

PARENT COMMUNICATION IS CORE

Special Area: Administration

Written by: Diane Henry Leipzig, Ph.D.; Village Green Day School at Great Falls

I. ABSTRACT

This presentation describes one preschool's efforts to communicate the content and relevance of the Core Knowledge Preschool Sequence to its parent population. Information about Core suffused a multitude of parent written communications and parent events, and served as the backdrop for its parenting education program. Goals went beyond helping parents gain a basic understanding about the Core Preschool Sequence to helping them reevaluate their beliefs about knowledge, learning, and the purposes of preschool education. A central focus was providing multiple opportunities for parents to learn home activities to do with their children designed to support and supplement their education in Core.

II. OVERVIEW

- A. Domains explicitly addressed include:
 - 1. Autonomy & Social Skills
 - 2. Oral Language
 - 3. Emerging Literacy
 - 4. Nursery Rhymes, Poems, Songs & Fingerplays
 - 5. Reading & Storytelling
 - 6. Mathematical Reasoning
 - 7. Scientific Reasoning

- B. Administrative issues to be addressed include:
 - 1. Sustaining Core Knowledge
 - 2. Monitoring Progress: Assessment & Evaluation
 - 3. Maximizing Parent & Community Resources

III. RESOURCES

- A. Bowman, Barbara T., Donovan, Suzanne, & Burns, M. Susan (Eds.) (2000). *Eager to Learn: Educating our Preschoolers*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- B. Burns, M. Susan, Griffin, Peg, and Snow, Catherine E. (Eds.) (1999). *Starting Out Right: A Guide to Promoting Children's Reading Success*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- C. Hart, Betty, and Risley, Todd R. (1995). *Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.
- D. Ilg, Frances L., Ames, Louise Bates, & Baker, Sidney M.. (1992). *Child Behavior: The Classic Childcare Manual from the Gesell Institute of Human Development, Revised Edition*. New York: Harper Paperbacks.
- E. International Reading Association (IRA) and National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). (1998). *Learning to Read and Write:*

Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Young Children—A Joint Position Statement of the IRA and NAEYC. Washington, DC.

- F. NASBE Task Force on Early Childhood Education. (1988). *Right from the Start: The Report of the NASBE Task Force on Early Childhood Education.* Alexandria, VA: National Association of State Boards of Education.

IV. PRESENTATION OUTLINE

- A. Setting the Stage: Beliefs Behind Core Knowledge
1. Use staff training to set the stage for parent communication. Provide teachers with basic theoretical underpinnings they can understand and relate to parents.
 2. Use Back to School Nights to confront parents' beliefs about preschool. Challenge parents' basic assumptions about the nature of learning and knowledge, and the functions of a preschool education.
 3. Use first newsletters to communicate the importance of the parents' role in the educational process.
- B. Assembling the Right Tools: Creating Vehicles for Parent Communication
1. Create monthly parent newsletters that communicate the Core Knowledge content addressed through classroom instruction.
 2. Modify formal assessments to present children's growth on Core objectives in parent-friendly ways.
 3. Develop informal assessment forms that enable teachers to collect anecdotal data likely to be shared with parents on a regular basis.
 4. Use review techniques at the end of the day to increase children's ability to communicate about the curriculum with their parents.
- C. Planning Effective Events: Using Parent Education events to Influence Parents' Ability to Support Children's Development
1. Snuggle Up and Read Night
 - a. Parent/child centers that allow parents to practice a variety of activities they can use at home to promote development through singing, reading, writing, and exploring letters with their children
 - b. Bedtime stories that serve as read-aloud demonstrations and discussions of book choice for preschoolers
 2. Discover Math & Science Night
 - a. Parent/child centers that allow parents to practice a variety of activities they can use at home to promote development through exploring number, natural phenomena, natural laws, and their own role in the world
 - b. Whole-group investigations that serve as demonstrations and sparks for parent/child math- or science-related conversation
 3. Ages & Stages and Preschool Pathways Night
 - a. Provide basic information about child development
 - b. Describe rationale for the placements we make: importance of autonomy & social skills and work habits in finding the right placement for children; sequence from Foundation level to Level I, Level II, and K; and description of the differentiation of instruction

that that will result from ratcheting up or down the academic aspects of the curriculum as needed by individuals.

4. Core and Carrie: Teaching Self Control at School and at Home
 - a. Parenting advice from a licensed psychologist on promoting self-control
 - b. Discussion of how teachers promote self-control at school through the Autonomy & Social Skills curriculum
 - c. Help parents learn how to use Stop and Think, and aspect of Autonomy & Social Skills, at home
- D. Providing Informative Handouts: Using Written Newsletters to Educate Parents on a Variety of Core Domains
 1. Monthly administrator columns in school newsletter on Core Knowledge
 2. Handouts at events that provide basic information about the various aspects of development

V. SAMPLE HANDOUTS/WORKSHEETS

- A. 5 S's of Core (Staff Training & Back to School Night)
- B. Theorists Go to Preschool (Staff Training)
- C. Two Kinds of Constructivists (Staff Training)
- D. The Central Paradox of Core Knowledge (Staff Training)
- E. Sample Chalktalk: Monthly Classroom Newsletter (2 pages, front and back)
- F. Informal Assessment forms: Status of the Class, Status of the Class By Domain, and Anecdotal Record Form
- G. Administrator Column for Appletalk: Literacy Development

VI. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Core Knowledge Foundation (1997). Core Knowledge Preschool Sequence. Charlottesville, VA: Core Knowledge Foundation.

THE 5 S's of CORE

SOLID Comprehensive
Addresses all facets of development

The flip side? Narrowly academic or play-oriented: unbalanced.

SPECIFIC Identifies explicit critical skills
Names various objectives to be attained

The flip side? General topics or themes, but no goals.

SEQUENCED Progresses from basic to challenging
Build new knowledge and skills based on what they have already learned.

The flip side? Repetition from year to year.

SHARED Explicitly specifies competencies and knowledge that all children should share
Ensures access to an excellent and fair education for all.

The flip side? Teach the "ready" and leave the rest behind.

And we at Village Green add, it is...

SCAFFOLDED Provide just the right level of support
Meet individual children where they are
Assess where they were and where they're going next.
Propel their development along

The flip side? Teach to the "middle"—cast out the net and be happy if you get anyone to bite.

THEORISTS GO TO PRESCHOOL

PIAGET believed children **construct knowledge** by exploring the physical world, they don't just receive transmitted information. Through play, a child would **naturally mature** through a predetermined set of **stages**.

This concept was used to support a **readiness perspective** on academics in preschool—**instruction was futile** (even harmful) until children became **“ready.”**

VYGOTSKY also believed children constructed their own knowledge about the world, but within an influential social context. He emphasized the **role of knowledgeable others** (peers, teachers) in development.

Good teachers plan experiences that stretch a child into just-unfamiliar-enough territory.

What is SCAFFOLDING, then?

Teachers identify where an individual student is *and* where he or she could be with teacher support. The distance between these two points is where instruction should take place.

Interacting with adults **helps children experience a new level of understanding than they exhibit on their own.**

Thus, teachers **compel development** toward this new level.

TWO KINDS OF CONSTRUCTIVISTS

Imagine constructing a wall alone. It can only be as high as you can reach. Wait until you grow taller and you can make the wall taller, too.

The readiness perspective.

That's Piaget.



Now imagine constructing a wall with the help of expert bricklayers. You lay the bricks yourself, but they give you the right materials and construction advice, and they help you reach higher than you ever could alone.

The scaffolding approach.

That's Vygotsky.



“The only good kind of instruction is that which marches ahead of development and leads it; it must be aimed not so much at the ripe as at the ripening functions.”

—Vygotsky

THE CENTRAL PARADOX OF CORE KNOWLEDGE

Every child is
a unique individual
with particular strengths
and particular weaknesses
They all come in with different skills.
Meet them where they are.

(OK, Diane, so you're saying all 3-year-olds are different.)

VS.

Every child should be working towards
the same high standards
Use this list of specific behaviors
all 3-year-olds should demonstrate.
Teach them all to get there.

(OK, Diane, so you're saying all 3-year-olds should be able to do the same things by the end of the year?)



No paradox here.

Respond to the needs of the individual...you'll help them grow towards those high expectations you hold for everyone.

Will they all be competent in all objectives by the end of the year? Of course not.

But it won't be because you didn't expect them to be.

VILLAGE GREEN DAY SCHOOL LEVEL I MONTHLY PLAN

CLASS & TEACHERS: MUNCHKINS 3D3A Mrs. Shapiro and Mrs. Reynolds	CHARACTER TRAIT: FRIENDSHIP	THEME: Welcome to School! Getting to Know You. "ME"		
SEPTEMBER 2006 CHALK TALK				
MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
			FOLLOW THE YELLOW BRICK ROAD!	1
4 <i>Labor Day</i>	5 HOME VISITS	6 HOME VISITS	7	8
11 WELCOME MUNCHKINS ORIENTATION DAY <i>Patriot Day</i>	12 hand print painting	13 Do you see what I <u>see</u>? eye spy collage	14	15
18 paper bag people puppets	19 the nose knows! <u>smell</u> Bring something to sniff!	20 What do you <u>hear</u>? listening ears	21	22
25 The Three Little Pigs	26 sticky glue smooth soft rough bumpy <u>touch</u> textures Parents Remember! BACK TO SCHOOL NIGHT 7:30-9:00 PM	27 apples Happy Birthday Johnny Appleseed!	28	29 <u>SPECIAL SHARE</u> 9/25 Natalie 9/26 Hayley 9/27 Ava

— PLEASE TURN OVER —

VILLAGE GREEN DAY SCHOOL STATUS OF THE CLASS OBSERVATION

Class _____

Date _____

Objective observed _____

Name _____	Name _____	Name _____	Name _____
Name _____	Name _____	Name _____	Name _____
Name _____	Name _____	Name _____	Name _____
Name _____	Name _____	Name _____	Name _____
Name _____	Name _____	Name _____	Name _____

**VILLAGE GREEN DAY SCHOOL
ANECDOTAL RECORD
BY DOMAIN**

NAME _____

DATE _____

(CIRCLE ONE)

<p>SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL/PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT: Movement & Coordination Autonomy & Social Skills Work Habits Music Visual Arts</p> <p>LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT: Oral Language Nursery Rhymes, Poems, Fingerplays, & Songs Storybook Reading & Storytelling Emerging Literacy Skills in Reading & Writing</p> <p>COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT: Mathematical Reasoning Orientation in Time Orientation in Space Scientific Reasoning</p>	<p>NOTES:</p>
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FROM DIANE'S DESK: OCTOBER 2006 APPLE TALK COLUMN

In anticipation of *Snuggle Up and Read Night*, a family celebration of literacy development, I thought it might be helpful to relate some basic information about learning to read that you might not know. Parents sometimes assume that learning to read is a straightforward process: learn the sounds (phonics), sound out words (decoding), and viola! You're reading. If you hold this view you might be thinking, my child knows her sounds, so why doesn't she know how to read yet? (And why hasn't Village Green taught her?) The answer is that it's not that straightforward, because successful reading requires the integration of multiple skills, many of which develop over multiple years. In fact, successful reading relies not only on phonics (which we do teach directly), but on the development of phonemic awareness, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, concepts of print, and perhaps most important, reading motivation.

Phonemic awareness is the understanding that the words we say are made up of sounds. This understanding leads to the ability to play with the sounds in words (can you say bat without the "b" sound? Can you make a new word by adding a sound to the end of "car"?) This understanding is prerequisite to the ability to break down written words into their sounds when decoding later on. But children must begin by doing this with spoken words, which is why nursery rhymes, songs, poems and fingerplays play such a large role in the Core Knowledge curriculum. Hearing and supplying rhyming words, whether real or nonsense, provides children with phonemic awareness practice. To supply the missing word in the rhyme "Humpty Dumpty had a great ____," children unknowingly are segmenting the sound "w" from "all," replacing it with "f" and then blending it with "all" to make "fall"—yet all of this happens without much effort because rhyming is fun and automatic when practiced often.

Vocabulary acquisition is essential to becoming a good reader. Vocabulary also begins as an oral skill: the ability to understand words in the context of meaningful speech. Oral language plays a very large role in our curriculum; you may have noted that our Chalktalks list the "Words We'll Hear." Using the Core Knowledge "Language of Instruction," teachers make a concerted effort to introduce content-rich vocabulary words into classroom conversations, as well as encourage children to use more complex and descriptive words in their own speech. A child may bite into a cracker and declare it tastes "good," but with a series of questions, teachers may help him label it "salty," "crunchy," or even "delicious." The more words a child can understand and use verbally, the more successfully that child will be able to comprehend what she's reading in years to come ("One type of fish with razor-sharp teeth is the barr... Oh I know that! The barracuda!")

Good **comprehension** is vital to later reading success. This is the bedrock of the Reading and Storytelling portion of our curriculum. Listening to stories read (or said) aloud allows children to internalize the structures that hold together narratives, from a simple appreciation of beginning, middle, and end, to a more complex understanding of story elements like character, setting, plot, problem, and solution. And listening to books helps children become exposed to the rhythms and vocabulary of stories, from "once upon a time" to the use of repetition for emphasis. The ability to make good predictions when reading is a sign that comprehension is well in hand. Besides the whole text level, comprehension also happens at the word level; hence, vocabulary words are also discussed in the context of reading.

Fluency is the ability to read a text accurately and quickly. While most of our students do not yet read independently, all of our students are building an appreciation of fluency when they hear stories that are read with phrasing and expression. Readers who are weak in fluency read slowly, word by word, focusing on decoding words instead of comprehending meaning. So when your child memorizes a nursery rhyme or a simple book and "reads" it to you (aspects of the Emergent Reading aspect of our curriculum), please don't point out that he's not really reading, because he is demonstrating fluency, a very real component of later reading ability. In some ways, it is more real than the halting butchery of the language that occurs when a new reader attempts to sound out every word on a page!

Concepts of print are those somewhat random conventions that govern how we read: from left to right, from top to down, from front to back, etc. When children explore books independently in the classroom, they are deepening their understandings of these concepts of print, even if they can't "read" the text yet. Children whose writing attempts are encouraged (through our Emergent Writing curriculum) also develop an understanding of the many purposes and forms of print (from lists to captions to notes) and develop understandings of concepts such as "word," "sentence," and "letter," because they have had these aspects of the text pointed out to them so often.

Finally, the best readers coming out of kindergarten will not necessarily be the best readers as adults. Research has found that the critical factor in lifelong success is **reading motivation**. Do you read to your child each day? And when you do, is it a warm, nurturing experience? At Village Green we provide a number of experiences to make reading and writing fun and fulfilling. Our teachers read with passion and humor, they choose activities that help children extend their enjoyment of a story beyond Circle Time, and they choose books recommended by the Core Knowledge curriculum that are just plain good, written by a variety of traditional as well as modern authors.

So before you ask your child's teacher when she's going to learn to read, ask yourself, how much is she learning about reading every day in her classroom already? The answer might surprise you!