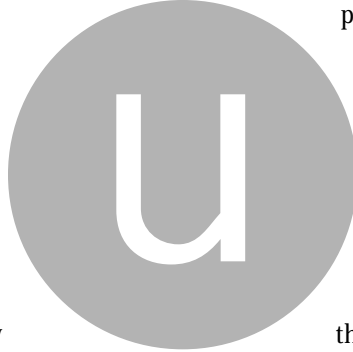


a message from the editor

## Universal Pre-K at Bank Street

I recently joined the Center for Universal Prekindergarten, which has given me the opportunity to observe the tremendous growth of Universal Pre-K in New York City, both as a whole and in each individual program. Twenty-five thousand New York City children are currently enrolled in the program, now in its second year. In only one year, the number of children who attend Universal Pre-K classes has nearly doubled.



A Universal Pre-K teacher with whom I spoke recently said that, about half way through the school year, she steps back and takes stock of her students' progress. This year, she is so proud of her students; her mid-year reflection allowed her to see the considerable growth her students had made collectively and individually. I believe that this is true as we reflect on Universal Pre-K in New York City.

I firmly believe that one of the most important factors in the implementation of Universal Pre-K in New York City has been the collaboration among school districts', community-based programs, higher education institutions, policy makers, advocacy groups, and the Board of Education. What appears to be the



unifying factor is the determination to offer four-year-old children the opportunity to become involved in active learning experiences in stimulating, language-rich, learner-centered environments.

Through the efforts of Governor Pataki, Universal Pre-Kindergarten has been funded through the next school year. As a result, 43,000 four-year-olds are expected to enroll in Universal Pre-Kindergarten. This promises to be another exciting year for the entire early childhood community.

Sally Imbimbo



# universal pre-k newsflash

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## Learning Centers in a Universal Pre-K Classroom

The children of Pre-K 104 have been wonderful explorers and observers. They have come to know every area of the classroom very well. From the computer area to the blocks, the children have had lots of opportunity to experiment with each area and now are able to pick and choose the area they like best. The wonderful thing about these learning centers is that the children have the opportunity to be creative, to use their imaginations while learning to socialize and form friendships with their classmates.

The areas are housekeeping, blocks, tabletop toys, computers, easel painting, writing center, and library.

The meeting area is the space in the classroom where the teachers conduct daily morning and afternoon meetings with the children. They sing songs, read stories, do finger plays, or conduct mini-lessons in which new themes are introduced. With each new theme, several skills are taught so that learning is always fun and exciting for the children. Incorporated with each theme is whatever holiday is celebrated that month. The children have learned various skills, such as identification of shapes and colors, cutting and gluing their own creations, and interpreting their environment. ●

Ms. Rabsatt, Ms. Quintero, Ms. Cruz,  
& Ms. Mohammed  
District 13, P.S. 133, Brooklyn, NY

## What is Special About Fours: Welcome to a Child's World

We read a story about Dr. King that told how he stood for freedom and died for *peace*. At the end of the day, we asked the children if there was anything they could remember from the story. One student raised his hand and said, "He died." I asked him if he knew why. He responded with, "He died because he ate *peas*."

We went over shapes this month. The class was calling out shapes very rapidly in a game we play. Brittany raised her hand and said, "Mrs. Modica, you're getting pretty good at this." ●

Rita Modica  
Marcus Garvey School, Brooklyn

Upon entering one of District 24's 32 half-day community-based Universal Pre-K programs, you will be greeted with a sign: "When you come into our school, please remember it is a child's world: his/her work, his/her ideas, his/her fun." It is an introduction to the specialness of the four-year-old's world and it guides the focus of our enriched cultural community with their varied garments, food, folk tales, customs, and languages (Albanian, Arabic, Armenian, Bengali, Brahui, Chinese, Greek, German, Hindi, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Kashmiri, Korean, Polish, Romania, Russian, Spanish, Ukrainian, and English).

The following are a few examples of captured and recorded experiences during exploratory play with clay: comments that were overheard, "See mine's fingers"; "My nest has an egg in it"; "I rolled and rolled and rolled and pinched

and banged, that's all." Cooperative play produced:

You put the fence here and here. I'll put the fence here and here. I'll put the cows in this spot. The sheep go here. Hey, come and see our real farm!

On a neighborhood walk, the children made discoveries and employed their oral language to explain and inform. When one child discovered a new friend, the following comments were overheard: "Oh what is it? It is my quiet friend. Your shadow is your quiet friend." The children also noticed "tons of daffodils. Hey, that one's sick." Another student asked, "How do you know?" and the first student responded, "Its stem's not up."

As we witness children constructing knowledge about things, be it object, symbols or people orally written or physical, we note their growth. ●

Barbara Kasanova  
District 24, Glendale, New York

# Highlights from the Center for Universal Pre-K

This is a period of unprecedented interest, expansion, and investment in prekindergarten education in the United States. Over the past decade, fiscal resources devoted to prekindergarten have more than doubled, from \$700 million in 1991 to \$1.7 billion dollars in 1999, and the number of children served has nearly tripled, growing from 290,000 to nearly 725,000.

New York City has the potential to serve as a role model for other cities working toward implementing early childhood programs. In its second year of operation, Universal Prekindergarten in New York City has presented significant growth in the field of early childhood education. Since the program's inception in 1997, the number of four-year children enrolled in Universal Pre-K programs almost doubled, from 14,000 to 25,000. Of the 25,000 children enrolled in Universal Pre-K programs, 60% are located in community-based organizations and 40% are in New York City Board of Education school sites. New York City has demonstrated a strong ability to enroll a large number of four-year-old children, present a variety of collaborative models, involve communities in the planning of Universal Pre-K programs, and provide quality prekindergarten experiences for children. However, the expansion of Universal Pre-K presents several challenges for all stakeholders. These challenges, which have an impact on quality, include professional development, program planning, the insurance of a developmentally appropriate curriculum, and uncertainty regarding funding.

In response to these challenges, Bank Street College established the Center for Universal Pre-K in the fall of 1999. Through this Center, Bank Street seeks to address the needs of public school and community-based programs as Universal Pre-K continues to expand.

The Center for Universal Pre-K has developed a number of initiatives and collaborations to address the challenges of developing and sustaining quality outcomes for Universal Pre-K programs in New York City. These program initiatives include:

- A Universal Pre-K Fellows Program, which is a collaborative venture with La Guardia Community College, New York University, and Hunter College. Universal Pre-K fellows receive ongoing professional development through evening and weekend seminars, peer support networking, and mentoring. In addition, fellows receive subsidized credit for their active participation in program activities.
- An Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development where collaborative models for professional development that link teachers, assistant teachers, parents, and program leaders in shared training sessions are developed and implemented. In addition, the Institute sponsors conferences,

seminars, and forums on issues related to quality programming with an emphasis on teacher recruitment, retention, and professional development. The Center also subsidizes Universal Pre-K teachers through Bank Street's New Perspectives courses (short-format weekend courses).

- Recently, the Center for Universal Pre-K formed a partnership with Cornell University to conduct a statewide study on Universal Pre-K. The study will provide a comprehensive understanding of New York State's implementation of Universal Pre-K over the next three years. The purpose of the study is to provide information that will lead to the further strengthening of Universal Pre-K and help to ensure continuation of the program.

In addition to these initiatives, the Center for Universal Pre-K has several resources available to Universal Pre-K programs and staff, policy makers, foundations, higher education faculty, advocacy groups, and the early childhood education community. The Center publishes a newsletter, *The Universal Pre-K News Flash*, and has a Web site that can be visited at <http://www.bnkst.edu/universal>.

The Center for Universal Pre-K has taken great steps towards its long-term goal of improving prekindergarten quality. The initiatives and collaborations of the Center present increased opportunities for teachers, administrators, and the early education community to strengthen their Pre-K programs and, in turn, for the Center to continue to respond to the Universal Pre-K community. For further information, please contact Maria Beneján at 212-875-4783, or Sally Imbimbo 212-875-4498. ●

## The Back Pack Book Club

Children at the Samuel Field Y are having fun as members of their Book Club. In each class, two children at a time take home a backpack, to be kept overnight. The children choose a book from the class library to take home and enjoy it with their families.

The backpack itself is appealing. It is colorfully decorated and includes a book that was chosen by the child, a "puppet pal," suggestions for activities, and a journal for writing. The puppet pal is for dramatizing stories and to motivate children to use language to enhance the experience. Our suggestions include questions that promote discussion such as: What do you think this story is going to be about? What do you think is going to happen?

Some suggestions for parent/child follow-up activities are:

- Dramatize the story.
- Use the puppet pal to answer questions about the story.
- Draw a picture.

The following are entries by the parents in the journal.

- "Keaton likes ice cream, just like the ice cream bear."
- "She wanted to see her shadow too, so I promised to show her shadow to her one day."
- "This is a terrific project for parents and children to share."
- "Matthew liked the story about Franklin and the camera. It is a nice lesson to be learned about returning property."

Teachers share the children's drawings and the parent's writings with the children during circle time. All are enthusiastic and are enjoying the Book Club. Phyllis Green, Brooklyn

## UPK Highlights

# Creating Emotionally Responsive Prekindergartens is Welcomed by District 15

Gloria Di Napoli Peropat, CSW, District 15, Brooklyn, NY

There is considerable research suggesting that children are less at risk of personal and academic failure when nurtured in empathic settings. "Creating Emotionally Responsive Prekindergarten Programs" was launched in the Fall of 1999 under the leadership of Eleanor Ukoli, Director of Early Childhood for the City of New York. Designed to integrate a mental health component within the Pre-K programs of the City schools, this innovative model was developed by Lesley Koplow, Coordinator of the Mental Health Project... New Beginnings at Bank Street College.

In District 15, with the enthusiastic support of Superintendent Francis J. DeStefano, and Early Childhood Supervisor Jean McPadden, administrators, staff developers and the Pre-K staff have been introduced to the concepts and classroom techniques in Ms. Koplow's book, *Unsmiling Faces: How Preschools Can Heal*. A classroom pilot program was begun at P.S. 295. Each month, Roberta Rubian, Assistant Director of the project, has worked with individual children, the whole class, and their teacher, Claire Dougherty, modeling emotionally attentive interventions. In addition, Dr. Rubian has facilitated group supervisions with the six social workers in District 15 who are working with teachers to create "psychological homebase" in each of the 58 classrooms of this

Brooklyn district. These meetings have been rich in meaning and have provided the motivation for continuing the difficult work of creating emotionally attuned classrooms where cognitive learning can take a firm hold on a solid foundation.

## Looking Forward:

A summer institute, hosted by the district, will immerse 100 teachers in the workings of this therapeutic model.

A goal of the institute is to spawn a number of model classrooms that will serve as professional sites for Pre-K teachers from around the city. "Early Childhood programs that attend to the young child's emotional life connect with families in a deep way and find avenues of communication that allow parents to have insight into their child's experiences in the school setting" (Koplow).

Committed to the belief that a child's emotional well-being is key to her/his academic success, District 15's early childhood program will provide ongoing professional development for all of the Pre-K staff in the next school year. Now that is good news! ●

# An Innovative Approach to Universal Pre-K Programming

Cynthia Murphy, Director, District 31, The Children's Center at the College of Staten Island

In the summer of 1998, the parents, children, and teaching staff of the Children's Center at the College of Staten Island anxiously awaited the final word from the New York City Board of Education on funding for the Universal Prekindergarten program. The Children's Center, which operates under the College of Staten Island Association, Inc., had applied as a community-based organization to provide a Pre-K program in cooperation with District 31. In August of 1998, the Center was awarded a contract to provide a Universal Prekindergarten program for 22 four-year-olds. The teachers and support staff at the Center were off and running to have the program in place by the first day of classes on August 31!

Our second year of providing UPK got off to a smooth start due to a commitment by the New York City Board of Education.

Through our flexible time scheduling varying from semester to semester, the educational and childcare needs of the children whose parents or guardians are pursuing a college education are met. To accommodate these needs, eleven children are enrolled in each of two mixed age groups of three- and four-year-olds. All the children attend for a minimum of two-and-a-half-hours a day, five days a week, as required by the State

Education Department. However, a child might be enrolled for two mornings and three afternoons with wrap-around child care to accommodate the hours not included in the Universal Pre-K program. Parents and guardians write the Center's newsletter, request workshops, and keep up on the issues that affect their children. Since the Children's Center is on the campus, the parents and guardians can stop in to visit during the day.

In addition to the wonderful early learning experiences in well-equipped rooms, outdoor play in a spacious yard, and a campus to explore, a nutritious breakfast, lunch, and afternoon snack are provided.

Our preschool program with flexible scheduling and mixed-age groups fosters the cognitive, social, physical, and emotional development of the individual child. Young children learn through play under the guidance of an experienced, nurturing, and highly qualified teaching staff in an environment

that offers hands-on learning

We look forward to another year of cooperation with the Board of Education to provide an on-campus Universal Pre-K program tailored to meet the needs of our community of college students. •

Thinking of what to do during the summer... perhaps some gardening, creative movement, or woodworking...

Why not add a professional dimension to your summer fun? Here are just a few of the topics that will be included this summer in the New Perspectives courses at Bank Street:

- Young Children and Computers (PreK-3)
- Setting up Learning Centers (PreK-K)
- A Garden Can Grow Anywhere: A Project of Wonder and Growth (PreK-6)
- Woodworking in Your Classroom, Home, or Office (PreK-8)
- 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)

This is just a small sample of the "short, cool courses" being offered this summer. And something special just for UPK teachers: Subsidized New Perspectives Courses. For more information, contact Maria Beneján, at 212-875-4783

## Betty and Minerva's Class

Superstart/UPK, District 89, The Ella Baker School, Manhattan

### Universal Pre-K Goes Maze Crazy!

We've been going a bit "Maze Crazy" around here. It all began when we started reading a book about mazes. Now it seems that every time we turn around, someone has a new idea either about how to make mazes or about some new way we can use the ones that we have already made.

Our study of mazes has been absorbed into several of our classroom work areas. In blocks, the children are building "human-sized" mazes that they themselves can travel through. Our first maze was built for Joe, our classroom guinea pig. It was here that we began to understand how important it was for mazes to have a purpose: Joe had to figure out how to get around all the detours in order to find and eat the apple that we had placed in the maze. In addition, we are creating mazes in our painting areas and with different math manipulatives, such as Legos and geo boards.

We also worked on making a maze book. Each child drew a maze on construction paper. Before we began, we talked about how we needed to make sure that our drawings looked like mazes and had a story or a purpose. After we finished, one student thought that instead of making a book, we should hang them all up "so our parents can be proud." We wanted to find out what other children thought about this idea, so we took a survey on the question: "Should we hang up our mazes or make a book with them?" The majority of children and adults wanted to hang them up, so

our maze pictures hang proudly outside of our room for all to enjoy.

### The children also worked together to create an amazing maze mural.

It was a great experience to see the children use so many different kinds of materials to make this large and impressive maze. We chose different materials, including paint and rollers, sticks, and footprints made out of sponges and feathers, to name a few.

The maze craze inspired the children to become interested in pulleys. Perhaps we will hear more about the activities of Ella Baker Super Start /Universal Pre-K in the next *NewsFlash*. •

## Victory in Albany

Thanks to the Early Childhood Strategic group and everyone who participated in the campaign to support funding for Universal Prekindergarten and reduced class size for kindergarten through grade three.

As a result of petitions and the children's art work campaign, the Legislature agreed to the following: \$225 for UPK; and \$140 for reduced class size.

This is a terrific accomplishment. Special thanks go to Charles Paparocki and Nancy Kolben for their hard work during this campaign. •

## Resources

Thinking about doing some surfing this summer? Catch these early childhood Web Sites:

[The Early Childhood Educators Resource Page:](http://ecresources.iwarp.com/)  
<http://ecresources.iwarp.com/>

Curriculum ideas, activities, and information to share with parents on dramatic play, the block area, circle time, art area, quiet area, science area, water/sand play, and small groups. In addition, the site also provides information for home day care providers.

[The Preschool Teacher:](http://www.bv.net/stormie)  
<http://www.bv.net/stormie>

This site was created by a Pre-K teacher for other Pre-K teachers. The site provides an area where ideas can be found and shared with your virtual colleagues. Ideas and activities can be found on multicultural education, behavior management, and curriculum and professional development.

## Staff Development:

In order to extend our staff development days, District 24 offered a series of after-school workshops for teachers and teaching assistants. These voluntary workshops, focusing on specific topics such as "Blocks, blocks and more blocks," "Beyond Arts and Crafts," "Let's Pretend," and "Discovery," provided an opportunity to meet and talk in a small group setting with other district Universal Pre-K staff. The positive response and feedback is evident in the classrooms. — Barbara Kasanova, District 24, Glendale, NY

## Many Thanks:

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

## A Special Thanks:

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[Preschool Education:](http://preschooleducation.com)  
<http://preschooleducation.com>

In this site, visitors are encouraged to ask questions regarding preschool education. In addition, the site hosts a message board where users can find pen pals for their class, trade and sell educational material, and find out about freebies and bargains for teachers.

[Bank Street Center for Universal Prekindergarten:](http://www.preschooleducation.com)  
<http://www.preschooleducation.com>

Information for parents, educators, community-based programs providers, and policy makers. The site also contains information on Universal Pre-K in New York City, New York State, and nationally. ●

**FYI: If you have a program that is considering or undergoing NAEYC accreditation, contact the Center of Universal Pre-K for technical assistance and staff development support (212) 875-4783**

## What has four toes, is very cute, and feels soft?...

The children at Precious Kids Universal Pre-K have been involved in some interesting projects lately.

Learning to take care of our pet chicks.

"We have six baby chicks. They come from eggs. It takes 21 days for them to hatch. The chicks have pretty feathers. They have four toes on their feet. They have wings. They are very cute. We like to play with them. We like to hold them. They feel soft. We like to give them food and water. They live in a cage."—Precious Kids Universal Pre-K, District 27, Richmond Hill, NY

## Save the Dates:

Leadership Forum for UPK Administrators at Bank Street College, [September 2000](#).

universal pre-k  
**newsflash**

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Editor: Maria Benejan  
Managing Editor: Sally Imbibo  
Associate Editor: Ruth Kolbe  
Editorial Board: Eileen Wasow and Fern Khan  
Design: Amy Kwong

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The Bank Street  
College of Education  
610 West 112th Street  
New York, NY 10025-1898  
[www.bankstreet.edu](http://www.bankstreet.edu)



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