



A Letter from the Editor

Sally Imbimbo, Editor
Center for UPK

Dear Colleagues:

A few weeks after the September 11 attacks I met with a group of educators to discuss the tragic events and what we could do as professionals.

We started out by talking about what we heard children saying about the attacks. Our time was limited and we did not get to talk about more than children's comments in response to the tragedy. Towards the

end of the meeting a teacher said that she felt that her job was more important now. I have thought a lot about that

comment and the role of teachers in the lives of children and their families.

Through this tragedy we have witnessed compassion, cooperation and a spirit of "helping" across the city, the country and in early childhood classrooms near and far.

This was a difficult letter to write. One director that I spoke with said that things had become harder now in the weeks following the tragedy. In this issue we wanted to share the important work that you are doing as well as include resources for the work that we have ahead of us.

In light of the tragic events we decided to dedicate this issue to social responsibility to share the work that you all have been doing on the behalf of children and families.

Additionally, we wanted to include resources to share with colleagues and families:

Statement from Zero to Three on How to Discuss Terrorism with Young Children
<http://www.zerotothree.org/parent.html>

Discussing the News with 3- to 7-Year-Olds: What to Do?
<http://www.naeyc.org/resources/eyly/1998/22.html>

Disaster Recovery: Children's Needs
<http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/fcs/human-dev/disint.html>

Talking With Children When Disaster Strikes
http://www.tpt.org/TPTspecial_edition/walsh.html

Talking to Children About Violence and Other Sensitive and Complex World Issues
<http://www.esnational.org/guide.htm>

A comprehensive list of resources and contacts can be found on the Bank Street College Website.

<http://www.bankstreet.edu>

universal pre-k newsflash

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Message from the Director

Maria Beneján,
Center for UPK

Dear Colleagues:

I know that we will all agree that this was a September never to be forgotten. During the past few months our nation, especially those of us in New York City, have been challenged more than any other time in our history. Although the road to recovery has been a difficult one, I know that our resiliency and our passion for life will get us through each day — sometimes one day at a time. I fully understand the difficulties many teachers faced in trying to make children and parents feel secure at a time when many of us felt vulnerable and unsafe ourselves. My heart and hands go out to every teacher and administrator for the support they provided to the children of New York City during such trying times. I know now, more so than ever before, that the work we do with young children and families is so important. With the importance of our work in mind, I hope that this edition of Newsflash provides you with additional information and resources to help you continue to provide a safe haven in your classroom.



Upcoming events

January 28 – 29

Seventh Annual New York City Early Childhood Conference
(for further information contact (718) 722-2784)

February 11

Bank Street College Early Childhood Teacher Award
applications are due (see page 7 for further information)

April 7 – 13

Week of the Young Child

May 1 – 4

New York State Association for the Education of Young Children, 2002 State Conference, Buffalo New York

May 17

Third Annual UPK Conference
Brooklyn, NY. For more information please contact
(718) 935-4255.

The Center for Universal Pre-k at Bank Street College of Education

The Mission of Bank Street's Center for Universal Pre-Kindergarten is to help early care and education programs strengthen their services to young children and their families. We provide a variety of services and resources for teachers, support staff, administrators, parents, policy makers, advocacy groups and researchers that promote quality Universal Pre-K programming.

Services include:

- Universal Pre-K Fellows Program see page 7
- Individualized training and technical assistance for programs
- Support for programs seeking NAEYC accreditation

If you are not on our mailing list please contact Dawn De La Rosa at (212) 961-3414 to be put on the Center's list.

A letter from

Todd Boressff Director, at BMCC Child Care Center, District 2

Shortly after the September 11th tragedy Todd sent an email to friends and colleagues describing their return to the center after that tragic day. Friends and colleagues who were moved and inspired by Todd's words shared his letter with their friends and colleagues. We wanted to share an excerpt of his letter with you in hopes that you will be inspired too. The BMCC childcare is located downtown. The college served as a command post for rescue efforts.

What an enormously moving experience. My family resource coordinator and I have been spending time with the parents as they drop off their children and every story is powerful, even those about what they witnessed on TV — as I am sure you all understand. We gave every returning child a welcome back bag — a pad, markers, crayons and a beanie baby. One 3 and a half year old, who saw more than any child should ever witness, comforted the beanie baby, reassuring it that she was there, that the baby was safe with her — just as her mother had so successfully reassured her.

On the one hand I marveled at the courage of each and every student as they entered the building yesterday. There was not one for whom this was easy. But on the other hand, it is all about getting back to work — the kind of life force that we see in children who must play — even after a funeral.

From a Fellow . . .

The impact of September 11 Helping children understand the tragedy

Candace Lynch, Teacher, Bloomingdale Family Head Start,
Community School District 3, Manhattan

As a teacher of four year olds I have witnessed the impact that the events of September 11th have had on young children. Many of the children had witnessed the events on the television and also saw the fear and anxiety on the faces of their parents or caretakers.

Through observing the children I became aware of how the children were affected by the tragic events. The children were acting out what they had seen on the television or in pictures from magazines and newspapers. Some children were building tall buildings in the block area and then crashing planes into them, others were putting out fires in the imaginative play area. While others were telling stories about children or families that had lost a father or family member. When I asked parents about this they explained that the children must have been repeating situations that they had overheard adults talking about or had seen on television. All the families were fortunate that they had not lost family members in the event, the children were simply acting out their feelings through story telling and making up their own stories as a way of dealing with their feelings, fears, or anxieties.

In my class, the way we handled things was by allowing the children to act out whatever they had witnessed or heard and by giving them opportunities to express their feelings and helping them to understand their emotions. When children crashed planes into the buildings in the block area I might say, "The people in the building must have been really sad." If the children wanted to expand or continue I would follow their leads. In the imaginative play area we took out our fire outfits, fire hats, and doctor kits and the children were consistently putting out fires and taking care of other children. They were acting out scenes that they had seen replayed in the media.

We also realized the importance of helping parents at a time like this, so we gave them pamphlets on ways that they could handle things with their children at home. The Red Cross provided useful articles and we made these available to the parents in a parent meeting, along with explaining to them the way that we handle things in the classroom.

Guidelines for Use of Teddy Bears in Emotionally Responsive Classroom Practice

Pre-K — Grade 2

Lesley Koplow, CSW

After the September 11th tragedy, many charitable organizations across America responded by sending Teddy Bears to New York City's children. In addition, children in Oklahoma City sent Teddy Bears, books and cards empathizing with our children and sharing some of their own experiences as residents of a city harmed by terrorist activity.

Indeed, Teddy Bears can be very useful to young (traumatized) children both as comfort objects and as objects that stimulate symbolic processes that enhance early learning. Yet, many early grade teachers may be unfamiliar with the potential uses of Teddy Bears in school, and may appreciate some guidelines for emotionally responsive practice featuring the Teddy Bears.

All of New York City's children were effected by the terrorist attack to some degree. Their world was transformed from a safe place to an unsafe place in a matter of minutes. Many had too much access to media portraying the same terrible event over and over again.

Certainly, children who feel endangered do not learn well. The energy of bereaved children will be taken up with grieving. The need to help these children build a bridge back to experiencing school as a safe environment where they can focus on learning must include a clear emphasis on their emotional well being and an acknowledgement of any traumatic experiences that they have had.

Guidelines for Pre-K Children *

- 1) Introduce the bears in context of a meeting. "Some people who live in other places heard about the scary thing that happened here when the Trade Towers were knocked down. They wanted to do something to make New York City children feel better, so they sent us these bears."
- 2) Allow children to respond to what you have just said through open ended dialogue. If this includes a re-telling of the original events, listen and affirm their experiences. If it includes comments about the bears or their ideas for use or their prior experiences with stuffed animals, listen. When they finish talking, say that one of the things that makes these bears special is that they will live in the classroom for the school year. The children will have to find ways to make the classroom be a safe place for the bears to live.

- 3) Allow children to respond to what you have said through open ended dialogue. How do they think they can help to make the classroom a safe place for the bears? Listen to children's responses and record them.
- 4) The teacher can acknowledge how many good ideas the children come up with to make the bears feel safe, and talk about how hard they will all have to work to put those ideas into practice. Meanwhile, even though they will work very hard to make the classroom become a safe place for the bears, some of the bears might think about scary things that they have seen before they came to live in their classroom. Sometimes the bears might remember something sad, or they might become worried while they are in the classroom.
- 5) What are some of the things the bears can do if they are feeling sad or worried in the classroom? Listen and record children's responses. When children are unable to think of more, add some suggestions if they haven't already been raised by the children. Include; draw about what worries them, paint about their feelings, create with clay, play about the things they are remembering, tell you a story to tell the teacher so she can write it down.

Tell the children that the next time they go to the library everyone can look for books that the Teddy Bears might like us to read about coming to a new school, feeling safe, and having all kinds of feelings.

- 6) Follow through on all collective suggestions, including providing time for use of creative arts materials, symbolic play, and choosing books related to issues of well being. Read the books to the group for read-alouds and keep them available on the shelves for individual viewing. Create safe spaces such as beds or houses from shoe boxes if these were ideas presented. Give each child a blank book entitled "My Teddy Bear" and allow her to draw and dictate stories that come to mind. This project should also include ways of differentiating the bears. Each bear must have a name. How did the child choose the bear's name? How did her family choose her name? etc. Each bear must have a distinguishing feature so that there is not too much confusion. Children must make beaded collars with various patterns, etc. Teachers can make a chart with the name of each child, name of bear, distinguishing feature.

Teddy Bear Guidelines

Continued from previous page

- 7) Make sure to have bears available for rest time, **free play/work time, and meetings that involve bear topics in stories. Bears can be incorporated into other times of the day if the teacher finds it useful. Children who form deep attachments to the bears as comfort objects should be allowed to either hold them or make a safe space for them in their cubby. Letting bears go home with children and then come back the next day might work for some families but be impossible for others. Teachers should know their population before making a policy about this. Keeping them in school until the end of the year will probably diminish confusion and ensure that children have bears with them when they need them. Meeting time should always include an invitation for expression of concerns or thoughts.

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***Rest time is a difficult time for children who are experiencing severe separation anxiety or who have been traumatized. When children are active, they are able to defend against overwhelming feelings or use activity to express their feelings. When they are inactive they often become overwhelmed by the feelings, and therefore, distressed or unable to cooperate. Bears at rest time are particularly useful for our children during this uncertain time. ●*

A Shattered Peace

Linda Robins, Teacher of Pre-K 102 at P.S. 306
District 19

September 11, 2001, is a day that will live forever in the minds and hearts of all Americans, and people everywhere. In response to this unspeakable tragedy, I wrote this poem to express my feelings, as an American and as an educator. I was asked to share it at a parent workshop, where we discussed the ways in which we can help our children to comprehend these acts of terrorism.

In addition, my class, Pre-K 102, created a lovely mural to show support of our country.

A Shattered Peace

September 11, 2001

A beautiful day had just begun
The sky was blue, the sun, bright yellow
The mood at PS 306, was mellow
All of a sudden, our world was shattered
Our sense of security, torn and tattered
We needed to focus, and think of what mattered
Through our knees had turned to Jell-O
Terrorism pierced our heart
It ripped out wonderful city apart
We were scared, but tried not to show it
Was this the end of the world as we know it?
A faceless enemy, with many tricks had ripped a whole too big to fix
We were at war, and did not know why
All we could do was pray. And cry
What can we tell the children we teach?
How can we help them?
What words can we preach?
We need to help them understand
We need to take them by the hand, and somehow, show them that
with love, and with faith in GOD above
We will survive, and we'll be strong.
We'll teach them how to get along
We'll teach them to respect each other, in spite of all the pain
We cannot allow all those innocent to be lost in vain
America. America — our freedom is at stake!
We must unite and win this fight,
No matter how long it may take
As teachers, we can do our part, and help our children see,
That we should live in brotherhood
It's what America means to me.

Room 204 Newsletter

September 20, 2001

Tico Cassell, teacher at Bank Street College School for Children

Dear Families,

Thank you for your concern about our loved ones. We hope that everyone in your world is safe after the terrible tragedy at the World Trade Center. The children in our class have not really brought up the disaster since Tuesday. This is probably partly developmental and partly that they are busy getting used to their new teachers, classroom, routines, schedule, being away from you, and learning about each other. Because we are just getting used to sitting together as a group and listening to each other we have decided to discuss the disaster when it comes up naturally. Times that seem especially productive to talk are when they are in smaller groups like snack or talking while drawing or using play dough. We will mostly listen, and also clarify misinformation, and reassure the children that they are and will be safe. On Monday, we did have an opportunity to hear what the children know about what happened because that morning Tamar, our student teacher, had been delayed by train problems. When she came in during meeting, the children wanted to know what had delayed her. As Tico started to explain that the trains were effected by the explosion at the World Trade Center children immediately raised their hands and called out "I know what happened." Here is some of what they said at meeting and then in a small group after meeting:

"The people who blew up the World Trade Center killed their selves, but you know what, then we might fight with their friends and their friends will be in big trouble for fighting with the most powerful country in the world, the 'nited States"

"When I came to school, the trains stopped and someone told mommy the trains topped because of the World Trade Center. Then we saw a cab and we got in but the cab couldn't take us. My mom saw some people in a car and we got a car to take us."

"I know what happened to the World Trade Center. A airplane flied into them."

"It crashed very loud into the airport and nobody can move their airplanes there."

"The planes crashed into the World Trade Center and there was gasoline and the gasoline caught on fire."

"When my dad and me were walking to the kid's pool we asked the firemans why did some of them get hurt. And then we kept walking."

— *"My daddy works near the World Trade Center."*

— *"Does he work at the Chrysler Building or the Empire State Building?"*

— *"No. He works near the World Trade Center but I don't know where."*

"I saw the airplane crashing. I saw the big fire and I saw it break down on television and then glass turned into ice and then the second one dropped the bomb."

"My neighbor got burned by the fire."

— *"The pilot probably wasn't looking when it crashed into the building."*

— *"No! No! They wanted to blow up the biggest building in the world. They're mad at the 'nites States."*

"My friend came over for a play date and she told me that the world famous, um, that a plane had crashed into a building. She says that the building has none people in it but my sister says that there was people in it, but they didn't get hurt."

"I saw it on TV and my mom said that I will remember it for my whole life."

"My mommy told me about it and said that some busses had stopped."

"When I was at the restaurant with my cousins we saw people holding real candles."

As you can see, they are certainly aware that something happened and, like all of us, they are trying to make sense of what they've heard and seen. ●

Are You an Effective Pre-K – Grade 3 Teacher?

Have a great idea for a classroom project? Want to take some graduate courses?
Want to attend a conference on early childhood education?

Need funding?

Take advantage of this great opportunity:

Application orientation to be held on
January 8, 2002 6pm

To request an application or attend the orientation
please call Maria Benejan at (212) 961-3410
Entries must be postmarked no later than February 11, 2002
Bank Street College of Education 610 West 112th Street, NY, NY 10025



Bank Street College
Early Childhood
Teacher Awards
Celebrating outstanding
early childhood practice
in public schools

What is the UPK fellows program?

The UPK fellows program is a one credit bearing professional development program that strives to strengthen teachers and assistant teachers understanding of developmentally appropriate practice through:

- Monthly seminars
- Mentoring
- Networking
- Resources
- Career development

*Have you turned in your
application for the UPK
Fellows Program?*

For more information
call Wanda Frankel
(212) 961-3413

Looking for a special book for a child?

Literary Resources

Books for Children on Emotions

- Aliko. *Feelings*. New York: Greenwillow Books, 1984. Happy, sad, mad, glad: they are explained in simple clear language.
- Bang, Molly. *When Sophie Gets Angry - Really, Really, Angry...* New York: Scholastic, 1999. This Caldecott Honor book expresses out of control feelings with explosive reds, oranges and yellows.
- Brown, Laurie Krasny, and Marc Brown. *When Dinosaurs Die: A guide to understanding death*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1996. Short simple answers to often asked questions accompanied by cartoonish illustrations.
- Clifton, Lucille. Illustrated by Ann Grifalconi. *Everett Anderson's Goodbye*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1983. A young African-American boy copes with his father's death
- DePaola, Tomi. *Nana Upstairs and Nana Downstairs*. New York: Puffin 2000. This classic title for children coping with grief has been recently reissued with color illustrations.
- Doray, Malika. *One More Wednesday*. New York: Greenwillow Books, 2001. Simple line drawings and tender text describe a bunny's weekly visits with his granny and his questions now that she is gone.

Special Funds Available through the 9-11-01 Child Care Training Program

In the aftermath of the tragedy of September 11, 2001, you may find that you need assistance in helping children, families and staff in your childcare program deal with the long term effects of this disaster. The New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) is offering special funds through the SUNY Educational Incentive Program (EIP) to pay for the services of organizations that can offer you the help you need. You may request up to \$2000. For further information you can contact the SUNY EIP office at 1-800-295-9616 or email eip@tsg.suny.edu.

universal pre-k newsflash

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