paying kindergarten fees. On average, 10 to 20 children from poor families attend each kindergarten with partial or complete exemption from enrollment fees.

### Home-Based Centers

The main purpose of the home-based centers is to provide education and care to children in remote areas who are unable to attend the central kindergarten due to distance or for any other reason. Children with disabilities find these centers easy to access because of the short distance. Furthermore, they are less intimidated by the smaller number of children attending the home-based centers and enjoy the opportunity to interact with other children.

Satellite home-based centers operate on a schedule

determined jointly by parents and teachers. This schedule typically involves two to three hours per day, two to three days per week. Parents pay symbolic fees of around 5 soms per month. Home-based centers, because of their shorter schedules, typically include a snack of tea and bread instead of meals, and families often contribute these.

## Getting The Centers Organized

**S**ave the Children (UK) provided educational training for center staff. Teacher training took place in the winter, when the centers were closed. Given a choice of training schedules, teachers requested short training,

The ultimate goal was to support communities in providing inclusive care services and education for all children.

one to two days each. Training sessions were conducted on child-centered educational practices. Teachers and caregivers learned how to make and use low-cost teaching materials with local materials, and they were able to develop their skills and knowledge of interactive methods for working with children of differing abilities. The learning materials rotate from the central kindergarten to the home-based centers.

Once a month, joint activities for all the children from the home-based centers and the kindergarten are arranged in the main kindergarten. All centers are child-centered and child-friendly.

Central kindergartens serve children from two to seven years of age; home-based centers may include even younger children. Home-based centers typically serve 10-15 children with one adult caretaker or teacher who hosts the children in her own house. Kindergartens use community premises and have from 30 to 100 children with several adults.

Both types of day care centers are open March/April to October/November rather than year round, for several reasons. This schedule meets the actual need for care, since most parents remain home during the winter months, and heating, especially for central kindergartens, becomes prohibitively expensive. The risk of electric

power loss during the winter increases, and winter presents vulnerable families with additional difficulties in providing warm clothes and shoes.

## How Children Benefit

**T**hrough this model of central kindergartens and satellite home-based centers the project managed to increase the number of children in early education programs from 10-15 percent to 55-70 percent on a sustainable basis. “Those children who have attended children’s centers have better results in school,” says Acida Ismailova, a teacher of primary school in Ak Bulak,

Osh oblast. “They are more active and better organized, have better skills, and they can communicate easily with other children. They have less difficulty learning, and fewer of them drop out of school.”

## The Roles Played by Different Stakeholders

**D**ifferent players facilitated the early education project. Community members volunteered for the Initiative Groups and VECs. Local government officials, teachers, caregivers, parents, children, farmers, and people from the local mosques contributed their expertise and time.

## Teachers

**T**eachers played a crucial role, serving as the catalyst for the whole process.

“I was a kindergarten teacher before,” says Karamat Djaanbaeva in Beshik Djon, Djalal Abad oblast, “but for the last six years I didn’t have any job as our kindergarten was closed. I was an ordinary village woman like hundreds of others in my community. I did not like to talk to others and had difficulties in communicating with other people. After a few meetings with my former colleagues, who were also unemployed, we decided to talk to parents and to find ways of re-starting kindergarten services for our community children.”

Initially teachers participated in all trainings and activities, but it was soon found that overloading teachers could lead them to shift their focus from children to

other activities. So their main role was to create a child-centered, friendly environment for the education and development of the children.

## Parents

Parents were involved, to some degree, in all activities. They became members of the VECs, participated in trainings, initiated home-based day care centers, participated in business development, renovated kindergartens, and purchased assets.

“One day I was invited to the community meeting organized by Save the Children where some children’s issues were discussed,” recalls Baktigul Tadjimatova of Ak Bulak, Osh oblast. “There was a kindergarten in our village, but it had not operated since 1990. It was suggested that we renovate the kindergarten building so that it could re-open. I expressed interest because I wanted my three children to get appropriate care and education. And this could also free my time for a full-time job. I talked to my friends and other parents, and we decided to identify what steps we could take to make this happen.”

“We participated in the training and seminars that were of great importance to us, and that helped us to develop such qualities as self-discipline and self-confidence,” says Abdimalik Shukurbekov, head of the VEC in Nookat, Osh oblast. “We became more responsible. We learned to create partnerships with people, to establish relations with the authorities, and to cooperate with different organizations. As a team we discussed different issues which children face in our community and tried to find solutions to their problems.”

## Local Government

Local authorities in turn supported the VECs in developing sustainable businesses, provided central kindergartens with food (in some cases partially), provided payment for public utilities (partially), and covered some of the kindergartens’ expenses as well as teachers’ salaries. Children from poor and marginalized families were able to access the day care centers by paying reduced fees, or no fees at all, and some parents found employment, releasing local authorities from the pres-

sure to provide support to these families on a regular basis.

“We managed to raise all the community’s interest to our work and got support from the local authority, which is very important for successful development of our community,” says Karamat Ashimova of Kyrgyz Ata in Osh oblast. “Now I am participating in almost all community meetings and the local government invites me to participate in their budget assessment.”

## Children

Children were encouraged to start their own clubs where they could discuss different ways to become involved in community life. In some places children made house-to-house visits to identify children who had



dropped out of school because of disability, poverty, or for other reasons. The children developed activities to involve these children in school life. Child facilitators arranged trainings for their peers on children’s rights and child participation and organized their own resource rooms. They supported adults in changing attitudes towards children with special needs. They also organized puppet shows for primary school children, concerts, competitions, and theatre for fundraising.

“We did not know that children have their own rights and are considered equal members of society,” says Ainura Kazikanova, age 16, of Kizil Ay village in Djalal Abad oblast. “After receiving training in child participation, children’s rights, child facilitation, and child-to-child education programs, we decided to arrange our own club where we could come together, talk about different issues and discuss our involvement in community activities.”

## Religious Leaders and Farmers

People from local mosques played the role of mediators and in some cases helped to avoid conflicts if there was a dispute over the use of kindergarten premises by business people. Farmers provided their support in the cultivation and harvesting of different crops. Their experience was very useful in developing community income generation activities.

## Challenges and Lessons Learned

Initially, it was difficult to motivate people to search for alternatives that would enable them to meet their own needs for preschool care. Historically, they were used to being at the receiving end where the government satisfied all their needs. The project did not anticipate a rapid growth of home-based centers and hence did not have enough resources to fully cover all the related costs. Community members were expected to contribute on a volunteer basis, but people gave priority to domestic and economic activities before allocating time for volunteer work.

*Project implementation and evaluation produced important insights:*

- Midterm evaluation helped us to re-design the project in order to make the best use of time and resources for project expansion.
- Development of the model demonstrated that access and quality in early childhood education could be achieved with minimal resources.
- All aspects of society—NGOs, local government, private sector, religious leaders, communities—should be included in the project design from the early stages in order to have the best results for the benefit of children.
- Contrary to general belief, marginalized families are able and willing to contribute in various ways to the improvement of service delivery for children (work/labor, providing food, getting the right papers with permissions from bureaucracy, etc).
- To enable marginalized children to have access to educational services on a sustainable basis, day care programs are not enough on their own. Preferably there should be a complex of programs that are linked to each other.

- Piloting the day care project enabled government authorities to experience and understand its advantages, thus motivating them to promote this model in other disadvantaged rural areas.

- This was a very positive experience, not simply in terms of project development but also in terms of the recognition and respect received by community people who had never before imagined that they could do something for their children by thinking and working together and using their own limited resources.

- When the government provides no education, the community itself can be the greatest engine to ensure early childhood education for children. Not only does this ensure the right of marginalized children to have access to education from their early years, but it also raises the self-esteem and confidence of people in remote rural communities.

“This approach could be used widely in our country as well as in other countries of the former Soviet Union where some infrastructure for early childhood education remains,” says Saadat Satarova from the Department of Education, Nookat rayon, Osh oblast. “If no resources exist beyond individual initiatives, starting work on day care centers and other activities for children can still be productive.”

## Conclusion

With limited external resources, rural communities in the Kyrgyz Republic have been able to manage, administer, and financially sustain a network of early education programs for their children. Furthermore, they have succeeded in having local authorities contribute to, and engage in, the realization of the project. The active participation of communities and their representative authorities enabled young children to have an early start in their education and contributed to the decentralization and self-governance objectives of the country. Last but not least, people in the project communities mobilized their own resources to bring about positive change in the lives of their children. This increased their motivation and their confidence that change can take place from within.

# ISSA Network News

## Participation, Education, and Knowledge Sharing (PEAKS) Project:

A USAID-funded initiative to strengthen basic education in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan

The Open Society Institute is pleased to be a partner on the PEAKS project, which will strengthen basic education in four Central Asian countries. The project is a joint initiative of the Academy for Education Development (AED) and partner organizations OSI, Save the Children US and UK, and Abt Associates. Over a three-year period, PEAKS will:

- Improve in-service teacher education
- Make available curriculum emphasizing learning skills
- Increase parent and community involvement in schools
- Strengthen institutional, management, and technical capacity at all levels to better support innovation at schools
- Improve school infrastructure

Main PEAKS activities will focus on Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, while small pilot activities will begin in Turkmenistan. The project will select between five and ten Professional Development Schools in each of the three core countries to receive training and technical support to become models of school improvement, Step by Step, Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking, and community-based programs. These schools will be formally connected with in-service teacher training systems and will reach out to provide training to cluster schools in future years. The project will pilot innovative community programs, including life-long learning projects (Community Learning Associations), youth activities, community-based management information systems (c-EMIS), and projects to reduce school drop-outs. Another unique element of the project will be a focus on developing local educational professional membership associations, including Step by Step, RWCT, and school improvement NGOs. OSI will receive over \$3.7 million dollars from USAID during the three-year period.

Through the PEAKS project, Step by Step experts and NGOs will support translation, publication, and widespread distribution of Educating Children for Democracy and a regional supplement in all local languages in Central Asia. The project will cover costs for a regional editor as well as costs of an annual regional Step by Step workshop. PEAKS will also support the official launch of the Step by Step project in Uzbekistan and will cover costs for the third year of Step by Step development in Tajikistan.

## Revised Primary Observation Instrument

The Primary Observation Instrument has been revised and sent to ISSA's national members for translation and use this spring. The new instrument is shorter and focused on skill acquisition in subject matter.

There are multiple purposes for using the Step by Step Primary Observation Instrument: It serves as a guide for instruction. The initial data helps the teacher determine the strengths and needs of each student at the start of the school year. It helps to inform parents about their child's growth and development. The teacher monitors specific educational indicators based on observable abilities demonstrated by the student.

Students also benefit from the Step By Step Primary Observation form because it promotes an individualized approach. Multiple sources of information, including the child's self-assessment form, records of classroom observations, anecdotal reports, portfolios with samples of children's work, parent surveys, and interviews provide a comprehensive assessment of children's progress in school.

## Ensuring Standards Implementation and Teacher Certification

Last fall a series of regional meetings introduced representatives from all Step by Step organizations to the process of teacher certification. Two important findings emerged from these regional meetings: 1) countries are at different stages in terms of standards implementation and teacher certification; and 2) the Observation Instrument does not provide adequate detail to ensure a reliable and consistent measure of teacher performance. In an effort to meet the needs of all countries and to sustain and build on the progress they have already made, a three-component follow-up strategy was proposed.

A group of selected countries (*component 1, Quality Improvement Group*) will design and implement a quality improvement process to help all Step by Step teachers increase classroom quality and progress toward certification.

A *Pilot Group* of selected countries (*component 2*) will assist in the creation and piloting of a new Observation Instrument.

The two working groups will collaborate with the *Advisory Board for Standards (component 3)*, which consists of an ISSA representative and Western European and US experts. Many of the countries involved are working toward inclusion in the EU; therefore the Teacher Certification Project Team feels that it is critical to understand other standards and certification trends in Europe. This group will also act as a bridge to other countries not involved in ISSA but concerned about the same issues. The Advisory Board is scheduled to meet in June 2003.

## Web Publishing Program

Most educators agree that contemporary age-appropriate reading materials are important for the development of good reading skills and a life-long interest in reading. In areas where ISSA operates,

most pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classrooms have few, if any, of these reading materials, especially in poor regions, where the few books that do exist are of poor quality and consist primarily of folk and fairy tales.

The ISSA Web Publishing Program, the Reading Corner, ([www.soros.org/readingcorner](http://www.soros.org/readingcorner)) aims to develop excellent contemporary children's literature in all Step by Step countries and to make it available at an affordable price, initially for these countries and eventually universally. The books will be made available to members on-line and in printed editions in up to the 29 languages of the region, including Roma languages. A long-term objective for the project is to develop publishers' interest in books that include multi-cultural and multiethnic themes that address topics not currently present in the children's literature in the region.

In order to create interest among authors and illustrators, ISSA ran four regional workshops for over 120 people, with the assistance of Western children's editors. A course on writing children's literature has been placed on the web site and will be

translated into many languages.

All books are submitted in English. It is up to each country's Step by Step office to translate the books into the local language and to post the translation on the Reading Corner web site. To date, 20 stories have been selected for publication by the ISSA International Editorial Board. The first 13 stories are already posted on the Reading Corner web site in ten languages, with more languages to be added shortly. Only one story is illustrated, but more are expected within the next month.

Once a book is on the web site, the local Step by Step office can download the book in the language(s) desired. Because each book will have the same format—the spreads will consist of one page of text and one page of illustration—users can simply pick the language wanted and print out the book. Books in a country's primary language will also be available in its minority languages: Polish in Lithuania, Hungarian in Romania, Russian in Estonia, etc. Volunteer parents or teachers can create "books"—with illustrations and the text in the desired language printed out—arranged and tied together to

look like a children's "book" in plastic sleeves.

If the audience for a specific story is sufficiently large, the book can be printed and published by the local Step by Step office or by arrangement with a local commercial publisher. Printing of the books requires a small payment to cover author and illustrator fees and ISSA overhead.

Once a significant number of books is available on the Reading Corner web site, the books will be presented to Western publishers of children's books in the hope of enticing them to publish their own editions in English, French, German, etc. The acquisition of publishing rights for a significant number of the books could help finance the Web Publishing Program, provide additional income to the writers and illustrators, and introduce Western editors to a new source of writers and illustrators.

The search for new material is continuous. Writers and illustrators with a manuscript that fits the criteria should submit their material to the local Step by Step office. The Web Publishing Program is ready for "take-off." Be a part of it.

## ISSA Member Update: New Look

**B**ased on the questionnaires completed by 23 Step by Step countries, ISSA developed an informative newsletter with colorful pictures as a forum where members can share information on initiatives, funding opportunities, events, news on educational reform projects, and efforts to build strong communities and partnerships.

The newsletter will be published quarterly—in *March, June, September and December*. The first issue of the newsletter provides a wealth of information and impressive photos. It is available in both a PDF version and a Word document on the members' web site, <http://www.issa.nl>.

ISSA Member Update is a tool for nourishing wonderful ideas and strengthening the benefits of being part of a community. Since we are naturally curious about each other, here are the highlights from Volume 1:

- A new "Parental Education and Preparation for School" initiative planned in Armenia.
- Plans are underway for the tenth anniversary

celebration of Step by Step in Belarus.

- An all-Russia conference on "Inclusive Education: Challenges and Solutions" will be convened in late September-early October 2003.
- The Ukrainian Step by Step Foundation, together with ISSA and the Every Child Organization (UK), developed "Creating Centers of Excellence for Inclusive Education of Children with Special Needs in Mainstream Schools" and won a grant from TACIS for 2003-2004.
- In Lithuania six NGOs established a coalition to promote better cooperation between nonprofit and state institutions.
- A pilot project in Bulgaria used education as a strategy for combating child labor, prostitution, and trafficking. The Step by Step Program Foundation Bulgaria is responsible for the educational part of the project.
- The social inclusion of children and youth is the objective of a multi-agency initiative in Macedonia.



# International Step by Step Association

## 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference

### Location:

Prague, Czech Republic  
 Hotel Pyramida  
[www.hotelpyramida.cz](http://www.hotelpyramida.cz)



### Dates:

October 14–17, 2003

*Official Languages of the Conference:* English and Russian

### Topic:

networking  
 information  
 exchange

# Equality

professional  
 development  
 quality education

**in Early Childhood Education**

**E**ach year we gather together early childhood professionals, teachers, trainers, and representatives of international organizations to provide a forum for professional development, exchanging inspiring ideas, and establishing new partnerships.

The conference will examine quality across the spectrum of early childhood programs of more than 30 countries. Presentations, workshops, round-table discussions will consider the following strands about quality:

- 1) Defining **Quality**
- 2) Measuring **Quality**
- 3) Achieving, Maintaining, and Ensuring **Quality** in Early Childhood Education
- 4) Building a **Quality** Education System
- 5) Advocating for **Quality**
- 6) Evaluating **Quality**

**W**e are pleased to announce the following leading early childhood experts as Featured Speakers of the conference:

- **Sue Bredekamp**, Director of Research, Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition, Washington, DC
- **Mark R. Ginsberg, Ph.D.**, Executive Director, National Association for the Education of Young Children
- **Mary E. Young, M.D., Dr.P.H.**, World Bank, Lead Specialist, Education Sector, Human Development Network
- **Randy Sinisi, Ph.D.**, Commission on International and Trans-regional Accreditation
- **Noirin Hayes**, Head, School of Social Sciences & Legal Studies, Dublin Institute of Technology

### Join ISSA when you register, and get membership benefits!

#### Registration Fee

Non-members: **\$350**

#### Discount on Registration Fee

Individual members: **\$50 OFF**

Organizational members: **\$100 OFF**

#### Special Discounts:

*Early Bird* registration, by *August 1*: **\$100 OFF**

Participants from *ISSA Member*

*Countries and developing countries*: **\$150 OFF**

Conference Presenters: **\$50 OFF**

#### Special room rates are available at Hotel Pyramida for conference guests:

2400 CZK (\$86\*/room) double room

1800 CZK (\$64\*) single room.

\* Prices in \$ are only informative, based on the current exchange rate.

#### For further information please contact:

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E-mail: [eizsak@issa.hu](mailto:eizsak@issa.hu)

For conference information, registration forms and presentation proposals, visit the ISSA website:

<http://www.issa.nl>

# 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, both in print and online, and in Russian 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, Mongolia, and Haiti. During 2003, we will be identifying editorial associates in each of the 29 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. 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:  
*Rochelle Mayer, Ed.D., ECD Editor,*  
*Georgetown University Center for*  
*Child and Human Development,*  
*3307 M Street, N.W., Suite 401, Washington DC 20007*  
*Email: mayerr@georgetown.edu*

# Subscribe to Educating Children for Democracy!



**L**earn about child centered educational practices, change and educational transformation based on the experience of countries in transition. *Educating Children for Democracy* addresses the continuing challenge faced by all democracies to provide the kinds of educational experiences that will ensure the continuation of open and free societies.

*Educating Children for Democracy* is the professional journal of the International Step by Step Association. *Educating Children for Democracy* 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.

If you would like to subscribe, please send the form below to the coordinating office by fax or mail and follow the payment instructions on the next page. The Journal is distributed free to ISSA members.

## Yes, I want to subscribe to Educating Children for Democracy:

Annual subscription (two issues, published in English): \$30 USD

I would like to receive previous issues of the journal (\$15 USD per issue):

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# Join ISSA as a Member!

Organizations and individuals who share our vision are invited to become general members of ISSA:

- Educational, Non-Governmental, and Public Benefit Organizations
- Teacher Training Institutions, Universities, Retraining Institutes, and Technical Colleges
- Schools and Preschools
- Parent Associations
- National and International Development Organizations
- Other Network and Membership Organizations
- University Faculty Members
- Preschool and Primary School Teachers and Staff
- Early Childhood Experts



If you would like to know more about ISSA, and for membership information, please contact an ISSA coordinating office nearest to you:

400 West 59th Street, New York, NY 10019 USA, tel: +1 (212) 547-6918; fax: +1 (212) 548-4610; or Rakoczi ut 22. 4/24. Budapest, 1072, Hungary, tel: +36 1 486 2855; fax: +36 1 266 34 63.

E-mail: [eizsak@issa.hu](mailto:eizsak@issa.hu)

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## Payment instructions for subscription:

To subscribe, obtain back issues, or for permission to reprint, contact an ISSA Coordinating Office: 400 West 59th Street, New York, NY 10019 USA, tel: +1 (212) 547-6918; fax: +1 (212) 548-4610; or Rakoczi ut 22. 4/24. Budapest, 1072, Hungary, tel: +36 1 486 2855; fax: +36 1 266 34 63.

E-mail: [eizsak@issa.hu](mailto:eizsak@issa.hu)

Please mail (this form may be photo copied) or fax **the completed subscription form**, together with your **check, money order**, or **credit card information** to the nearest coordinating office.

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