



No 139 August 2015

Message from the President-Elect

We are living in a time like never before, in which the importance of early childhood education is being recognized around the world. Our work is an integral part of a successful start in a child's life, and the work we are all doing in Alberta is leading the way. This year was a year of learning, waiting, listening and watching. We watched our students transform their learning and excitement to take risks and show courage to try. We worked together to rally and support and learn from one another. It was amazing to be a part of great conversations and to read social media on early learning and collaboration that was happening all over the province.

This was a year of listening for me as an educator—listening and learning what was important in the eyes of the children I taught. I focused on their interests and what is really important. In my own community, we created a beautiful natural new space for learning in our outdoor classroom. I was fortunate to attend different conferences, see different school sites and travel with my family to enrich my experiences and share them with my students and colleagues.

I've discovered a couple of interesting websites:

- www.childrenandnature.org—a recent post is “Mud Pies and Green Spaces – Why Children Do Better When They Can Get Outdoors.”
- www.naturalcuriosity.ca—check this out for great ideas to bring inquiry-based environmental learning to your classroom.

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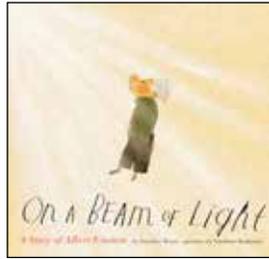
Beginnings Nursery School, New York

Effective IMMEDIATELY, your annual no-cost specialist council membership will no longer expire in August. Instead, it will continue year after year until you change it. To register or change your council membership, log in at www.teachers.ab.ca with your username and password.



And here is a list of children's books that spark rich inquiry:

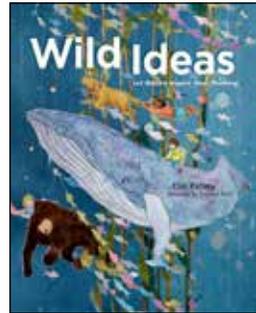
- *On a Beam of Light: A Story of Albert Einstein*, by Jennifer Berne. 2013. San Francisco, Calif: Chronicle Books.



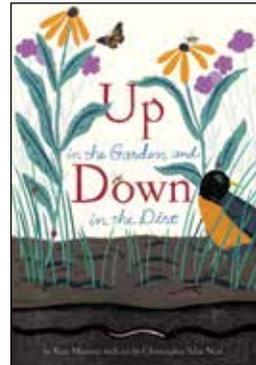
- *The Most Magnificent Thing*, by Ashley Spires. 2014. Toronto: Kids Can.



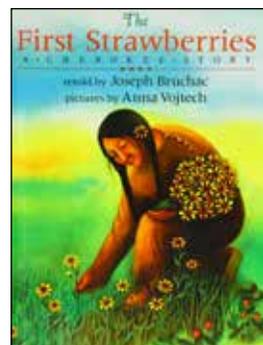
- *Wild Ideas: Let Nature Inspire Your Thinking*, by Elin Kelsey. 2015. Toronto: Owlkids Books.



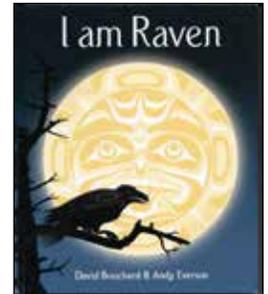
- *Up in the Garden and Down in the Dirt*, by Kate Messner. 2015. San Francisco, Calif: Chronicle Books.



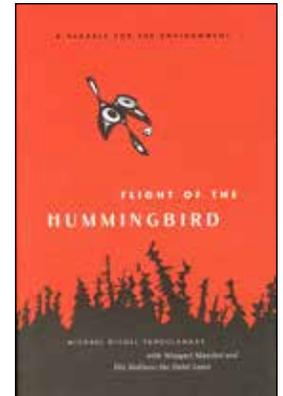
- *The First Strawberries. A Cherokee Story*, retold by Joseph Bruchac. 1998. New York: Puffin Books.



- *I Am Raven*, by David Bouchard. 2007. Victoria, BC: More Than Words.



- *Flight of the Hummingbird*, by Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas. 2008. Vancouver, BC: Greystone Books.



For more great resources please check out GoodMinds.com, a leading source for information on bias-free teaching and educational resources related to Native American, First Nations, Indigenous and Aboriginal studies.

Summer gives us time to stop, rest and reflect on our practice. It gives us time to learn and perhaps engage in an inquiry of our own.

Take time to relax, rejuvenate and breathe! Summer is a blessing, a time to see new possibilities and go on new adventures.

I hope your summer has been healthy and happy. See you in the fall.

Danielle Kowalchuk



Partner Research Schools



Partner Research Schools are dynamic collaborations among schools, communities, and universities leading innovation through research-active inquiry and practice.

A little over two years ago, I was asked to become the director of Partner Research Schools, a new initiative in the Werklund School of Education at the University of Calgary. Delighted at the challenge, I immediately said yes and then wondered, what exactly does this mean? As time passed and people asked me what my role was and what partner research schools were, I found myself stumbling for a response.

Shortly after becoming director and during an informal conversation with a friend discussing my new role, she posed a question regarding the idea of community involvement with partner research schools. She went on to say that she was on the board of the Rozsa Foundation and that the president was looking to collaborate on a research project regarding the arts in schools. At the time, I had only visualized partnerships with school authorities, and the idea of working with community partners as well made so much sense and opened up so many more possibilities! That conversation eventually led to a collaborative research project with a number of schools in the Calgary Separate School District. Funding to support the research was generously

provided by the Rozsa Foundation as well as the Werklund School of Education. Students in middle schools and their teachers were directly affected by the work of this research project, which involved the principal researcher, Brittany Harker Martin, director of the Youth Werklund Leadership Centre, who examined student engagement, creativity and innovation.

As the idea of a collaborative model evolved, our committee, representing senior administration from a number of school jurisdictions, worked to define the meaning of partner research schools. After about four months of meetings, discussions and debating, we came up with the following definition that reflected our understanding of the term *partner research schools*:

Partner research schools (PRS) are dynamic collaborations among schools, communities and universities leading innovation through research-active inquiry and practice. The Partner Research Schools initiative is aligned with the Education Research Framework document ratified in 2011 by the Education Research Partnership Committee and guided by the Inspiring Education document.

In addition to developing a definition for partner research schools, we also designed a letter of interest and memorandum of agreement, signed by eight school authorities in Calgary and the surrounding areas in April 2013, and a three-year strategic plan.

Our initiative was designed to create opportunities for academic staff and schools to work together on a research project/question. A research project may also include experts from various community agencies (for example, theatre, museums and foundations). The richness of a PRS project is that it fosters collaboration among stakeholders in the school, school jurisdictions and the larger community. This research might include formalizing a question regarding such ideas as classroom practice; curriculum areas; examining diversity; technology integration in teaching and learning; universal design; and assessment of for and as learning.

This exciting journey continues with the Partner Research Schools initiative, and what I have found most fascinating is the many other benefits that have evolved from our work. Faculty members have been asked to present at school boards' professional development days for teachers, connections with faculty and their work has been made with particular schools, requests have been made for conference presentations regarding partner research schools, and senior administration and teachers in school are interested in pursuing graduate work with particular faculty members. Many connections and many professional relationships have developed!

If you have an action research project or question in early learning that you would like to pursue, please contact prs@ucalgary.ca. We also invite you to look at our website, www.ucalgary.ca/prs, to learn about new research initiatives.

Cynthia Prasow

Let's Connect and Get Social!

ECEC Website: <http://ecec.teachers.ab.ca>

NING: <http://earlylearning.ning.com>

Facebook: www.facebook.com/ececata

Twitter: @ECEC_ATA

Pinterest: www.pinterest.com/ECEC_ATA

ECE Bookshelf—Boys with Curiosity, Energy, Courage and Big Hearts!

The “ECE Bookshelf” introduces titles that beckon young listeners and readers to the magical world of stories, poems and informational texts. The current selection is all about boys—young and older—who are curious, energetic, courageous and caring. Many are fictitious creations of the authors’ imaginations, but some are real children whose deeds and ambitions have made a difference for others. Others are little boys who teach big lessons. Debby Zambo encourages teachers of young boys to share picture books with archetypes. She notes that the books we offer our boys “should speak to their hearts and souls, and affirm that we are there to help them find their identity, be it traditional or not”¹ (Zambo 2007, 130). Side by side on the ECE Bookshelf, many of these tales and accounts of admirable achievements offer the archetypes to which Zambo refers. All selections on the shelf invite both boys and girls to read, laugh, be entertained and learn together.

The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind, by William Kamkwamba and Bryan Mealer. 2012. New York: Dial Books.

William Kamkwamba had always been curious about how mechanical things worked. As an ambitious 14-year-old in Malawi in 2001, he set out to build a windmill to bring water to his drought-stricken village. With admirable determination, he slowly turned scrap metal into a functional windmill, making it possible to have electricity in his home and life-saving water in his village. This true story, colourfully

illustrated using oil paints and cut-paper images, gives readers a sensitive view of hunger in sub-Saharan Africa and shows them the necessity of water. It is sure to appeal to budding engineers who will rejoice in William’s success. Author notes explain that William is currently studying in the United States to be a professional engineer.

Ryan and Jimmy and the Well in Africa That Brought Them Together, by Herb Shoveller. 2006. Toronto: Kids Can.

Ryan Hreljac (*Hurl-jack*) was just six years old when he wished to dig a well in Africa to make safe, clean water available to the villagers. This photoessay, compiled by Ryan’s great-uncle, tells the story of young Ryan’s exceptional commitment to global citizenship, from his first letter exchanges with his pen pal to the establishment of the Ryan’s Well Foundation. But the story is much more than a water story. It is the story of friendship between Ryan and Akana Jimmy, an orphaned boy in Agweo, Uganda. Both boys show determination to reach their goals, despite challenges. This true story opens a window through which young readers can see clearly that rich rewards come to those who persevere.

Hope Springs, by Eric Walters. 2014. Toronto: Tundra Books.

Readers who have already met Muthini, in Walters’s *My Name Is Blessing*, set in rural Kenya, will be happy to meet Boniface, another endearing, orphaned child who lives in the Rolling Hills Residence. *Hope Springs* is based

¹ Zambo, D. 2007. “Using Picture Books to Provide Archetypes to Young Boys: Extending the Ideas of William Brozo.” *Reading Teacher* 61, no 2: 124–31.

on real events. When the rains failed to supply needed water, Boniface and his friends went to the shared village spring to collect water. In desperation to meet their own families' needs, the village folks sent the boys back to the orphanage with empty containers. Boniface struggled to understand the villagers' meanness. When the orphanage got its own well, Boniface had an idea destined to restore hope and understanding to all. This is a story of kindness and heart, one that shows just how capable children are of being generous and compassionate. The author's notes (with photographs) clearly explain his work in Kenya and how his charitable organization provides for Muthini and Boniface and their families, and those of many others. This book is available in both print and electronic formats.

William's Doll, by Charlotte Zolotow. 1972. New York: Harper & Row.

William wants a doll, but some of his family think a boy who wants a doll must be a sissy. They try substitutions of toys more typically associated with boys' play. But William wants a doll. His thoughtful grandmother understands and gives him a baby doll. When asked why, she carefully explains he needs a doll so he can practise being a father. Now classic, this title is priceless in its power to gently show readers the influence of stereotypes. Zolotow has a remarkable gift for seeing into the minds and hearts of little children.

My Princess Boy, by Cheryl Kilodavis. 2011. New York: Aladdin.

In this mother's story about a young boy who loves to dress up, who dances like a beautiful ballerina and whose favourite colour is pink, readers again confront stereotypes. His mother's and father's love of their princess boy is written between the lines on every page. They love him for who he is. With sensitivity, the mother-author explains the hurt that results when others disapprove of her son's choices. While many young children may not fully appreciate the story and life lesson portrayed, this book could be stimulus for rich discussion in the teachers' lounge.

Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress, by Christine Baldacchino. 2014. Toronto: Groundwood.

Morris has a great imagination! And he loves to play dress-up. He especially loves to wear the tangerine dress. Its vibrant colour reminds him of tigers, his mother's hair and sunshine. But other children tell him dresses are for girls, and they shut him out of their play. Ill at home one day, he paints a wonderful picture of his imaginary space safari with his cat, Moo. In his painting, a little boy wearing a tangerine dress rides a very large blue elephant and is set for all kinds of adventure. On Monday, he again chooses to wear the tangerine dress. Again, he is not invited to ride the other boys' spaceship. Undaunted, he builds his own, puts his painting on the front, and sets off with Eli and Henry, now quite curious to tag along to a planet they had never visited before. When, upon their return, Becky demands the dress and reminds him that boys don't wear dresses, Morris simply replies, "This boy does." Illustrated with charcoal, watercolour, pastels and Adobe Photoshop, this touching story pays tribute to all children who have the character strength and courage to be different. Readers will find Morris endearing and will admire his marching to the beat of his own drummer.

No More Kisses for Bernard! by Niki Daly. 2011. London, UK: Frances Lincoln.

Everyone loves Bernard, especially his aunts. Bernard loves his aunts, too, but he's not so keen on their sweet hello or sneaky-on-the-nose kisses. "No more kisses," Bernard declares. And he means it. This was a problem. How could there be no kisses on Bernard's birthday? The aunts are sad until they come up with a creative solution that even Bernard thinks is great. When bedtime comes, the aunts are gone and it's only Mama and Papa left to tuck him in. Bernard finds one special Bernard kiss! This tender story with its lively illustrations will resonate with many little boys who haven't quite figured out how to accept their relatives' affection.

The Man with the Violin, by Kathy Stinson. 2013. Richmond Hill, Ont: Annick.

When world-renowned violinist Joshua Bell played in the Washington, DC, subway station, it was the children who strained to listen; adults rushed on their way. Little Dylan was one of those children who listened. Despite his pleas, his mother would not stop. It is only later that Dylan and his mother share the sweet music. In this touching story, Stinson illustrates Bell's wish for all children—that their innate appreciation for music be fostered in school and at home. Author notes explain the real event of Bell playing his priceless Stradivarius, and Bell's own message reminds adult readers that music requires imagination and curiosity, two things that children have aplenty. The book is available in paper and electronic formats.

A Fiddle for Angus, by Budge Wilson. 2001. Toronto: Tundra Books.

From the east coast of Canada—a village in Cape Breton—comes more music. Angus's family are musical. His mother played the accordion, his dad the whistle, Tom the guitar, and Molly sang. But young Angus mostly just listened. Sometimes he hummed. He loved the music and longed to join the family orchestra. When finally he is given a fiddle, he discovers just how hard it is to coax out the tunes. But he wants to learn to play and he works very hard at it. Success is his reward. Budge Wilson and illustrator Susan Tooke show readers the rich musical traditions of Cape Breton in this delightful story about a boy's desire and dream coming to fruition through his persistence and practice.

Alexander, Who's Trying His Best to Be the Best Boy Ever, by Judith Viorst. 2014. New York: Atheneum Books.

Readers who have met Alexander in other Viorst titles will not be surprised that he loves mischief and hates consequences. After eating a whole box of doughnuts, his belly aches and his mother warns that there will be consequences! With his greatest determination ever, he vows he will be the best boy ever. Never again will he do the mischievous deeds he ponders and he'll always be helpful. It's a great plan and he is almost totally successful. Alexander's antics will be familiar to many readers and Viorst's humour will keep them rooting for him cover to cover.

Ellray Jakes Is Not a Chicken, by Sally Warner. 2011. New York: Penguin.

Ellray Jakes and Alexander (Viorst 2014) have something in common. They are both trying to be good boys. Ellray's dad has promised a family trip to Disneyland if Ellray stays out of trouble. Ellray wants to go on the trip, but it is not easy to be good when he is challenged. No one is going to call him a chicken and get away with it! With humour, the story unfolds to show readers that Ellray is a sensitive, determined boy who is capable of making very good decisions. *Not a Chicken* is the first in a series of five, all of which will appeal to those who have just graduated to independent reading of chapter books. They will revel in eight-year-old Ellray's many antics and laugh aloud at his clever plotting as he takes on one adventure after another.

Mission Statement: To improve the practice of teaching young children by increasing member knowledge and understanding of this specialty. The ECEC acts on behalf of young children and their teachers to promote excellence in education.

Visit our website at ecec.teachers.ab.ca.

How Can a Growth Mindset Benefit Students and Teachers?

Based on *Mindset—The New Psychology of Success*, by Carol S Dweck, PhD. 2006. New York: Random House.

What is this buzz about having a growth or a fixed mindset, and how can it change the way we view the world around us? It is based on the work of Carol Dweck and encompasses the way we view and deal with life situations.

In order to build on these principles in our learning environments, it is important to understand the difference between a fixed and a growth mindset. A *fixed* mindset is the belief that you are destined to follow a certain path and that your qualities and characteristics are set. In this mindset, you believe that what you have been dealt you will have to live with.

The *growth* mindset “is based on the belief that your basic qualities are things that you can cultivate through your efforts” (p 7). This understanding allows for all individuals to grow and learn through continued perseverance and experience.

As teachers we are in the profession of helping students continue to build skills, confidence and understanding. A growth mindset would ultimately be the goal we would want each of them to reach.

So how do you implement this in the classroom?

Based on Dweck’s research, there are several ways to foster a growth mindset in students. An important element is the way you

approach learning and how you give feedback. Explaining to students what can be improved, and then guiding the learning, works to build skills and a belief in the possibilities that can be attained with hard work. Keeping high standards is important, but students must be given the tools to help reach these goals. A nurturing environment where experimentation is encouraged and mistakes are allowed is also vital. “The great teachers believe in the growth of the intellect and talent, and they are fascinated with the process of learning” (p 194). They don’t judge what students can do and see that as the end point—they start where students are, offer observations and feedback, and make a plan together with the student for what they can do next.

How do we help keep our students’ mindsets growing? (p 211)

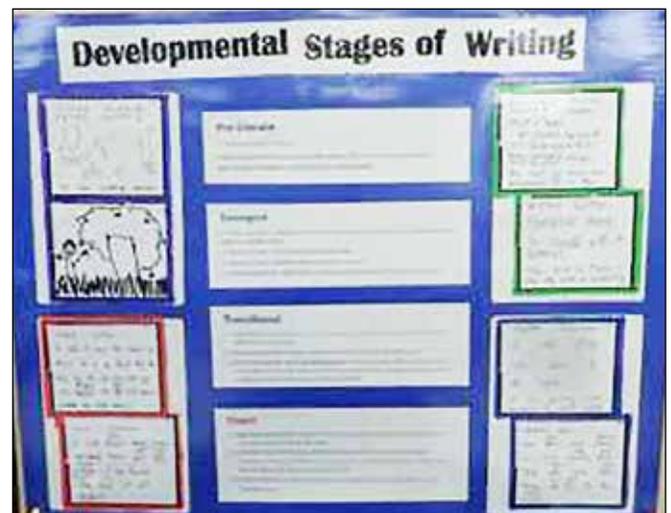
- Give messages that say we are interested in their learning and excited to see more progress.
- Focus on the processes that children use to create something or solve a problem rather than praise for a good job.
- Use constructive feedback to help children think through and solve problems.
- Set achievable goals so that children can see their own progress.
- Don’t lower standards to help children; instead, give them tools and support to help them meet the standard.

Kim Wrathall and Lisa Schoeler

Writing and Assessment in Grade 1

This year our school development plan was focused on improving assessment. To support this goal, our Grade 1 professional learning community wanted to create consistency for students and parents in order for them to understand assessment of writing. Students were able to create criteria, in the form of a target, and then compare their own writing to the target. Once each class had brainstormed their ideas for what good writing looks like in Grade 1, we typed up a copy of the target that the students glued into their writing folders. While conferencing with a teacher over the next few writing lessons, each student picked two or three things from the target to focus on to improve his or her writing. On subsequent days they could then check back to see if they had met their goal.

To give parents an understanding of what beginning writing looks like and some of the changes that they could anticipate over the year, each teacher created a poster with writing and drawing samples and descriptions of the developmental stages of writing as published by the Bureau of Education and Research [www.ber.org]—preliterate, emergent, transitional and fluent. We shared this poster with the parents at our November parent-teacher conferences. We found that this was very helpful to parents because they often were disheartened when they initially looked at their child's work and it didn't look like writing. They could more clearly see all of the learning, thinking and growth that happen as children move through the stages of developing as writers.



Developmental Stages of Writing poster

Photo: Lisa Schoeler

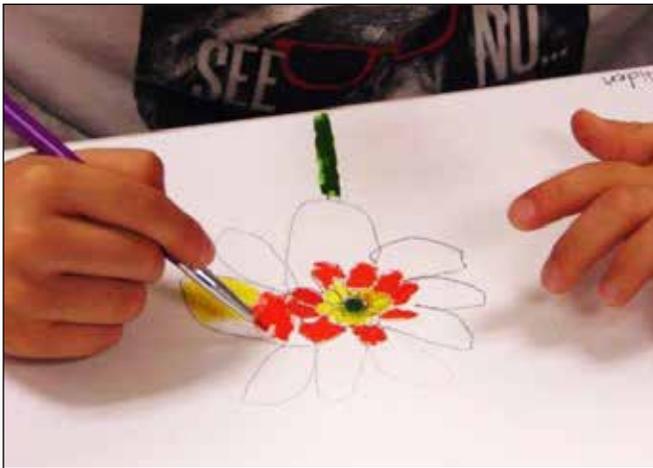
Class-generated writing expectations

Photo: Lisa Schoeler

So Why Art?

Often I am asked, Why do art? My response is why not? Art is such an incredible platform to build students' skills. I work in a high-needs school that is very diverse and at times can be quite challenging. Art is the area of learning in which I see amazing creativity and growth that connects all areas of the curriculum. In my classroom art is referred to with excitement, intrigue and amazement as I work to build skills, process and intrigue with students.

We have done so many projects this year that quite honestly it was difficult for me to narrow it down. We spent time at the beginning of the year discussing authors and types of art processes; this led us into a collaborative alphabet project. We have used recycled materials in our "heart" work (cardboard, packaging paper, drywall mud, paint and glitter). We have used food colouring, watercolour paints, spray paints and all types

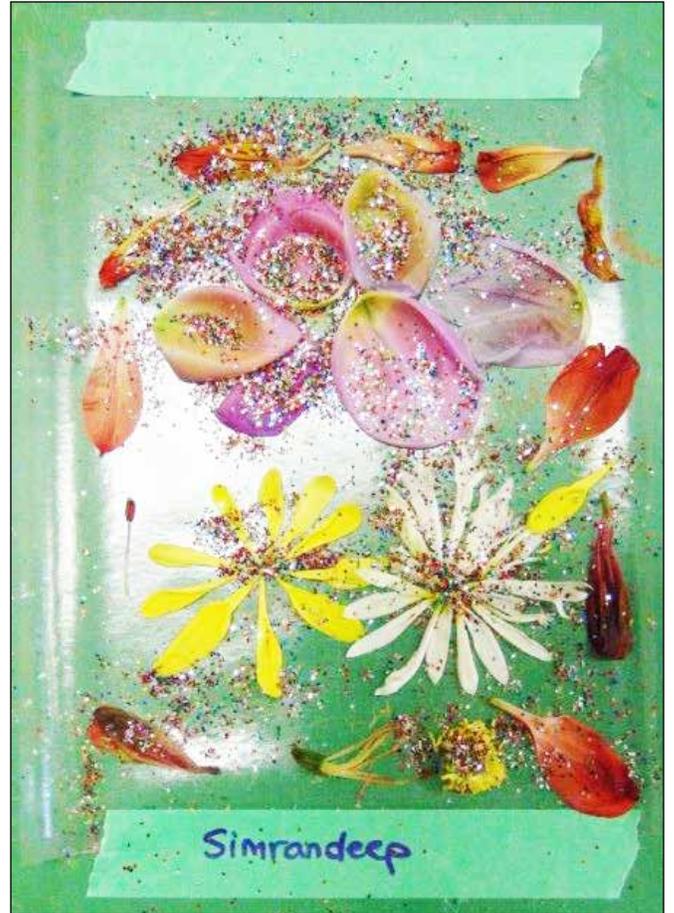
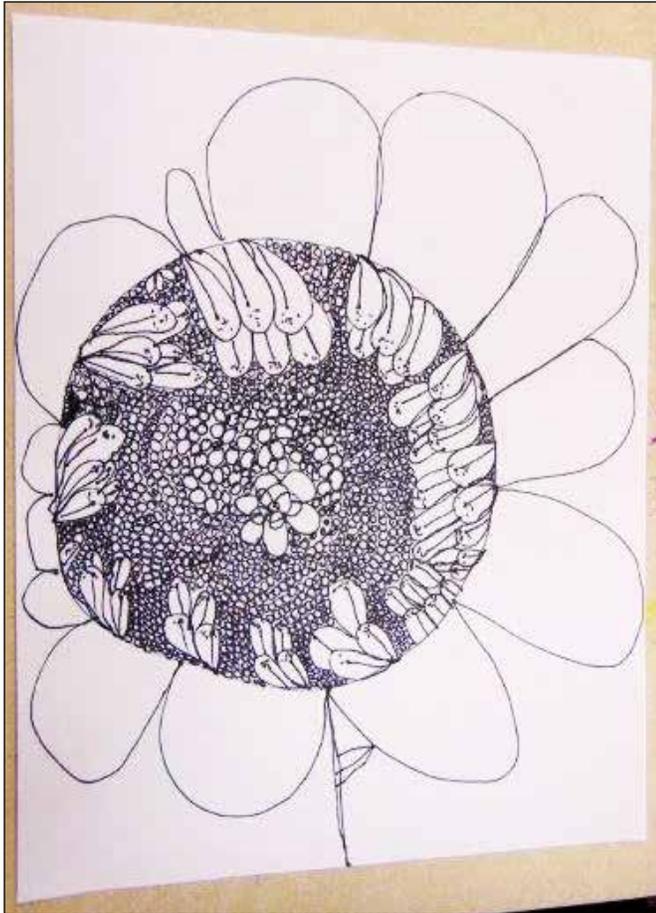


of texture tools (sponges, potato mashers, spiky balls, cotton balls, q-tips, feathers, mesh and more). The possibilities are endless. The most important aspect is that the students in my class found this as a way to experiment, calm their feelings, express their needs and try new things. The end result was both beautiful and inspiring. Whenever I mentioned that we were doing art, it was met with cheers and willingness, both of which would make any teacher proud.

I encourage all teachers, regardless of the fears of messiness and worry, to try something new. Have the students create an inspiring space; sketch outdoors; use a new material; bounce a ball with paint on it (outdoors!); use old sheets and spray paint them on the chain link fence, cut them up and use the pieces to create art. Trying something new and outside of your comfort level may just result in reaching some of your students in a new way.

Kim Wrathall





ECEC Awards



The Early Childhood Education Council offers several awards and grants to recognize the work of educators. Watch for information about application deadlines in future issues of *Issues, Events and Ideas*.

ECEC Award

The Early Childhood Education Council presents an annual award to a person or organization that, in the judgment of the council, has contributed to the field of early childhood education by exemplifying the philosophy of the ECEC and has taken action to promote this philosophy. This award is presented at the annual conference in the fall.

The selection committee consists of the past president and two members of the provincial ECEC executive; each regional of the ECEC may nominate up to two candidates each year.

Advocate for Young Children Award

This award recognizes the work of council members or nonmembers in the service of young children. Recipients can be recognized at the provincial or regional level. Provincial awards are presented at the annual conference in the fall.

Recommendations for recognition at the provincial level shall be approved by provincial table officers. Recommendations for recognition at the regional level shall be approved by the executive of the regional (refer to the executive list on the back cover for contacts).

Recognition of Service Award

This award recognizes the contributions made by members of the council at the provincial and regional levels. Contributions may be to the ECEC, at the provincial or regional level, and/or significant contributions as an educator to the field of early childhood education in Alberta. Recognition is in the form of a framed certificate.

Recommendations for recognition at the provincial level shall be approved by provincial table officers. Recommendations for recognition at the regional level shall be approved by the executive of the regional (refer to the executive list for contacts).

ECEC Grant

An annual grant of up to \$1,000 will be awarded to an Alberta teacher to assist in research or innovative classroom programming in early childhood education. Applicants must be members of the ECEC.

The recipient will receive 50 per cent of the grant at the beginning of the research or classroom project and 50 per cent upon completion. Proposed projects should adhere to the educational philosophy outlined in the ECEC position statement.

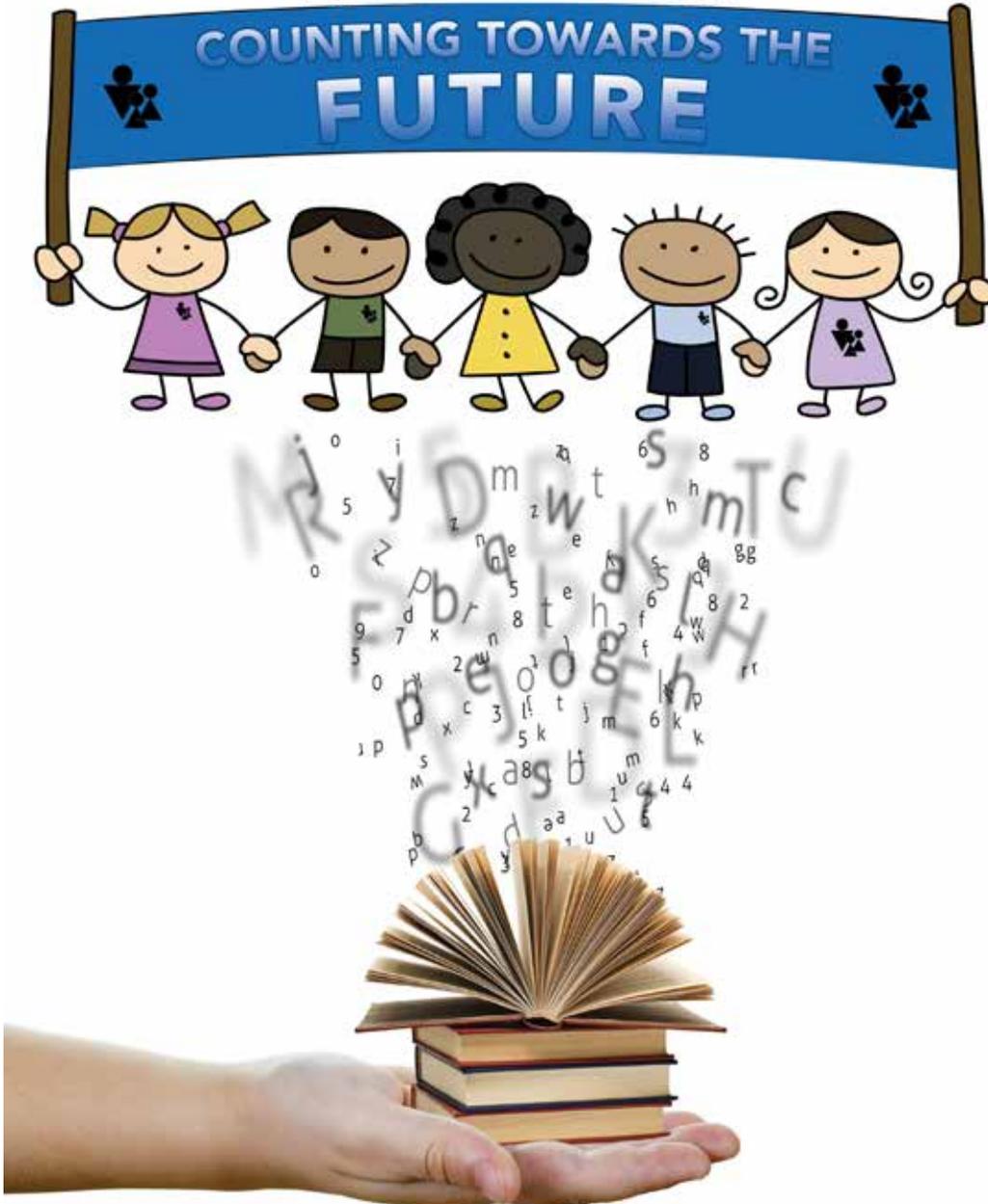
Grant money may be used for materials, release time or any other worthwhile component of the research or classroom project. Proposals with school support are encouraged. School support could take the form of matching funding, teacher preparation time or administrator recognition.

The award recipient must share the results of the research or classroom project in a manner that enhances the professional development of ECEC members, such as ECEC journal articles, conference presentations or regional workshops.

Applications are received by members of the provincial ECEC executive.

ECEC CONFERENCE 2015

COUNTING TOWARDS THE
FUTURE



KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

**Cathy
Fosnot**

**Judith Byron
Schachner**

**Michael
Mitchell**

**Robert
Kelly**

Be sure to join us!

November 5, 6, 7

Registration opens May 1, 2015

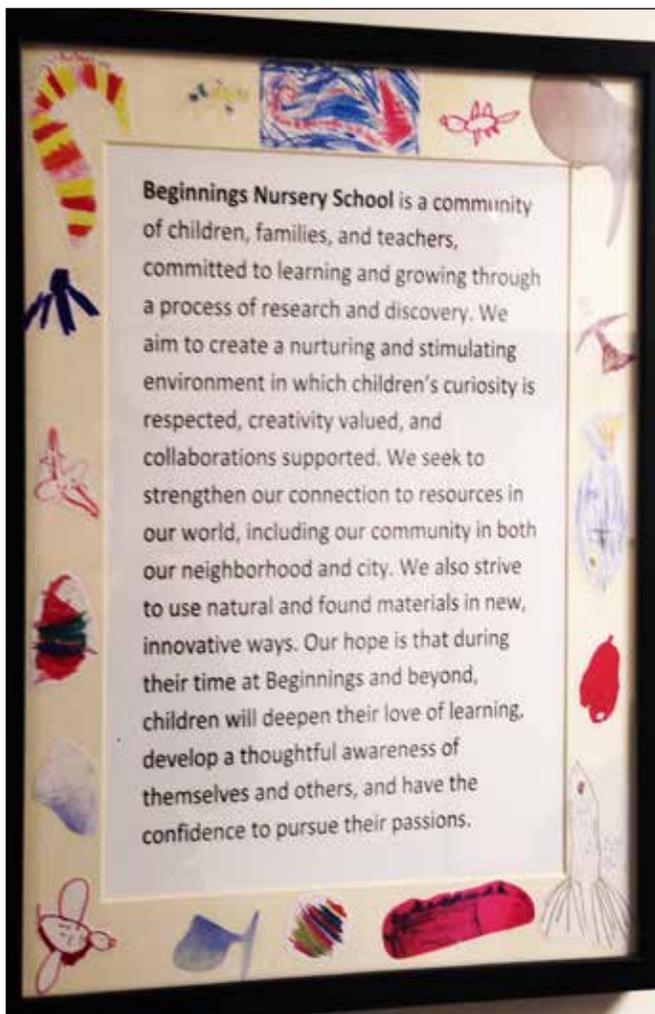
Delta Lodge Kananaskis <http://ecec.teachers.ab.ca>



Dialogue of Two Cities: NYC and Reggio Emilia

Conference November 2014

As part of my journey of learning this year, I had the opportunity to attend Dialogue of Two Cities: NYC and Reggio Emilia, a Reggio Alliance conference, in New York. I was invited to a site visit before the conference; I chose to tour Beginnings Nursery School (<http://beginningsnursery.net>). This was the highlight of my visit.



The school's website features this statement: Beginnings Nursery School is a community of children, families and teachers committed to learning and growing through a process of research and discovery. We aim to create a nurturing and stimulating environment in which children's curiosity is respected, creativity valued, and collaborations supported. We seek to strengthen our connection to resources in our world, including our community, neighborhood, city, and natural and found materials.

The site visit was inspiring. It was an amazing experience to go into each room and see the learning taking place—so many open-ended activities that allowed the children the

time and space they need to construct their own understanding of the materials and their properties. It was wonderful to see projects in process, with many adults and children working together to make sense of their world. It was apparent that relationships, conversations, joy and creative play were encouraged and supported. The children were so engaged and excited to work on their ideas and projects around the site.

We toured all the rooms, watching the collaborative approach between the various professionals and the students. Listening to the director explain the collaborative and coaching approach the staff takes to planning and working together inspired me further to think outside my classroom walls.



What an amazing community of learning!
I can only hope that many of you experience
a site visit like this. I know I will follow what
Beginnings Nursery School does in the years
to come.

*Our task, regarding creativity, is to help
children climb their own mountains, as high
as possible. No one can do more.*
—Loris Malaguzzi

Danielle Kowalchyk



Early Childhood Education Council Executive 2014/15

President

Joy de Nance
Bus 403-777-7300
jadenance@cbe.ab.ca

Past President

April Brown
Bus 780-532-9276
aprilbrown013@gmail.com or
aprilbrown@pwsd76.ab.ca

President-Elect

Danielle Kowalchuk
Bus 780-476-7634
danielle.kowalchuk@ecsd.net or
dkowalchuk@me.com

Secretary

Jennifer Bridle
Bus 403-777-6288
jen-jones@shaw.ca or
jmbridle@cbe.ab.ca

Treasurer

Karin Gizzas-Rivard
Bus 403-500-2023
kgrivard@shaw.ca or
karin.rivard@cssd.ab.ca

Journal Editor

Pamela Winsor
Bus 403-329-2433
winsor@uleth.ca

Newsletter Coeditors

Lisa Schoeler
Bus 403-777-6740
lcschoeler@cbe.ab.ca
Kim Wrathall
Bus 403-777-6740, ext 3001
educ8tr@telus.net or
kcwrathall@cbe.ab.ca

PD Cochairs

Danielle Kowalchuk
Bus 780-476-7634
danielle.kowalchuk@ecsd.net or
dkowalchuk@me.com
Elan LaMontagne
Bus 403-777-6360
erlamontagne@cbe.ab.ca

Multimedia Chair and Ning Advisor

Janice Comrie
Bus 780-463-8108
janicecomrie@shaw.ca

2015 Conference Codirectors

Cynthia Tulissi
Bus 403-500-2118
cynthia@tulissi-environmental.com

Lynn McEachern
Bus 403-500-2081
lynnmce@gmail.com

Alberta Education Liaison

Karen Sliwkanich
Bus 780-422-6527
karen.sliwkanich@gov.ab.ca

University of Alberta Liaison

Larry Prochner
Bus 780-492-5416
prochner@ualberta.ca

University of Calgary Liaison

Cynthia Prasow
Bus 403-220-6288
cprasow@ucalgary.ca

University of Lethbridge Liaison

Pamela Winsor
Bus 403-329-2433
winsor@uleth.ca

PEC Liaison

Markiana Cyncar-Hryschuk
Bus 780-436-7888
markiana.hryschuk@teachers.ab.ca

ATA Staff Advisor

Shelley Magnusson
Bus 780-447-9478
or 1-800-232-7208
shelley.magnusson@ata.ab.ca

Webmaster

Sarjenka Kuryliw
Bus 780-623-4672
kuryliw@ualberta.ca

REGIONAL PRESIDENTS

Calgary and District

Donna Lawson
Bus 403-777-6177
dmlawson@cbe.ab.ca or
dmlawson@shaw.ca

Central West

Sandra Summers
Bus 403-887-3088
ssummers@chinooksedge.ab.ca

Edmonton

Michelle Bezubiak
Bus 780-436-7888
michekille.bezubiak@ecsd.net

Fort McMurray

Heather Fisher
Bus 780-215-5887
heathersceviour@hotmail.com

North East

Carrie Fox
Bus 780-657-3383
dcfox@telus.net or
carrie_fox@sperd.ca

South East

Jennifer Deruyter
Bus 403-528-3722
jennifer.deruyter@sd76.ab.ca or
jennifer.deruyter@hotmail.com

South Peace

April Brown
Bus 780-532-9276
aprilbrown013@gmail.com or
aprilbrown@pwsd76.ab.ca

South West

Deb Watson
Bus 403-381-1244
deb.watson@lethsd.ab.ca

University of Alberta

Jocelyn Finn
Bus 780-819-6543
jfinn@ualberta.ca

University of Calgary

Katarina Rivard
Bus 403-869-6801
rivardkatarina@gmail.com

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