

DBCC NEWS

DOWNTOWN BALTIMORE CHILD CARE, Inc.
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August 2009

TEACHING TODDLERS: *How I Became a Convert* By April Rejman

My first great learning experience was my weekly music class at Casey Park Elementary School. Mrs. Depalma created an environment unlike any other, and she did it by having her curriculum almost entirely based on play. I had no idea we were focusing on all the conventional subjects in school through play and music. We sang songs with funny lyrics that we later learned were words in French, Spanish, African, and Hebrew. Words like 'straw-ber-ry' and 'swimming' turned into counts of '1,2,3' and '1,2.' She always included interests of her students, but seamlessly branched into new worlds we didn't know existed.

Who knew that one could go from talking about

animals like a duck, cat, bird, and wolf, to hearing music from a faraway place called Russia where a boy named Peter had a great adventure with these same animals? I stayed heavily involved in music throughout middle and high school, so heavily to the point of being accepted into a music education college. My dream was to become Mrs. Depalma when I grew up, teaching first through fifth grade music.

But much to my surprise, after school ended I was full of self doubt about having my own classroom right away. I tried options like substituting and teaching lessons, but never felt like I was becoming a 'real' teacher, much less becoming one ready to have her own classroom. I had this anxiety until I found DBCC.

During my first year at DBCC, I was in a classroom with my dream age group of four to five year olds. I thought, "Finally, here's the opportunity I need to feel confident enough to build my dream curriculum." Six months later things changed and I was moved into a classroom full of toddlers! I wanted to be an elementary school teacher! I love five year olds mainly

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Jack Emmett Eli Sienna Mira Alex Mio

(Continued on page 2)



Please consider designating DBCC to receive your contribution to the United Way of Central Maryland, the Maryland Charity Campaign or the Combined Charity Campaign (#3537)!

TEACHING TODDLERS:

(Continued from page 1)

because of their conversational skills, and here were toddlers that could barely talk if at all. Any books or activities I picked out were completely ignored within one minute, as the children quickly got distracted and wanted to explore other things. Other activities had to be completely changed due to the sheer fact that these children were young and not at the developmental level needed for the task at hand.

Working with toddlers at first was incredibly frustrating for me both in and out of the classroom, but after a time I had the epiphany that there are many opportunities to teach these little people, and to teach endless concepts. My days then went from talking about animals to body parts to food to geography – whatever the child seemed to be interested in that moment. Granted, I started by doing most of the talking, but in a few months the children were responding back, repeating words and eventually adding their own. I had the chance to take children's interests and create a curriculum based upon them, which makes each week a unique week of play. Moreover, I find that through teaching I have much more opportunity to learn. I am reminded that if a child needs help washing their hands, that's a lesson in fine motor skills turning on the water and squeezing out soap. A child playing with a stuffed frog is an opportunity to identify body parts while building verbal skills, and to contrast and compare the child's body parts to the animal. Working with toddlers has especially forced me to observe in a way I never have before.

In such a short time in a toddler room, I have and continue to observe how children develop at sometimes amazingly different rates, and how it's possible to teach all children when one really looks and reads the signals they give about what to teach and how. I think that element of observation is both the most necessary and pleasing part of my job, and one that I will now carry into any educational setting.

As for including music, it's something that plays a big part of every single day in the toddler room. We sing a song when it's time to have everyone gather up in one spot. We sing a song to clean up. We play with instruments of all shapes and sizes, and march and dance around the room. The children not only love it, they learn from it. I can honestly say that in this first year working with them, I had some children singing before they were talking. Now these same children specifically request the songs they want to sing, then stand up and sing it themselves. It's something I

never would have seen unless put into a new and challenging environment like a room full of wacky, lovable toddlers. I am now finishing my first full year in the toddler room at DBCC, Park Avenue. It's an experience about which I've grumbled, laughed, and learned. I'm not sure I want to teach toddlers the rest of my career, but I can say that I love and respect these little guys for teaching me as much as they have.



Man with a Colored Hat by Claire Pupa, age 5

Activities That Build the Young Child's Brain

Suzanne Gellens, in her book, *Activities that Build the Young Child's Brain* (Early Childhood Association of Florida), lists the ideas that early childhood professionals have known for years and are now confirmed by recent brain research:

- Every situation is a learning experience
- Children need to be nurtured and have physical contact with other people
- Children learn through their interactions with people and the environment
- Play is an essential component to learning
- Hands-on activities result in life-long learned skills
- When a child has a choice in selecting its own activities, involvement is increased
- All children's senses need to be stimulated in an enriched atmosphere
- Activities presented to children should match their stage of development and their interest level
- There should be a balance between activity and rest; quiet learning and active learning
- Children need a loving, stress-free environment for optimal learning to occur.

© Exchange Everyday



Ask Aliceanna

Dear Aliceanna,

My son is going into kindergarten this fall and he does not listen to me! When I ask him to do something he simply stares at me. He doesn't say anything. He just stares and won't budge. I've been sending him to his room which he will do willingly but only after I've told him 100 times to go. He'll tell me he is ready and then come out of his room and do the same thing over again. Most of the problem surrounds his roughness with his little sister. Any suggestions?

Signed, The Referee

Dear Referee,

Sounds like a case of being Mother Deaf! Oh, this happens a lot with parents who rely too much on language. This age group, in particular, really wants to know that you are in control of them – no – *really* in control of them. They are starting to recognize the scope of their world and how dependent they are on their parents – which is why they test. The world can be a scary place to be for young children!

Your son will feel much more secure and you will have a whole lot more success if you stop relying so much on language and physically follow through.

Stop what you are doing; take your son by the hand, kneel down to his height and say, "You need to be more gentle with the baby."

If the behavior continues even for a little bit, kneel down and say, "Do you need help stopping yourself?"

If the behavior stops, tell him, "Thank you for stopping yourself! Good job!"

If he refuses to stop then I'd take him by the hand and say, "If it is too hard for you to stop yourself then I will help you." Take him to his room. "Please let me know when you are ready to stop yourself."

You must physically follow-through whenever you ask him to do something. That puts power behind your words and eventually he will stop fighting you!

Do you have a question for Aliceanna? You may email her at uc@dbcckids.org and put Ask Aliceanna in the subject line.



A Face by
Claire Pupa

😊 IT'S A BOY! 😊 IT'S A GIRL!

😊 Spice is a grandmother! **Charles "Charlie" Aaron Glassman** was born March 19, 2009 and weighed 6 lbs. 8 oz. Congratulations to Karen, Adam, Maggie Rose, Eliza and Spice!

😊 Director Evelyn Owens is a grandmother! **Taylor Harris** was born on March 30, 2009 and weighed 6 lbs. 14 oz. Congratulations to Evelyn, Ronnie, Tamika, Andre, Tyler, Shanika and cousin, Saleigha!

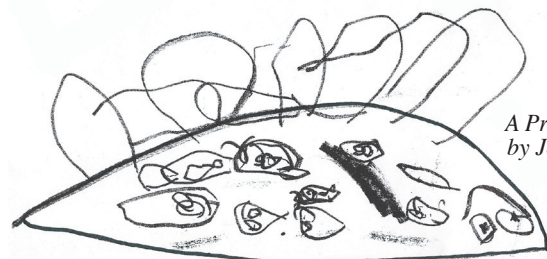
😊 Roisin is a big sister! **Hesper Winifred Casey** was born April 12, 2009 and weighed 10 lbs. 15 oz. Congratulations to Genevieve, Eoghan and Roisin.

😊 Teacher Krystle Beckett is a mommy! **Nysean Wesley Beckett** was born on March 5, 2009 and weighed 2 lbs. 11 oz. Congratulations to Krystle and Grandmother Jackie!

😊 Teacher Lynette is a mommy! **Ju-ziya Holton** was born on May 12, 2009 and weighed 6 lbs. 3 oz. Congratulations to Lynette, Davone, alum Jeremiah, Jayden and John!

😊 Gabriella is a big sister! **Vikram Fuller Roberts** was born on June 25, 2009 and weighed 7 lbs. 10 oz. Congratulations to Sushma, Miguel and Gabriella!

😊 Sienna is a big sister! **Sasha Gray Lindamood** was born on July 25, 2009 and weighed 3 lbs. 12 oz. Congratulations to Melisa, Kevin and Sienna!



A Pregnant Whale
by Jordan Brown,
age 4

THE WAY WE LIVE NOW

Kindergarten Cram

By PEGGY ORENSTEIN

About a year ago, I made the circuit of kindergartens in my town. At each stop, after the pitch by the principal and the obligatory exhibit of art projects only a mother (the student's own) could love, I asked the same question: "What is your policy on homework?"

And always, whether from the apple-cheeked teacher in the public school or the earnest administrator of the "child centered" private one, I was met with an eager nod. Oh, yes, each would explain: kindergartners are assigned homework every day.

Bzzzzzt. Wrong answer.

When I was a child, in the increasingly olden days, kindergarten was a place to play. We danced the hokey-pokey, swooned in suspense over Duck, Duck, Gray Duck (that's what Minnesotans stubbornly call Duck, Duck, Goose) and napped on our mats until the Wake-Up Fairy set us free.

No more. Instead of digging in sandboxes, today's kindergartners prepare for a life of multiple-choice boxes by plowing through standardized tests with cuddly names like Dibels (pronounced "dibbles"), a series of early-literacy measures administered to millions of kids; or toiling over reading curricula like Open Court — which features assessments every six weeks.

According to "Crisis in the Kindergarten," a report recently released by the Alliance for Childhood, a nonprofit research and advocacy group, all that testing is wasted: it neither predicts nor improves young children's educational outcomes. More disturbing, along with other academic demands, like assigning homework to 5-year-olds, it is crowding out the one thing that truly is vital to their future success: play.

A survey of 254 teachers in New York and Los Angeles the group commissioned found that kindergartners spent two to three hours a day being instructed and tested in reading and math. They spent less than 30 minutes playing. "Play at age 5 is of great importance not just to intellectual but emotional, psychological social and spiritual development," says Edward Miller, the report's co-author. Play — especially the let's-pretend, dramatic sort — is how kids develop higher-level

thinking, hone their language and social skills, cultivate empathy. It also reduces stress, and that's a word that should not have to be used in the same sentence as "kindergartner" in the first place.

I came late to motherhood, so I had plenty of time to ponder friends' mania for souped-up childhood learning. How was it that the same couples who piously proclaimed that 3-year-old Junior was not "developmentally ready" to use the potty were drilling him on flashcards? What was the rush? Did that better prepare kids to learn? How did 5 become the new 7, anyway?

There's no single reason The No Child Left Behind Act, with its insistence that what cannot be quantified cannot be improved, plays a role. But so do parents who want to build a better child. There is also what marketers refer to as KGOY — Kids Getting Older Younger — their explanation for why 3-year-olds now play with toys that were initially intended for middle-schoolers. (Since adults are staying younger older — 50 is the new 30! — our children may soon surpass us in age.)

Regardless of the cause, Miller says, accelerating kindergarten is unnecessary: any early advantage fades by fourth grade. "It makes a parent proud to see a child learn to read at age 4, but in terms of what's really best for the kid, it makes no difference." For at-risk kids, pushing too soon may backfire. The longitudinal High/Scope Preschool Curriculum Comparison Study followed 68 such children, who were divided between instruction- and play-based classrooms. While everyone's I.Q. scores initially rose, by age 15, the former group's academic achievement plummeted. They were more likely to exhibit emotional problems and spent more time in special education. "Drill and kill," indeed.

Thinkers like Daniel Pink have proposed that this country's continued viability hinges on what is known as the "imagination economy": qualities like versatility, creativity, vision — and playfulness — that cannot be outsourced. It's a compelling argument to apply here, though a bit disheartening too: must we append the word "economy" to everything to legitimize it? Isn't

cultivating imagination an inherent good? I would hate to see children's creativity subject to the same parental anxiety that has stoked the sales of Baby Einstein DVDs.

Jean Piaget famously referred to "the American question," which arose when he lectured in this country: how, his audiences wanted to know, could a child's development be sped up? The better question may be: Why are we so hellbent on doing so?

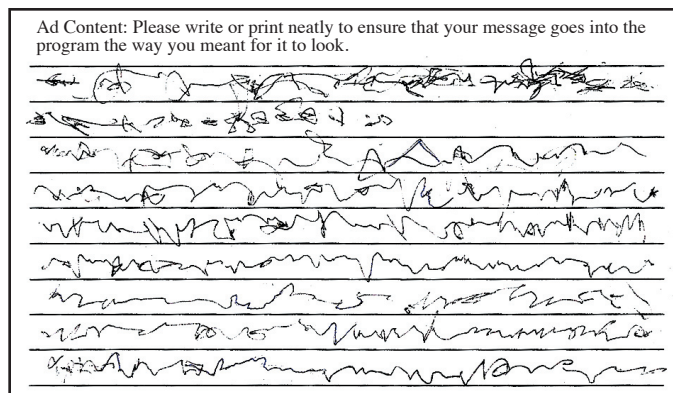
Maybe the current economic retrenchment will trigger a new perspective on early education, something similar to the movement toward local, sustainable, organic food. Call it Slow Schools. After all, part of what got us into this mess was valuing achievement, speed and results over ethics, thoughtfulness and responsibility. Then again, parents may glean the opposite lesson, believing their kids need to be pushed even harder in order to stay competitive in a shrinking job market.

I wonder how far I'm willing to go in my commitment to the cause: would I embrace the example of Finland — whose students consistently come out on top in international assessments — and delay formal reading instruction until age 7? Could I stick with that position when other second graders were gobbling up "War and Peace" — or at least the third Harry Potter book?

In the end, the school I found for my daughter holds off on homework until fourth grade. (Though a flotilla of research shows homework confers no benefit — enhancing neither retention nor study habits — until middle school.) It's a start. A few days ago, though, I caught her concocting a pretend math worksheet. "All the other kids have homework," she complained with a sigh. "I wish I could have some, too."

New York Times, May 3, 2009

Thank you Erin Roth for passing this article on to DBCC.



Eli Cole, age 4, carefully filled out this form. It says "No dinosaurs in the house."

Grandma Says THEY SHOULD KNOW BETTER

I couldn't help but smile recently when I heard President Obama commenting on the activities of corporate CEOs who had created havoc and then asked for help. "They should know better," he said sternly, sounding so much like a firm and frustrated parent.

My thoughts went in several directions. His words echoed those I hear from so many parents, who have told their children how to behave and then expect that they will follow those instructions.

So many things prevent young children from behaving in expected ways: (1) Immature mental processes that do not yet comprehend the lessons; (2) Developed self control that prevents them from doing that which is wrong, yet attractive; and perhaps more importantly, (3) Failure of parents to help children see the sense in acting in certain ways.

This is what good guidance is--helping children come to understand why some choices are better than others, for them, and for others. Saying the same thing a time or two does not mean the lesson is complete, though most parents think that should be it. This assumption means we fail to consider the ways that young children learn.

They learn slowly, by consistent repetition of experiences that have some meaning for them. They don't learn so much through words as they do through actions, whether those actions are watching the behavior of someone else--there's the parent's example to consider--or through experiencing the results of behaviors.

All of this takes time, and nobody knows just how long that will be. Even knowing what the appropriate behaviors are, it takes even longer for self-control to kick in. When adults are around, their presence is often a reminder of the teaching. But out of sight, children are often tempted to do what feels good, right or not.

This faulty self-control can continue for many years, as the parents of many adolescents can affirm.

In addition, many parents assume that some things are so self-evident that they should just be understood implicitly. It may seem this way to you, maybe, with years of living in the world under your belt.

For a young child who is continually encountering new situations, there is no built-in rulebook. We can't just assume that they will know better. Without explicit, careful teaching, they will not.

As we teach general guidelines of behavior that is right or wrong, eventually children should be able to apply those guidelines to the specific situations they encounter. But the process is long.

Should those CEOs have known better? Given their years on the earth, yes. But who knows how they were taught as they went? I mean no judgment on the parenting they received. I use the example only to help today's parents consider what they are teaching and how. And why.

With children, we have to be careful when we sigh, "They should know better." Instead, we should contemplate where our children are in the process of learning appropriate actions and self-control.

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25th Anniversary Bash!

The DBCC 25th Anniversary Celebrations was a huge success! Silo Point was an beautiful venue – high ceilings and glass walls – and the Sky Lounge was unbelievable, with sweeping views of Baltimore! So many people showed up including former students, parents and board members, old friends and current families and board members! The extra special treats were seeing long time friend, Bea Badders and alumni Alice Arcieri and her parents, Joe Arcieri and Janice MacGregor! Everyone had a wonderful time!

The Delta Connection Trio performed the excellent music and the Classic Catering People provided the tasty food. The Wine Source donated the delicious wine and Radebaugh Florist and Greenhouses decorated the place with lovely flowers. Thanks to Loane Bros. Party Rentals and Table Toppers as well! Other sponsors included ACS International Schools and Kirk Seese for his beautiful custom murals (www.bbmurals.com).

Maggie de Cuevas was the chair for this event and did a fantastic job! Thank you, Maggie! DBCC is so appreciative of the work involved pulling everything together for an event of this scope. PNC Grow Up Great partners Pat Chambers and Laura Rutherford provided lots of support as well.

DBCC's board members were extremely helpful in soliciting auction items and sponsors. DBCC parents brought in items for the class baskets which were a huge hit at the silent auction. Special thanks to the teachers, staff, and families for all their help!

Part of the 25th Anniversary Celebration was to honor those staff members who have been a part of DBCC for 20 or more years. They include Gwen Chesley, Edith Garrett, Evelyn Owens, Margo Sipes, Gina Robertson, Susan Sandstrom, Anthony Wilkins and Gregory Wilkins.



Maggie de Cuevas, Tricia Rubacky and Margo Sipes



*Bees and a Beehive
by Jocelyn Smith and Julia Mammen, ages 5*

CHILDSPEAK

- Alum, **Atlas Pyke**, was at University Center picking up his sister, Ramona. Atlas is going into 3rd Grade and said his favorite number is still 4 because that was the room he was in with his best teacher, Ms. Lorien!

- The teacher was giving **Eli Texter**, age 4, a big hug. "Oh, you're like a big piece of chocolate," cooed the teacher. Eli pushed away and said, "I can't be chocolate. I'm white." The teacher said, "Well, there is such a thing as white chocolate." "Oh, that's right," agreed Eli.

- **Chandler Wood**, age 3, was sitting on the teacher's lap. One teacher said to another teacher, "I have to use the rest room."

"Rest room?" said Chandler.

The teacher explained that there are lots of names for the bathroom.

"Oh, Ms Judy is going to sleep on the toilet" announced Chandler.

- The teacher asked **Nell O'Connell-During**, age 3, to wipe her nose.

"Which one do you want me to wipe?" asked Nell.

- The director read a book to Room 4. The children begged for another book but the director said, "I only bought one special book from home to read to you today."

Sienna Lindamood, age 3, said, "Is the office your home?"

ALUMNI NEWS

DBCC received some wonderful emails from past parents and students. Keep those emails and pictures coming! We love to hear from you!

*** First we heard from *Nancy Kassam-Adams*:**

We are all well. The “kids” are 24 and 27 (!) and both are living and working in Philly - nice to have them nearby. I think you know that Rabiya’s a teacher? She’s teaching 7th and 8th grade social studies in a public school in Philadelphia. Rahim finished at Brown last year and is liking his work at an organization that tracks quality and prices for health care technology.

Shahir and I are both 50 this year and finding ways to celebrate -- his is most dramatic - climbing Kilimanjaro this summer. Shahir has wanted to do Kilimanjaro since childhood (he grew up in East Africa). It’s a challenging hike at high altitude, but not a technical climb. The kids are going with him. I am opting for a 65 mile walk in Ireland instead - I like knowing that there is a nice bed and shower (and perhaps a pub) at the end of each day. :)

*** We were so glad to hear from long ago parent and DBCC friend, *Hollie Walkley*:**

I’m living in York PA, fundraising for a leadership training nonprofit. It’s quiet here in York...

Julian owns (and is always working on) an old house in Hampden. He graduated from Temple University with a degree in Criminal Justice and works for Nationwide as a personal injury adjuster. The house keeps him very busy and he has a long-term girlfriend who is quite nice.

Jeff graduated from West Virginia University with a civil engineering degree, works for his dad’s company and has just begun Hopkins’ masters program in civil engineering. He is living with Julian and also has a very nice girlfriend.

Ryan is on the 5-year plan at Towson, plays for the University’s Rugby club, and is living with a group of rugby players in a house in Towson. He’s a business major and is interested in finance. I’m thinking maybe he should go right for the graduate degree given the current economic state and outlook for finance people though they will one day be in demand, I suppose.

Hollie Walkley

*** What fun to hear from alum, *Rachel Emmel*!**
Hi DBCC!!!

Do you remember me from a LONG time ago?? My brother David and I went there in the mid-late 80’s! Well DBCC came up in conversation and I went on a mission to find your website. I saw on the newsletter that you are looking for old alums and thought I should provide an update! From DBCC we both went to St. Pauls and now...

My brother David is living in Austin, TX. He graduated from UT Austin and is working at a hedge fund right now. He loves his job but misses Baltimore and wants to come back soon!

I went to Rice University and then to University of Maryland- college park. I studied bioengineering in undergrad and mechanical engineering for my masters degree. I’ll be working for General Dynamics as a senior systems engineer starting in June which will

be exciting. Right now, I have a bit of time between graduate school and “the real world” so I have been actively working for a few different dog rescue organizations in the city including BARCS and SKD rescue. It’s such rewarding work but I am told daily by my boyfriend that I am not allowed to bring any more dogs home!!! (We have 2 already...)

Anyway, I am attaching a picture of me and David at his graduation last spring. Maybe it will spark some memories :-)

I hope all is well with you guys at DBCC!! I still dream about the broccoli with cheese sauce we used to get for lunch occasionally there!!

Rachel Emmel



Rachel and
David Emmel

*** We also received email from *Emily Hunt* who filled us in on her son, *Justin Nethercut*.**

Justin is in his second year at Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts. It’s an unusual place—a liberal arts school without majors or grades or even departments that allows self-directed students to pursue their interests deeply. After some initial distribution requirements, students design increasingly complex programs of study, guided by committees of faculty and their own passions. Justin is interested in studying photography and video, especially the role it can play in social justice movements, and especially in Latin America. He wrestles with balancing his artistic impulses with his need to persuade.

When I think about it, the fact that DBCC allowed him to choose his own activities and work on play projects until whatever need he had was satisfied was probably a big force in his becoming the kind of learner that he is today.

While we miss having him in our daily lives, we are really enjoying watching him respond to the world that is opening before him.

I’ve attached a recent photo. That cute little boy is now north of 6 feet.

Emily



Justin Nethercut



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a journey, not a race.*