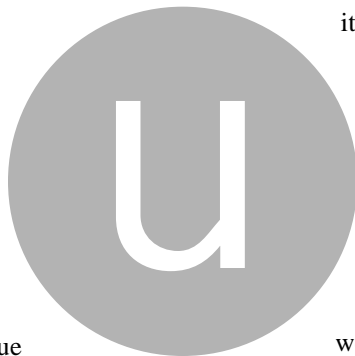


a message from the editor

Universal Pre-K at Bank Street

This is an issue of “threes.” First, Universal Pre-K is in its third year, with 38,000 four-year-olds currently enrolled. In addition, this is the third edition of the UPK Newsflash. Thirdly, three times as many articles were submitted for this issue than for past issues. What has been most exciting about publishing the newsletter is the responses we have received from readers and writers alike.



I believe that it is important that we celebrate our successes,

and the UPK Newsflash is one way of telling the Early Childhood world about your successes.

I think that our community has a lot to be proud of in its third year.

Universal Pre-K has expanded to extend services to even more children than last year. Granted that we have not reached our targeted enrollment, but we have succeeded in expanding Universal Pre-K programs to enroll more children.

Lately, I have had the good fortune to be out in the field a lot more and have had an opportunity to see the impact of Universal Pre-K on children. In the past two weeks I have observed children greeting each other “Good Morning,” and children building a house for tigers and giraffes while another group of children was busy testing common classroom items in the science center to see if they



would sink or float. In another classroom two students were busy at the easel, one covering a paper canvas with multitudes of colors and another painting a picture of a friend. This is just a small sample of the activities that are engaging children in Universal Pre-K programs.

If we did not have Universal Pre-K in New York City the number of four-year-olds engaged in activities such as these would be considerably less. I am hoping that Universal Pre-K continues to grow and has the opportunity to become truly universal. There is talk that this coming year will bring more challenges for Universal Pre-K funding. It is important that we get the word out about our success and let our legislators know that we need support for continued Universal Pre-K programs.

universal pre-k newsflash

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From the Center for Universal Pre-K Director's Desk

Maria Benejan, Director,
Center for UPK



Wow! Have you stopped to look at where we started with Universal Pre-K and where we are now? The last three years have been very exciting and pro-

ductive years for Universal Pre-K programs in New York City. We at the Center for UPK are honored and extremely proud for taking part in this endeavor.

As you begin to reflect on this year's accomplishments and plan for next year, remember to build upon your successes. Renew your commitments to create stronger relationships with your partners, and, above all, challenge yourself and your program. As leaders in the early care and education community, you are well positioned to positively affect what happens to the children, families, and community you serve.

I hope you enjoy our third edition of Newsflash, and I look forward to our continued work toward high quality programming. Thank you for your continued perseverance on the behalf of young children and their families. ●

Universal Pre-K Reflections

Pamela Galvon, Teacher, Interdisciplinary Center for Child Development, Brooklyn

I teach art at a pre-school for children with special needs, with some integrated classes containing UPK children. Our children are so impressive that while teaching them I feel in contact with the tide. In my position I have made the following observations:

The process of using materials facilitates children's emotional development. You take risks with materials:

"How will I feel being a dinosaur . . . drawing myself riding a tricycle . . . drawing my family . . . smoothing out clay into beautiful wet forms." Emotional flexibility aides children all of the time, especially as they as they confront new situations and relate to others.

The process of using materials informs one physically about new pathways to take with our bodies. Moving smoothly and efficiently on the playground during pretend play or while making art creates such a lightness and ease. One can reach further, do more . . . program one's body to function after repeated exposure to certain movements. The growing phenomenon of children able to manipulate computer equipment so very quickly and efficiently appears to stem from their early experience with computer programs and activities.

Touring UPK programs for my daughter to attend provided me with an opportunity to observe other schools. What a luxury! Collages based



on the works of Picasso and Braques lined one classroom's walls. Petrie dishes with mold experiments were placed on top of another room's cubbies. Clearly, good and imaginative programs are out there.

Our focus for UPK and other grades must now be on transportation to and from programs — and why oh why are there half-day classes? Let us create small classes, full-day programs, and more seats. Just as in the upper grades, consider the true number of school-age children in need of programs. "The more the merrier" sounds just right as a slogan for pre-school. ●

The Me Museum

Phyllis Murray, P.S. 38, Staten Island

Our Pre-K youngsters are part of a fascinating and festive project called the Me Museum in which they celebrate themselves through their families. In preparation, parents are asked to participate in planning with youngsters for their special day. Items to be brought in include a large poster with mounted photographs and/or other objects for the display table with an emphasis on the Pre-K youngsters. Families help children choose five to ten objects brought from home to accompany the photos. Items include: baby clothes, favorite toys, favorite songs, books, pets, games, and so on. Parents label each object for the display. The child is asked to explain what is happening in the photographs and/or display table and to explain why these experiences and people are significant.

The parents also act as tour guides to the presentation, and some of them enjoy showing us their unique talents. They are encouraged to share a family story, food, or something to view from their family or culture. One family plans to cook burritos for Cinco de Mayo.

The youngsters love to wear their favorite outfit on their special Me Museum day. Some of the clothes may relate to a preferred sports activity while others may have a meaningful cultural significance. The choices are as varied as the children! One of our youngsters wore his favorite shirt with a picture of a truck on it and presented an exhibit that developed on the theme of trucks, his favorite interest.

A special part of the presentation comes when a parent reads a favorite book that is selected by a child at home and brought in to share with classmates.

Finally there is a demonstration of an activity that the child likes to do best. Subjects may range from playing hockey to gymnastics or bringing in their most beloved stuffed animal or toy. One child brought in her helmet, kneepads, and skates and slid proudly around the room while the other children watched her feat.

This project continues to be a wonderful opportunity to learn about the unique family of each youngster. Often we get to see Mom and Dad as well as siblings and extended family. The whole family is encouraged to become involved in a direct and meaningful way in the child's school experience.

And each Me Museum is different and fascinating. One of the children brought two grandmas, Mom, Dad, and a six-month-old sister to share in the families' stories. At one point, Grandma set up an electric keyboard, and the family sang their favorite childhood songs. The rest of the class joined in for another round of each song. Yet another youngster brought her mother and aunt to teach

us how to use sign language while viewing and singing "I Know an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly."

Through the Me Museum project children appreciate their individual uniqueness. They feel good about themselves and get to know each other better and note their similarities and differences.

Vocabulary expands and a connection between home, family, and school is fostered. By sharing such treasures as favorite songs, stories, poems, music, and dance there is a greater appreciation of reading and the arts. Children love to draw from their experiences of the day and role-play family situations in the dramatic play center.

As we learn from each family, we take photos of the family and tape record the youngsters for our memory book about the Me Museum. As our classroom grows with posters we really do enjoy looking at all of the rich cultural diversity in our room and in our lives.

At the end of the presentation, the participants receive a participation award and leave with a feeling of pride and accomplishment. On the Me Museum day we have all learned a lot more about each other. ●

Archdiocese of New York Head Start Program

Nora Fuery, Ed.D, Executive Director,
Archdiocese of New York Head Start Program, Bronx

With major aim of training parents in being the primary teachers and partners in the education of their children, the Archdiocese of New York Head Start Program launched their Literacy Project during the first week of November. All its sixteen centers staged the Literacy Day Celebration by giving out the book "Feather for Lunch" to all its children. Parents were invited during the occasion to discuss the importance of exposing children to literacy materials. Parents and teachers agreed that exposure to printed materials is one of the best ways for children to learn and appreciate the value of knowing how to read. The agency plans to give more free books to all its children. ●

UPK at P.S. 220 is cooking up something special

Susan L. Wellman, Athena Kochilas, and Jan Swiatocha, Teachers
P.S. 220, Queens

The Universal Pre-kindergarten in P.S. 220Q is happy to share some of the activities we employ to shape the home/school connection.

“My special day” is an activity that encourages parents to come in and share visuals that depict the child’s first: words, steps, and baby teeth. The parent is also encouraged to bring in the child’s favorite possession, such as a blanket or toy, and his or her favorite food. (Make sure there is enough to share with the entire class.)

Another activity is our “Friendship Month”. We send out letters to parents and to P.S. 220 staff members asking them to be a friend. They read their favorite children’s book to us in keeping with the principles of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Brotherhood Month. Each reader signs his or her name on a strip of paper, creating a “friendship chain” across the classroom.

We believe “cognitive” cooking experiences offer ways for parents to become involved in the education of their child. To show them how this is accomplished, we get them involved in monthly cooking experiences in school. For example, in October we made “jack-o-lantern” tortillas, which emphasized shapes. Another cooking activity was making applesauce. We also graphed the children’s favorite-tasting apple.

The key to our program is that the staff works as a cohesive unit to make the bonds of the home/school connection a reality. ●

UPK Highlights

Exploring Enchanted Lands

Melanie Spiegel, Teacher, P.S. 279 Brooklyn

Once Upon a time there lived a class who decided to travel to an enchanted world of giants, golden eggs, talking bears, simple-minded pigs, brave goats, and mean-spirited trolls. They found that sharing fairy tales together gave them opportunities to share what they already knew about old favorites and to learn new things about this magical genre. For example, did you know that Fairy Tales always have evil characters who are punished and good characters who are rewarded? Also, it is no coincidence that a few of our favorites have the number three in their titles, and that many fairy tales use the number three. Can you think of a few?

The Three Billy Goats Gruff brought three goats and a mean troll into the classroom. When we took a closer look at the troll we used the author’s descriptions to create our own trolls eyes like saucers and noses as big as poker. The children turned our meeting area into a stage and had a wonderful time acting out the story. The children helped create their script by choosing recurring lines from the story. The actors used loud voices and strong body movements as they pretended to be the biggest billy goat. The children also worked cooperatively to create a mural about the story. These activities provided wonderful reinforcements of size concepts. The children graphed their favorite characters. Who do you think was most popular? Well, the biggest billy goat of course. After all, he was the hero of this tale.

When Goldilocks walked into the house of The Three Bears, what did her eyes see? This first question was posed in order to activate the children’s prior knowledge about this tale. Their responses ranged from a description of porridge, chairs, and beds to evaluations of Goldilocks’ behavior. As we read the story we focused on whether

the children’s first impressions were correct. We discussed Goldilocks’ behavior and decided that she did not behave well in the bear’s house. The children decided that they should write apology letters on behalf of Goldilocks. Their letters were placed in a class book entitled “Dear Bears.”

Goldilocks made such a mess of the house that the children were able to participate in several different sorting activities. They sorted the bears’ belongings into the appropriate rooms of the house. Also, the children matched each bear to his or her bowl, chair, and bed. The bears also took center stage in our meeting area. The children discussed the lines that they thought were important and helped create the bears’ house on the rug. Each child performed the role of papa bear, mama bear, baby bear, or Goldilocks. Papa bear had a great big voice, mama a middle-sized voice, and baby a little voice. Goldilocks had no voice at all when she saw the bears standing over her! What a sight!

We all learn through our mistakes, even the Three Little Pigs. The children explored the story sequence. They created their own board game based on the houses that the Big Bad Wolf visited. We know that the first little pig did not make wise choices about building materials. What would you have made your house out of? The children brainstormed a list of possible types of houses. They worked cooperatively to create a mural of the Pig’s new houses.

The trip through the enchanted lands will continue. As the children continue to share reading, writing dramatic, and art experiences they should learn to live happily ever after. ●

Music and Language Development

Marie Silva, Teacher, P.S. 93, The Annex, Brooklyn

Last year Marie Silva was one of the Early Childhood Teacher awardees. She reports on the special music project she developed.

I am currently in the second phase of my proposed project to incorporate music into my Pre-kindergarten curriculum in order to facilitate children's language development. It is proving to be an educational and gratifying experience for me.

In August I completed a three-day introductory and advanced workshop with the Music Together program in Princeton, NJ. From this experience I gained a better understanding of developmental practice in music and expanded my music curriculum with a mix of new and traditional songs and movement activities.

Thus far, our musical experiences in my Pre-kindergarten classroom have been enlightening and truly enjoyable. Already I have seen what I considered the quiet child shaking a maraca to the beat or suddenly start singing almost as loud as the other children. I have also seen the child with speech concerns signing without any inhibitions. The results have gone beyond my expectations, and this is only the second month of school. This experience has shown me that music not only facilitates language development but also promotes socialization, helps fine and gross motor skills, develops eye-hand coordination, and boosts self-confidence. Best of all, the children seem happier.

Now that I am applying my newly acquired knowledge and skills and witnessing the resultant success, I soon will be sharing my findings with colleagues through staff development and with parents in music workshops. ●

Interested in applying for the Early Childhood Teacher Awards?

The Bank Street Early Childhood Teacher Awards are a celebration of outstanding early childhood practice (pre-K through grade 3) in public schools throughout New York City. The awards were created by Bank Street in 1993 in cooperation with the Board of Education and the United Federation of Teachers and with original funding by the Levitt Foundation and the Reliance Group.

Full-time, experienced general, special education, and bilingual classroom teachers are encouraged to apply.

Finalists will be eligible to take three credits (Graduate School or New Perspective courses) at Bank Street College and receive \$350 to attend local early childhood conferences. In addition, awardees can receive \$2,000 in financial support for their projects.

If you are interested in finding out more about the Early Childhood Teacher Awards, there will be an informational session on January 4, 2001. Applications are due February 12, 2001. For additional information call Maria Benejan at (212) 875-4783. ●

Do you have those cold weather blues? Why not brighten up your winter through New Perspective courses? New Perspective courses take the weary out of winter.

This is just a small sample of courses to be offered this winter:

- Young Children and Computers (PreK – 3)
- Teacher Certification Test Prep
- Behavior Management Strategies for the Classroom Teacher (PreK–8)
- Art for Children with Special Needs (PreK – 8)
- How Young Children Learn Through Play (N – 1)
- Setting Up Learning Centers (PreK – 3)
- Workshop Skills for Staff Developers
- Woodworking in the Classroom (PreK – 8)
- Music for Pre-School Children (N – K)
- Using Blocks to Build Creative, Inclusive Early Childhood Environments

Something special just for UPK teachers: Subsidized New Perspectives Courses. For more information, contact Maria Beneján, at 212-875-4783

Fun in the Fall

Carol Spivach, Director, and Madelyn Gordina, Teacher, Riverdale Temple Nursery School, Bronx

Fall has been an exciting month for us. We jumped right in when we went for a nature walk and made our own “nature bracelets.” On our walk, we found different colored leaves, tree bark (we know it’s the tree’s skin), flower petals, pinecones, grass, and acorns. We found a tree with a huge trunk, and we measured the trunk using our bodies. It took six children to go completely around the trunk. When we came back to the class, we wrote a class story about our walk and drew pictures showing what we each had found.

We also made a class tree using our handprints for leaves because, just as every handprint is different, so is every leaf. Next we collected leaves in the playground and did a leaf pressing in which we took turns ironing. The pressings look beautiful hanging in our classroom windows. We also made leaf bookmarks and learned that a maple leaf comes from a maple tree and has five points, just like our hands.

In math and science we have sorted and counted various types of fall nature, and we have learned about the similarities and differences among the leaves near our school. We have also continued our tree study of the “Butterscotch” tree. (This is an oak tree in our playground that the children have adopted and named Butterscotch.) We observed that her leaves are now yellow, orange, red, and partly green, but still she has lots of them. We “recorded” our findings, took pictures of the tree, and collected some newly colored leaves just like real nature scientists. We will continue to study the “Butterscotch” tree over the next few months. ●

Involving Parents in Early Literacy Programs

Eileen Fortuna, Teacher
Bronx Community College Child Development Center-UPK
Bronx

I am a firm advocate in encouraging children’s early literacy development through reading, writing, and language. As a pre-kindergarten teacher I like to involve parents in home/school literacy programs, and offering simple suggestions to parents on how they can participate in their child’s literacy development is a good way to begin.

Make suggestions that are uncomplicated and non-threatening. Also, have ideas that will fit easily into their daily routine, which is often busy and hurried. I always tell my parents that children model behavior. Setting up a special place for a child to draw, “write,” or store their own books at home (like mom does), often works well. It parallels their activities at school and encourages similar behaviors at home. I often suggest to those moms who tell me that they don’t have time to work with their children that they can set up a stool next to the sink in the kitchen and let the child play while they prepare dinner. It’s also a great opportunity for conversation.

While they are working they can talk with the child about what they are doing and also talk about what the child did in school that day. I send home a weekly newsletter with an overview of what we did in class for the week and a preview of what’s coming the following week. I also include titles of books we’ve read and occasionally the words to songs that we have sung. I suggest that parents read this aloud with their child at the end of the week and ask their child to tell them what about what happened, while they discuss the events.

Creating a lending library in class also encourages parental involvement in fostering their child’s interest in reading. Include some activities along with the book, such as recipes or games. Also, include a journal for parents to jot down a few lines. When they see the comments of other parents, they usually respond, sometimes with their own suggestions.

Ideas on reading with your children, a resource list of appropriate books, and a teacher who is readily available to help parents are all the ingredients needed to create a successful Early Literacy program. ●

Resources

Thinking of going back to school? Check out these resources on scholarships and financial aid.

<http://www.ed.gov/funding.html>

The U.S. Department of Education has information on loans, financial aid programs, grants, and other funding opportunities.

<http://www.earlychildhood.org>

This site contains information about early childhood career development, including Early Childhood Associate credentials (NYS Department of Labor Apprenticeship and Training Program), which can be earned through a sponsoring childcare facility where an individual is employed. Information is also available on the New York State Child Care Educational Incentive Program (E.I.P.), which was designed to provide scholarship money to childcare providers wishing to further their education or receive additional training. Web Links for college searches, virtual tours, financial aid/scholarships, and career counseling and planning are available here as well.

<http://www.teachny.com/html/>

This site has information on scholarships, loan forgiveness programs, incentive programs, certification, and recruitment events. For more information on the Loan Forgiveness Program call (718) 935-2449.

<http://www.hhs.gov/topics/head-start.html>

Quality Improvement Funds to Increase the Number of Teachers with College Degrees (The Head Start Act, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 9831 et seq.) As part of an effort to increase the benefits children receive from Head Start, funds are being made available to all Head Start and Early Head Start programs to improve the training and qualifications of classroom teachers.

Interested in learning more about Pre-kindergarten programs nationally and in New York State, or would you like to discuss early childhood education with your virtual colleagues? If so check out our updated website at:

<http://www.bankstreet.edu/universal>

Save the Dates

New York State Education Department
2001 Interagency Conference
January 29 – 30
Sheraton Hotel, New York City

National Coalition for Campus Children's Centers
2001 Annual Conference
March 28 – 31
Marriott Hotel, Brooklyn, NY

NAEYC Professional Development Conference
June 2001
Washington, DC



Many Thanks

Thanks to all of the writers who contributed to this issue of *NewsFlash*. Your work is greatly appreciated!

A Special Thanks

The *NewsFlash* is brought to you through the generous funding of the Altman Foundation, Chase Manhattan Foundation, Joseph E. Seagram & Sons, The Russell-Grinnell Memorial Trust Fund, Fund for Child Development, and the United Way.



universal pre-k
newsflash

Issue 3, December 2000
UPK NewsFlash is distributed to UPK programs and staff, policy-makers, foundations, higher education faculty, advocacy groups, and the early childhood educational community.

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New York, NY 10025-1898
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