

It's Time to Prepare for the Future Needs of our Youngest Students *submitted by Dr. Robin Hooper*

"You can't be brave if you've only had wonderful things happen to you."
- Mary Tyler Moore



As spring progresses the early childhood department is moving forward on several current initiatives related to curriculum, assessment and the transition of prek students to kindergarten. Despite uncertainties posed by the budgetary concerns at district, state and federal levels, our early childhood staff have maintained their focus on the provision of quality prekindergarten programs for our students now and in the future. The hard work of our parents, staff and students has never been more evident.

Several of our Universal Prekindergarten programs in schools and community based organizations have been accepted to participate in the New York State field test of the QUALITYstarsNY, a state-wide early childhood program evaluation. Programs selected for participation include the Rochester Preschool Parent Program, the Florence S. Brown Prekindergarten Program, Volunteers of America Childcare, Head Start Hart St., Wilson Commencement Park and Lakeside Child and Family Center. Several private childcare and preschool

centers are also participating in the pilot. The broad array of early childhood programs participating in the pilot should be provide an excellent cross-section of program types for assessing the pilot program.

The adoption of a district-wide prekindergarten curriculum for our UPK program is continuing forward. Four curricula have been piloted in our classrooms: High Scope Preschool Curriculum, Literacy Express Preschool Curriculum, Our World of Learning Preschool Curriculum and Prek Math Building Blocks. The UPK Curriculum Adoption Committee consisting of parents, Pre-K and kindergarten teachers, school and agency administrators, and central office administrators convened on April 6, 2010 to finalize the rubric that will be used in the curriculum selection. Teachers who piloted the curricula will be presenting their findings at the April 27th meeting of the committee. Curriculum developers will present to the committee on May 4th.

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Celebrating our Success: Hands-on Learning *submitted by Chara Dukes, Ibero Head Start, UPK Teacher*



The children developed fine motor skills and increased their vocabulary as they enjoyed this fun, sensory experience.

The study of dinosaurs provided lots of learning and skill development as children made paper mache dinosaur eggs.



Robin Hooper... *Continued from page 1*

The early childhood department and our UPK staff members are preparing for our district-wide Transition to Kindergarten Parent Event scheduled to be held on Saturday, May 15th at the Ryan Center/School 33 from 10 AM - 2:00 PM. The event will feature a variety of learning activities for parents and students as well as workshops for parents. Families will receive free items related to the featured activities to continue their children's learning at home. The parent workshops will focus on the programs available for students entering kindergarten as well as general expectations for elementary students. Registration for Pre-K and kindergarten will also be available at the event. Although the random selection process for Pre-K and kindergarten was completed at the end of March we are still actively recruiting for both Pre-K and kindergarten.

Look for future updates on the progress of our prekindergarten initiatives in upcoming newsletters. There is still much to be accomplished.

Save the week of August 23-27 for the Early Childhood Summer Institute

Once the UPK Curriculum Adoption Committee makes its selection, the Professional Development Committee will finalize plans for curriculum training before the start of the new school year on September 2. We expect to plan for at least 3 days of training during the week of August 23. It is strongly recommended that all classroom staff attend this training. Look for details in the June newsletter.

Transition to Kindergarten Parent and Child Event on May 15

Date: Saturday, May 15, 2010

Place: School #33, Ryan Center
500 Webster Ave.

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

You will soon receive invitations for your UPK families to attend this special event for Parent and Child as they get ready to transition from UPK to kindergarten. Families should plan on spending an hour or two at the event, which will feature a number of fun, hands-on, learning activities which parents can replicate at home to support their child's continuous learning.

In addition to the activities, there will be a series of "mini-workshops," which will address parent's concerns about their child's readiness for kindergarten, the transition to CSE from CPSE, integrated kindergarten, bilingual kindergarten and parent participation and communication beyond preschool.

Following each of the activities (8 different ones are planned), families will receive gifts to continue the type of activity demonstrated at home.

We invite UPK staff to join us there to learn along with your families. We also welcome your assistance as a volunteer. Volunteers please RSVP: jeanne.herrick@rcsdk12.org

Adaptive Skills Development *submitted by Karen Spawton, CPSE Chairperson*

A cry goes out in the delivery room as the physician assists the newborn. The medical staff quickly clean up the baby and hand it to you- the new parent. As you gaze upon this new creation, the child you are holding seems so perfect. Yet, this infant is so helpless because it needs to depend on you for every aspect of its life. At birth, a child has limited abilities and functions on basic reflexive and sensory capacities. He can make some rudimentary visual distinctions- although visual abilities don't become refined until the end of the first month. There are also the basic sensory abilities for hearing, smelling, tasting, touch, temperature, and the perception of pain.

Flash forward three years to the preschool stage of life. In a typically developing child, you should observe a significant growth in his thinking and problem solving skills. He should be understanding communication and expressing his wants, needs, and thoughts well. He should have adequate control of legs and arms; being able to run, kick a ball, build a tower of six blocks, and hold a crayon. The child's adaptive skills, or the ability for him to be personally independent and socially responsible, should also show

maturity. Dressing, feeding, and toileting skills are keys to a child's independence.

In a world where we seem to always be in a hurry and it becomes so convenient and easy for us to do everything for our children, we may actually be doing more harm than good. Patience is an important word to remember in parenting. However, the book on patience or parenting, for that matter, is not handed to us with the newborn in the delivery room. Encourage your child along the road to independence. Even if it takes more time to get the job done; let them help with the dressing skills. Even when there is a mess on the table; let them try to feed themselves. Even if it seems like it is taking forever; let them become self-sufficient in the bathroom.

Independence is the goal for adaptive behavior. Flash forward eighteen years to the beginning of another stage of life. You know that your job as a parent has been accomplished when you gaze upon a new creation - this one a young adult who is responsible and able to start their own journey in life.

Creating a Mural While We Study Bears

submitted by Paula Wooters, UPK Teacher, St. Paul's Child Care



It all began with learning about where bears live

bamboo for the pandas. "We need more bamboo for the pandas!" chimed in Aspen. He drew another stalk of bamboo and taped it to the mural.

Next came the Sun Bears. "Sun bears have suns on their tummies," explained one child to a visitor. They make nests in trees and eat the bugs they find in the tree. One morning someone said, "We need bugs!" Markers were pulled out quickly by several children and soon there were plenty of bugs in the tree for the Sun Bears to eat!

Jeremy was the first to add a Brown Bear. He drew it during center time and added it to the mural. Soon others were drawing brown bears. The children decided on the placement of all the bears. Several children put their bears on the trunk of the tree to show that the bears can climb trees. Michael was the one



Bears can climb trees

who decided, "We need berries for the brown bears to eat." Several others jumped in to make more berry bushes. Another child said, "The bears need water to drink," so the lake was added. John thought the lake needed a sailboat and immediately

went to draw a boat. Yet another child wanted to add a hollow log so the bears would have a place to hibernate. Still to come were Spectacled Bears and Moon Bears. "Oh, no!" said Shea when we had finished. "We never learned about the Sloth Bears!" There's always something more to learn!

Watching the wall mural come to life was amazing! The children worked cooperatively, collaborating and sharing ideas. Everyone in the class ended up adding something to the mural. Creating a wall mural has been a wonderful way for the children in our UPK class to come together to demonstrate their learning!

At St. Paul's UPK we learned all about different kinds of bears and where they live. The centerpiece of this unit became our wall mural. This was a project that began small and became huge, thanks to the children's enthusiasm!

The idea for the mural came from a picture of polar bears the children made on large paper. We put it up on the wall, but the children thought we should put up more pictures of bears. The teachers provided "land" for the other bears to live and the kids were off and running!

The next group of bears to be added was pandas. Shea, our resident expert on pandas told us, "We have to make bamboo so that the pandas have something to eat!" "Pandas only eat one kind of bamboo, so it has to be the same color," was John's advice. The children cut out strips of green paper and taped them together to make the



Pandas eat bamboo

went to draw a boat. Yet another child wanted to add a hollow log so the bears would have a place to hibernate.



Brown bears were a must



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MOVEMENT TIDBIT *from Moving Minds*

submitted by Carol Bedenik-Carmel, PT and Andrea Gerhardt, OT, RCSD

Using yoga with young children is a great way to:

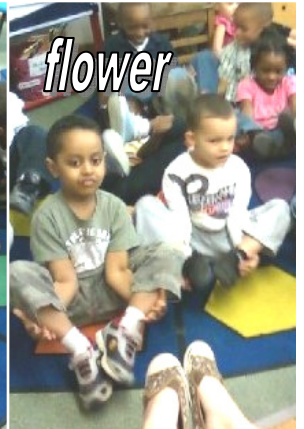
- increase their body awareness,
- improve their flexibility, and
- produce a calming affect.



Here is a yoga activity related to spring that you can do as a whole class activity during circle. We took different yoga positions, demonstrated them and had the children try each one, and then told our "yoga story". When the children heard the words in the story, they assumed the yoga position.

Yoga Story: "SIGNS OF SPRING"

A **squirrel** is looking for acorns near the **tree**. A **bird** is busy building a nest, while a **frog** has found a home near the pond. A **butterfly** flies among the colorful **flower** gardens.



(Thank you to Kathy Shapiro's ABC Head Start students for demonstrating the yoga positions.)