

# Preschool Projects- Inquiring Minds Want to Know!

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# A little about St. Mary's...

- ▶ WHY PROJECT WORK??
- ▶ Preschoolers need hands on, concrete experiences for true learning to take place.
- ▶ Start with THEIR interests, embedding the learning in their wonderings!
- ▶ How do I know a topic is project worthy?
- ▶ How do I keep it going?

### THEMES.....

- A broad concept or topic like “seasons” or “animals”
- When using a theme, teachers assemble books, photographs and other materials related to the theme.
- Experiences in most content areas or domains of development (such as language, math, or science) relate or connect to the theme.

### UNITS....

- Usually consist of pre-planned lessons and activities on a specific topic that the teacher considers important for the children to know such as “magnets”
- The teacher typically has a clear plan about the concepts and knowledge he wants the children to learn.

### LEARNING CENTERS.....

- A way to organize their teaching
- Areas of the room are designated for the investigation or development of certain knowledge and skills, such as “block area”.
- Materials and equipment for each area are selected to teach concepts and provide practice in skills that the teacher wishes the children to develop.

### PROJECT APPROACH....

- Provide contexts in which children’s curiosity can be expressed purposefully, and that enable them to experience the joy of self-motivated learning.
- Teachers don’t always know what direction a project will take or what aspects of a topic will interest a particular group.
- Well-developed projects engage children’s minds and emotions and become adventures that teachers and children embark on together.

# Projects

## 1. Choosing a topic:

Can you see it?

Can you touch it?

Are there experts?

Can you go there?

How can the children represent what they have learned?

How will the children lead their own investigations?

## 2. How will the children research the topic?

How will the project be sustained?

## 3. Documentation- Why? Who? How? Where? When?

## 4. Spin offs of a project

## 5. Culminating events

## Outline of The Project Approach

### Phase 1: A Project Begins

- The project could be teacher initiated or emerge from the children's interest
- Creation of a web by teacher to see the endless possibilities this topic holds
- Teacher decides if project is appropriate for further study
- If yes, a web is created in collaboration with the students
- If no, topic is dropped and teacher begins again with observation to see if another area of interest arises

### Phase 2: A Project Develops *foundations*

- Teacher is then able to tie in *foundations* (standards) with the project
- Investigation begins through field site visits and visiting guest experts
- Children need to represent a gain in new knowledge through drawing, constructing, writing, and dramatic play
- Re-web to identify what was learned

### Phase 3: Conclusion of Project

- Complete the culminating event through presentation of the knowledge that was gained or enhanced over the course of the project

## CRITERIA FOR CHOOSING PROJECTS

- it is directly observable in the children's own environment (real world)
- it is within most children's experiences
- first-hand direct investigation is feasible and not potentially dangerous
- local resources (field sites and experts) are favorable and readily accessible
- it has good potential for representation in a variety of media (e.g. role play, construction, writing, multi-dimensional, graphic organizers)
- parental participation and contributions are likely, and parents can become involved
- it is sensitive to the local culture as well as culturally appropriate in general
- it is potentially interesting to many of the children, or represents an interest that adults consider worthy of developing in children
- it is related to curriculum goals and standards of the school or district
- it provides ample opportunity to apply basic skills
- it is *optimally* specific--not too narrow and not too broad (e.g., a study of the teacher's own dog or "buttons" at one end, and the topic of "music" or "the seasons" at the other)

# Preschool Project Work...

- ▶ What does it look like?
- ▶ Doctor Project
- ▶ Ant Project

# Questions?

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