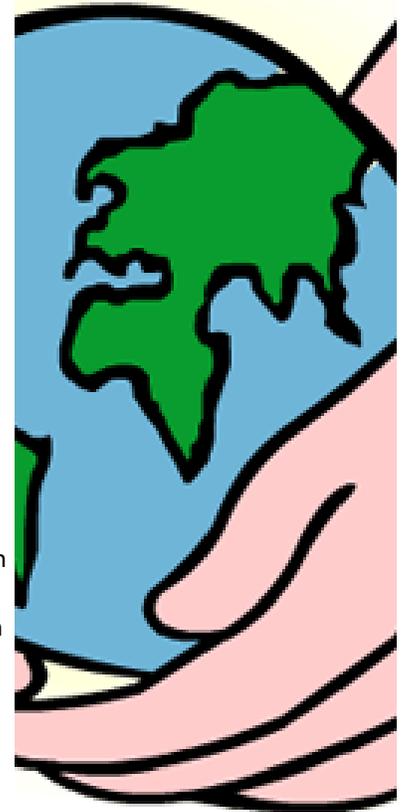


# Smile Maker

## EMERGENT CURRICULUM

BY: TRACEY SMITH-PRESIDENT

I love hearing about teaching experiences and practices from other colleagues who are in the middle of it all. Often times, it gives me courage to try new things. This year I made a decision to let go of my lesson plans and follow the interests of the children. It was difficult to know where to start. I began by informing parents and the next step was getting to know the children. After identifying interests, I would talk to the children about the things they know and then the things that they would like to learn. This part was challenging. It was difficult to stretch their thinking and help them stay focused on the unknown. I even brought in photos and objects to help with this. After a couple tries, I gave up this particular aspect of the emergent curriculum. Maybe it was this group of children or maybe I'm not very good at this. I may be leading you to believe that this endeavor was unsuccessful but that is not the truth. I like having the freedom to facilitate investigative and exploratory learning without having to stick to a theme. The best part of letting go of the lesson plan is being able to explore a subject until the children seem ready to move on. Activities can be repeated with slight variations. I have found that some of our learning begins with a subject that the children already love like space or pets. Some of our learning is sparked by something else like a story we read or an event that is happening in their lives. This is an approach that allows learning activities to develop out of children's interests, actions and questions. The process of learning is focused on the child rather than the curriculum. The idea is that the children are motivated because it is relevant. My experience with this approach is that the children are more engaged in our classroom activities. Recently, I offered colored ice blocks, shakers filled with salt, and spray bottles filled with water. This was a very popular activity and it was crowded at the sensory table on that particular day. I had a parent observing the mess that this was producing amidst the active learners. She asked me, "do you ever ask what was I thinking when I planned this one?" I responded by telling her I only ask that question when I put time and effort into planning and the children are uninterested and no one wants to participate. My experience with emergent curriculum has not turned out exactly as the experts have claimed but it has provided positive, engaging learning experiences for my students. I am willing to keep on trying and hope to get better at this approach with more experience. We would love to hear the new things that you are trying as an early childhood educator! I hope you are having a terrific school year! I'm looking forward to our upcoming workshop on March 3. I hope to see you there!



## Earth Day

**April 22 is Earth Day.**

**People across the country celebrate this day by wearing green, planting trees, and learning how to use resources wisely. Ask your children about some activities they would like to do such as turning off lights, planting flower seeds, or recycling.**



## WHY DO WE TELL CHILDREN TO READ?

We're always telling children that books and reading are good for them, but have we ever really thought about why that's true? Exactly what do older children get out of reading novels? What do younger kids get from being read to? Does reading matter?

The more young children are read to, the greater their interest in mastering reading. Reading out loud exposes children to proper grammar and phrasing. It enhances the development of their spoken language skills, their ability to express themselves verbally.

Reading, by way of books, magazines or websites, exposes kids to new vocabulary. Even when they don't understand every new word, they absorb something from the context that may deepen their understanding of it the next time the word is encountered. When parents read aloud to children, the children also hear correct pronunciation as they see the words on the page, even if they can't yet read the words on their own.

*“The more young children are read to, the greater their interest in mastering reading.”*

## E-BOOKS

**Reading can improve hand-eye coordination.**

It may sound funny, but ebooks can be a way for children to improve their fine motor skills and their hand-eye coordination, as they click around a childfriendly website or click the backward and forward buttons of online story pages.

They may also be picking up valuable computer skills that they'll need in school and later in life.

## READING CAN OPEN NEW DOORS

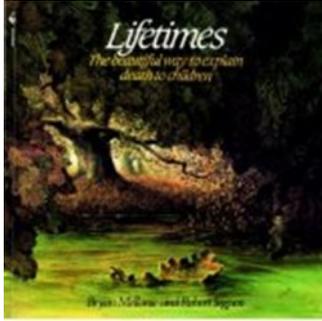
Through books, children can also learn about people and places from other parts of the world, improving their understanding of and concern for all of humanity. This, in turn, contributes towards our sense that we truly live in a "global village" and may help us bring about a more peaceful future for everyone. This can happen through nonfiction but, perhaps even more importantly, reading novels that are set in other places and time periods can give children a deeper understanding of others through identification with individual characters and their plights.

Through stories and novels children can vicariously try out new experiences and test new ideas, with no negative consequences in their real lives. They can meet characters who they'll enjoy returning to for comforting and satisfying visits when they reread a cherished book or discover a sequel. Books also give kids the opportunity to flex their critical thinking skills in such areas as problem solving, the concepts of cause and effect, conflict resolution, and acceptance of responsibility for one's actions. Mysteries allow children to follow clues to their logical conclusions and to try to outguess the author. Even for very young children, a simple story with a repetitive refrain or a simple mystery to solve gives a confidence boost. Children can predict the patterns and successfully solve the riddles.

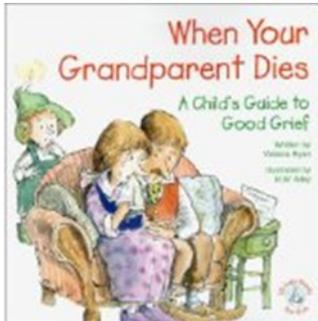
Children are influenced by and imitate the world around them. Carefully chosen stories and books can have a positive influence on children, sensitizing them to the needs of others. For example, books can encourage children to be more cooperative, to share with others, to be kind to animals, or to respect the natural environment.

There are so many ways in which reading continues to be both a vital skill for children to master, and an important source of knowledge and pleasure that can last a lifetime. Nurture it in your children. Make the most of all the resources that are available and waiting for you: printed books, online books, magazines and so forth. Encourage follow-up activities involving creative writing skills and the arts, as well, so that your children can reflect upon or expand on what they've absorbed and, at the same time, develop their own creativity. As you help your kids appreciate the magic of reading, you'll find that there's a whole wonderful world full of children's literature out there that YOU can enjoy!

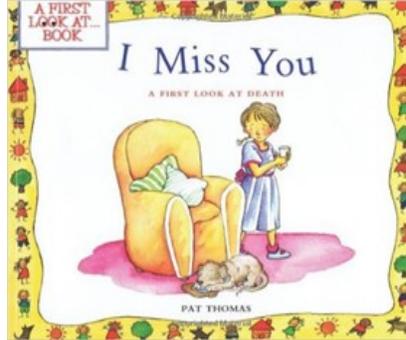
# When Grief Hits a Family~



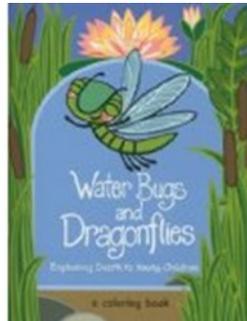
*Lifetimes* is a moving book for children of all ages, even parents too. It lets us explain life and death in a sensitive, caring, beautiful way. *Lifetimes* tells us about beginnings. And about endings. And about living in between. With large, wonderful illustrations, it tells about plants. About animals. About people. It tells that dying is as much a part of living as being born. It helps us to remember. It helps us to understand.



Explaining what happens from a child's-eye view, the elves depict the difficult days before, after, and beyond a grandparent's death. They explore the meaning of death and heaven, as well as how to stay close in spirit with a grandparent who has died. Includes questions for discussion.



This book helps boys and girls understand that death is a natural complement to life, and that grief and a sense of loss are normal feelings for them to have following a loved one's death. Titles in this sensitively presented series explore the dynamics of various relationships experienced by children of preschool through early school age. Kids are encouraged to understand personal feelings and social problems as a first step in dealing with them. Written by psychotherapist and counselor Pat Thomas, these books promote positive interaction among children, parents, and teachers.



*Waterbugs and Dragonflies* is a graceful fable written by Doris Stickney who sought a meaningful way to explain to neighborhood children the death of a five-year-old friend. The small book is beautifully illustrated by artist Gloria Ortiz Hernandez.

A few years ago I had a little girl in my classroom that lived with her grandma as her mommy had just passed away that summer. My go to phrase “mommy and daddy” was no longer appropriate and I quickly adopted the phrase “grown ups” when talking about the people the children live with. We don’t always know what family dynamic our children live with but we know for sure they are always living with grown ups. I have a little girl this year that no longer has a mommy. She openly talks about her mommy and is a strong and confident little girl. She must have some amazing grown ups in her life to give her the love and understanding that enables her to be such a confident and loving person.



# Let's Wear Green !

(The Mulberry Bush)

Let's wear green and  
dance a jig, dance a  
jig, dance a jig.

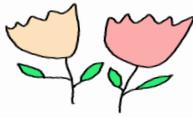
Let's wear green and  
dance a jig-

On St. Patrick's Day.

All join hands and  
circle round, circle  
round, circle round.

All join hands and  
circle round -

On St. Patrick's Day.



# SPRING FEVER

## March

**Green Rice:** Color rice by shaking it in a clear plastic bag with several drops of green food coloring and several drops of rubbing alcohol. Spread the rice on paper towels to dry.

**Sprouting Shamrocks:** Cut a shamrock shape out of terry-cloth. Place the shape in an aluminum pie tin and add a little water. Help the children sprinkle alfalfa seeds all over the shamrock. Place the pie tin in a sunny spot and regularly add water to keep the shape moist. Observe over the next week as the seeds sprout and turn the shamrock green.

## April

**Making a Rainbow:** Place a small mirror in a clear glass of water and tilt it against the side of the glass. Stand the glass in a window in direct sunlight. Can the children find the rainbow? If not, tilt the mirror a little until the rainbow appears on a wall.

**Tiptoe thru the Tulips:** Cut out tulip shapes and arrange them on the floor. Play music and join the children in tiptoeing through the tulips without stepping on them.

## May

**Lovely Lilacs:** Cut purple and white tissue paper into 2-inch squares. Show the children how to twist a paper square around the eraser end of a pencil to make a lilac blossom. Make several blossoms and glue them to craft sticks to make lilac branches. This might make a nice "Mother's Day" project.



# EMERGENT CURRICULUM

## Goals of Emergent Curriculum

1. To inspire delight, curiosity, celebration and inquiry in the classroom.
2. To build intrinsic motivation and a long-term love of learning in children.
3. To help children craft an internal compass to guide them as a learner, rather than relying on instruction and direction from others.
4. To inspire children to be authors, inventors, illustrators, designers, dancers, singers, actors, etc. and to celebrate their unique talents and abilities.
5. To encourage consistent self-reflection and professional growth among teachers, so they may always improve the quality of classroom experience.
6. To maintain a teaching staff well-versed in the fundamentals of how and what children learn, so they can support and guide learning as it emerges naturally inside the school, in the natural world, and in our community as a whole.
7. To allow the natural pace of individual and group learning to emerge, and not be guided exclusively by the clock.
8. To create cooperation, partnership, resource-sharing and amiability between staff, students, parents and the community.
9. To give children an organized environment in which to use all of their senses and faculties to learn.
10. To recognize that critical learning takes place during conflict, negotiation, brainstorming and resolution.
11. To provide adequate outside time daily.
12. To support the varied learning styles (visual, auditory, sensory, verbal, etc.) in ways that are also aware of gender differences.
13. To carry out assessment in the form of student portfolios and documentation of learning.
14. To honor and welcome children with special needs into our school community.
15. To practice supportive social learning rather than punishment.

## How do we do This?

- Weekly classroom documentation displayed.
- Monthly portfolio additions for individual students.
- Student-led expeditions, inquiries and investigations.
- Field trips and excursions outside the school.
- On-going staff training and professional development.
- Activities in our dramatic play, block, science, sensory, literacy and manipulative areas in school, as well as on the playground.
- Opportunities to run, jump, sing, dramatize, wiggle, write, read, create original work, and YES-hit, kick, yell, throw, catch-all with appropriate targets of course and nurture, feel, cry, hug, feed, care, wonder, and more...

## Why?

Because this is how children learn. They do not learn by sitting before a teacher who imparts knowledge. They learn by doing and self-directing! And they succeed in the future by learning to love school. Their delight and spontaneous wonder will always be our first priority.



# GDCPTA

The Greater Detroit Cooperative Preschool Teacher's Association



## TA Spring Workshop

### Schoolcraft College

Thursday March 3rd

### **Victoria Schreiber, M.A.,L.M.S.W**

Discover strategies for supporting young children when they experience a death, what to look for, and how to listen to young children.

### **Laura Scott**

Join us to learn about the latest and greatest in picture books and non-fiction.

Book trends, tips for choosing read-alouds, and some storytelling dos and don'ts too.

**Don't Forget to  
Get the Word out about  
GDCPTA!**

Our wonderful workshops can be counted towards the 16 clock hours of annual training required by licensing.



## CALENDAR

### March 5, 2016

Appelbaum Training Institute

The Inn at St. John's

Plymouth, MI

6 Clock Hours of Training

Register @ [www.atiseminars.org](http://www.atiseminars.org)

### March 31-April 2, 2016

MIAEYC

Grand Rapids

### August 24, 2016

TA Summer Learning Fair

### November 4, 2016

TA Fall Workshop

### March 2, 2017

TA Spring Workshop

The **Smile Maker** is your newsletter. If you have anything you would like to submit for our next issue please email it to the editor: [reneehult@yahoo.com](mailto:reneehult@yahoo.com).

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