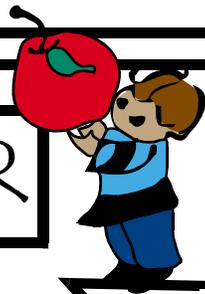




# AN APPLE FOR THE TEACHER

March, 2007

Volume 11: No. 3



Application of  
Personal &  
Professional  
Learning  
Experience

## Section 1: An Overview of Volume Focus



Welcome to the APPLE—a newsletter for teachers of young children. As was noted in the last APPLE, the focus is a bit different this year. There will still be reviews of interesting articles from professional journals such as *Young Children* (NAEYC). We will also provide updates on the state research on school readiness for which you are providing data. Other topics related to teaching and working with young children and their parents will also be included.

**Section 2** focuses on professional information of interest to teachers of young children. The Teacher to Teacher section has a request from one teacher for information on a specific program. For this volume, Section 2 will focus on an article from the January 2007 issue of *Young Children*—"Writing: Empowering Literacy".

The state update (**Section 3**) will update you on the current status of the School Readiness Project, and provide an overview of our future plans for this project.

**Section 4** is the application portion of the newsletter. This month's topic will be on 'best practices'—as provided by the kindergarten teachers who completed the KTP last year. The results support developmentally appropriate practices AND all day kindergarten.

Finally, **Section 5** provides a list of resources, websites, and conferences that might be of interest to you.

As always, we appreciate you and all the work that you do. Please address any comments, suggestions, or questions to the editor, Gayle Stuber. (785-296-5352 or [gstuber@ksde.org](mailto:gstuber@ksde.org)).





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## Section 2:

### *Early Learning Professionalism—information and support*

Writing: Empowering Literacy by A. Love, M. S. Burns, and M.J. Buell (p. 12 -19) *Young Children*, vol. 62, No. 1, January 2007)

The authors begin with the statement that writing is an essential part of quality literacy practices in all early care and education settings. Children need to understand and appreciate writing as a way to express themselves and to communicate with others. There are some tips for teaching writing, that teachers need to keep in mind as they plan writing opportunities.

1. Children understand writing differently from adults.

Through observation of older siblings, peers, and adults, young children learn that writing can be used to communicate information—making a list, scribbling a story. There is a link between writing and reading that children learn through being exposed to a literacy-rich environment. The writing continuum can begin with scribbling and move toward different lengths of scribbles (longer for sentences!), writing individual letters, and eventually words.

2. The interconnections of writing and drawing support active writing exploration.

Children often combine art and writing. By the age of four, children are more able to differentiate drawing from writing, can likely write 1 lines and have some print awareness—words go from left to right, placement on a page, and the difference between numbers and letters. Teachers can help children connect by acting as a scribe for children who want to write about a drawing or promoting a discussion of where to put the print on a page with a picture (above, below, next to).

3. A writing-friendly environment supports broader literacy development.

“Children learn to write through meaningful activities to accomplish social and personal goals”. (p. 15) Teachers can support writing as well as reading within a literacy environment by integrating writing into multiple early childhood activities and learning centers. The authors list several centers that can include writing materials:

- Block area
- Art Area
- Literacy area
- Science area
- Dramatic Play area

4. Sensitive adults support is crucial to writing development.

Teachers are able to ‘unlock literacy development through modeling and scaffolding and by balancing adult guidance and child autonomy’. (p. 16) Children can perform in more complex ways when they have an adult to help them. Of course, too much guidance and structure can easily inhibit children’s motivation and independence so align your support with the child’s needs.

5. Writing activities support the home-school connection.

Children need to see the important adults in their live write purposefully, both at home and at school. Making writing meaningful clearly supports and motivates children in their writing growth. Using home journals, including children in everyday writing tasks,





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and sharing home writing at school are all ways to enhance writing skill.

The authors conclude that 'writing involves more than merely learning and using meaningful symbols and codes; it supports communication, and promotes social,

emotional, and cognitive development." (p. 18)  
Empower the children in your classroom by supporting, scaffolding, and encouraging them to write.

## Section 3: An Update from the State

### School Readiness Project

We have received all the forms from those of you who are participating in the project this year. This has taken a bit more time than last year—we just got in the last forms this past week. We are now in the process of scanning all of them (we did have to 'bubble' in KIDS numbers on several hundred before we could scan them!)—and should have the data to the statistician (Renee' Patrick from last year is working with us on this) by mid-March. What this means for you is that you will not be receiving the state report as soon as we had hoped. We are aiming for the end of March. Once the data has been analyzed, we will send out the results via email. Please be looking for it! And if you have any questions, please contact Gayle at [gstuber@ksde.org](mailto:gstuber@ksde.org) or 785-296-5352. Again, we do apologize for the delay—but the data you send us is very valuable and the reports will be worth it!

You should have received your stipend of \$150 for participating in the project. If you did not send in a form this year, you will not get a stipend, so if you believe that you were overlooked, please contact Lucy Campbell at [lcampbell@ksde.org](mailto:lcampbell@ksde.org). Also, if you believe the KU Beach Center owes you your 450 bonus for recruiting parents, but have not received your voucher form, please be patient with us—the same delays in scanning in and updating the database have caused a delay in determining which parents belong to which teachers. Please contact Jean Ann Summers at [jsummers@ku.edu](mailto:jsummers@ku.edu) if you believe you should be getting the bonus but have not yet heard from us. Please specify if you are a kindergarten or a preschool teacher.

### Spring Tasks

For all teachers: We will send you the KELI/KELI-4 forms for the spring data collection. We will not be collecting schedules for the spring this year so the KELI or KELI-4 forms for your students are all you should be getting. We will send them in a packet with a return envelope. You should get them by mid-to the end of March and they will be due by the end of April (see your timeline in your fall packet).

### For Four Year Old At-Risk teachers:

1. You are receiving via email a link to a survey about the content being taught in their classrooms. This is connected to the Early Learning Standards that will be sent from December 2006 to April 2007 to each program. There is no right or wrong answer—this is just general data collection.
2. Teachers in the project will be observed during March through the beginning of May by observers using the CLASS observation assessment. This is approximately one class period (morning or afternoon) and is looking at teacher-child interactions. The CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System) is a nationally known instrument that provides some great (and research-based) information on classroom practices. The results will be aggregated (put together) at the state level and will be used, in part, to help with professional development next year.





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THANK YOU AGAIN FOR ALL YOUR HELP AND YOUR WORK! We do appreciate it! We apologize for the lateness of the report—glitches in the scanning machine as well as the number of forms (we have over 11,000 to scan) contributed to the delay. The report will be out as soon as possible.

We have gotten a LOT of data from all of you! We want to go beyond the descriptive reports we have provided last year (and will provide this year) so we are planning for some changes in this next year. CHANGES WILL DEPEND UPON THE FUNDING THAT IS AVAILABLE (as always!).



## TEACHER to TEACHER:

- Sharing professional expertise, questions, and concerns.
- Working together to help each other and the children and families of Kansas.

A question has come from the Kansas City Kansas preschool coordinator. She would like to know who has or is using the Early Prevention of School Failure (EPSF) program/assessment. IF you are or have used the EPSF and would be willing to share your opinions and information with Marylee Griffiths, please contact her at [magriff@kckps.org](mailto:magriff@kckps.org).

A second request is from members of the Kansas State Board of Education. They are interested in getting information from any district that has had full-day, every day kindergarten AND has followed the children who participated in this program throughout their school years to see if the full-day, everyday makes a difference as children get older. The national research is beginning to examine the long term impact of full-day, every day scheduling of kindergarten, but it is a fairly new aspect of the research. Any information you can share would be very much appreciated. Please let Gayle know at [gstuber@ksde.org](mailto:gstuber@ksde.org).

Write to Gayle at [gstuber@ksde.org](mailto:gstuber@ksde.org) with topics you want covered or re-visited for either this part (TEACHER to TEACHER) or any part of the APPLE.

## FUTURE PLANS—for the Kindergarten Part of the Project

The School Readiness Project has been collecting information on kindergarten children, teachers, and classrooms as well as parent information for several years—with the last two years providing the data being used to examine school readiness over the long term.

**First:** The Kansas Health Institute is funding a Kansas Kindergarten Assessment Initiative (K-KAI) for the fall of 2007. This will be a new portion of the School Readiness Project, and will ONLY look at the skills, abilities, and knowledge levels of entering kindergartners (child level data). The K-KAI will not collect data on teacher practices (the KTP) or collect data from parents. People who are trained on the standardized assessments being used in this project will work with schools, teachers, and parents to collect the child level information.

Children will be selected randomly from across the state to participate in this portion of the Project.

**Second:** The KSDE School Readiness Project will piggy-back on the K-KAPVI and ask teachers who have the children being assessed to also complete a KELI on each child as well as a KTP. Teachers will be given the KELI, the clarification of the items (the addendum from your fall packet), and the link for the KTP which we hope will be completed online. We will pay teachers for each KELI completed, but, of course, this is a volunteer piece of the project so teachers are requested, but not required, to complete the forms.

This is different from the current process—but has several very strong points that support this change.

1. Teachers should have far fewer than 10 children selected from their classroom (so won't have to complete the KELI on as many as this year).
2. The random selection process is a stronger research design and will help support all the work you have done over the last two years (or more for some of you!).
3. This process will help give us time to look at the data you have been sending us over the





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last two or more years and help with further professional development and reports that you can use with your parents, administration, and community.

The standardized assessments provide a part of what we need to know about the children and your classroom. We need more to show growth over time, to show what works and what doesn't in classrooms, and to give some indication of the birth to five years' experiences of these children and the potential impact of

these experiences on the school readiness of these children.

THEREFORE, please look for upcoming information on the fall, 2007 data collection process. We hope that you will participate in this part of the project. *And, starting in the fall of 2008, we will again be looking for participation in state wide data collection using the KELI, the KTP, and the parent information forms to continue our School Readiness Project. We will still need you!*

## Section 4:

### Best practices: A report from 2005 – 06 kindergarten results

Data was collected on kindergarten classroom practices by asking participating teachers to complete a self-assessment describing the practices they use in their classrooms during the year. The instrument, **Kindergarten Teacher Practices (KTP)**, is based upon an observation instrument, the Assessment of Practices in Early Elementary Classrooms (APEEC) developed by Hemmeter, Maxwell, Ault, and Schuster (2001). The KTP describes practices that are or should be seen in kindergarten classrooms. Part A is composed of physical environment items; Part B is composed of items that relate to the social context and instructional context of the classroom.

The 20 items on the KTP frequency part B that should be seen daily (based upon Developmentally Appropriate Practices as defined by Bredekamp and Copple, 1997) were defined as 'Best Practices'. Results of the KTP examine the use of Best Practices across the 232 kindergarten classrooms in the study from the perspective of student achievement on the KELI (Kansas Early Learning Inventory).

A specific review of the data examined the impact of Full Day Kindergarten, defined as Kindergarten classes that go the full school day, every day (the same schedule as 1<sup>st</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup>). Sixty percent (60.2%) of

the teachers who participated in the School Readiness Project taught full day kindergarten.

In general, Best Practices are more frequently seen in full day kindergarten classrooms rather than in kindergartens that are scheduled for half day sessions. Non-daily Best Practices do not have a significant impact on the outcomes of any of the domains. Best Practices have a marginal effect on math and general knowledge if the child is in all-day Kindergarten while BP have a significant positive effect on symbolic development, written language, and oral communication whether the child is in all-day Kindergarten or not.

Best Practices AND full day Kindergarten have a significant positive effect on the academic areas: math, general knowledge, symbolic, written language, and oral communication. Putting Daily Best Practices in full day kindergarten is the strongest method of supporting and enhancing student learning.

Of the 20 daily Best Practices, full day and half-day teachers appear to be able to easily incorporate at least 10 to 15 daily best practices. Many teachers in full-day, however, are able to incorporate 16-18 daily best practices while teachers in half-day Kindergarten are rarely able to incorporate more than 15. Most teachers





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who practice high levels of Best Practices (at least 10) include centers in their classrooms.

Certain daily Best Practices are seen much more frequently in full day kindergarten. These are significantly higher in full day kindergarten sessions than in half-day sessions. Included in the table are the percentage of teachers in the different schedules and the percentage of the total number of teachers participating in the project. These best practices are among those that are highly recommended to be practices in quality classrooms by professional early childhood groups. Note that the highest percentage for all teachers using these practices is just under 86 %.



### Item

17. Hands-on materials, such as unifix cubes, games, small toys, or art materials are provided for the students in multiple subject areas.
30. Time for children to learn through play exploration or self-instruction is provided.
31. Multiple grouping methods (e.g. whole group, small group, individual one-on-one, guided discovery) are used when providing instruction.
44. Students are encouraged to move independently to new activities when finished with a project.
45. Students are allowed extra-time, if needed, to complete a project task.
46. Advance notice about upcoming transitions, both in and outside the classroom are provided to students.

Summary: Using the best practices daily improves student achievement. Daily use of these "Best Practices" is easier to accomplish in full day sessions of kindergarten. These practices require time and include: (1) use of centers; (2) more hands-on materials available; (3) multiple instructional methods; (4) student choice; (5) time to complete tasks and to show learning.

Other practices which were higher in full day schedules, but were not significantly different at the  $p < .05$  level include enhancing language allowing students to express their thoughts and opinions, diversity teaching. The one practice that appears about the same in both full day and half day kindergarten classrooms is the inclusion of students with disabilities: #47: Students with disabilities participate as fully as possible in all classroom activities.



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## Section 5:

### SEEDS of Knowledge and Resources

1. The 38<sup>th</sup> annual PDK/Gallup Poll from Phi Delta Kappan: September, 2006 (vol. 88, no. 1; p. 41)

This complete article gives lots of information related to the public's attitude toward public schools. One important piece of information related to early childhood: the percentage of the public who agree that preschool programs for students from low-income homes will help them perform better in school in their teenage years has grown from 74% (1992) to 81% (2006). And 66% are willing to pay more taxes to fund such programs (up from 49% in 1992).

2. The Connecticut State Department of Education has a great booklet out called "Getting your Child Ready for Kindergarten". Go on to <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/D/eps/Early/KinderGroEng.pdf> and look it over. *Should we do something like this for Kansas??*

3. An article called "Preschool is School, Sometimes: Making early childhood education matter" can be viewed at <http://www.hoover.org/publications/ednext/4612287.html>. It examines the results of the CLASS (Classroom Assessment System) that will be used in some of the four year old at-risk classrooms this spring. The general conclusion is that teacher-child interactions are key to high quality early childhood classrooms (and this is also true for kindergarten and primary grades!).

4. NAEYC position statements are available at <http://www.naeyc.org/about/positions.asp>. These can be useful as you talk with administrators, parents, and other teachers and staff.

5. The Clearing house on Early Education and Parenting (CEEP) is available at <http://ceep.crc.uiuc.edu/> and is part of the Early Childhood and Parenting Collaborative within the College of Education at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. It has multiple resources to support any research or help answer questions you might have on early childhood topics.

6. The Kansas Early Learning document is out and available on many websites—you can find it on the KITS website at <http://www.kskits.org>. Four Year Old At-Risk teachers will be receiving copies this spring. Kindergarten teachers are welcome to ask for copies. These Standards incorporate in part the school readiness items on the KELI and the KELI-4 and are aligned with K-3<sup>rd</sup> standards.

