

The Professional

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A newsletter for the early learning and care professional, creating a bridge between research and practice in the field.

“The case of the missing cookies”: a tale of emergent curriculum at its best

By: Tricia Dumias, Associate Faculty, Early Childhood Education, Conestoga College

Presented as part of the Panel “Stories of Innovation” at the AECEO’s 59th Annual Provincial Conference.

I recently had the good fortune to be involved in a panel presentation at the Annual AECEO Conference in Windsor. As part of this panel I was to share a story of innovation and change. I am now delighted to share with you a written version of this panel presentation.

My story of change and innovation began with an introduction to emergent curriculum, more specifically The Project Approach. Until that time, I had been doing what many ECEs do - filling in the boxes. You know what I mean, with the days of the week along one side, the categories ‘social’, ‘cognitive’, ‘gross motor’, etc., on the top, resulting in 20 to 25 boxes to fill in week after week.

Sometimes, my colleagues and I would work with a theme to provide guidance in our planning. For instance, for a week “colour” was our theme and we’d plan a purple PJ party, baking blueberry muffins, foot

painting with red & blue to make purple, and more. Except that inevitably when it came time to actually doing all we had planned, my colleague was sick, there was interesting construction nearby that caught our attention, or foot painting took longer than anticipated.

By the end of the week, our boxes were all marked up and sticky notes were there to explain to the Ministry, parents, and our supervisor why we did not get to all of the items on the program plan. It was, of course, because life had gotten in the way.

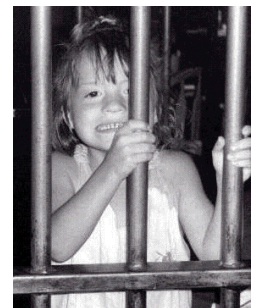
Then in 2001 my life as an ECE changed as I abandoned the boxes and began to use the project approach. The things that used to interrupt our program *became* our program and life no longer got in the way, life was the way! Since 2001 my journey as an ECE professional has been filled with extraordinary projects that have amazed children, parents, colleagues, supervisors, and myself. I will share with you just one example:

One day during snack, a child in the 3-5-year-old preschool room said, “If

you get caught stealing, they cut off your hand”. Other children contributed in the lively discussion. I pointed out their apparent curiosity and asked if they would be interested in knowing more about what happens if you get caught stealing.

As is typical in the project approach, we brainstormed what we knew using a visual web. From there we set up our class to provide opportunities to act out what the children knew. A 911

office was created, a police station, police cars, a house to burglarize, and of course a prison.



The preschool children decided to invite a police officer in to help with the learning.

Continued on next page...

Want to know more about Emergent Curriculum?

Check out these resources:

Thinking Big: Extending Emergent Curriculum (DVD), Harvest Resources

Side by Side: Mentoring Teachers for Reflective Practice (DVD), Harvest Resources

Learning Together with Young Children, Deb Curtis & Margie Carter

Authentic Childhood: Experiencing Reggio Emilia in the classroom, Susan Fraser

Emergent Curriculum in the Primary Classroom, Carol Anne Wien

The Case of the Missing Cookies continued...

Their letter of request read:

Dear Mr. Steve Reecer,

We are learning about police. We would like it if you could come to visit us. Please come in your police clothes or in regular clothes. If you come in regular clothes, can you please bring your police hat and other stuff that you are wearing when you are a police?

Can you also show us your badge and can you please not bring your gun? Can we go outside and see your police car and show us the inside? But we won't press any buttons, 'cause we never know what is going to happen. We hope you can come.

*Thank you,
Preschoolers*

Of course, Mr. Reecer came to visit. As the play progressed, so too did the questions so to assist us further in answering some of the complex questions that arose, another letter was composed:

*To Eden's Daddy
(a criminal defense lawyer),*

We are learning about police. What if criminals said 'no' when they did really do it? If the criminal lies, how does the judge know if the criminal is lying? But what if the criminal lies and the judge does not know that he is lying? If the criminal says no, then put them in jail, 'cause he probably did it.

Please can you help tell us what all of these things mean?

*Thank you,
Preschoolers*

Eden's daddy, who like many

others had forgotten purple PJ day, was eager to become involved and create a mock trial so with the help of a judge, "The Case of The Missing Cookies" began.

On a day like many others, we made a batch of chocolate chip cookies. I returned from my break with a chocolate covered face and crumb covered shirt. Soon after, the children discovered that the cookies were gone. One child declared, "It is a good thing the judge and lawyer are coming, because now we have a real mystery on our hands."



The mock trial illustrated perfectly the issues that arise when trying a criminal in a court of law, and the judge and lawyer served to answer the complex questions posed by the preschoolers.

The judge used child friendly language to explain that sometimes "good" people do "bad" things, and that not all criminals should go to jail. The judge also explained that based on the majority vote of eight children, with one accusing "I know you did it Tricia, I know you did it!!!", I was found guilty. Despite six children insisting I was innocent, - one claimed "How could she have? She's our teacher!" - I was sentenced to baking cookies for the class every Friday for six weeks.

As a culminating event to celebrate answering all of our questions and the conclusion of our project, we shared our cookies and "The Case of the Missing Cookies" book that documented our project with other classes.

My career has been filled with joys as a direct result of using emergent curriculum and renegotiating my image of an ECE. By relinquishing some power, I learned and grew alongside children and families, and I was constantly amazed at how deep our learning went.

It is a very exciting time in ECE with many changes occurring. In addition to the College of ECE, certification, full day kindergarten, changes to our notions of diversity are occurring.

Quality indicators such as DAP are being challenged as a reconceptualization movement continues to grow.

According to Alan Cohen, "It takes a lot of courage to release the familiar and seemingly secure, to embrace the new. But there is no real security in what is no longer meaningful. There is more security in the adventurous and exciting, for in movement there is life, and in change there is power."

I invite you to join me on your own journey of change and innovation into the new and exciting adventures that await us in ECE.



Beginning with Books

Laura Dick, Literacy Librarian and Laura Reed, Coordinator of Children's and Teen Services, Kitchener Public Library.

Welcome to Beginning with Books, a monthly column devoted to books and early literacy. Our goal with this column is to share with you lots of wonderful, exciting books that you can use with the children in your care, and which are available at the Library. We will also introduce you to the six early literacy skills that children need to develop in order to become readers. We will focus on each skill and present fun and easy ways to incorporate early literacy activities in your programming. Between us we have almost 40 years of experience working with kids and books and literacy so we have lots to share!

Each month our column will feature a different early skill or technique along with some ways to highlight that skill. We will provide an accompanying book list with some of our favourite titles related to each column.

20 years. In the past, she has worked as a children's librarian, a reference librarian, a family literacy facilitator and an adult literacy instructor. Currently she works as the Literacy Librarian at the Kitchener Public Library which represents the best of all worlds as it allows her to work with kids and families to encourage them to develop a love of reading and to enjoy reading together. Laura also develops early literacy materials for the library and develops staff training around literacy issues. Laura loves to talk to other literacy professionals in the community and share her passion for engaging families and children in books.

Laura Reed is proud to be a Children's Librarian. She began her career with children and public libraries in New York City, where she developed a passion for children's literature and storytelling. Since then she has shared her passion with children and families in various Ontario libraries.

In Kitchener she has worked to develop strong community connections and to find creative ways to take the library outside of its four walls. Reading is a building block for lifelong learning and success, so getting families excited about reading and reading together is the goal that keeps her excited about her job.

This summer check out these titles available at your local library:

Duck on a Bike by David Shannon

Bark George by Jules Feiffer

Yummy: Eight Favorite Fairy Tales by Lucy Cousins



Children's Book High Light



Freight Train by Donald Crews

This is my absolutely, all time, favourite book for kids. I use it with babies all the way up to 6 year olds. It has everything – soothing rhythm, colour recognition, print awareness, and stunningly simple illustrations. An excellent choice for introducing print awareness skills as the train track moves across the page from left to right, just like print. The train grows car by car as the pages turn and the text grows, too, just like the letters in a word or the words in a sentence. Encourage listeners to chime in with choo-choo-choo-choo-choo-choo-choo-choo as you turn the pages and you have, in my opinion, a near perfect picture book for the youngest of listeners.

If you have any questions about books or early literacy, please send us an email !

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Getting Connected for Early Literacy Learning

Full Day Conference Saturday October 16, 2010
At Conestoga College

Presented in partnership by: The Early Literacy Alliance of

Waterloo Region and Conestoga College

For more information about early literacy events including this upcoming conference visit our blog at:

www.earlyliteracyalliance.blogspot.com

Butterfly Resources Region of Waterloo and surrounding area

For our community we are really lucky that we have two butterfly Conservatories. Wings of Paradise and the Naturium both offer spectacular programs and provide children and adults an opportunity to get up close and personal with insects. In the fall they both participate in Monarch Days (September) and release hundreds of Monarchs for their migration to Mexico. Wings of Paradise sells butterfly kits and caterpillars for Monarch days (around \$72.50 a kit—includes cage, plant and 5 caterpillars). The Naturium (out of Green-Way Blooming Centre) provides monarch caterpillars through out the summer until Monarch Days (approx \$13.00 per caterpillar + jar). They also sell the plants, both tropical and swamp milkweed. Through the summer they offer Bug University with John G Powers (the Butterfly man), a free program for children. For more information please visit www.greenwaybloom.com www.wingsofparadise.com



Did you know the PRC has a butterfly Kit?

Stop by and check it out! It has everything but the caterpillar and plant!



Samantha Harper, RECE
Professional Resource Coordinator

The warmer weather has returned and many children will be spending numerous hours outdoors. It's here in our backyards, playgrounds or maybe down the street at the local park that something very magical is about to take place! This magic is the science of nature, it's not in a book (although you can certainly find lots of books to support your findings) it's all around you! It's the grass, the trees, the flowers, dirt and the creatures that live there.

When children make discoveries of nature an opportunity for learning is created. These real experiences become more meaningful than textbook pictures because the experience itself is tangible, children can look, listen, touch and observe. So when their interest is sparked from the worm they found in the garden, or the butterfly they saw fluttering by, what are you going to do?

Seize the moment, join in their excitement and sense of wonder! This could be the beginning of a project for your group! The first step is the discovery or the find... if you don't have natural vegetation go for a walk to your local park, or pond. Being in Ontario we are lucky to have an abundance of natural insects and creatures to find. The Monarch caterpillar is one of them. You will find these black, yellow and white striped caterpillars on milkweed plants.

Gently turn over the bottom leaves of this plant that can be found on roadsides, and fields (the best time to find these caterpillars are in July and August). Once you find one they are easy to care for, and children will be captivated by watching the transformation of caterpillar to butterfly before their very eyes!

How to care for a Monarch Caterpillar

The three key ingredients to create a Monarch Rearing Station are an enclosed clear container (must be breathable material), food and a caterpillar. The caterpillars will only feed on milkweed. If you pick it from the field make sure

that you wash it before you put it in your container. Aphids or other insects that maybe on the leaf can harm your caterpillar. Make sure that you wash your hands after touching milkweed as the white foam (milk) from the plant can cause irritation or be harmful if you get it in your eyes. You can put the plant in water, as you would a bouquet of flowers, this helps the plant keep longer. You can also pick the leaves and keep them in a sealed bag in the fridge, this helps to keep them fresh. You can even buy milkweed from your local garden centre. These Caterpillars are hungry and double in size each day. Your caterpillar will stay in this stage



wings (pushing fluid from it's abdomen). In a few hours you can take it outside and release it. Gently place the butterfly on a flower or plant, or open the cage and let it take flight.

So the next time you are outside, take a closer look, and enjoy the small miracles of life.

Bringing backyard science to life!

Where can you go to find amazing natural science young children will be excited about? On the playground, your own back yard or maybe down the street... it's there waiting for you just outside!

for about 10—14 days depending when you found your caterpillar.

The Metamorphosis of a Monarch

Your caterpillar will begin to crawl towards the top of your enclosure. Soon it will attach itself to the top and drop in to a "J" shape. It can stay like this for a couple of hours, even days. Then the caterpillar will split its skin and work itself into a tight jade green gem. The new skin will harden forming a chrysalis. It is inside here that the biggest changes will take place. Your chrysalis will darken and turn black after 10-14 days. The once green shell will become translucent and you will be able to see the wings through the chrysalis. Your butterfly is almost here. Once your butterfly breaks free from its chrysalis it will dangle and pump it's



Adding a garden to your playground

When you have no space, or even grass, thinking green can be difficult!

Samantha Harper, RECE, Professional Resource Coordinator.

So you have no grass on your playground; you are surrounded by a concrete jungle and the only insects you find on your playground are the plastic bug toys you brought from home. How can you create more plant life for children to enjoy when space is limited and natural resources are hard to come by? It's time to dig up some trash! That's right, another man's garbage is about to become your treasure! Call your local garage and ask if they will donate some old tires, chances are they will be glad to get rid of them! Make sure that the rim is removed from the tire before you pick them up. Your hallow tire is going to become your garden and it's simple to do! Find a space that you want to set up as your garden. Although the tire garden can be moved, it's not easy once the

soil is in place. Line your tire with a garbage bag, punching small holes for the water to drain to avoid root rot in your plants. You can add a layer of stones along the bottom to assist with drainage, but it is not necessary. Next, fill your tire with soil. If you don't have a large budget ask parents to donate their left over soil from their gardening projects. Parents can be a great resource for leftover seeds, clippings of plants, old potting containers and leftover soil. You can also ask local garden centres to contribute for your project.

Get the children involved! Having the children get involved in the planting and preparation of the garden will help them to identify what the garden is for. It can also help prevent flower picking later on.

To keep a healthy garden you can add a few earthworms to the soil.



If you can't find any, pick some up at your local tackle shop

(they sell them as bait). Plant flowers and plants that will attract and support insect life. Cross reference your plants with the toxic plant list (available at www.cccf-fcsge.ca/docs/cccf/RS_29-e.pdf) and with your centres allergy list. Encourage wildlife to visit your garden by planting vegetables and flowers that are host plants. A full list can be found at:

www.greenwaybloom.com/naturium/butterfly_garden.php

It's time to reconnect with nature, even small spaces can be beautiful and green!

Want to know more about gardening with kids?

Pick up the PRC's gardening kit to start your project. Inside are all the materials you need to get started, just add soil and seeds! You'll find articles and reference materials, gardening tools, a clear root viewer, and gloves. Use this kit to expand your knowledge on gardening or to support your classroom interest on the subject. The kit is the perfect starting place to plant the "seed" of inspiration for your next project!

For more resources on outdoor and natural experience check out these titles available in the PRC:

Outdoor Play in Early Childhood Education, CCCF, 2003

Worms, Shadows, and Whirlpools: Science in the early childhood classroom, Karen Worth and Sharon Grollman

Out the Door, Let's Explore! Rhonda Redleaf

Gardening Kit #SC001

Go Green Kit#EN007

POEMS (preschool outdoor environment measuring scale) Kit#EN008

What's New in the Resource Centre Spotlight

Old lady who swallowed a fly (Language and Literacy kit #LL017)

Children love this classic song and story and now you can bring it to life in your classroom! This puppet set can be used by both the teacher and child to recreate this silly tale of the old lady who swallowed a fly. Inside this kit is a story book that includes an audio CD of the story, as well as the lady puppet and animal bean bags. What else can this lady swallow? This is a fun activity that you can link to sequencing—who did she eat first, or smallest to largest. You can also use this kit as an introduction to rhyming! The simple rhythm and repetition of this story make it easy for young children to follow along and join in the storytelling. Check out this item today!



Hours for July 2010



PROFESSIONAL RESOURCE CENTRE

Monday 10-6pm
Tuesday 10-6pm
Wednesday 1-9pm
Thursday 10-6 pm
Friday 10-4pm

Summer hours—
closed weekends.

Conestoga College
ECE Building
299 Doon Valley Drive
Kitchener, Ontario N2G 4M4
519-748-5220 ext 3388

The Early Childhood Professional Resource Centre

Become a member today!

Did you know that being a member of the Professional Resource Centre is recognized as belonging to a professional organization? Our evidence based resources combine current research and quality materials to enhance your programs, and understanding of learning. Our members receive a monthly newsletter, discounts on in-house workshops, lending privileges for our library and access to our data bank of research and early learning and care articles. Members also receive updates on current information in the ELC community and have access to our work stations and equipment (laminator, computer, binding machine etc). Join today and discover the value of belonging to a professional organization that is invested in your professional growth, our community, and the future!



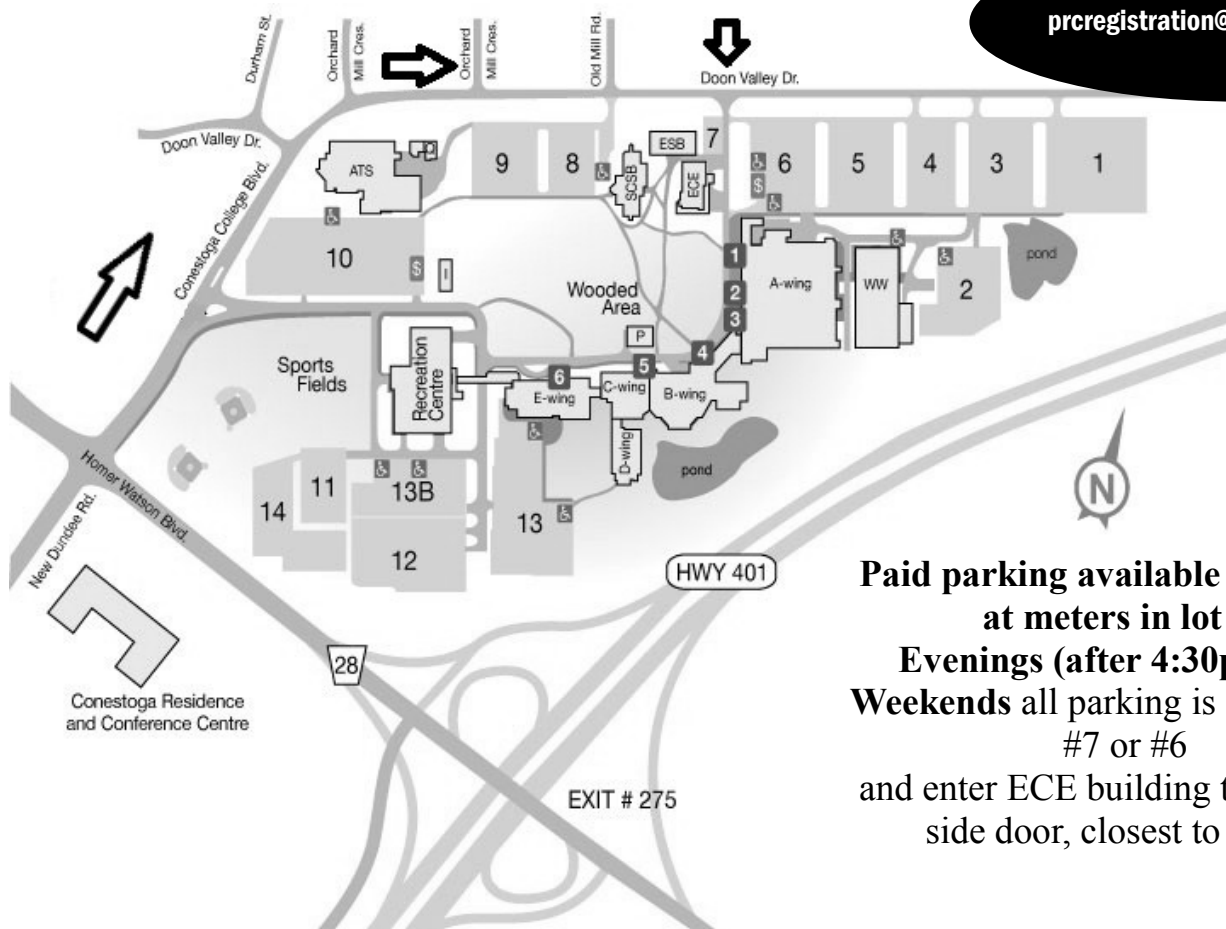
Region of Waterloo
SOCIAL SERVICES
Children's Services



CONESTOGA
Connect Life and Learning



LYLE S. HALLMAN
FOUNDATION



prcregistration@conestogac.on.ca

**Paid parking available (Mon-Fri)
at meters in lot #6**

**Evenings (after 4:30pm) and
Weekends all parking is free, use lot
#7 or #6**

**and enter ECE building through the
side door, closest to lot #7.**