



From the Playroom

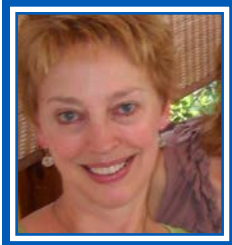
MAY 2012 • A PUBLICATION OF CHILDREN'S INSTITUTE INC.
A NOT-FOR-PROFIT AGENCY • COPYRIGHT ©2012

Creating Space to Grow...

Every spring many of us may feel the urge to de-clutter. Creating space in our lives, whether at home or at work, allows for new energy, a revitalization of sorts. It allows us to reflect upon our past accomplishments while looking forward to new opportunities and experiences. Some of us, particularly those of us in the northern, colder states, pack away the bulky winter clothing and make room in our closets for our spring and summer wardrobe. Our gardens, neglected during the winter months, beckon us to remove debris in an effort to encourage new growth. Spring is indeed a time to create spaces where growing and stretching are encouraged.

This spring edition of *From the Playroom* focuses on how Primary Project creates space in a variety of growth-producing ways. You will read how one seasoned Primary Project supervisor shares how the program creates space and gives her early connections to parents. Another contributor shows the impact of Primary Project in shaping a journey of encouragement. Still others share reflections of change and tidbits of knowledge that help them stretch their thinking and practices in a variety of different Primary Project roles. In other words...never stop growing.

An Even Greater Advantage



We often think of school mental health professionals' role in Primary Project as being fairly straightforward and well defined. Rather than provide direct services to students, we act as the supervisors to the child associates, who then work directly with the children in the playroom. As school social workers (school psychologists or counselors) we continue to work directly with the high need students in our buildings. The child associates are able to meet the needs of a larger segment of the population, those students who we identify as having mild to moderate school adjustment problems. The result is that more students are serviced, and hopefully more serious social/emotional problems are less likely to surface down the road.



As a supervisor for almost 20 years now, I am convinced that there is an even greater advantage to this expanded role of the mental health professional. I believe that it is my early contact with parents, an essential part of my role in Primary Project, which has an equal or greater impact. In my building, Primary Project is an integral part of our early intervention services for Kindergarten and First grade students. Built into the structure of our program is the opportunity for parents to attend both an initial and final conference with the mental health professional and the child associate. It is in these meetings with parents (often their first exposure to school personnel other than their child's teacher), that a foundation is first laid. In these conferences I have the opportunity to hear parents' worries, concerns, and hopes for their child. We have the chance to discuss how issues at home might be impacting a child's behavior in school, and we talk about changes that could be helpful. We are building a foundation of trust. This trust will help to facilitate healthy communication between the school and the parents in the years to come. It also will prove beneficial when in a few years, that parent needs help with a new concern, and remembers the early experience they had with Primary Project. I cannot begin to count the number of families that I have "revisited" over the years, families I originally met in that Primary Project conference. I am convinced that my impact as a school social worker has been greatly enhanced as a result of my involvement with this wonderful program!

*—Mary Carol Dearing, LCSW-R, RPT-S
Country Parkway Elementary
Williamsville, NY*

Ideas from Supervisors

During my tenure, the aspect of Primary Project that has resonated with me the most has been the notion of “play being the work of children.” Whether it be with school adjustment, trauma, or loss – children benefit from the opportunity to play. Over the course of a school year, children demonstrate growth in their confidence, their social skills, and their ability to cope and problem-solve different situations which had previously made them feel uncomfortable.

Given our roles in my building, and the many responsibilities each of us has, it is comforting to know that the needs of our children are being responded to so thoroughly via Primary Project. The commitment our child associates make to each child is incredible; their work allows us to respond to 100+ kids each school year, and in doing so we are able to extend our “reach” across the building!

–John Miles, Fairport, NY

I have found the “ACT” acronym of limit setting in the playroom (from Garry Landreth’s work) to be very helpful. A = Acknowledge what the child wants; C = Communicate the limit; and T = Tell/target what the alternative is. Therefore, “child-directed” play and necessary limit-setting can very happily coexist.

–Ann Poelma, Fairport, NY



Spotlight: Linda Beaty-Gladney



Linda proudly graduates this spring with her masters in social work, all the while working first as a child associate, and then as a senior child associate. We interviewed Linda to reflect upon her years with Primary Project and her plans for continuous growth.

“Primary Project shaped my professional life.” Back in 1991, it was Linda’s sister who encouraged her to apply for the child associate position. At that time, her sister was both a parent liaison and a child associate in the Rochester City School District. She said, “Linda, children are always at your house and you’re naturally good with them.” So with that little bit of encouragement, Linda applied, was hired, and a professional life of encouraging young children began.

Linda clearly credits words of encouragement from Audrey Lewis-Cummings (now Director of Rochester City Schools Social Work Services, Primary Project and the Homeless Programs) as part of her journey. Audrey gave her consistent messages that she was capable, and that she could and should return to school. “You can do it” messages were always there and yet as a single mother of three, Linda wanted to ensure her own children made it to the next level before she returned to school. Proudly, Linda shared that indeed all three children have a success story of their own! Her oldest daughter has her Master’s in Adult Education with a specialization in Human Resource Development; her son has a degree in Urban Education and her youngest is in Human Services. These fields are all blessed to have Linda’s children in them. Perhaps helping others is in their DNA.

Linda also credits the depth of her opportunities, trainings, and experiences with numerous Primary Project teams with providing her with a strong foundation to return to school. “I think I was ahead of most folks, as I was so fortunate to have been around so many social workers and others.” She sees that Primary Project supervision offers a chance for the social worker/psychologist to support and encourage the child associates, while allowing the social worker/psychologist to focus on children with greater needs. She spoke about the importance of consistent supervision as a mutual gift for both the supervisor and the child associate, allowing growth for both roles.

Additionally, she is reflective on the power of the relationship between the child associate and the child. “I run into past program children who are now young adults who say, “I remember you and that playroom.” Primary Project reaches those children who might slip through the cracks...and in our microwave society...this quick “fix it fast society”... actually slowing down...sitting down and playing with a child is such a phenomenal gift.” When asked about her wish for Primary Project in the future, she thoughtfully paused and answered, “That others will see the benefit and value of this type of play approach. It is foundational to growth...we have to hold on to this approach...that’s my hope and desire.”

And finally, when asked about her future plans as a new graduate, she responded, “I hope I can transition into a social work position here in the district.” Fingers crossed for you Linda! We wish you well...a true champion for children and growth!

The Cardinal Sings

Saying Good-Bye



Fifty years ago, I was a “frequent flyer” to the nurse’s office in elementary school. Thirty-five years ago, I worked with “frequent flyers” at an elementary school in a small rural community, then as an “aide” in a mid-sized district. Thirty years ago, I attended a workshop in Berkeley, CA where I learned about a program for children who were struggling in school. Twenty years ago, after working with many wonderful people to build an infrastructure for supporting these “frequent flyers,” I flew from California to New York to work at what we now know as Children’s Institute. What does this have to do with “saying good-bye?” Just about everything.

In my early years with Primary Project, folks would say, “But they are doing so well, shouldn’t they stay in the program longer?” The response was often, “Its important for children to learn about and experience changes in relationships.” And we would often say that its also important to, “Let them grow, but also let them go.”

Well, that time has come for me. To let go. When I left California, “The Cricket Chirps” column came to an end, now its time for the “Cardinal Sings” column to come to an end as well. Voices of new singers need to be heard as they are strong and beautiful!

I am not leaving. I am still around. I have shifted my focus to working with others to update the research on Primary Project. I’m excited about the opportunity to continue to contribute in that way. You know how to find me...please stay in touch...and if ever I send you a survey or call to ask a question, please help us to inform our practice by responding!

*–Deborah Johnson
Director of National Services*

Bringing the Lessons Home

Stretching Our Imagination

Sometimes as parents, we need to stretch our imagination when we think about creating space and opportunities for our children to play. The power of play stretches into several learning domains including social-emotional. Susan J. Oliver from the organization *Playing for Keeps* reminds us of this with her thoughts...



It's not so much what children learn through play, but what they won't learn if we don't give them the chance to play. Many functional skills like literacy and arithmetic can be learned either through play or through instruction – the issue is the amount of stress on the child.

However, many coping skills like compassion, self-regulation, self-confidence, the habit of active engagement, and the motivation to learn and be literate cannot be instructed. They can only be learned through self-directed experience (i.e. play).

Please feel free to copy this page and share it with Primary Project parents.

Trayendo las Lecciones al Hogar

Extendiendo Nuestra Imginación

A veces como padres, tenemos que extender nuestra imaginación cuando pensamos acerca de crear espacio y oportunidades para que nuestros niños jueguen. El poder del juego cruza varias áreas de aprendizaje incluyendo social-emocional. Susan J. Oliver de la organización *Playing for Keeps* nos recuerda esto con lo que ella piensa...



No es tanto lo que los niños aprenden a través del juego, sino lo que ellos no aprenderán si no les damos la oportunidad de jugar. Muchas destrezas funcionales tales como leer y escribir, aritmética pueden aprenderse a través del juego o a través de la instrucción – el asunto es cuánto estrés se pone sobre el niño.

Sin embargo, muchas de las destrezas para arreglárselas tales como compasión, regularse a sí mismo, tener confianza en sí mismo, el hábito de participar activamente y la motivación para aprender y leer y escribir no pueden ser enseñadas. Estas se pueden aprender solamente a través de la experiencia que uno mismo dirige (ej. juego).

Siéntase en libertad de copiar esta página y compartirla con los padres del Primary Project.

Save the Date...

Children's Institute will be hosting the annual Primary Project National Conference on October 3rd & 4th, 2012 at the Woodcliff Hotel & Spa located in Rochester, NY. This year's theme is **Relationships, Relevance and Resiliency**. Look for registration materials in early September!

Relationships
Relevance
Resiliency

Congratulations...

The following sites have passed Primary Project National Certification:

Early Childhood School of Rochester (#57)	Rochester, NY
Henry Hudson School #28	Rochester, NY
Nathaniel Hawthorne School #25	Rochester, NY



New Logo

In the spirit of creating space for new growth and opportunities, it is with great pleasure that we unveil the new Primary Project logo.

This new logo focuses on the one-to-one relationship that nurtures and grows between the child and the child associate. It is this relationship that is the foundational core of Primary Project.

Creating this safe relational space is intentional through the consistency of weekly playful experiences and the competency-based skills of a child-directed play approach.



**The new logo is available for your use by download at:
www.childrensinstitute.net/programs/primary-project/logo**

children's institute

STRENGTHENING SOCIAL AND
EMOTIONAL HEALTH

274 N. Goodman Street, Suite D103
Rochester, New York 14607
(585) 295-1000 (phone)
(585) 295-1090 (fax)
(877) 888-7647 (toll free)

www.childrensinstitute.net



Children's Institute is affiliated with the University of Rochester

A PUBLICATION OF CHILDREN'S INSTITUTE, INC.
A NOT-FOR-PROFIT AGENCY

Contributors: Mary Carol Dearing, Linda, Beaty-Gladney,
Deborah Johnson, John Miles, Mary Anne Peabody, Ann
Poelma

Designer: Mary Maiolo

To receive this newsletter, please send your e-mail address
to sfernandez@childrensinstitute.net