



From the Playroom

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Reflecting on the school year

Spring is upon us! While the signs of spring may be different depending on what part of the country you live, the spring season brings with it revitalization and new life. Tree leaves begin to pop, flowers start to bloom, the days get longer, and planting begins! There is almost a surge in energy and a rush to get it all done. Schools are no different this time of year. Students, teachers, administrators, and parents are gaining excitement for the summer months ahead, while at the same time completing all the tasks that have to be finished before the end of the year. Primary Project programs across the country will be finishing up weekly sessions with students, collecting post data, and connecting with parents and teachers.

During the busyness of the school year ending, every Primary Project team has something to celebrate! Now is the time to reflect and recognize changes seen in students (no matter how big or small), or growth that child associates have shown in child-led play skills, or supervisors that have gone above and beyond at not only supporting child associates, but providing program leadership at the building. In this issue of *From the Playroom* we recognize Debbie Johnson for her contributions to children's social-emotional health and Primary Project. We also celebrate the accomplishments of Shelley Sanyshyn and Lynn Smith as they take on a co-directorship role for Primary Project. The "Bringing the Lessons Home" article focuses on celebrating kindness with each other and how we can support the development of this skill in children.

We wish you a safe, playful, relaxing summer and look forward to re-connecting in the fall!



Long Range Planning

Primary Project partners and leaders joined together in February around their shared investment related to Primary Project, reflecting on the continued growth of the program, where it all began, where we find ourselves today, and what the future may have in store.

Supporters from Arkansas, Florida, Maine, and Massachusetts met over two days to discuss the rich history that Primary Project embodies, current trends observed in today's school setting, how the program fits in schools now, and next steps needed to continue the legacy of Primary Project.



When asked about what they envision for the future of Primary Project, partisans shared the following:

1. To have continued success in maintaining strong programs across the country and to expand into new geographic areas.
2. To see Primary Project research begin again and be published.
3. To see articles in the scholarly literature (research and practice articles/journals).
4. To be creative with alternate models: Universities, after-school programs, homeschooling, parenting extensions, etc.

As the school year comes to an end, we invite you to consider what you see for the future of Primary Project. Primary Project turns 60 years young in the fall of 2017. Do you have any birthday wishes for the program? Drop your wishes to Lynn Smith at lsmith@childrensinstitute.net.



A retirement celebration was recently held for Debbie Johnson. Friends and co-workers shared stories and wished her well in her next career as a vicar in a nearby church. Debbie will be missed at Children's Institute!

Co-Directors of Primary Project

Children's Institute is pleased to announce Shelley M. Sanyshyn and Lynn Smith as Co-Directors of Primary Project

Shelley M. Sanyshyn, received her Master's in Applied Psychology and Quantitative Methods with a specialization in Counseling from the University of Baltimore in 2000. Prior to joining Children's Institute, she served as Associate Director at the University of Maryland, Baltimore, School Mental Health Program. She was licensed as a Clinical Professional Counselor in the state of Maryland.



Since joining Children's Institute in 2008, she has been involved in many aspects of Primary Project operations including consultation, training, national certification, and coordination of New York State programs.

In her new role as Co-Director, this work has expanded to include overall responsibility for the leadership and supervision of program implementation and growth.

Together, Lynn and Shelley bring great enthusiasm for the opportunities to build on existing relationships with programs and develop new partners to support the expansion of social-emotional development efforts for children through Primary Project.

Lynn Smith, received her Master's in Social Work from Syracuse University in 1994. Prior to joining Children's Institute, she worked as a social worker for the Baby Love program at the Golisano Children's Hospital, working in a community-based setting helping high risk women access early and ongoing prenatal care as well as securing basic needs for families. In addition, she practiced as a social worker within the University of Rochester Medical Center in Ambulatory Pediatrics, the Emergency Department, and provided assessment and discharge planning for inpatient obstetrics and gynecology patients.



Since joining Children's Institute in 2001, she has been involved with Primary Project at a local, state, and national level providing training, consultation, and program certification. In addition to her work in Primary Project, she has also worked at providing behavioral health consultation in early childhood classrooms, as well as coordinating Coping Power, an evidence-based program for 4th-6th graders in the Rochester City School District.

Congratulations to Shelley and Lynn!

Bringing the Lessons Home

Helping children learn about kindness

When I'm able to tune in, one of the shows I enjoy the most is Ellen DeGeneres. Besides her dancing, great sense of humor, ability to connect with her audience, and some of the fun games she plays with guests, she ends every show with: "Be kind to one another."

We have all heard concepts such as "pay it forward," or "random acts of kindness," without really spending time thinking about what they mean. However, if you have waited in a drive-through line and heard the cashier say, "That car ahead of you bought your coffee," you know how surprisingly pleased and fortunate you can feel. That happened to me and I was in a cheery mood for the rest of the day.

Children do not learn kindness by only thinking and talking about the concepts. Like all of us, the power of kindness is learned by feeling it – whether we are in the role of receiving it, or more powerfully, in the role of the giver. Children need practice in ways to be kind. Here are some helpful tips to support the development of "kindness" as a character trait:

1. Make caring for others a priority. Parents tend to prioritize their child's happiness and achievements over their child's concern for others. But, in order to be kind, children have to learn to balance their needs with the needs of others. The first step is helping your child recognize what others need. Examples are passing a ball to a teammate who hasn't had a turn or working with a classmate who needs a partner. For children to learn to be kind, they need to hear from parents that caring for others is a priority. Earlier this year, my son Kyle's friend broke a finger and was not able to participate in outdoor recess. We all talked about how unhappy this made his friend. And then Kyle made a choice to stay inside during recess so that his friend would not have to be alone.

2. Expand your child's circle of concern. All children care for those closest to them – parents, siblings, grandparents. Our challenge is to help children learn to care about someone outside of that circle, such as the new student in class, or even people who live in distant countries. Recently, Kyle experienced a period of days when his first grade teacher was out sick and there were different substitutes for each day. While talking about all the transitions, and missing his teacher, he remarked, "It just isn't the same when Mrs. Gardner isn't there. She does everything right!" This allowed our family to have some conversations around how to care for others who find themselves in unfamiliar situations. Kyle was then able to think about how the substitutes might be feeling because they didn't even know the kids' names or the schedule. We went on to discuss that remembering how the substitutes feel could help remind Kyle and his classmates to be helpful throughout the day.

3. Be a role model for kindness – and talk about why you do what you do! Children learn by example. Being a "caring and kindness" role model means that we – as adults – practice honesty, fairness, inclusiveness, and caring – everyday!

–Lynn Smith, LMSW
Social Worker, Children's Institute



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

Trayendo las Lecciones al Hogar

Ayudar a los niños para que aprendan sobre la bondad

Cuando puedo mirar la televisión, uno de los programas que disfruto más es el de Ellen DeGeneres. Además de bailar, su gran sentido del humor, capacidad para conectar con su audiencia, y algunos juegos divertidos que juega con sus invitados, ella termina su programa con: "Sean bondadosos unos con otros."

Todos hemos escuchado conceptos tales como "devolver el favor," o "actos de bondad al azar," sin pasar algún tiempo pensando en lo que significan. Sin embargo, si usted ha esperado en una fila de "drive-through" y el cajero dice, "El carro frente al suyo compró su café," usted sabe lo sorprendentemente contento y afortunado que se puede sentir. Eso me pasó a mí y el resto del día estuve en un estado de ánimo muy alegre.

Los niños no aprenden la bondad de solamente pensar y hablar acerca de los conceptos. Al igual que nosotros, el poder de la bondad se aprende de sentirlo – ya sea que desempeñamos el papel de recibirla, o más poderoso aún, el papel de darla. Los niños necesitan practicar las maneras de ser bondadosos. Aquí le damos algunas ideas para ayudar en el desarrollo de la "bondad" como una característica del carácter:

1. Hacer del preocuparse por los demás una prioridad. Los padres tienden a dar prioridad a la dicha y logros de sus hijos sobre la preocupación de sus hijos por los demás. Pero, para poder ser bondadosos, los niños tienen que aprender a balancear sus necesidades con las necesidades de los otros. El primer paso es ayudar a los niños a reconocer lo que otros necesitan. Ejemplos son pasar una pelota a un compañero de equipo que no ha tenido un turno o trabajar con un compañero de clases que necesita una pareja. Para que los niños aprendan a ser bondadosos, ellos necesitan escuchar de sus padres que el preocuparse por otros es una prioridad. A principios de este año, el amigo de mi hijo Kyle se fracturó un dedo y no podía participar en el receso al aire libre. Todos hablamos de lo infeliz que esto hacía a su amigo. Y entonces Kyle decidió quedarse en el interior durante el receso para que su amigo no estuviera solo.

2. Ampliar el círculo de preocupación de su niño. Todos los niños se preocupan por los que están más cerca de ellos – padres, hermanos, abuelos. Nuestro reto es ayudar a los niños a preocuparse por alguien fuera de ese círculo, tal como un estudiante en su clase, o hasta personas que viven en países distantes. Recientemente, Kyle experimentó un período de varios días cuando su maestra de primer grado estuvo enferma y hubo diferentes sustitutas para cada día. Al hablar de todas esas transiciones, y echando de menos a su maestra, él comentó, "No es lo mismo cuando la Sra. Gardner no está ahí. ¡Ella hace todo bien!" Esto permitió a nuestra familia tener conversaciones acerca de preocuparse por otros que se encuentran en situaciones desconocidas. Kyle pudo pensar acerca de cómo las sustitutas podrían sentirse porque ni siquiera sabían los nombres de los niños o el horario. Luego discutimos que recordar cómo las sustitutas se sentían podía ayudar a Kyle y sus compañeros de clase a recordar que debían ser de ayuda durante el día.

3. Sea un modelo para la bondad – ¡y hable acerca de por qué hace lo que usted hace! Los niños aprenden del ejemplo. Ser un modelo de "cariño y bondad" significa que nosotros – como adultos – practicamos la honestidad, equidad, inclusión y el preocuparnos por otros – ¡todos los días!

–Lynn Smith, LMSW
Trabajadora Social, Children's Institute



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Program Development Manual

The **NEW and IMPROVED** Primary Project Development Manual offers an enhanced overview of the program, resources, and a new look. Now a blend of two of our most popular resources, the Primary Project Program Development Manual and Creating Connections DVD, this manual provides programs with what they need to support Primary Project implementation in their school.

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www.childrensinstitute.net/sites/default/files/documents/primary-project_certificate_completion_2016.pdf)

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