DOWNTOWN BALTIMORE CHILDREN'S CENTERS

DBCC NEWS

DOWNTOWN BALTIMORE CHILD CARE, Inc.
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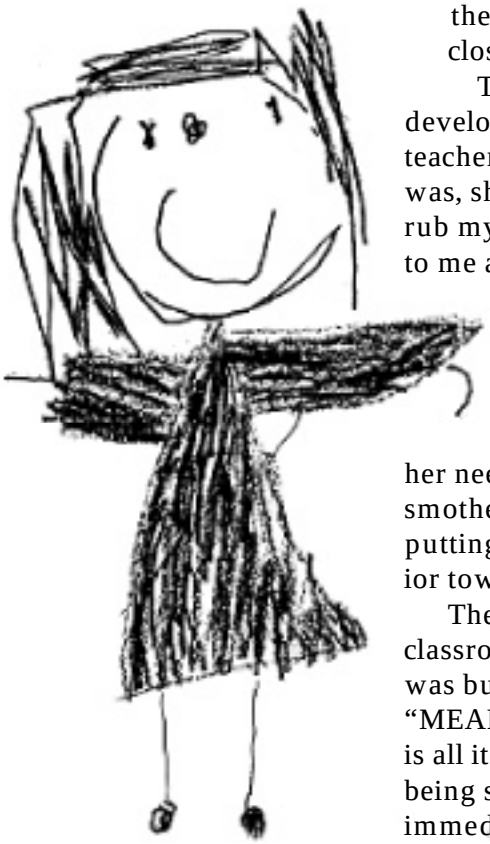
University Center, 237 Arch Street, Baltimore, MD 21201-1526 • 410-659-0515

Spring, 2004

What Message Is Your Child sending You?

By Susan Sandstrom



Julia Bainum, Age 4

I once worked with a child who drove me crazy! Wait, I know what you're thinking . . . that's not supposed to happen to an early childhood professional. But, it does, and sometimes it's because, like most adults, we focus more on the child's behavior and less on the messages behind the behavior. Meara was four-years-old and tried for the longest time to send me a message but all I could see was her troublesome behavior.

Meara was extremely affectionate. I was so pleased at first. She sat in my lap or held my hand or rubbed my ear lobe as often as possible during the day. I wanted the child to feel secure so I encouraged her to stay close to me.

The weeks went by and Meara began to blossom in the classroom. She developed a close group of friends and needed very little direction from her teachers. She was happy and busy and productive. As competent as she was, she continued to approach me throughout the day to hold my hands or rub my head or touch my face. If we were having a meeting, Meara sat next to me and touched me throughout. At lunchtime she ate with one hand and had her hand in my hair with the other.

A typical pattern for preschool children is to wean away from the need for lots of physical contact with the teachers. They may need a quick hug as support or maybe to sit close to you, but generally contact grows less and less. Meara was functioning very well, but her need for physical contact with me increased. The child was slowly smothering me. Every time I turned around this child was touching me, putting her hands in my hair, climbing in my lap. I saw none of this behavior towards the other teachers and I really wanted it to stop.

The days went by and I came to dread seeing this child walk through the classroom door (and over to me to rub her hands on my face). My tension was building and building until finally, I could take it no more. I snapped, "MEARA, STOP IT! STOP TOUCHING ME!" She looked surprised but that is all it took. The touching stopped. Meara had a palpable sense of relief at being stopped, which of course, was what she wanted. Our relationship immediately changed for the better. Meara would still ask for the occasional hug or to sit in my lap but the obsessive touching ceased. *(continued on page 2)*

Now enrolling for Fall, 2004 ! DBCC has openings in every classroom!
Visit our website at dbcckids.org or call to arrange a tour.

What Message ? . . . *from page 1*

Meara was a wonderful teacher for me. She taught me two valuable lessons. I learned to trust my feelings. If I was uncomfortable then that was a signal for me to pay attention to the behavior. I also learned to look beyond the behavior. What message is the child sending me through her misbehavior? For Meara, her message was clearly a "stop me" message. Children crave limits and will push you until a limit is reached which is exactly what Meara did! This is a very common message for many children and easy for adults (like me!) to misread.

Children need to know how much their parents or teachers will let them get away with. When will they be stopped? It is vital information for a child and their level of comfort and security depends on it. If they are unsure of how far they can go, they will push and push until they are stopped. Meara needed to know how far she could push me. She worked very hard until she had the information she needed. The mistake I made was to think that she needed patience and tolerance-what she needed was for me to stop her inappropriate behavior.

It is important for parents and teachers to be kind and patient and selfless much of the time. But children are uncomfortable if they only see that benevolent side of you. Children want you to set firm limits. They need you to set limits. Their behavior will get outrageous without limits. It is an important part of your child's sense of security and social development to learn to respect limits.

So, how do you deal with a "stop me" message? As we all quickly learn, most of the time it takes more than a verbal request to stop a behavior. I was lucky with Meara. Usually it is necessary to physically stop a child and often it takes many repetitions before a behavior goes away. For example you tell a child, "I need you to put the glass down." As you make the request you need to take the glass from the child. Children soon learn that when you tell them to do something you will follow through and it will be done! This is the part that many adults forget-the follow through that puts the oomph behind the words. It works much better than multiple repetitions or threats or bribes. Once your words have power, you won't need the physical follow through. Your words will be enough.

Of course there are many other messages that children send adults. The "stop me" message is just one of them. Some messages can be easy to interpret like "I'm hungry (or tired or sick)" although they can still be confusing. Others are more difficult like the "I need more attention" or the "I'm angry" message. It is always a challenge to try and figure out misbehavior but it very important to see beyond the behavior and to try and decipher the code: What is my child trying to tell me? Misbehavior rarely has a simple explanation. That's why it's important to know the child, to look for patterns, to reflect on changes in the child's life, to recognize developmental milestones (often children get fussy or difficult right before a new milestone is reached) and to be aware of the child's health. And don't be afraid to ask for help—understanding behavior is very tricky!

In your presence, does your child:
- aggressively attack other children?
- push or hit another child for no apparent reason?
- ignore your demands to stop?
- hit you?
- never seem satisfied?
- treat you with contempt?
- call you names?
- give you orders or become demanding?

Your child may be sending you a message. S/he may be asking for that vital information- When will I be stopped?

Having difficulty reading your child's behavior? Don't be afraid to seek professional help. All that emotional closeness we have with our children can prevent us from interpreting the messages children send us. Professionals are wonderful at helping us read those messages and developing new strategies for dealing with all kinds of behavior issues.

by Hallie Rockcress, Age 2

DBCC NEWSLETTER EDITORS
Susan Sandstrom
Nancy and Bob Kramer
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410-659-0685 - University

Thank You To . . .

• Carolyn Hayes, Robin's mom, for finding a television that DBCC could use as a monitor.
• Eric Rice, Celka's dad, for your computer support.
• Stephen Frank, Ben's uncle, for loaning us the wonderful step-walker scooter.
• Ann and Frank Vorys for the baby toys.
• Beth, Benjamin and Addison Horowicz, for the delicious donuts for the staff.
• Dalal Tonob and family for the delicious pastries! We still miss you, Dunia!
• Andy Kane and Diane Shaw, Collin and Ryland's parents, for the lights, CD rack, decorative hangings, scales and easels. Thanks for all the special activities, too.
• Curtis Adams, Emily's dad, for cleaning up the litter on the parking lot in October and November!
• Cathy Brennan, Liam's mom, for cleaning up litter on the parking lot in December.
• Qin Fu, Henry's mom, for the treats and decorations for Chinese New Year.
• Andy, Lucienne, Haley and Maddie Parsley for the housekeeping supplies and to Andy for planing the classroom 1 door so it no longer sticks.
• David, Sara and Ruby Elbert for the Chinese New Year treats.
• Thora Johnson, Ben's mom, for the fortune cookies.
• SangeetaMalhotra and James Rhoads, Amrita's parents, for the phones, lap top computer and styrofoam.
• Colette Veasey-Cullors and Arlen Cullors, Adia's parents for the cupcakes
• Dawn and Todd Smith, Madelyn's parents for doctor prop box.
• Karen Detling, Tom Edsall, Rebecca and Jamie for all the toys and for the delicious chocolate torte. Yummmm!
• Miek and Ron Ouwerkerk, Jules' parents, for the baby spoons, lights and computer with all the works.
• Amira Ouraishi, Noor Jehan's mom, for the pillows and slipcovers for the reading area in the "three's room."
• Fatma Ismail, Mahey's mother for attaching latches on the center hallway climber.
• Grantley Pyke, Atlas's father, for picking up the trash.
• Beth Rockcress, Hallie's mom, for carrying boxes of books and papers upstairs into Margo's new office.
• The parents in Room 6 for buying all the wonderful new materials and supplies for the classroom!
• Cecilia Meisner, Charlie's mom, for sharing her birthday food and for all the baby spoons.
• Tina Hall and Ann Ramsey, Grace's parents, for the CD's and kites

It's a Boy! It's a Girl!

Teacher Angela Crim is a mom! **Brionna Jacqueline Crim** was born on June 5, 2003 and weighed 7 lbs. 1 oz. Belated congratulations to Angie, Ronald, Shanae, Ronnie and Pierre the cat!

Sean Meinke is a big brother! **Emma Catherine Meinke** was born on November 17, 2003 and weighed 6 lbs. 12 oz. Congratulations to Deana, John and Sean!

Althea is a big sister! **Quinton Claude Laughon Worrell** was born on November 19, 2003 and weighed 8 lbs. 1 oz. Congratulations to Kathryn, Claude, Najeeb and Althea!

Teacher Tiffany Thornton is an aunt! **Kaylen Monica Pittman** was born on November 20, 2003 and weighed 6 lbs. 5 oz. Congratulations to Aunt Tiffany, Diedre, Calvin and Kaela.

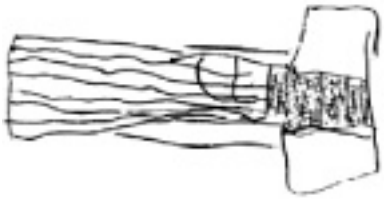
Music teacher, Spice, is an aunt! Philip Leo Kleinmann Rosenberg was born on January 3, 2004 and weighed 3 lbs. 12 oz. Congratulations to Laura, Stephen and Aunt Spicey!

Henry is a big brother! Ann Gannett Bethel was born on January 14, 2004 and weighed 6 lbs. 14 oz. Congratulations to Sarah, Hugh and Henry!

Clark is a big brother! **Cameron Charles Stikeleather** was born on January 28, 2004 and weighed 8 lbs. 11 oz. Congratulations to Tracey, Derek and Clark!

Michael is a big brother! **Max Franco Howarth** was born on January 28, 2004 and weighed 7 lbs. 5 oz. Congratulations to Danielle, Michael, Quinn and Michael!

Teacher Sherri Sykes is a grandmother! **Domonique Deniese Sykes** was born on March 8, 2004 and weighed 7 lbs. 1.7 oz. Congratulations to Sherri!



This is the American flag with 50 stars created out of folded paper and marker by Zachary Lane, age 5.

Special Thanks to . . .

• **Our wonderful DBCC Parents** for their unending support!
• **Tom Johnson** for his continued volunteer work at Park Avenue. Tom has been volunteering for well over a decade! We missed you while you were gone! Glad you're feeling better! We love you, Tom!
• **Bob Kramer** and **Nancy Kramer** for all their artistic and graphic assistance with a variety of projects. You keep DBCC looking sharp, Bob and Nancy!

MARCH MAGIC *What a wonderful success!*

It was a delightful evening of music by the Bobwhites (thanks to Dorothy Valakos), delicious food, extraordinary desserts (thanks to the DBCC parents), fantastic auction items and even some child decorated furniture (thanks to the DBCC children).

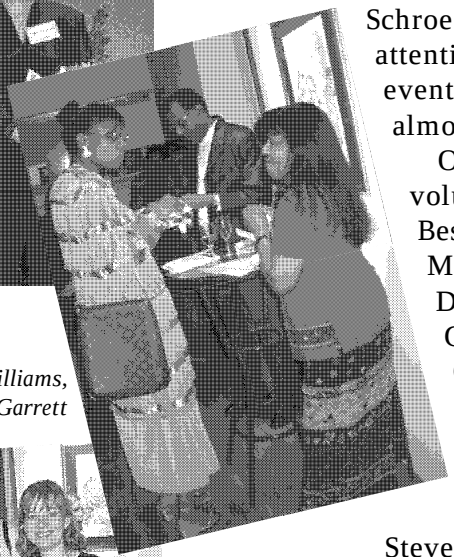
This year the March Magic event was chaired by Jean Schroeder (mother of Grace and Helen) whose organization attention to detail and e-mail meetings made this DBCC event one of our most successful. We raised almost $11,000 !

Of course Jean had some help. Many thanks to all the volunteers: Curtis Adams, Kari Appler, Allison and Pau Bessette, Pat Bolden, Cathy Brennan, Carolyn Burlin, Margaret Cellucci, Gwen Chesley, Tina DiFranco, Dennis Edwards, Leslie Felton, Karen and Jim French, Glen Gaddy and Robin Kolodny, Edith Garrett, Carolyn Hayes, Anita Kassof and Josh Neiman, Bob and Nancy Kramer, Scot Kuo, Jennifer Mammen, Peg McCarthy, Cecilia Meisner, Roni Neff, Evelyn Owens Williams and Ronnie Williams, Sharon Pula, Amira Quraishi, Eraina Ridley, Kirsten Rook, Steve Sakamoto-Wengel, Susan Sandstrom and Margo Sipes, Dorothy Valakos, Colette Veassey-Cullors, Denise Weber, Shelly Wengel and Sky Woodward. There were other names, too, so please forgive us if we left off your name.

Sponsors of this event included The Wine Source, Maryland General Hospital, Wachovia Securities and Aaron Meisner, The Kornblatt Company, Struever Bros Eccles & Rouse, Inc., Barton - Cotton Strategic Response Marketing, Paul Norman Bessette Design and Illustration, Consolidated Insurance Center and Tom Campion, AEGON Direct Marketing Services, Scott Cook and Empire Milk Company and Bill White and Porters Supply Company, Smoke Free Maryland and Port Networks.

The proceeds of this event will go towards the Barbara J. Hawkes Scholarship Fund. Thanks to everyone who made this fabulous event possible!

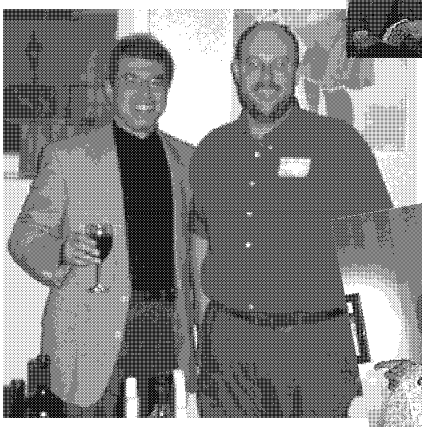
Margo Sipes, Peg McCarthy, Jean Schroeder



Evelyn Owens Williams, Edith Garrett

Sara Gannett and Ann, Hugh Bethel, Sharon Pula, Wendy Lane

Peg McCarthy, Margo Sipes, Pat Hillers



Scot Kuo, Glenn Gaddy

Kashawnta Stanley, Gregory Wilkins

Karin Berardo, Geoff Taylor, Gage Blair

ALUMNI NEWS

• **Andy Gabriel** is a senior at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, N.Y. **Lisa Gabriel** is a freshman at Trinity College in Hartford, CT. Time does fly!

• **Natalie Schmidt** was at the DBCC Park Avenue location for 2 years starting out in the 2-year-old class with Mary, Char and Jane and then in the 3/4's with Gwen and Virginia. She's now in 1st grade and doing great at school. She loves dolls, cats, swimming and acting in plays.

From Emily Hildebrandt, Walter, Natalie and Isaac Schmidt (Athens, GA)

• **Ben** and **Henry Moore** and their mother, Caroline, made a surprise visit toUniversity Center. Henry is 10 years and in the 4th Grade at Friends School. Henry loves to play football and X Box and his favorite subject is recess! His favorite book is entitled Sunwing by Kenneth Opel. He remembers the fire hose swings at Park Avenue and the playroom. His favorite thing about DBCC were the teachers, especially Jen and Petra. He still plays with DBCC alums Josh Potash, Alex Lowitt, Arnie Capute, Rachel Bolin and Julian Hampton. Ben is 7 years old and in the 1st Grade at Friends School. He likes to play with his friends and he likes to eat-especially Chinese food-"General Tso's Chicken with white rice." His favorite subject at school is Social Studies and his favorite book is Treasure Island. Ben remembers his DBCC classroom and squeezing his hand through the window to say goodbye to his mother. He also remembers squirting his classmates with water from a spray bottle on a hot day. Ben was asked if there was anything else he wanted people to know about him. He replied, "Whenever my room is messy I clean it up. I'm organized. I'm really good at puzzles."

Caroline said one of her favorite memories at DBCC was the Goodbye Window.

• **Charlotte Kennison**, age 8, ran her own bake sale with friends to save the Baltimore City Public Schools. She organized her friends who did all the baking and the children went door to door in their neighborhood and raised $111. Charlotte and friends delivered the money to the principal on Monday morning. *The Baltimore Messenger* wrote a cover story about Charlotte and her attempt to save the Baltimore City Schools in the March 4, 2004 issue. Her mom attributes her outgoing nature to Charlotte's DBCC experience!

• I thought you might enjoy seeing this picture of **Arianna Guillard**, now 8 years old, who attended DBCC from ages 2 - 4. Susan Sandstrom once commented about how Arianna loved to "twirl" around as she went through the Center. Somewhat quiet when she first started attending DBCC, we all watched her confidence develop during those early years. Now, Arianna has just finished playing the role of "Ariel" in an after-school program production of The Little Mermaid. The picture shows Arianna after the show and gives you an idea of how happy she was.

My thanks to DBCC for supporting Arianna in becoming who she is and encouraging her creativity. DBCC was a wonderful experience for our family! *From Gail Guillard*

Alice Ball
Age 4

The Little Old Lady Who Loved Cats

By Alexis Morgan

The little old lady lived in the country of New York City and she loved her cats Sillya and Wise Cat.

The Wise Cat was the one who was very wise and brave of everything and the Sillya cat was afraid of everything.

The cat that was scared had a nice juicy red apple and a juicy orange pear.

One day the little old lady decided to sew mittens and pockets for them in the winter to keep them warm and not cold.

After she was done the little old lady had a smile on her face. The End.

Childspeak

• **Robbie Miley**, age 4, was asking his mother questions about death. His mother told him, "When you die you live with God in a very peaceful and quiet place." Robbie said, "When I die I'm going to make some noise!"

• **Althea Laughon Worrell**, age 3, was outside and said to her teacher, "My hands are cold." Her teacher took off her own gloves and put them on Althea. "Oh, M's Virginia, I love you!" said Althea gratefully.

• **Jamie Detling-Edsall**, age 2, watched one of the teachers play her violin. Jamie thought a while and said, "Hey Susan, you didn't go to work today?"

"I *am* at work, Jamie. I work at DBCC."

"Oh," said Jamie incredulously.

• **Hallie Rockcress**, age 2, noticed her friend Ruby Elbert arriving one morning. Hallie, very loudly announced, "Yeah! It's Ruby time!"

• **Zachary Lane**, age 4, and friends were painting a chair for the March Magic silent auction. The teacher told him that grown ups would pay money for the chair and the money would go to his school. Zachary said, "I want this chair but I don't have any money. I'm like a slave with no money."

• **Beatrice Kennison**, age 4, told her mom in the car on the way to school that she didn't have to zip her coat any more "because now the cold goes back into the earth and the warm spreads out all over."

• **Shareef Jakes**, age 4, told his mother he didn't feel good. "What doesn't feel good?" she asked. "My feelings are hurt," he answered.

• **Hailey Blachly,** age 2, watched a child take off her sweater and noticed the child's hair was full of static. Hailey said, "You need mousse. Your hair is a mess!"

• The following is a conversation between **Robbie Miley**, age 4, and his mother:

Robbie: Mommy, can you turn the bathroom light on for me so I can use the potty? Mommy: Sure, who's your best friend? Robbie: Miss Robin (his teacher). Mommy: Hmm. Then maybe Miss Robin can turn the light on for you. Robbie: But Miss Robin isn't here. Mommy: Who makes your lunch every day? Robbie: You do.Mommy: Who takes you to school every day? Robbie: You do.

Mommy: Well if I do all these nice things for you, can't I be your special friend, too?

Robbie gives his mother a serious once over.

Robbie: Mmmmmm, maybe if you had hair like Miss Robin. Mommy: Do you think Miss Robin's hair is beautiful? Robbie:Yes I do. Mommy: Me too.

Are You Worried About 1st Grade?

I know we were. While we love DBCC for its emergent curriculum and emphasis on creative play-based learning, privately we were deathly scared that when it came time to enter into the structured environment of traditional education, our 5-year-old would not be prepared. Having been at DBCC full-time since he was 4 months old through kindergarten, there was no doubt our child was a product of the DBCC philosophy. So, when it came time to begin the process of applying for competitive admission into 1st Grade, we were nervous.

Not being sure what type of school we were seeking, we decided to apply liberally and broadly to what are considered the best private schools in Baltimore--some of which have hundreds of applicants for two dozen slots. For the uninitiated, the application process into the Independent Schools of Baltimore seems not far off from applying to the Ivy League. Our son was subjected to the Reading Readiness Test, the WJ III Compuscore and Profiles Program, tests of fine motor skills, socialization, stamina and such a barrage of other instruments that we eventually lost track.

The big day is March 1st when all the private schools mail out THE LETTER! We knew our little darling was phenomenally talented in art and music, tremendously advanced in math and science, socially precocious with the verbal skills of Peter Jennings and likely to be the next president of the United States, but would they? Well, while they may not have appreciated all that, they clearly saw something they liked, as we could not have been more pleased with the outcome. He was offered a slot in every school (5) we wanted him to attend. While understandably proud of our budding Einstein, we are also fully aware that we owe this in large part to the outstanding educational environment of DBCC.

Proof of principle is in learning just how he did on the battery of standardized tests to which he was subjected. Truth is, he didn't do particularly well at the rote skills such as word recognition, consonant sounds and vowel identification. But, as the tasks became more difficult and tested conceptual skills his performance skyrocketed, ultimately achieving the highest level possible. There was little doubt that our son will learn to read so the schools placed more emphasis on the advanced cognitive skills and social maturity.

We are, of course, proud parents. We are also grateful parents for the wonderful environment at DBCC, and perhaps, most importantly, we know that we are not the only parents of a current DBCC kindergartner who are having the same positive experience . . . .. *From a Proud Parent*

Ask Aliceanna . . .

Dear Aliceanna,

I worry about my child being bored. She is very smart and I'm not sure she is being challenged I want her to work to her fullest potential. Is this possible in a play-based curriculum?

Signed: Old School Dad

Dear O.S.D.

What a good question! Aliceanna hears some of the same concerns from other parents but it is important to understand that children learn the most through play. I can assure you that smart children in play-based curriculums are challenged even more effectively than in the so-called structured curriculum. Most definitely!

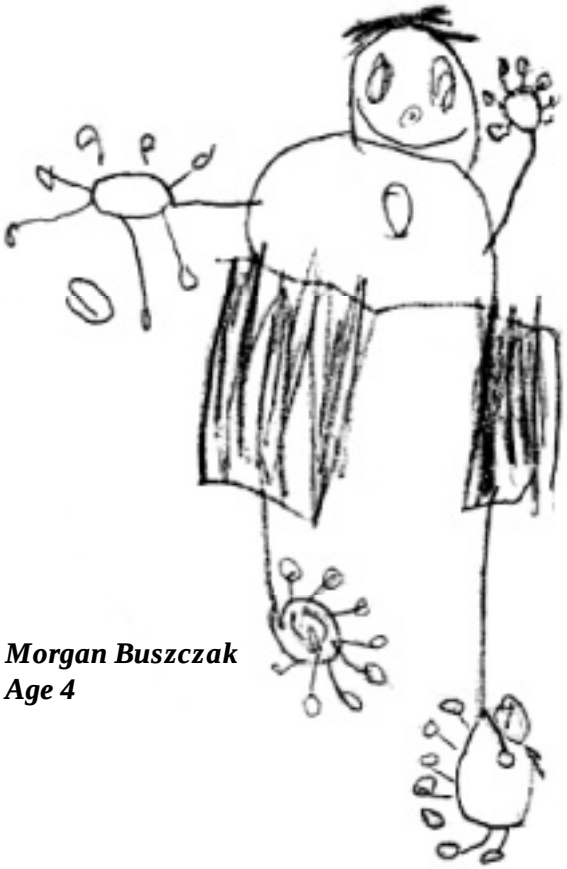
In today's society, children are very used to being entertained. The new toys, the videos, computers, television and often the so-called "educational" toys entertain children or are very passive in nature. You push a button and music plays or the toy is made to teach very isolated skills. In structured schools, work is presented to children in much the same way. Children are not so much entertained as given assignments to develop specific readiness skills. Thinking skills aren't taught until the 5th grade which, studies show, is when children from play-based curriculums excel way past the children from structured programs. This is because they've had lots of practice with critical thinking skills.

At DBCC we want the total child to develop and not simply isolated skills. In a play-based curriculum children self-select materials which are usually open-ended, self-correcting and / or creative. The materials require brain power and effort from the child. They are engaging and can be used on many different levels in many different ways depending on the developmental level of the child. For example, blocks are found in every classroom because children play with blocks in increasingly sophisticated ways as they go through identifiable stages of block play. Open ended play materials encourage brain growth and promote development of motor, intellectual, creative, emotional and social skills. With this solid foundation, the academic skills come easily and quickly. Academic skills are also learned in contex (so they are meaningful to the child) and are a part of the normal activities of the child's day. It is not necessary to deny children play time to learn isolated skills through "lessons."

Young children are ambitious and in a stimulating learning environment the challenges are many - especially within their peer group. Your child must learn to communicate clearly, to be flexible enough to accept another's viewpoint, to stand up for herself, to deal with her own or another child's strong feelings, to witness or experience exclusion from play, to resolve conflicts and to problem solve. This is a daily challenge for every child and, at first, most children require lots of assistance from the teacher. It is hard work! In fact, some children duck the challenge and teachers need to encourage and support social risk taking.

So, back to your original question -- is the bright child challenged in a play basec curriculum? Absolutely! In fact, the teacher has to be mindful that the challenges are not too great for the young child. Children who complain that they're bored are often the ones who are avoiding a challenge or who have discovered that the work "bored" gets a lot of reaction.

Aliceanna loves to hear from you! You can e-mail her at dbccuc@starpower.net or dbcckids@ earthlink.net or drop a note in either office.



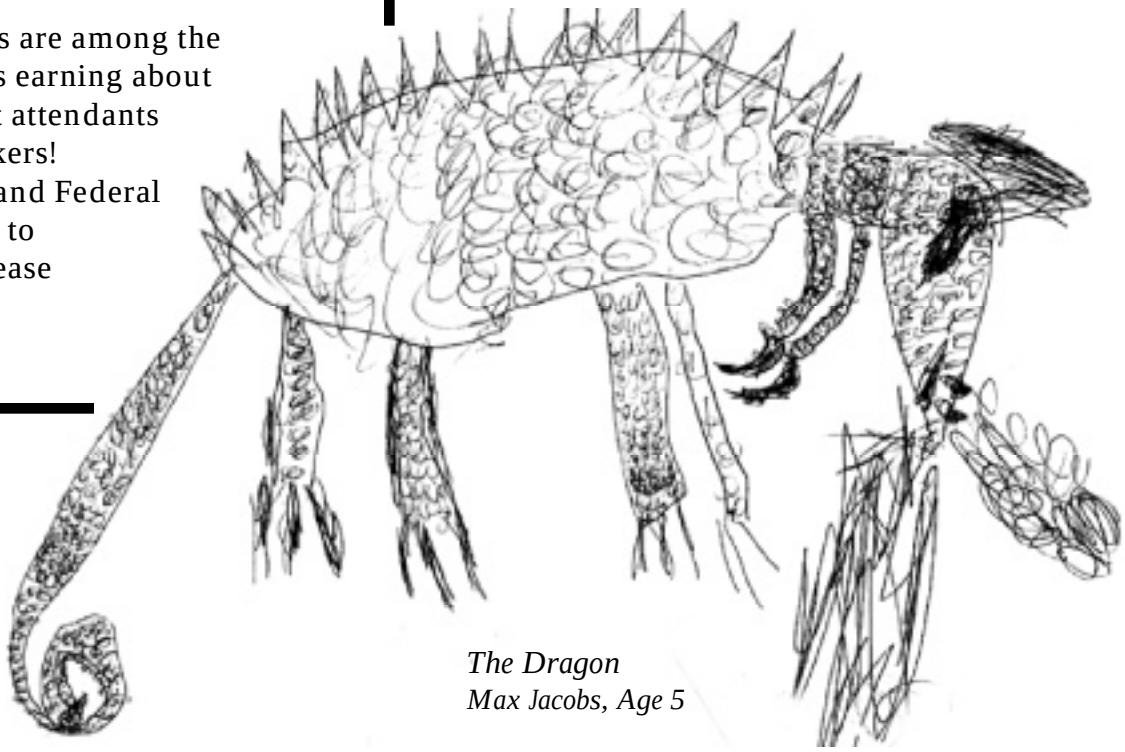
Morgan Buszczak
Age 4

"A child is not a vessel to be filled, but a lamp to be lit."
Hebrew Proverb

Worthy Wages for Child Care Providers!

Child care providers are among the lowest paid employees earning about as much as parking lot attendants and dry-cleaning workers!

Contact your State and Federal legislators to ask them to support efforts to increase compensation for child care providers!



The Dragon
Max Jacobs, Age 5

DBCC

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Childhood should be a journey, not a race.