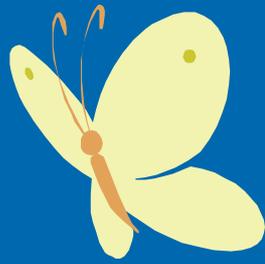


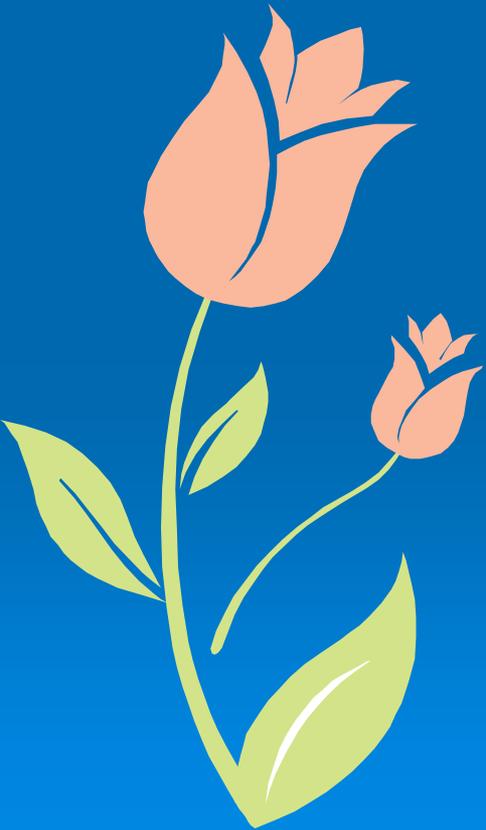
The Project Approach



Learning Through The Eyes Of Children

Fairfax County
Office for Children

Institute for Early Learning



What is “The Project Approach?”

An investigation of a subject in the **real world** of children.

The study may be motivated by an idea, a question, an event or an experience – something in the “here and now.”



The Project Approach (The Study Approach)

The study can be explored based on the knowledge, interests and curiosities of the children.



Throughout the study, children share information with each other.

The Study Approach

More than one study can take place at the same time.

Studies are flexible – designed to be responsive and interactive – the study changes as it evolves.



The Study Approach

Topics are **relevant** to
everyday experiences
in the real world.



The Study Approach

Opportunities for Integrated Learning

Math - Science - Engineering (Designing/Creating)

Language - Literacy

Social - Emotional

Visual, Creative, Dramatic Arts

Music - Rhythm - Movement

Social Studies - Global Views

Self-Help Skills - Personal Growth

Team Work - Individual Contributions



LEARNING is an open, active process that focuses on children's excitement and curiosity.

Provide Opportunities Without Judgment.

Listen to **ALL** Ideas.

Respect **ALL** Questions.

GUIDE the Learning Process.

Guide Children to REAL Answers rather than giving them answers.



Elements Included In The Study

Discussion

Field Work

Representation

Investigation

Display



These five elements are woven together throughout the study.

Discussion (Open-ended Questions)

What do we know?

What did we experience?

What did we find out?

What else do we want to know?

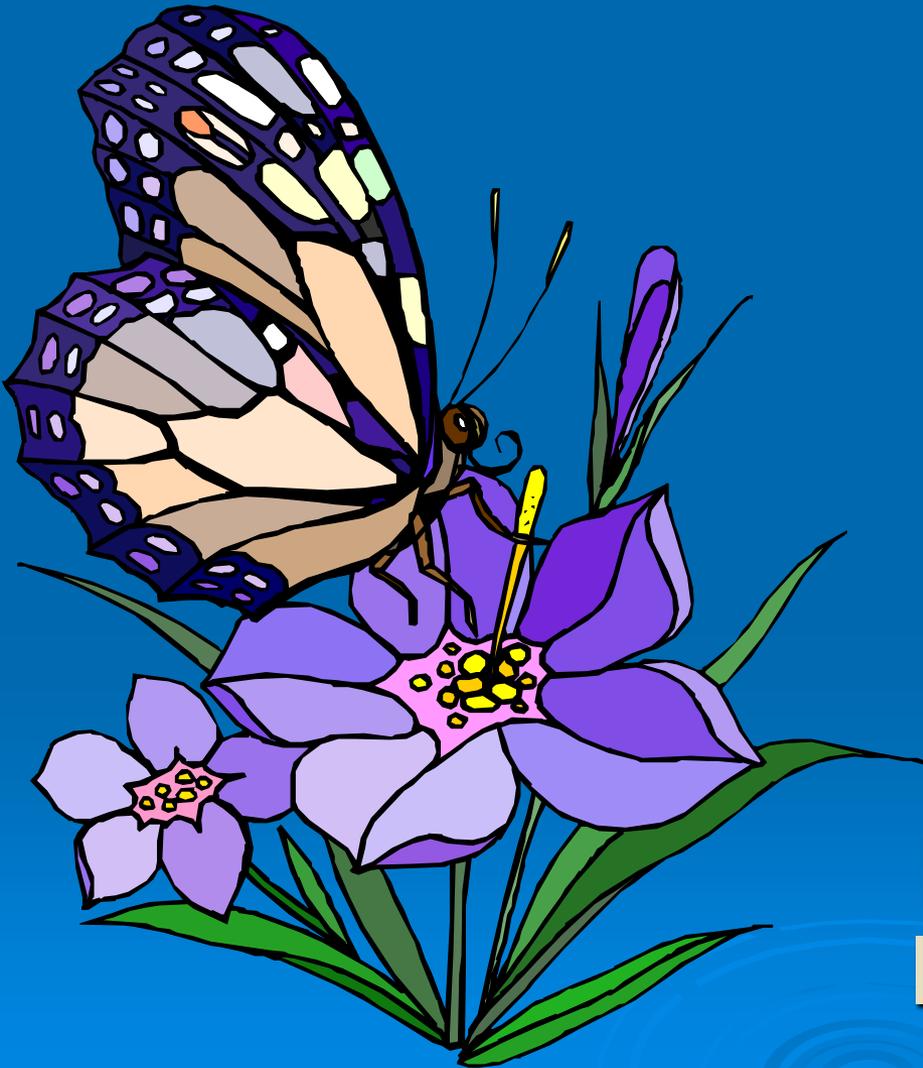
Who are the experts?

How did that work?



Children and adults share thoughts, experiences, knowledge, questions, curiosities and results.

Field Work



Reading - Research

Experiments

Discussions - Observations

Relevant Experiences

Field Trips

Interviews

Children gain
knowledge through
hands-on, exploratory
learning opportunities.

Representation

Drawing

Writing

Photos

Constructing – Building

Taking Things Apart

Mapping – Diagrams - Charts

Dramatic Play Opportunities



Children represent information and experiences through various methods.

Investigation

Developing Questions

Investigating Possibilities

Researching

Speculating

Trying New Things

Interviewing Others

Field Trips - Visitors



Children find answers to questions through a variety of resources.

Display



Sharing Information
Sharing Representations
Recording Work Accomplished

Children summarize what they know and share what they learned.

How do you begin a study?

Preliminary Planning

Observe and listen to the children – then consider ideas to explore and study.

What are the children's interests, skills, curiosities and questions?



Pre-Planning • Choosing A Topic

Consider questions/topics the children have recently discussed or been curious about.

Possible Examples:

- Why does it snow?
- Why is the moon bright at night?
- How many stars are in the sky?
- How fast can a fire truck go?
- Why do planes stay in the sky?
- Why does ice cream melt?
- Can rocks float?
- Where do squirrels live?

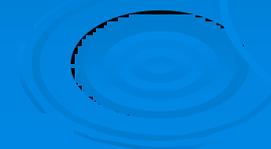


Rather than answer the children's questions, respond with questions.

That's a really good question. Would you like to study that to find an answer?

You know, I've been wondering about that, too. What could we do to find an answer?

Hmmmm – that's an interesting question I'm not sure what the answer is to that question. Would you like to study that so we can learn more together?



Choosing A Topic

Topics need to be developmentally appropriate so the children can be successful. (Appropriate to the skill level and interest level of the children.)

Topics need to be **REAL** in the lives of the children.

Resources need to be available to explore a topic in a variety of ways.



Choosing A Topic

The teacher will need to do some background exploration related to the topic to help guide the children.

The children must have a desire to learn about the topic – be curious about something.



Exploring A Potential Topic

Pre-Planning



The Kitchen

How does it get to the kitchen?

We Made It

How did we make it?

We put things together and we mixed it and we baked it.

Ingredients

Process of Making Bread

From the Store
(see other path)

Where Does Bread Come From?

The Store

How does it get to the store?

On a Truck

How does it get on the truck?

At the Bakery or Bread Factory

What is a bakery or bread factory?

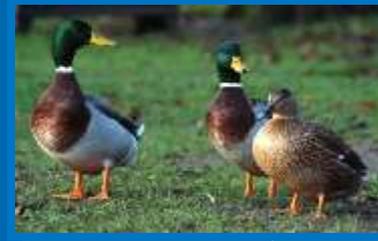


Many Different Types of Bread



Exploring A Potential Topic

Pre-Planning



DUCKS

What Colors Are Ducks?

Explore Colors

Is It Okay to Feed Ducks?

What Do Feathers Look/Feel Like?

Explore Feathers



What Do Ducks Eat?

Do Ducks Fly?

Where Do Ducks Live?

Visit A Nature Center or Local Pond



Do Ducks Sleep?

How Do Ducks Stay on Top of the Water?



Research and Ask a Nature Specialist

Are There Different Kinds of Ducks?

What Do You Call a Baby Duck?



Can We Have A Duck for a Pet?



Exploring A Potential Topic

Pre-Planning

Rain



Why Does It Rain?



What Are Clouds?

Study the Water Cycle

Does Rain Help Us?

Plant Life

Does Rain Make Sound?

Different Surfaces

Metal

Wood

Grass

Explore Temperatures

Explore Ways We Dress When It Rains

Rain Coats

Boots

Umbrellas

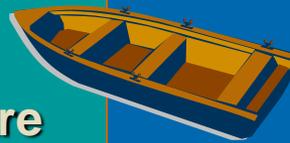
Water Life

Growing Food



Exploring A Potential Topic

Pre-Planning



Can People Ride on Boats?

Ships

Fishing Boats

Canoes

What Are Boats Made From?

Wood

Metal

Explore Types of Wood

Explore Types of Metal

BOATS

What Are Boats Used For?

To Carry People

To Carry Things

How Big Are Boats?

Explore Different Sizes of Objects

The Project/Study Approach

Elements of the Study

Discussion – Field Work – Representation – Investigation – Display

Preliminary Planning

Listen to Children – Develop Possible Area(s) of Interest by Pre-planning

Phases of the Study

Begin the Study – Engage the Children in Developing the Process of the Study

Establish the Study

Exploratory Learning

Summarize and Display



Phase I – Establishing the Study

In conjunction with the children, a topic of study is chosen.

The topic may be based on:

- The children's interests.
- The value of the topic for children's learning.
- Curriculum requirements.
- The availability of resources for exploration/learning.
- A recent event or experience.



Establishing the Study

The teacher and children discuss the topic and develop a baseline of understanding.

What do we already know about this topic?

The children share their experiences and current level of knowledge through discussion and displays (drawings, writings, stories).



Group Discussions

- What have we observed?
- What questions do we have?
- What do we want to know?
- What do our friends or family know?
- What books have we read about the topic?
- How can we learn more about this topic?
- How can we “show” what we know?



Phase II – Exploratory Learning

The teacher arranges opportunities for the children to do “field work” and engage in experiences related to the topic of study.

The children are involved in hands-on experiences and observations.

The children look for answers to the questions they developed.



Exploratory Learning

The teacher provides books, research materials, field trips, guest speakers, videos, materials, activities and more.

Many **hands-on learning** opportunities are provided for the children.



Exploratory Learning

The children document the learning process through drawings, photos, graphs, charts, diagrams, writings, stories, videos, things they build or create, and other methods.



Exploratory Learning

The children share what they have learned with each other.

The children generate new questions and develop new curiosities.



Exploratory Learning

The topic of study may take many new directions and have different focal points as the children go through the process.



The learning process is more important than the outcome.

Phase III – Summarize • Display

The teacher and children look at the learning process and the documentation that supports their exploratory (field) work.

The teacher offers the opportunity to decide how to complete the project and display/share their learning.



Summarize • Display

The teacher offers the children ways of personalizing their new knowledge and summarizing the project through art, stories, drama, sculptures or other methods.



Summarize • Display

A culminating event or activity brings the project (study) to a close.

- Invite families to an event that allows the children to share their learning process and new knowledge.
- Develop a display for everyone to see.
- In center-based programs, allow the children to share their learning process with other classrooms.



Transition To A New Study

Throughout the study, the teacher has been actively involved in the process - observing, guiding, discussing, providing learning experiences and materials.

When possible, the teacher uses children's ideas, interests, knowledge and curiosities to make a meaningful transition between the project being concluded and the topic of study for the next project.



Pumpkin Spice Playdough

Let's say the children are interested in the pumpkin spice playdough and wonder why it smells so good. This could be an opportunity to explore a new study.

What could you do to begin a study about playdough that smells good?

Pumpkin Spice Playdough

Preliminary Planning

Listen to Children – Develop Possible Areas of Interest by Pre-planning

Where is playdough from the store made?

Learn about playdough factories: how machines make playdough, how the playdough gets into the container, how the playdough gets to the store, how long playdough lasts, etc.

What is a scent?

Learn about different scents – how things smell. Explore items the children identify that have unique smells – e.g. flowers, food, animals, spices, perfumes/fragrances, etc.

Playdough that Smells Good

What is in playdough?

Learn about ingredients: flour, salt, oil, water, alum (or cream of tartar), food coloring, flavoring (or scents, spices, etc).

What is pumpkin pie spice?

Learn about the spices that are typically mixed together for pumpkin pie (cloves, cinnamon, etc.).

How do you make playdough?

Learn about the process: mixing ingredients, cooking (for cooked playdough), boiling water (for non-cooked playdough), kneading, etc.

Phases of the Study

Begin the Study – Engage the Children in Developing the Process of the Study

What do we (the children) already know about playdough that smells good?



What do we (the children) want to know about playdough that smells good?



The children's interests and curiosities will guide the beginning of the study.



How could you **summarize** and **display** the playdough study?

Photos - Books
Drawings - Stories

Playdough Art
Gallery

Host a Family
Playdough
Event

Learning Web
Document what we know
about playdough (or
fragrances) after the
study.

How could this study possibly expand into other learning opportunities?

Explore
Other Forms
of Creative
Art

Make
Fragrances

Create with
Clay

Cooking & Baking
Experiences

Make Other Things with Fragrances (such as candles)

Where do flowers come from?

If the children are curious about the flowers they see outside, it might be an opportunity to start a new study.

- What could you do to begin a study about flowers?
- What could you do to investigate (explore) the study?
- What could you do to summarize and display the study?



Listen to Children

Why is listening to children the most important component of providing experiences for young children?



Encourage Curiosity

Curiosity prompts
(promotes) learning.

How?

Learning prompts
(promotes) curiosity.

Why?

What?



Ask Open- Ended Questions

Allow lots of
time for
Exploration and
Experimentation.

Exploration and Experimentation

Open-Ended Learning



Question – Curiosity

- I wonder ___?
- What if ___?
- How can we find out about ___?
- What could we try?



Predict – Hypothesis

- What might happen if ___?
- How could you explore ___?
- If we try ____, what will happen?
- What is your guess?



Analyze – Communicate

- What happened when you ___?
- What did you notice about ___?
- What did you discover?
- What could you change?



Experiment – Try Your Idea

- What are you exploring?
- What else could you do?
- How is it working?
- What is happening there?



Learning Through the Eyes of Children

Enjoy learning with
the children.

Provide opportunities
and learning
experiences
based on the
interests and
curiosities
of the children.

