

A Message from the Editor  
Meredith Lewis, Editor  
Center for ECP

## Early Childhood Professionals at Bank Street

**A** child's work in Pre-K is to make sense of the world. Children do this by exploring their environment through play. An adult's work with the Pre-K child is to support this process. As adults, we need to recognize that the things that happen every day are the things that mean the most to children. It is our responsibility to

help them figure out the "how's" and the "why's" of their experiences.

As teachers, we need to design a



curriculum as a guide to support children in these explorations and learnings. Defining curriculum can be difficult. Often, it is intertwined with other words, such as themes, lesson plans, and activity of the month.

But curriculum is a term of its own, defined as, "the studying of an area of specialization." In a child's first school experience, then, we define the curriculum as the things we do every day. This is wherein the specialization of the area for study lies. Because the infant, toddler, and preschool child learn best in meaningful situations, the implicit lessons in the daily routine is where learning happens. It is the approach that is used in all areas of the classroom to facilitate learning.

Teachers are catalysts of learning. We design our classrooms, and then

add materials that reflect the interests of our students, with the intent to challenge them to deeper understandings. Teachers support these investigations by participating with their students, by providing vocabulary for newly discovered findings, by asking open-ended questions, and by creating opportunities for problem-solving. The interest of the children, now, has become a project for study, and creates new opportunities for learning about more connections between the real world and the classroom. This is the curriculum, as it unfolds in front of the children's eyes.

This issue of *NewsFlash* offers you the opportunity to climb inside of some classrooms and explore meaningful curriculum from the inside-out. I hope you are able to use some of these principles in designing curriculum and apply them to benefit your students!

*Meredith*

early childhood professionals

# newsflash

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## Letter from the Director

María Beneján, Director  
Center for ECP

Did you know that the Center for Universal Pre-Kindergarten has a new and improved name? We are now the Center for Early Childhood Professionals (Center for ECP) at Bank Street College. It's interesting that at the time of this *NewsFlash* edition, we had just completed an intensive process of reflecting on what we, as Center staff, do, who we work with on a daily basis, and where we see ourselves in five years. Doesn't that sound like we reflected on our curriculum and did some strategic planning? Yes, that's just what we did. We took some time to reflect on our current services and who we were currently working with. We saw that, over time, we indeed had broadened our scope and audience to much more than Universal Pre-Kindergarten programs. Most of the staff members we work with come from programs that serve more than UPK children and we realized that we were already making an effort to include those other program components (birth – grade 1) in our professional development. We also checked in with colleagues inside and outside of the early childhood community (CBO's, Department of Education, funders, advocacy organizations) and within Bank Street. They all reaffirmed our reflections and name change.

We feel that our new name, The Center for Early Childhood Professionals, does a better job of describing the work we do and the people we work with

on a daily basis. We hope you agree. Of course, we remain steadfast to our work with and for Universal Pre-K programs. Our goals remain the same: to raise the professional competence of early care and education workers, to strengthen the quality of program services, and to achieve positive outcomes for children from birth through grade one classrooms. Through research, training, professional development, advocacy, outreach, and information sharing, the Center for ECP work remains both to address the needs of and to support the community that serves young children.

I'm very excited over our current programmatic efforts which include :

- New York City Department of Education System-wide Early Childhood Professional Development Provider (ECPD);
- Quality New York (NAEYC Accreditation Facilitation Project);
- Early Childhood Teacher Mentor Program;
- Communication, Information, Research, and Advocacy Activities.

For more information about these programs, please visit [www.bankstreet.edu/ecp](http://www.bankstreet.edu/ecp).

I want to thank all of you for helping us “design, unfold, and renew” the Center for Early Childhood Professionals curriculum. I look forward to your continued interest in the coming years. So, enjoy this edition of *Newsflash*.




# Accreditation and Curriculum

Hilary Abel, Staff Developer  
Center for ECP

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)'s accreditation system is a voluntarily extensive self-study process. Programs that choose to pursue accreditation study their performance relative to the early childhood program standards and accreditation performance criteria through observation, surveys, and related documentation. Early childhood programs that achieve accreditation are identified as High-Quality Early Childhood Programs.

NAEYC is currently reinventing the accreditation process for the "next era." The reinvented accreditation system requires programs to complete four steps to achieve NAEYC accreditation. These requirements are designed to increase the accountability of the system for children, families, and all customers of NAEYC accreditation. Ultimately, the four steps are designed to ensure that programs meet each of NAEYC's Early Childhood Program Standards, which represent NAEYC's definition of excellence for an early childhood program.

There are ten Early Childhood Programs standards, and each has Performance Criteria that are evidence-based statements that define a discrete expectation for program practice. The standards address the following Performance Categories: Relationships, Curriculum, Teaching, Assessment, Health, Teachers, Families, Community Partnerships, Physical Environment, and Leadership and Management.

Curriculum has become an important category under the

new system. The Standard states: "The program implements a curriculum that is consistent with its goals for children and promotes learning and development in each of the following domains: aesthetic, cognitive, emotional, language, physical, and social." So what does all this mean?

It means that as teachers we need to know what our program's goals are for children, what the program's philosophy is, and what written curriculum or curriculum framework the program uses to guide children's learnings. We need to think about how responsive we are to family values, beliefs, language, and experiences. We need to be aware of individual children's abilities and how we can assess them in an appropriate manner. We need to engage children in play; develop in-depth topics of study based on the children's interests; and provide learning opportunities for social-emotional, language, early literacy, early mathematics, scientific inquiry and knowledge, understanding ourselves, communities and the world, creative expression, and physical development. The curriculum that takes place in an early childhood classroom is all encompassing, addresses each child's needs and developmental level, and is happening all day, every day, in every way.

As early childhood professionals, it is important for us to be aware of these new standards and how they are related to what we do on a daily basis. For more information on NAEYC accreditation, visit [www.naeyc.org/accreditation](http://www.naeyc.org/accreditation). ●

## Advocacy Corner

Betty Holcomb, Policy Director  
Child Care, Inc.

There's so much happening on early childhood policy right now, it's almost hard to know where to begin, but here goes:

First, it's time to send a message to Governor Pataki, today, as his staff prepares the budget for next year. All Albany insiders tell us it's going to be a tough fight this year—and also Pataki's chance to create a legacy.

That's why you should go immediately to the Winning Beginning New York website, [www.winningbeginningny.org](http://www.winningbeginningny.org) and click on the link to send the governor a message—we need to expand Pre-K services now.

But don't stop there. You can also get behind the Child Care That Works campaign to win \$20 million for recruitment and retention of early childhood teachers. The coalition also plans to fight for \$140 million in subsidies to make up for last year's cuts. To join this campaign, visit [www.cctw.org](http://www.cctw.org).

The folks at the Pre-K Coalition aren't asleep at the wheel,

either. They are pressing for an expansion of UPK services, to the tune of \$100 million. They also propose a new pilot teacher certification program, to help community-based Pre-K teachers get certified and the programs they work for pay better salaries. To learn more, see "latest news" at Winning Beginning website.

Taken together, this legislative agenda may sound ambitious, but it's only a tiny part of the state's annual \$100 billion budget—and we all know the payback for children, families, and our communities when we do what's right in early childhood programs.

Which is exactly what the state Board of Regents now recognize in their new proposal for statewide early childhood education, "Early Education for Student Achievement in a Global Economy." The regents now champion a birth to age five agenda, with preschool services for all three- and four-year-olds. They are also looking into a new school-aid formula tailored just for Pre-K, and propose \$99 million in new funding, annually, over the next four years to support such services.

So now it's up to all of us to make sure that these things happen! Together, we can win more resources to do the right thing for all our children. ●

# Exploring Our Community

Betsy Grob, Staff Developer and Professor, Bank Street College of Education

JoAnne D'Addesio, Pre-K Teacher, Yonkers

Helping children make sense of the world in which they live is an essential part of the curriculum in Pre-K. For threes and fours, their world is very small, starting with themselves and then reaching out to their family, their neighbors, and finally their school. When threes and fours come to school, they are thrown into a world of new classmates and adults. How do they fit in? What role do they play? How are they alike and different from the children around them? Who are the adults that pass through the doorways and offices of their school? What do they do? While threes and fours don't actively ask these questions, it is the answers that help them to feel safe, connected, and empowered as learners in this new environment. These answers also help them feel part of the larger school community. On entering the Pre-K classroom, a sea of new faces awaits the children. For many of them, it is the first time as a part of a new community outside their family, the first time away from their families. How can we help children feel safe and included in this new setting? Group routines and group songs are a way to begin to define the community. Morning meeting, with its rituals and time to share children's news, is another important community builder. Through the job chart, children learn how each person in our community has a job, a responsibility—that we are interdependent.

As the months go on, we go beyond the walls of the classroom to learn about people who work in the school. Last year, we chose a "School Study," realizing that children spend a large part of their waking day in our school. Adults came in and out of our room, children went to meet with different people, yet we never stopped to help them make sense of who all of these people were and how they were connected to us. We wanted to help the children make sense

Our first study each year is about who we are—our classroom community. There are so many ways to help children learn about each other—songs, games, and class-made books are so important. One of my favorite tools is the bar graph—a perfect, concrete mathematical tool for young children. The classroom abounds with graphs—birthday graphs, "how I come to school", "how many children in the family?" eye color, hair color, types of shoes, what floor I live on, favorite foods, etc. All of these graphs help children to see how they are the same and how they are different from their classmates. They are drawing, counting, pasting, comparing, contrasting, and using lots of language as they do these graphs. I make sure to make them big enough and mathematically accurate so children can truly use them.

of their school through a process of inquiry and exploration, and then process the information through, talk, art, and play. We encouraged our children to be curious, and to understand the concept of interdependence beyond the walls of our classroom.

We began by brainstorming: who are the different people working in our school? This list was charted on large paper. In this way, we learned about those people the children have noticed. We started our investigation by interviewing the Head Custodian.

First we asked the children, "what do you think the custodian does?" Their answers told us a lot about their thinking and their previous knowledge. Then, we brainstormed questions about what his job entails and how he helps the community. This can be a challenge, as four year olds are just beginning to understand the concept of forming questions (I noticed that it got easier as we interviewed subsequent school workers). I wrote their questions up on chart paper beside their names—and with accompanying pictures when possible.

Having the custodian visit the classroom and be interviewed was a real treat for the children. When I read the questions and he answered them, the children saw how their thinking was taken very seriously. By recording his answers on a chart, children began to connect written language with real words—and we revisited his answers later. The custodian also showed some of the tools he uses in his work—a most exciting part of the interview. He then gave us a "custodian's tour" of the school, including a visit to the boiler room with all its huge pipes and containers. This was the highlight! The children were able to see the machines, hear the motors, and follow the pipes that take the heat and hot water to our classroom.

When we returned to the room, children drew and wrote or dictated in their journals. As a group, we wrote a letter to Mr. Eric to thank him for the interview. Children included something that they learned on the trip in the letter. We also made a book out of pictures that children drew on their clipboards while we visited the basement.

I observed children processing their new knowledge in their dramatic play and in blocks. They were fixing things with our plastic tools and using the shopping cart to push heavy boxes around. In the block area, at my suggestion, some of the children made a model of the boiler room, using odd tubes from paper towels and silver foil to make it more realistic. We made signs to show it was the boiler room.

We followed this same process as we interviewed other adults in our school world—first what we thought their work was, then brainstorming questions, then interviewing and

# Curriculum with Style

Bonnie Smith, Director, and Carla Scarlett, Head Teacher,  
Round the Clock Nursery, Bronx

**T**he Child-Initiated, Developmentally-Appropriate, Self-Esteem Reaffirming, Teacher-Facilitated, Transformative and Adaptable Approach to Early Childhood Education and Curriculum Development.

Ok, so we've got a few kinks to work out in the name. It doesn't quite roll off the tongue, like "Creative Curriculum" or "Bank Street Approach." In fact, I'm not sure how the NAEYC Accreditation Academy is going to react to the name! But the idea of creating a curriculum that taps the creativity of all teachers, and stimulates learning in all children has been a developmental process at Round-the-Clock for as long as the school has been open.

The concept isn't new; in fact, it's as old as quality parenting. It reaffirms the self-worth and creative thought process of the child. Each teacher acts within the classroom as a learning facilitator—asking questions, stimulating thought, and encouraging learning. It is expected that the teacher knows something of the topic being discussed. However, it is essential that she guide the children into thinking divergently, developing hypotheses, and working out a plan to test their ideas. She must also be willing to research the topic, and develop a "web" of activities centered around the child-initiated idea. "Choice" centers, such as the science, library, housekeeping, blocks, art and water table, can all be enhanced with items that will reflect the topic.

Each teacher has a list of Pre-Kindergarten Standards, as set by the City of New York's Department of Education. The children are observed regularly to determine how they meet these standards. Throughout the year, a portfolio is kept of each child's work, illustrating how they are developing the skills needed to meet the Standards. Anecdotal records are kept to illustrate children's daily growth. At the end of the year, the children are again assessed in relation to their own progress through the year. Their growth is reported to the District, and a portfolio goes home with each child as a remembrance of this school year.

Lesson Plans have been a challenge. They cannot be

turned in prior to determining the topics that stimulate the interest in the class. Often, they tend to change as the class opts to pursue a tangent. For instance, on the second day of school in one class, high interest emerged when the children discovered that the sand at the "sand and water table" was actually collected over the summer during a school trip to Coney Island, Brooklyn. This sparked the interest of the children as one child excitedly yelled out: "I went to Coney Island too, with my father and mother!" "Me too! I went to the beach and I did this!" responds another child, imitating how he scooped and poured sand to build "something" when he went to the beach. "I have a big ball!" says another followed by more "me too's," as the children excitedly conversed among themselves about what they had or did at the beach. Seeing the interest of the children unfold, the teachers generated ideas for a possible topic that would further challenge the children and bring the experience of "the beach" to those who had no experience of it.

As of the writing of this article, the following project is underway in this classroom:

**Possible topic:** Building a beach terrain in the classroom (could be in a natural setting such as the playground if possible)

**Materials on Hand:**

- Sand collected from the trip to Coney Island
- Large tree stump collected from a trip to Crotona Park
- Various types of rock and small driftwood samples collected from a school trip to Bear Mountain
- Seashells

**Next Steps:** The children will be challenged to brainstorm other materials to be added and where the beach terrain will be created.

**Follow-Up:** Depending on the children's interests, this project could last momentarily or a few weeks or months.

I propose that this adaptable style of curriculum development not only challenges the children to enjoy learning, but also helps to keep teachers stimulated and involved in the education process. ●

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*continued from page 4*

looking at work tools, visiting their work space, and finally returning to process the information through writing and drawing (thank you letters, journal entries, and a class book) dramatic play, painting, and blocks. We found that each person takes up to a week or more to study.

The children became "experts" at questioning and observing. When the children left the room at the end of

Pre-K, they had learned to be a part of an ever-growing community; they had learned about independence; and they had been validated as thinkers and inquirers, recorders and builders, and life long learners. And I learned that by encouraging children's curiosity about the world around them, they became better citizens and more engaged in the learning process. ●

## Yoga and Balanced Literacy

Karen Berliner, PS 198, Brooklyn

*Karen Berliner, Universal Pre-Kindergarten teacher, has been a Bank Street College of Education Center for Universal Pre-K Fellow, Fellow Advisor, and this past year a mentor in the Bank Street College Mentor Program. Karen's Pre-K program was honored this year with the New York State Department of Education Interagency Outstanding Early Childhood Program Award 2005. If you have any questions or would just like to talk about yoga and children, Karen can be reached at kberliner1@aol.com.*

While browsing through the Bank Street College Bookstore, I came upon *Yoga Kit for Kids*. I quickly pulled it off the shelf and was immediately interested. The kit included an instruction guide, 25 student cards of yoga poses and poems, and a CD. I enthusiastically purchased my “find” and carefully placed it in my book bag.

Exercise has always been a component of my classroom's daily schedule. We take time before breakfast in my morning Pre-K class and before lunch in my afternoon class. In the past, our exercise routine included simple stretching while counting in English or Spanish, or aerobics accompanied by a Rock & Roll CD. Now, we also practice yoga each week.

Watching my students practice yoga is like watching a beautiful flower blossom as each pose unfolds with pride. How proud, happy, and relaxed my students are after every yoga session! I am the facilitator during each yoga/balanced literacy session. First, I show a picture of each pose and read aloud the name of the pose. Then I help my students strike



### Implementation Tips!

1. It is important that we have rules during our yoga sessions:
  - We need to focus and concentrate on our yoga pose and poem.
  - We do not talk or touch each other.
  - When we lie down, our feet are off the area rug or touching the wall.
  - We try our best.
  - We don't over stretch or act silly.
  - We hold the pose until the poem read aloud is over.
2. As the year progresses, I add more and more poses, reaching a total of 15 or 16 poses.
3. Poses that my students find too difficult are eliminated from our yoga presentation.

each pose with guiding words or gentle hand guidance. When each child has reached his/her comfortable position, I read the poem as the classical music CD plays gently in the back ground. I do not regularly perform the poses with my students, though once in a while, I will demonstrate a pose.

The yoga and balanced literacy curriculum continues to emerge throughout the day and the year. I hear my students engaging in accountable talk about their favorite poses as well as about poses they want to learn. During center time they draw, write, and dictate about their yoga experiences. The students and I use our class digital camera to photograph different students in yoga poses and add captions to our photos. We create individual books, class books, and classroom displays using students' work and photographs. Individual and class books are read during our daily read aloud, independent reading, and/or shared reading.

My students are very special to me and it's great to be able to give them something special, the gift of yoga and balanced literacy together. ●

## Upcoming Events

The Mid-Atlantic Equity Center's Annual Conference

**March 24, 2006**

Promoting Academic Excellence for Culturally Diverse Young Men – Washington D.C.

Call 301-657-7741 for more information.

New York State Association for the Education of Young Children's Annual Conference

**May 5-6, 2006**

Saratoga Springs, NY.

Visit [www.nysaeyc.org](http://www.nysaeyc.org) for more information.

New York City Association for the Education of Young Children's Annual Conference

**October 2006**

New York City, NY.

Visit [www.nycayc.org](http://www.nycayc.org) for more information.

**New Perspectives**, short-format, graduate level courses, available through Bank Street College's Division of Continuing Education, are designed to meet the needs of educators in two to four days. Some of the most popular courses include: Art with Young Children, How Young Children Learn through Play, Supporting Emergent Literacy, Using the Supportive Play Model, and The Youngest Scientists: Hands-on Adventures. For more information about these courses, or for a catalog with additional course listings, call 212.875.4649 or visit [www.bnkst.edu/newperspectives](http://www.bnkst.edu/newperspectives).

### HAVE YOU CONSIDERED?

Use this *NewsFlash* as a tool for staff development!

Copy an article

(or download the whole issue at <http://www.bankstreet.edu/ecp>).

Guide staff to read, reflect, and then discuss it at your next staff meeting!

## On the street...talking with teachers about their practice

### Q: What influences the curriculum in your classroom the most?

**A:** My main theme is going wild and crazy and letting loose. I usually pick out the theme. The first experience of coming to daycare is always our first theme because it is new and they are not familiar with the experience. So I ask the children to talk about their parents and I ask parents to bring in pictures of home. From there, we just add on and become more comfortable. I like to pick something that will bring more attention to the activities—something they will have a lot of fun with—and I'll monitor them—and if it looks like they are enjoying it, we build on it. And sometimes the children will give me ideas. I try to get information about topics to connect everything together and sometimes one theme leads to the next, such as taking care of themselves and hygiene and learning about the body. We have a great time!

Mary Miller, Teacher,  
Jonathan Williams Day Care Center, Brooklyn

**A:** The children. We—my teaching team and I—observe the children and take anecdotal notes. By observing their play, we get ideas for activities. We review the anecdotal notes and then make our lesson plans from what we observed the children doing in their play.

Traci Chen, Teacher,  
Bloomingdale Family Program, Manhattan

## earlychildhoodprofessionals newsflash

### Issue 12, Fall 2005

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### Many Thanks

We would like to thank the educators who shared their insights with us in this issue of *NewsFlash*. Your willingness to tell your story has helped us all grow to become stronger teachers and advocates for children.

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The Center for Early Childhood Professionals is part of the Division of Continuing Education at Bank Street College of Education. The mission of the Center is to help early care and education programs strengthen their services to young children and their families. For more information about our programs, please contact María Benejón at 212.961.3414 or visit our website at [www.bankstreet.edu/ecp](http://www.bankstreet.edu/ecp)

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