



No 134 June 2013

President's Message

Hello again, members.

The Early Childhood Education Council has been very busy this past year. Many thanks go to the conference committee for their preparations for the 2012 conference, at West Edmonton Mall. It was a smashing success, attended by more than 750 delegates.

The executive continues to support the Early Learning Ning (earlylearning.ning.com). Consider joining and learning from other Alberta teachers. This is an excellent opportunity to become part of an online professional development community.

IEI and the *ECEC Journal* are always looking for submissions from you, our members, about projects, research or investigations you are doing in your classroom. If you are interested in writing a short article for *IEI*, please contact Fran Galbraith or Kim Wrathall. I know they would be happy to hear from you. If you are interested in writing an article for the *ECEC Journal*, please contact Anna Kirova, the journal editor; she would be happy to help with your submission. All e-mail addresses are in the executive list at the back of this newsletter.

I cannot believe that two years has passed. As president, I have learned a great deal, and it is always a pleasure to attend meetings and work with dedicated teachers who believe in best practice in early childhood education. You won't find a more dedicated group of teachers than primary teachers. I have enjoyed my two years as president, but I am also looking forward to passing the reins to the incoming president, Joy de Nance. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to learn and grow as a professional. Enjoy your summer. I look forward to seeing you at our next conference, in Kananaskis, in November 2013.

April Brown

In This Issue

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Ideas

These classroom experiences, created by Michelle Bezubiak, will inspire you. For more classroom ideas from these early childhood teachers and more, join the ECEC Ning.

Mouse Paint
Ellen Stoll Walsh

Through **QUESTIONING** and Inquiry
This **PROJECT** emerged from the children's
interest and curiosity

After reading the **Mouse Paint** book,
the **QUESTION** that was asked was,
"How did the mice mix the paint?"
We then asked the students if
we could mix *paint* like the mice.
Their response was, "Noooo!"
My reply was...
Why not?

The collage includes several photographs: children in green and purple body paint, close-ups of feet with colorful paint, and children stepping on paint to create patterns on a white surface.

Mouse Paint



Inspired by Barbara Reid

Chandelier Project

Designed, Created and Delighted in by Children in 100 Voices
St. Monica School



The Provocation

The Inspiration

The students had many IDEAS for our collaborative project. We were able to bring the ideas TOGETHER and make a plan. The children wanted a rainbow chandelier like the LAVA one with butterflies hanging down.

The Process- sort all the multi-colored beads into groups. Decide which colors to start with. Hang them on the chandelier. We discussed how we could get up to the top to hang them. The students decided that Mrs. Bezubiak should hang the ones close to the ceiling and they could hang the ones at the bottom.



Critical Thinking

The children noticed that the chandelier was starting to droop.
I asked them why that was happening?
They thought that the beads were getting heavy.
I asked them how we can fix this problem.
One theory was, that if it was too heavy we needed to take some of the beads off.
The other theory was to put more wire on the chandelier to make it stronger.
The children agreed that adding more wire would be a great solution.



Chandelier

What's This Ning All About?

Have you been wondering what the Early Learning Ning is all about? Well, it's ECEC's newest online professional development site. The Early Learning Ning was created this past year to help ECEC teachers with their professional development in early education, up to Grade 4. The wonderful thing about this Ning is that Alberta teachers work behind the scenes to inform you of their practice in the primary grades. Here is a quick guide to help you get started.

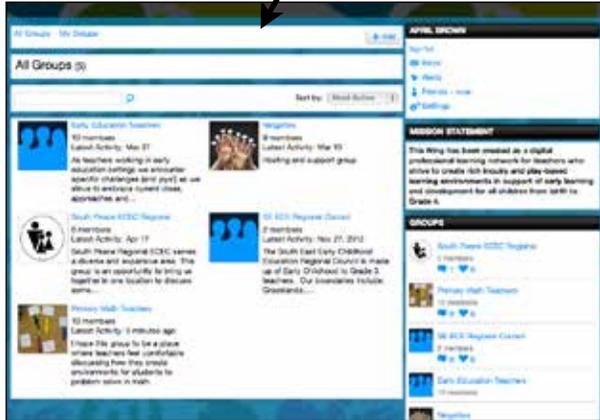


You'll need to create an account and a password. Remember to pick one you'll remember.

You'll be asked to add information to your page to create a profile. This is what my page looks like. It's important to pick a photo so that people will recognize you, or at least know that you are a real person.

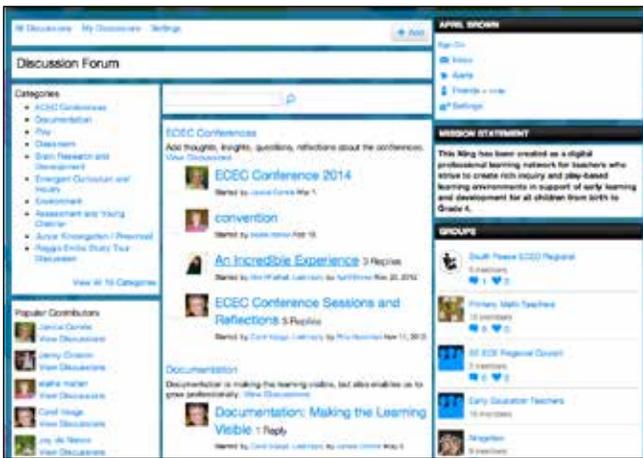


This is the Early Education Teachers Group. You'll receive a welcome message from Carol Vaage, our site main administrator. From there, you can access any of the other groups on the site. Here are some of the other groups you can join.



There are some regional councils to join, to find out what is happening in your region, and other groups that are more specific to subjects or other interests.

As you navigate the site you'll find lots of different discussions and forums to browse, and you can also add your comments and suggestions to the online discussions.

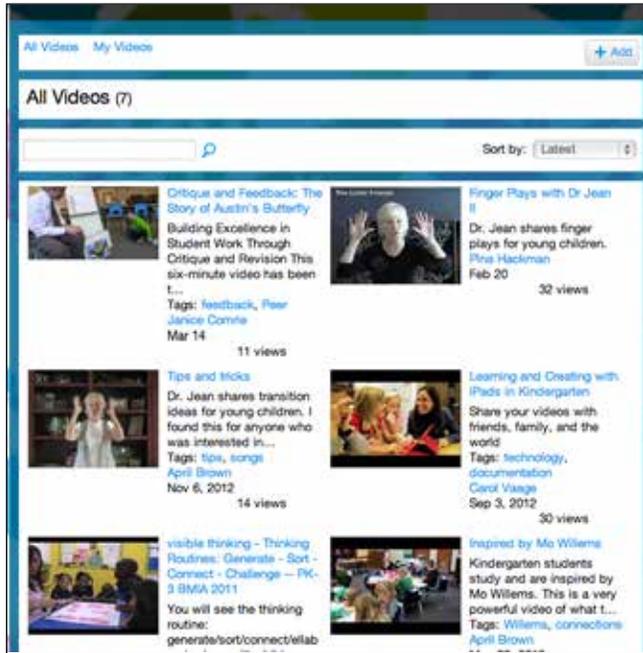


Discussions are listed in alphabetical order. You can scroll down the page to catch up on a discussion you missed or want to participate in. If you contribute to a discussion or group, you'll be sent an e-mail of any new comments or posts by contributors. We encourage you to add to the discussions or groups—this makes the site far more interactive and valuable for you and the other members of the Ning.

If you're looking for ideas on classroom design or you just want to look at some photos of what other teachers may be doing in their classrooms, head on over to the PHOTOS section. You'll instantly become inspired.



I love that Alberta teachers are sharing what is happening in their Alberta classrooms.



If you are looking for some inspirational videos, check out our VIDEO section, where you'll find some great ideas on how to incorporate play into your classroom, and other wonderful ideas and suggestions to try.



If you are really feeling adventurous, I would highly recommend participating in an online chat. There is not a set time for chats—they are just open to anyone who is online. This is an area where you can really begin to have valuable conversations with other teachers.

Are you feeling more comfortable and adventurous now that you know what this Ning is all about? Come on, give it a try—you never know what you might learn. The Ningettes look forward to learning alongside you. See you online. Look for more information in future newsletters.

April Brown

April Brown is the current provincial president and the South Peace president. She is a multitasker and lover of math and technology. You can find her at www.msbrownsggrade2class.blogspot.com or aprilbrown013@gmail.com.

Creating a Classroom Website

As a staff, we had discussed the idea of creating our own classroom webpages this year. One of my colleagues had already started hers and had great success with it, so I decided to take the plunge. Here is a list of things that I learned during the process:

1. Check with your school board to see what protocol they require for your webpage to be considered for approval. For instance, the Calgary Board of Education requires the host to be a Web 2.0-approved site. You must apply to the school board for approval to proceed. Approval can take up to 24 hours, but in most cases it is less than that.
2. Once you have approval for your host (I chose Weebly for Education), set up your domain and start to design your page. Many companies offer templates and design tools. The initial cost is free.
3. Consider upgrading and purchasing your domain. When you purchase your domain, it means that no one else will have your website. When you upgrade, you have perks like creating up to five sites, having student access available in different ways, more design templates, app capabilities and much more. The prices are very cost effective and become cheaper the longer the term of the purchase. It can take a few days for the purchase of your domain to take effect.
4. Take some time to learn the host's site as you are creating. Play around with the look and feel of it before publishing it to the web.
5. Password protect your site so that you control who logs in. I gave out the information at interviews with the disclaimer that if parents lost the login information at any point they needed to notify me, no questions asked, so I could change the login information and maintain security for their children.
6. Ensure that the students know what is going onto the site and how the site will inform their parents about their learning.
7. On the site that I have created there is an area for a blog that I try to write on a couple of times a month.
8. Consider creating areas like your philosophy, the curriculum, parent suggestions, classroom and school newsletters, pictures and articles that would interest parents and students, examples of the students' work and what they have learned from it, why your classroom is set up the way it is, the importance of early childhood education, and even ways to contact you or the school for important information.
9. Try to make the class site simple to navigate for parents and students—if there are too many words they will lose interest.
10. Last, don't be discouraged if you find at the end that not as many parents were involved as you might have wished. The process and the opportunity for a view into your classroom are the most important aspects.

Kim Wrathall

Regional Report—University of Alberta

Vince Gowman: Remembering to Play

On February 14, Vince Gowman came to the University of Alberta to teach the preservice teachers to remember to play. While teaching us that it is important to incorporate play into our classrooms, Vince had us participating in play activities. This was a nice change from our typical routine of sitting in desks and listening to lectures. We learned that play is a natural process that we partake in freely as children, without thinking about it. As we grow up, we are taught to suppress our desires to have fun, laugh, make believe and act silly. Vince reminded us that if we allow ourselves to act in a playful mindset, our creativity is heightened, we experience greater joy in life and we complete tasks with greater ease.

We were very fortunate to have Vince come in and play with us. Often it is easy for us to forget how much we enjoyed playing as children. Play is definitely something that we should encourage our students to continue to do, but it is also important for us to remember to partake in playful thinking and playful activities. You are never too old to play!

*Sarjenka Kuryliw
ECEC Council of University of Alberta*



Notes from Dr Jean

This letter and photo are from our 2012 conference keynote speaker, Dr Jean Feldman. Readers who want more information can contact her at drjeansongs@gmail.com.

The weather outside was frightful, but the teachers were so delightful!

Oh, Canada! What an amazing time I had in Edmonton last November—what a fabulous conference! I was so impressed with the commitment that ALL of you have for children. “It takes a village to raise a child” is clearly a statement that you live in Alberta.

We started off Thursday evening “kissing our brains” as we sang and danced. Friday was packed with ideas for transitions, learning centres, and activities where children can learn and have fun. (Of course, there was time for some shopping and fabulous food in between the sessions.)

It was a joy to meet all the early childhood educators, and I was honoured to be a part of such an exciting program.

Happy teaching to all of you!

Dr Jean

PS: I hope some of your children have picked up a southern drawl from my music!



ECE Bookshelf

The ECE Bookshelf introduces titles that beckon young listeners and readers to the magical world of stories, poems and informational texts. Currently, the collection on the shelf focuses on the approaching summer season and the activities that children and families enjoy when school doors close for vacation. Each suggested book offers young readers a chance for exploration and enjoyment in the summer months.

Mama, Is It Summer Yet? by Nikki McClure (2010), presents a boy’s curiosity as he awaits summer’s arrival. This celebration of changes in nature encourages children to look closely at the world around them. McClure’s cut-paper art is extraordinary. Other books on this theme are

- *Summer Seasons*, by Nick Winnick (2011), and
- *The Twelve Days of Summer*, by Jan Andrews (2005).

Grow Your Own for Kids, by Chris Collins and Lia Leendertz (Mitchell Beazley 2012), hooks all young gardeners with its photographs and abundance of excellent advice. Children are sure to be enthusiastic as they learn how to grow tasty salads from seeds and great smiley sunflowers. Other books on this theme are

- *The Life Cycle of a Flower*, by Bobbie Kalman (2004), and
- *The Book of Gardening Projects for Kids*, by Whitney Cohen and John Fisher (2012).

Look Up! Birdwatching in Your Own Backyard, by Annette Cate (2013), invites children to begin birdwatching by getting outside with their sketchbooks and really looking around. Information is provided in full-colour illustrations and the birds’ chatter about their characteristics. Other books on this theme are

- *Backyard Birds: An Introduction*, by Robert Bateman (2005), and
- *Squirrel Rescue*, by Jennifer Curtis (2012).

Butterflies and Moths, by Nic Bishop (2009), leads the reader to see shimmering butterflies and transforming caterpillars up close. Magnificent photographs, including a centre double-page fold-out, show butterflies and moths larger than life. The rich text offers fascinating facts told in a way that will delight the whole family. Other books on this theme are

- *Butterflies in the Garden*, by Carol Lerner (2002), and
- *Spinning Spiders*, by Melvin Berger (2003).

Pictures from Our Vacation, by Lynne Rae Perkins (2007), reminds young photographers and parents alike that some of the best memories of vacations aren't captured in pictures. Other books on this theme are

- *Maisy Goes on Vacation*, by Lucy Cousins (2010), and
- *Carl's Summer Vacation*, by Alexandra Day (2008).

On the Way to the Beach, by Henry Cole (2003), takes readers for a walk to the beach and along a path through the woods one summer morning. Encounters with plants and wildlife are exquisitely illustrated in fold-out two-page spreads. At the end of the book, labelled diagrams provide readers with names of the creatures encountered. Other books on this theme are

- *Scaredy Squirrel at the Beach*, by Melanie Watt (2008),
- *Wave*, by Suzy Lee (2008), and
- *Arty Facts Oceans and Art Activities*, by Janet Sacs (2002).

When We Go Camping, by Margriet Ruurs (2001), reminds readers of the many adventures and chores from sunup to sundown that keep campers busy. For readers who are not campers, the descriptive text is instructive. The illustrative paintings by award-winning wildlife artist Andrew Kiss (of *Mountain Alphabet* fame) challenge viewers to find the hidden squirrel in each one. Another book on this theme is *We're Going on a Picnic*, by Pat Hutchins (2002).

Readers looking for more challenge in their summer reading—those who are ready to read independently after Grade 2—might reach for Amelia Bedelia's latest adventures in *Amelia Bedelia Means Business*, by Herman Parish (2013), in which Amelia must earn enough money to buy a new bicycle. Others might choose *School Days According to Humphrey*, by Better Birney (2012). Even though school has just let out, Humphrey is thinking about new friends in next year's class.

At the end of the shelf is a pair for Grade 4 readers. If they haven't yet met the Penderwicks, they are sure to enjoy meeting the four fun-loving sisters and their dad, who head off for summer vacation in *The Penderwicks: A Summer Tale of Four Sisters, Two Rabbits, and a Very Interesting Boy*, by Jeanne Birdsall (2005). As soon as the last page is turned, readers who connected with practical Rosalind, stubborn Skye, artistic Jane and shy Batty will be reaching for *The Penderwicks at Point Mouette* (2011) for more summer laughs, adventures and joyful tears.

Pamela Winsor

Early Childhood Education Council Executive 2012/13

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