

## The Truck Project

A Project by 3-, 4-, and 5-Year-Old Children  
at Fairview Early Childhood Center, Rockford, Illinois  
Length of Project: March to May 2002  
Teacher: Jean Lang

### Phase One

#### *Beginning the Project*

This project began when parents were invited into the classroom to share a job, hobby, or interest. One father brought several Nylint trucks from his place of employment. His presentation caused a great deal of attention, and we saw interest in trucks in the classroom. Several children painted trucks almost every day; block play included trucks consistently. We read several books about trucks. I wrote to parents about the children's interest and asked for materials or experts to help. Next, I created a teacher anticipatory web that included possible concepts, curriculum goals, and portfolio items. I also made a list of focusing activities, possible field sites or resource people, ideas for dramatic play or constructions, and possible culminating activities.

### Phase Two

#### *Developing the Project*

The children had many ideas and questions such as, "Who can drive the trucks?" "What does he do with the cement?" "How many people fit in the truck?" "How many wheels does it have?" "How does the dump truck's shovel move?" A grandparent brought her dump truck for children to sketch. Another family arranged for a cement truck to come and pour cement from which we made circular garden stones. We sketched and asked the experts our questions. We observed a sewer construction in the school neighborhood and sketched. We were able to visit the construction site on four different occasions. There was so much activity at the construction site that families, teachers, and children could hardly record all the information.

The children were fascinated by the trench box that held the soil back in order for the workers to safely build the cement water and sewer lines. They again had many questions, such as "Why is the trench box in the hole?" "Why do pipes go in the hole?" "What is the trench box made out of?" "How do you make the poles on the trench box stand up?" "When he puts the cap onto the trench box, will he hammer it together?"

### Phase Three

#### *Concluding the Project*

The children decided to build a dump truck in the classroom out of appliance boxes. We also built a model of a trench box, which the children buried in the sand box on the playground. A parent made a base for a cement truck out of dense foam blocks that had been donated through a recycling center. The children painted the models and added wheels. We culminated our project with a sharing night for families to view our documentation panels and constructions. This project was one of the longest and most successful projects that we have ever completed.

Comments

There were many positive aspects to this project. We were able to involve many of the families in our classroom as the catalyst for the start of the project and also as resource experts and support during field site visits. In addition, the community that surrounds our school environment was a major contributor to the development of this project. The Rockford Water and Sewer Department and even the Coca Cola delivery truck that serves our school became involved in our project work. It is important to remember that educators are much more effective when we tap the resources and knowledge of both our community and our families. I would like to share and extend the knowledge of project work to several families within our classroom so that they can support their children in project work outside our classroom. This experience will develop a lifelong skill of investigation and learning.

