

# THE BING TIMES

BING NURSERY SCHOOL, STANFORD UNIVERSITY

SEPTEMBER 2023, VOL. 49

## Directors' Column: Conversation Matters: How Talk and Response with Young Children Opens the Door to Meaningful Communication

By Jennifer Winters, Executive Director, and Beth Wise, Program Director



From left: Jennifer Winters, Beth Wise

Walking through Bing classrooms each day provides ample opportunities to stop and listen to how teachers respond to young children. The quality and timing of their responses—and the focused attention they display—helps to build deep and meaningful relationships with children. This in turn contributes to the children’s sense of self, allows them to express their thoughts and ideas more clearly, and shows how much they are valued for who they are. In *The Art of Talking with Children*, author Rebecca Rolland explains, “It’s not about knowing exactly what to say. It has far more to do with an attitude of curious waiting: using talk to open a window

and letting your child take it from there.”

One day this past year a child was drawing at the language table and said, “I love my mommy.” I (Beth) asked, “What kinds of things does your mommy do that make you feel that way?” She quickly replied, “My mommy lets me do things we don’t have time for.” I said, “I can imagine having time to do things with your mommy is fun. I remember feeling that way when I was younger.” The child then asked, “What do you remember doing with your mommy?” A very natural conversation began that was a way of gaining trust and establishing a relationship.

These conversational “serve and return” moments help build brain architecture that supports the development of communication and deep social-emotional learning while enhancing cognitive skills. “Serve and return” is a term coined by Harvard researchers to describe back-and-forth interactions between adults and children. One person “serves” by offering up a sound, glance, word, gesture, or question, and the other “returns” in a timely and responsive way.

Working with Stanford students enrolled in Psychology 147: Development in Early Childhood each quarter, we address



engaging in authentic dialogue with young children as one of our first topics. Rather than asking questions they know the answer to, students are encouraged to listen, notice, and practice reflective listening with the children. Each week in our seminar, we discuss their experiences in the classroom and how the lectures and readings reinforce what they are learning. Over the course of the quarter, students become increasingly aware of the children’s capabilities, their ability to have deep conversations, and how Bing teachers guide and support their social and emotional learning. One student commented, “When I started listening and interacting with children, I began building meaningful relationships. They are nuanced and impressive developing humans and deserve the same



### IN THIS ISSUE

<i>Directors' Column</i> .....	1
<i>Distinguished Lecture</i> .....	4
<i>Research</i> .....	6
<i>Kordestani Family Program for Parents and Educators</i> .....	8
<i>Classroom Curriculum</i> .....	12
<i>Staff Development</i> .....	25
<i>Conferences</i> .....	29
<i>Events and Information</i> .....	34
<i>Annual Giving</i> .....	38

Read *The Bing Times* online at  
<http://bingschool.stanford.edu/bingtimes>

level of respect and acknowledgment that grown adults receive. When you observe young children, you realize they are eager and capable of deep learning. Acknowledging this changes the teacher's role from a traditional educator to a facilitator and supporter of early childhood development, exploration, and education.”



Part of our role at Bing is to educate Stanford students who are preparing for careers in a variety of fields, such as medicine, education, law, public policy, psychology, technology, and product design, to name a few. Some express an interest in becoming parents themselves someday. The communication skills

developed in the classroom not only benefit the children, but also guide the rest of us to be better communicators. A graduate student ended the course by writing, “The transition from dramatic play with vintage phones to creating a pretend fire and becoming firefighters showcases how children actively engage in dramatic play. The comments and conversation facilitated by teacher Rinna [Sanchez-Baluyut] stimulated engagement, demonstrating how children become actively involved in the learning process through their curiosity and exploration.” Rinna modeled and practiced “serve and return” as a way to build community with a group of 2-year-olds and facilitate shared understanding. It’s a device to bring everyone into the conversation, lifting the voices of quieter children, including those just beginning to build language skills, and listening to children who have many thoughts and ideas at their command.

ment unfolds in a bootstrapping sequence,” she writes. “Genes provide the blueprint of early development, but early experiences and relationships shape the foundation of the brain and mind. Later healthy growth rests on that foundation being solid.” Critical to forming that foundation, Christakis points out, is an early environment that includes some deceptively simple qualities: warm and close relationships with adults, responsive conversations, and natural habitats.

Bing teacher Betsy Koning, who is particularly masterful at conversing with young children, talked about the meaningful conversation she had with an older child preparing to move on to kindergarten. By the end of the year, the child was expanding his discussions with Betsy to include questions about the school’s operations and who worked in the school’s office. Later, his budding interest in the school’s operations and design came into play as he created a series of recycling, composting, and landfill containers from the large hollow blocks on the patio. Betsy’s ability to listen and engage mindfully conveyed her interest in his thoughts and ideas and modeled a

*The Bing Times* is published annually by Bing Nursery School, Stanford University. Bing Nursery School serves the Department of Psychology and Stanford University as a laboratory for research in child development and a site for teaching undergraduates.

**Executive Director** Jennifer Winters  
**Program Director** Beth Wise  
**Editor** Chia-wa Yeh  
**Assistant Editors** Nancy King  
 Matthew Siegel  
**Copy Editors** Betsy Koning  
 Mischa Rosenberg

Bing Nursery School, Stanford University  
 850 Escondido Road, Stanford, CA 94305  
 (650) 723-4865 • (650) 725-1270 (fax)  
 bingschool.stanford.edu



“How should we approach talking to children?” is an important question posed in Erika Christakis’s *The Importance of Being Little*. “The science to date shows that children’s early develop-



By Declan J., 3 years 4 months



By Elena M.-F., 3 years 8 months

deep sense of respect and belief in who the student is at his core.

When we interviewed Betsy, she explained that she seeks to convey a genuine interest in what the children are saying. This might involve repeating or paraphrasing what she heard and asking a follow-up question, such as, “So, do you mean...?” or “Are you saying...?” “Having this shared narrative that you can refer to opens the door for expansion on the topic at a later time,” Betsy said. “The child may come to school and ask, ‘Remember when we were building the recycling center?’ and I would respond, ‘Oh, yes, you mean the time on the patio with the hollow blocks?’”

Betsy also notices and remembers what children discussed previously and brings up those details in conversation. “I remember how much you love bunnies. I added one to our song today,” she might say. According to Betsy, “It’s like having landmarks in your relationships that act as a point of reference for each child.” This allows her to guide the child in what they might do differently the next time: “Remember the first time we did that, and all of the pots of water spilled? Maybe we should try a different way this time.” Betsy continued: “Making a connection, having a shared history, shared information, and not having to explain everything from the beginning shows children that you consider what



they are saying important. Valuing what children say supports social-emotional learning and establishes trust so that when they are having a hard time, they are confident that you will be open, be a good listener, and make sure that you really understand what they are saying.”

As parents, educators, and advocates for young children, we can practice listening and responding to our children in a way that opens a dialogue and creates a relationship of genuine curiosity. A study from 2004 found that “children who have healthy relationships with their primary caregivers are more likely to develop insights into other people’s feelings, needs, and thoughts, which form a foundation for cooperative interactions with others and an emerging conscience.” At Bing, the how and why of talking to children individually or in groups is something we take seriously. Young children deserve our utmost respect and understanding to help them develop into capable individuals.

Noticing that a child’s painting had transformed from the depiction of a rainbow and a garden to a canvas covered entirely in gray paint, a teacher remarked, “I noticed that your painting has changed since you first started.” “Oh yes,” the student said, “the storm is coming, and fog is covering the whole garden.” We can learn so much by paying attention; through conversations, we glimpse what children are thinking, imagining, wondering, and worrying about. That is the gift we find in our work each and every day. **B**



## IMAGINATION AT WORK

Minna starts to dig a circular shape in the sand area.

Minna: “I am making a big river for the animals.”

She adds water to the river. Shyamali comes over and watches.

Shyamali: “What are you doing?”

Minna: “I am making a river for the animals and the leaves will protect the animals from the volcano.”

Shyamali: “That’s a nice river!”

Later, Minna asks to get more animals from the sand shed. As Minna waits for the animals, she sees a plastic cylinder.

Minna: “Can I use this instead?”

She points to the plastic cylinder and then places it in the middle of the river and adds water and leaf branches.

Minna: “This is a volcano, and the animals won’t get hurt because I created a gate with the leaves.”

—By Liz Gonzalez, Teacher



# Professor Steven O. Roberts: Conversations About Racism

By Karla Kane, journalist and former Bing parent

Steven Roberts was around 8 years old when he was falsely accused of stealing while shopping for a birthday gift for his little sister. His dad sat him down for a talk. That day, Roberts learned some hard truths, including the fact that someone in his immediate family had been the victim of a horrific hate crime.



Steven O. Roberts

“How worried are you that your child might be a target of racial bias?” and “How worried are you that your child might be racially biased?” The survey found that both concerns were significantly higher in Black families, and that both worries in Black families increased after Floyd’s murder.

“That was my introduction to racism. My entire reality shifted,” said Roberts, an associate professor of psychology at Stanford University and the director of academic programs at Stanford’s Center for Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity. On May 3, he shared the deeply personal story at this year’s Bing Nursery School Distinguished Lecture, “Conversations About Racism.”

Unfortunately, Roberts noted, his family’s experience is far from unique. Black American families are all too familiar with giving “the talk” to their children, trying to prepare them for the racist treatment and even mortal danger they may encounter as they grow up. Roberts’ work is devoted to understanding the psychological bases of racism and how to dismantle them. Over the course of his presentation, he discussed findings from his research into how different types of families talk about racism; the “promises and pitfalls of colorblindness;” and how to have more productive conversations with children on these issues.

## Discussions in Black vs. White Households

Roberts and his colleagues conducted an online survey of Black and white American (monoracial) families shortly before and after the murder of George Floyd (a period of increased public focus on racism and police brutality), asking if and how families were discussing racism with their children. Questions included:

In the aftermath of Floyd’s death, Black parents were more likely to discuss racism with their children, while the inclination of white parents remained mostly unchanged. When asked for more information on how families addressed the topic, there was a significant difference in strategy between Black and white families, which Roberts illustrated by sharing two responses.

In the example from a Black family, the parent spoke frankly to their 6-year-old about their godfather being murdered by police (and the incident receiving no media attention). The white parent, on the other hand, told their 6-year-old child, “Everyone is treated equal. Your color doesn’t matter.” While the latter message may be well-intentioned, Roberts said, it’s “not the most accurate or effective way to have these conversations.” It makes sense, he said, that parents might try to promote a “color-blind” message and to encourage their children not to classify people by race; however, this message fails to provide the tools necessary to overcome racial biases in the real world.

## Promises and Pitfalls of Color-Blindness

In a study Roberts conducted at Bing, designed to investigate how children reason about categories, children were introduced to two fictional groups of beings, Hibbles and Glerks, who typically wear certain colors and engage in (morally neutral) group behaviors, such

as eating specific types of berries. By offering stereotyped information about the groups, the study sought to determine whether children would judge or criticize those who don’t conform to what is expected for their category.

Roberts shared a video clip of a child who had just been told about a Glerk eating a berry of the type usually eaten by Hibbles, and Roberts says the child’s strong reaction captures a broader pattern. When asked if he would want to be friends with this Glerk, the child adamantly responds “No!” He vehemently insists it is a “bad” Glerk the others would hate or even kill.

While not all participants had such extreme responses, “they do have pretty negative evaluations of individuals who go against the category,” Roberts said. When introduced to Hibbles and Glerks as individuals making individual behavior choices, though, children proved much more accepting. “Once you take the emphasis off the category, children are more tolerant,” Roberts said, justifying, perhaps, parents’ inclination toward color-blind messages. However, he insisted, “we don’t live in a color-blind society.”

Roberts presented a number of sobering facts, including that Black Americans are six times more likely to be incarcerated than white Americans; the median net worth of Black families is approximately 10 times lower than for white families; and infant mortality is much higher for Black children than white ones.

“How can we get children to think very critically about how very important these categories are in the real world, but at the same time not undermine how they see and evaluate individuals?” Roberts asked. “That’s been a very tough challenge for developmental psychologists. No one’s really found how to have

that balance.” Children are exposed to information about categories all the time and, understandably, use that information to develop their worldview.

Even if we might want children to take on a “color-blind” perspective when it comes to race, Roberts said, “they still are given clear messages, and associations are being built between categories and things like divinity and power and knowledge.” If you do a Google Images search for “God,” for example, the majority of results, Roberts said, are “a lot of old white guys.” Because the dominant image is that of a white male God, researchers conjectured, many people associate whiteness with being more godlike and worthy of leadership.

### The Power of Perception

In addition to working with adults on this topic, Roberts’ research team surveyed 176 Christian (mostly Black and white) children between the ages of 4 and 12 attending Sunday schools in California and North Carolina. They asked the children to draw a picture of God and found that the children were more likely to draw God as white (and male). The children were also shown pairs of faces of similar age and gender but different races and then asked which looked more like God. Again, there was a bias toward whiteness. Finally, they were shown a group of facial photos, told they were pictures of people who worked together, and asked to identify which three they thought were the “bosses” of the group. Sure enough, the more likely they were to have a concept of God as white predicted how likely

### PROFESSOR STEVEN O. ROBERTS

Steven O. Roberts, PhD, is an associate professor of psychology at Stanford University. He is also director of academic programs at Stanford’s Center for Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity. Professor Roberts received his PhD in psychology from the University of Michigan. Professor Roberts’ research examines the origins of racist thinking and the social structures that foster it. He has received numerous awards, including Stanford School of Humanities and Sciences Dean’s Award for Distinguished Teaching, Rising Star Award from the Association for Psychological Science, and Janet Taylor Spence Award for Transformative Early Career Contributions from the Association for Psychological Science (2021).

they were to select white or light-skinned faces as being in positions of authority.

As part of the study conducted at Bing, participants were presented with a story about Zombot, the fictional planet where the Hibbles and Glerks live and pray to Liakbor, a divine being they believe created Zombot and all its life forms. So the children would initially assume that Hibbles are the more powerful group, they were told both Hibbles and Glerks believe that Liakbor is a Hibble.

The participants were randomly sorted into three storyline groups: In one, Liakbor is revealed to be a Hibble; in another, Liakbor is actually a Glerk; and in a control group, Liakbor is a different type of being entirely. The children were then asked, in light of this new information, which group should rule over Zombot, and the results were straightforward: The children believed the group created in the image of the divinity should be in charge.

“If children are bombarded with this image that this powerful, all-knowing entity has a certain race or a certain gender, of course they’re going to use that to make inferences,” Roberts said.

### The Importance of Cultural Context— and Conscious Messaging

When having conversations with children about racial bias—as a way to counter the color-blind narrative—Roberts noted that it is important to impart information on the wider, systemic foundations of injustice rather than focus on individual actions. He offered the example of Derek Chauvin, the former police officer convicted of murdering George Floyd. While one could make the case, Roberts said, that Chauvin is a bad person who did an evil thing, there are larger structural forces at play, such as the systemic prejudice and societal conditions that led Chauvin to make the choices he did. Individual action and the broader cultural context, he noted, are not mutually exclusive, but by focusing on individuals and their particular crime and punishment without addressing the structural and historical context in which they exist, the bigger issues remain unexamined.

To what extent are parents talking about the structural roots of racial inequality? Roberts shared some ongoing research into this topic led by his doctoral student Nicky Sullivan. In this study, a group of local parents and children are presented with a story about Alex, a child living in the fictional town of Williamsville. Alex sees a group of protestors speaking out against repeated acts of brutality by the town’s police force against Black citizens. Researchers then ask the parents to have a brief conversation with their child about the story, addressing why this mistreatment is happening. In one shared example, the child is told the blame lies with “bad, racist cops,” while



Rainbow egg hunt. By Katherine L., 3 years 9 months



Rainbow. By Nile T., 4 years 4 months

---

### About the Author



Karla Kane is an award-winning local journalist and musician (best known as the lead singer, songwriter, and ukulele player in the band The Corner Laughers). She holds bachelor's and master's

degrees in anthropology and lives in Redwood City with her husband and bandmate Khoi Huynh, her daughter, Octavia (a proud Bing alumna!), and several cats.

---

in another, the parent attempts to offer some background on systemic racism. In general, Roberts said, focusing on the individuals is much more common. And when the children are shown a list of possible explanations for the racist police action and asked to rate which explanations seem the most likely, they are more inclined to give high ratings to reasons that emphasize the individual, which correlates with the conversa-

tions they had with their parent. “The work that we’re doing is looking at the structural explanations,” Roberts said. “How to get children to think about these inequalities and also what predicts why a white parent in particular might elicit a structural explanation versus an individual explanation.”

Toward the end of his lecture, Roberts described one of his “all-time favorite” studies, also conducted at Bing. To explore how talking about categories in positive or negative ways can impact children’s thinking, a researcher presented herself as a Hibble and invited children to be Hibbles too (by giving them shirts in the color associated with being a Hibble). Some children were given positive messages about Glerks—that Hibbles really like Glerks and enjoy playing and sharing with them—and some were given negative messages (told that Hibbles do not like or interact with Glerks). When a second

researcher, playing the role of a Glerk, came in and attempted to interact with the child, the children’s reactions to and feelings about the newcomer differed depending on the messaging they’d received. Embedding positive norms around categories, therefore, could be another strategy—in addition to structural explanations—for shaping the way children think about racial bias.

Roberts and his colleagues, who recently submitted a paper on the challenge of helping children understand such complex issues from a young age, acknowledged that many questions remain and their work is ongoing. “These are really big concepts and topics,” he said. “They are really hard for a young child to grasp, and we really need to figure out how to get them to grasp them.” **B**

Watch the lecture at  
<http://youtube.com/bingnurseryschool>

### RESEARCH

## Researcher in Profile: Rondeline Williams on How Environmental Noise Impacts Children’s Learning

By Chia-wa Yeh, Head Teacher and Research Coordinator

---

**H**ow might environmental noise affect children’s learning? Are young children sensitive to the type of sounds that best suits their changing goals?

Rondeline Williams, a fifth-year Stanford graduate student in developmental psychology, has been investigating these questions at Bing Nursery School over the last two years. More than 150 children have participated in her studies.

Williams, a Southern California native, was raised in a family of educators and school workers: Her grandmother was an elementary school teacher for more than 30 years; her mother



a middle school teacher; her father a school bus driver; and her younger brother an elementary school teacher.

As an undergraduate at Cornell University, she majored in psychology and

minored in Africana studies. At Stanford, she works in the Language and Cognition Lab, led by her faculty adviser, Professor Michael Frank. When not collecting data, she enjoys collecting treasures she finds at thrift stores and estate sales across the Bay Area, crocheting, and meditating.

The following is an interview with Williams.

**Tell us about your research interests and your current study.**

I am interested in how young children learn in noisy auditory environments, and I have a special interest in word learning.

The current study explores children’s understanding of the auditory environment’s influence on goal achievement.

### **What got you interested in research about auditory inputs?**

Before coming to Stanford, I worked in a language development lab at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center. There, we studied how deaf children with hearing aids and cochlear hearing implants learn spoken language. For these children, the auditory signal they receive with their devices is degraded and sometimes muffled; their auditory experience is unique. One feature of our study was asking families to take home an audio recording device and record their children’s day. When I listened to these recordings, I was struck by how different the auditory experiences were across families, especially the various noise sources. I started thinking about how noise might be related to language acquisition and implemented a study to examine this. This study is still ongoing, but it has completely changed my research trajectory!

### **Tell us about the studies you’ve conducted at Bing.**

My current study explores children’s understanding of how auditory environments influence goal achievement. In the first study, we introduced 3- to 5-year-old children to two Lego friends, Joe and Mandy. We then introduced them to four small wooden houses lined up on a table with two other Lego characters inside. Attached to the back of each house was an audio button that played one sound—instrumental music, babble from multiple talkers, white noise, or silence. These buttons were hidden from the child’s view to simulate the sound coming from inside the house. Joe and Mandy had a list of four activities they wanted to complete—dancing to music, reading a book, taking a nap, and talking to each other. Children were invited to hold Joe and Mandy and help them decide whether they should complete each activity in a room. We walked through one house at a time by simultaneously opening the door

and pressing the sound button. We then asked children, “Should Joe and Mandy [dance, read, nap, talk] in this room?”

All the activities in Study 1 were familiar activities that the children have probably done at home or elsewhere. Study 2 explores whether children can extend this understanding to activities they have never heard. In other words, is children’s understanding of how auditory environments influence goal achievement flexible? Here, children completed the same task, but we replaced familiar activities with novel ones—frawing: when someone reads you a bedtime story before you fall asleep; gobbing: when you are looking for something fun to do; plipping: when you spin around in circles to a beat; and terbing: when you don’t want anyone else to know your tummy is making noises.

### **What were the results, and what do they tell us about children’s development?**

In Study 1, we found that children were using the auditory signals from each house to decide whether it was appropriate for each activity. This was true for even the youngest children! Data collection for Study 2 is ongoing, but we have preliminary evidence that children are also reasoning about the novel activities. These results suggest that children are sensitive to the sounds in their environment and that they may use these sounds to inform what to learn and how to behave.

### **What was it like to conduct research at Bing?**

Conducting research at Bing has been so much fun! My undergraduate research assistants and I have enjoyed getting to know the children and teachers in each classroom, and it is often a highlight of our weeks. As game-room teachers, we spend several hours in the classroom before inviting any child to participate in our study. We build blocks together, read books at snack time, assist in building sand structures, and participate in anything else the children’s imaginations suggest. This allows us to develop positive relationships with the children so

they feel comfortable and excited about participating in research. My personal favorite feeling is when I walk into a classroom and a child runs up to me excitedly asking to play my game in the game room. Many of the children really do get some pleasure out of participating in research, and that is one of the reasons I continue researching at Bing. At the end of one session, the child participating in the study stopped me and said, “Wait, let’s put Joe and Mandy back in this house so they can sleep.” It was great to see how engaged children were in the game, even after we finished.

### **What are your next steps? What do you plan to investigate further and why?**

We are currently running a follow-up study to the previous two to explore the mechanism that drives children’s auditory environmental sensitivity. Do children rely on association—meaning that activities are conventionally paired with certain auditory environments (e.g., dancing in a room with music on)—or some other cognitively flexible process, one that centers on exploration (e.g., if music is not one of the choices, which room would children choose for the Lego characters to dance in when given room options with noise not associated with music)? If children rely on exploration, this may suggest that they can use auditory information as a cue for where best to learn. This flexibility could be a key to understanding how children learn in noisy environments. We are excited to invite another 72 children to participate in this study in the coming months, and Bing will continue to play a major role in this work! **B**



For Neil [brother]. By Sarina B., 5 years 4 months

# Educator Summer Session 2023: The Power of Imagination in Early Childhood Education

By Adrienne Lomangino, Head Teacher and Pedagogical Specialist, and Emma Vallarino, Head Teacher and Manager of Kordestani Family Program for Parents and Educators

This past July, Bing hosted a three-day session for early childhood educators entitled “Let’s Imagine: Embracing Imagination as the Heart of Education.” As part of the Kordestani Family Program for Parents and Educators (KPPE) at Bing Nursery School, this session was the latest in a long history of offering in-person professional development experiences for early childhood educators—and, with the disruptions caused by COVID-19, this was the first in-person Educator Summer Session since 2019. Thirty educators from California, Arizona, Texas, Virginia, Connecticut, and Georgia gathered at Bing to focus on the topic of children’s imaginations across several days of presentations, a school tour, discussions, classroom observations, activities, and interactive exhibits. The session’s co-creators were Adrienne Lomangino and Emma Vallarino, longtime Bing teachers and the team behind KPPE.

Before diving into the presentations and discussions, the session began with an improvisational group activity called a “stoke,” designed to stimulate the imagination and to get energy flowing, both physically and mentally. We were led by Seamus Yu Harte, a Bing parent and head of learning experience design at the Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford University (commonly known as the d.school). The experience



served as a backdrop for Harte to raise important questions over the three-day session: How do we prepare children for their futures in the unknown and rapidly changing world in which they are growing up? How does the way we think and talk metaphorically about children shape how we view them (e.g., the child’s brain as an empty vessel vs. a house being built)? How can we, as adults, open ourselves up to embrace our own imaginative capacities?

Over the course of the summer session, Bing educators shared five presentations related to supporting children’s imaginations. The first day included presentations by Vallarino and Lomangino: The first focused on what the imagination is and the wide range of thinking processes that involve imagination, from basic perception to far-flung fantasy; the second presentation highlighted play and the arts as “wellsprings” for the imagination.



On day two, Bing head teachers Nandini Bhattacharjya and Parul Chandra discussed how the selection and arrangement of materials in the classroom can support children’s use of their imaginations. This session concluded with a focus on “loose parts,” which are materials that are open-ended, can be moved and manipulated in many ways, and can foster the imagination. From bottle caps to pinecones, sticks to pieces of cardboard, these materials come in any size and may be found in nature or manufactured. Bing teachers Marisa Chin-Calubaquib and Andrea Alexander Gorgazzi put together a hands-on experience that allowed participants to play and engage with a variety of loose parts. The participants headed outside to explore various materials typically available to children in the classroom to perhaps test the flow of water, experiment with balance and gravity, and create mandalas, shelters, faces, and more.

Following this experience and a classroom observation period, the day ended with a presentation on storytelling by Bing head teachers Nandini Bhattacharjya and Todd Erickson. They shared many examples from their classrooms about the power of stories and storytelling to nurture and engage children’s imaginations.



For dada. He'll love it.  
By Fearne H., 2 years 3 months



By Matteo S.-C.,  
2 years 5 months





In the final presentation, Vallarino and Lomangino returned to focusing on imagination as a fundamental human competence, and explained the link between imagination and developing other vital cognitive capacities such as memory, reasoning, conceptual development, creativity, and perspective-taking. Videotaped remarks by the late Sir Ken Robinson, a respected British educator and advocate for returning imagination and creativity to classrooms, echoed many of the session's main themes. "There are very few things that set us apart from the rest of life on Earth," he said. "One of them, I believe, is our inexhaustible power of imagination."

Interspersed among the presentations were opportunities for educators to observe Bing classrooms, have informal discussions, and exercise their own imaginations. The tour allowed them to take in the classroom environment and selection of materials, but once they devoted time to observing, they noticed more about the interactions, both between teachers and children and among peers. During debrief conversations, teachers commented on the children's sense of calm,



as well as their focus, independence, and willingness to help each other.

Small group discussions touched on the importance of wonder for inspiring imagination. Researchers Kieran Egan and Gillian Judson, who have written extensively about education and imagination, asserted, "The educational challenge is to keep the mind awake, energetic, and imaginative. One of the great tools for doing so is the sense of wonder, the sense that allows us to continue to see the world as wonder-full."

Educators visited Bing's "imagination studio" on the second floor of the Tower House, a hands-on space in which to wander, wonder, and create. Bing teacher Kay Erikson had set up a "mini-world" forest scene for teachers to tell stories and an open table for collaboratively creating their ideal early childhood environment with various open-ended materials (corks, wood, wire, cloth). There was also an unusual "gallery" experience with several objects displayed like art pieces and viewers were invited to contribute a title for each. Educators added their wishes to a "wishing tree" and created man-



dalas with natural materials at a table arranged by Bing teacher Laura Benard.

Continuing up the stairs to the top of the Tower, educators found the windowsills lined with children's books curated by Bing teacher Mischa Rosenberg. A small bookshelf held academic books and articles about the imagination. Visitors could also add the titles of their favorite books about imagination to a list.

The Educator Summer Session is intended to provide a meaningful opportunity for early childhood educators not only to think deeply about a topic and how it relates to their practice but also to feel valued both as professionals and as people. Feedback from this year's participants suggested the objective was met, with comments such as "Your workshops make me feel seen and supported in my values as a teacher, and I always walk away having learned so much and with a sense of community." Embedded in Bing's mission is to foster a broader community dedicated to improving the lives of young children and their families—a mission advanced by the Educator Summer Session. **B**

## Promoting Children's Well-Being: Strategies to Help Them Thrive

By Andrea Alexander Gorgazzi, Teacher

In late February, nearly 80 parents and caregivers gathered for a stimulating evening of learning at Bing Nursery School. Denise Pope, Ph.D., presented a seminar, "The Well-Balanced Child," as part of Bing's Kordestani Family Program for Parents and Educators. Dr. Pope, a senior lecturer at the Stanford

Graduate School of Education specializing in curriculum studies, student engagement, and school reform, is the co-founder of Challenge Success, a research and intervention initiative that aims to increase student well-being and reduce unhealthy pressures that students often feel in school. She is also

the author of two books and co-host of Stanford's *School's In* podcast.

Pope began by identifying two goals for the evening: to have parents/caregivers reflect on child-rearing strategies that are already working well for them, and to offer advice on how best to handle stressful

parenting moments. A parent herself, Pope acknowledged the unique challenges parents face post-pandemic as a result of habits born out of necessity or unusual circumstances. Perhaps children spent more time in front of screens while parents worked from home, or children had fewer opportunities to socialize with their peers or extended family, not to mention the fear and confusion over mask-wearing and vaccines. But success for both parent and child is achievable with the right tools. After considering what “success” means in this context, Pope moved on to discuss topics including parenting styles, autonomy, sleep, play, and technology and how setting healthy boundaries helps to raise confident, successful children.



Denise Pope

### Success

“What do you believe defines success?” Pope asked attendees. “What qualities do you want your child to have?” Parents then engaged in a “turn and talk,” sharing thoughts with those around them and finding they shared similar perspectives. Common characteristics of success included: maintaining healthy relationships, feeling content or happy, being able to persevere through obstacles, being physically and emotionally healthy, and having moral integrity. Interestingly, while parents’ aspirations tended to focus on well-being, Pope pointed out that when she asks middle and high school students to define success, they typically focus on academic and extracurricular performance—emphasizing extrinsic as opposed to intrinsic markers of success.

### Parenting Styles

The group then considered various types of parenting and examined which tend to develop healthy parent-child relationships. In the 1960s, psychologist Dr. Diana Baumrind identified three styles of parenting—authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive—while a fourth type, neglectful, was added later by Stanford researchers Eleanor Maccoby and John

Martin. Pope focused on the authoritative style, characterized by a high degree of responsiveness and high expectations (an authoritarian style, by contrast, is low in responsiveness and high in expectations). She described authoritative parents as being warm and responsive to their child’s needs, while continuing

to hold high expectations, to set and uphold boundaries, and to maintain “natural consequences” for the child’s actions. An example of a natural consequence might be, “The last time Mommy took you to the store, you pulled things off the shelves. This time, Mommy won’t be taking you to the store.” To aim for authoritative parenting, Pope encouraged parents to set clear expectations and fair rules. She explained the importance of natural consequences and not complying with a child’s wishes simply to avoid friction and to make a situation easier.

### Autonomy

Next, Pope discussed autonomy and how it relates to the child. Examples of how children experience autonomy include choosing their clothes, picking which activities they participate in, and interacting with peers. Pope explained the benefits of increased autonomy, which include self-regulation, creativity, decreased anxiety, intrinsic motivation (motivated by one’s own interests versus external rewards), and persistence. For the group’s second “turn and talk” session, they were asked, “How is your child developing autonomy and what are the benefits you see?” Their responses

included: dressing themselves, toileting alone, and preparing/helping with meals. The benefits were self-evident. By giving choices, authentic tasks, and resisting the urge to step in, parents can boost their children’s sense of autonomy.

### Sleep

The topic of sleep was a familiar one to parents, as they all had experience putting children to bed (or children refusing to go to sleep). After joking that it can be just as hard for adults to fall asleep and stay in bed, Pope turned to the science of sleep, which has developed rapidly in recent years. Sleep is vital to our physical and mental health as that is the time when many critical processes take place, such as hormone secretion and processing any learning that occurred earlier that day. The impact of insufficient sleep can include decreased energy, increased irritability, and, in teens, heightened anxiety. To set the mood for sleep, Pope suggests maintaining a consistent sleep schedule, with tips including:

- Establish a routine.
- End screen time 30–60 minutes before bedtime.
- Wind down with soothing activities: take a bath, read a book, listen to soft music.

### Play

Next, the group turned to the importance of play. But what exactly *is* play? Pope listed the following characteristics:

- It is self-chosen.
- It is self-directed.
- It is intrinsically motivated.
- It includes the freedom to stop at any time.
- It includes imaginative elements.

The importance of play, according to Pope, is that it can serve as a vehicle for learning. To illustrate, she referred to fort-building: “Imagine your child starts pulling off the sofa cushions. Now imagine they’re adding some blankets, and stuffed animals are strewn about.”



Rainbow house. By Harper X., 4 years 9 months

While Pope acknowledged that the mess might create stress for some parents, when children build forts, they are actually doing math and science. “They’re figuring out ‘If I put this teddy bear on this blanket, it’s heavy and the blanket will stay. But if I take the bear off, now the blanket falls down.’” Think of it as child engineering at work.

Children at Bing have ample opportunities to play every day. Through play, they give themselves over to their imaginations—with time to explore, experiment, and problem-solve. These long blocks of playtime also offer opportunities for the children to take turns, practice conflict resolution, learn emotional regulation, and develop language skills. Pope emphasized that children who attend play-based schools perform better long term both socially and academically. She stressed that play will look different for each of us, but we all need opportunities to engage with others in fun and creative ways to “exercise” our brains and bodies and feel like we are part of a community.

However, extracurricular activities should not be confused with play. Unlike unstructured playtime, these are structured activities that might include music and dance lessons, sports, and art classes. Children do *not* need to be enrolled in extracurriculars at this young age, according to Pope, but if they are, parents should find activities that offer both structured and unstructured time. Examples include music classes that incorporate some free music play or ballet classes that make room for free expression. There is no need to specialize in an activity at this age. For most children,



A helicopter. By Areeb A., 5 years 1 month

starting an activity at a young age does not develop into exceptional skills later, and some research suggests that specializing from a young age can lead to burnout or injury from overexertion.

Pope stressed that aftercare in elementary school is a perfectly acceptable alternative to enrolling in extracurricular activities. But if parents *want* to enroll their child in extracurriculars, one is plenty. She suggests the following:

- Look for activities that are developmentally appropriate for the age group.
- Avoid placing value on competition or the need to win.
- Avoid specializing too young and overscheduling.
- Make sure to allow for downtime.

### Technology

The last topic of discussion was the role of media and electronic devices (anything with a screen and an on/off button). Pope began by acknowledging that technology is advancing faster than ever and what constitutes appropriate screen time is always changing. Still, it is important that parents set and enforce limitations. Parents in attendance shared that their children often use devices during travel, at restaurants, and while waiting in line. Pope agreed that in some social situations, it is perfectly fine for the child to have some screen time (on an airplane, for example, or when they need to be quietly occupied for an extended period of time). For all other aspects of family life, parents should feel empowered to set rules around media, be consistent, and model responsible device usage.

It is important to note that using devices does not support developing intrinsic motivation to complete a task. Consequently, Pope cautioned parents against offering media use as a reward for finishing a task (“If you help clear the dishes, then you can use the tablet”). She also mentioned studies indicating that overusing media can inhibit sleep, free play, physical activity, social

and emotional development, language development, and family bonding. Parents should make an effort to model attitudes and behaviors toward media they would like to see in their children.

Tips for media use within the family:

- Always preview or co-view the content.
- FaceTime or video chats (like talking to relatives) should be regarded differently from other forms of media use because they promote connection.
- Be wary of media labeled “educational” and do your own research.
- Media exposure should end 30–60 minutes before bedtime.
- Avoid digital media or screen time in the bedroom at night or during family meals at home.
- Make space for non-media play.
- Use timers to set limits for screen time.
- Model appropriate behavior.

The evening was a wonderful venue for Pope to share strategies on how to promote children’s well-being while striving for an authoritative parenting style. Parents can show warmth and responsiveness and give choices to their children while at the same time adhering to appropriate expectations and demands. To further these objectives, parents should encourage children to cultivate autonomy at home and engage in activities such as choosing their clothes, helping with household tasks, and self-grooming. Sleep should be treated as an essential component of a child’s health; see to it that they receive the recommended amount. Make time and space for free play and be a play advocate. Extracurricular activities are not necessary but should be chosen carefully and based on the child’s interests. Limit the use of electronic devices with the help of timers, schedules, and clear expectations. These strategies promote autonomy, self-regulation, and an enhanced sense of belonging that help children thrive as they develop into adulthood. **B**

# The Joy of Baking in Our Twos Classroom

By Rinna Sanchez-Baluyut, Head Teacher

**A**t the playdough table, Elliot carefully flattens some playdough using a rolling pin and says, “I’m rolling the dough out to make a cookie!” At the sand area, as Willy fills the muffin pan with sand, he gently places it in the oven saying, “Let’s put it in the oven. Bake it in the oven...10 minutes.” At the kitchen patio, Josiah excitedly shares, “I’m making ice cream pie!”

Children in our Twos classroom naturally gravitate toward kitchen play as they enthusiastically prepare a dish at the playdough table, in the sand, and in the patio area. Cooking play scenarios like these are quite typical in our Twos classes and it is a recurring theme that we witness daily. It is only natural to extend children’s growing interest in cooking after seeing them so involved in this play.

The children take great pleasure in the whole baking process, as the aromas of freshly made pizza, honey bread, banana muffins, and pretzels fill the Twos classroom. During the winter quarter, baking activities in our Twos classroom afforded children rich sensory experiences. The children explored a variety of tactile experiences as they kneaded, rolled, mashed, and mixed dry and wet ingredients together. Children had many opportunities to see the different shapes and sizes and the transformation of ingredients between the beginning and end of the baking process. When we cook, the children get very excited to taste their



warm baked goods during snack time.

Baking has provided countless learning opportunities in our Twos classroom, starting with a social experience for children to come together as a group. With that collective goal in mind, the sense of being part of a community was strengthened. We

were amazed to witness how the children were able to self-regulate their impulses as they waited patiently for a turn to stir, pour, or scoop ingredients in a bowl. The children grew increasingly more cognizant of helping their peers as they noticed when they were needed to hold the bowl in place so it would not tip or spin. While waiting for a turn, the children freely conversed and shared their thoughts and opinions.

When using a variety of ingredients and baking tools, and trying out different baking techniques, children gain first-hand experience understanding cooking terminology and increase their awareness of different ingredients, becoming more proficient in using these terms in their speech and expanding their vocabulary. At the baking table, we could hear the children talking with one another. For instance, as she waited for a turn, Sanaya politely asked, “Can I please have a whisk?” Ella listed the ingredients in her bowl, saying, “I have eggs, butter, and salt inside my bowl,” while Graham announced, “My dough is sticky. I think I need a little more flour,” as he kneaded the dough together.

Children practice mathematical skills as they bake in the classroom. They measure flour using measuring cups and



spoons, count the number of bananas that need to be mashed, and count the number of eggs to be added to the mixture. What’s more, over the course of the quarter and after repeated experiences of following the same recipe, we noticed that the children began to understand the baking sequence and anticipate the next step. While baking honey bread, Ella excitedly exclaimed, “We need to put the water and that [pointing to the yeast] into the bowl!” While making pretzels, Ethan suggested, “Now we can put the cinnamon.” While mixing ingredients for the banana oat muffins, Alina added, “Now we put in the oats!” Following recipe directions allowed the children to have a better understanding that baking is a step-by-step process and must be completed in a certain order.

Fine-motor and hand-eye coordination skills are reinforced as children stir, roll, scoop, and knead. When children have frequent opportunities to bake, their confidence in baking and cooking increases, and parents delight in sharing that their children are showing greater interest in helping them cook at home. Not only does baking offer the children in our Twos classes the chance to develop numerous skills, but this shared social experience also brings much joy to our Twos community! **B**

# A Culture of Kindness and Empathy in the Tuesday/Thursday AM Twos

By Vanessa Ortega, Head Teacher

Evi heard a friend cry, and she turned to me and asked, “Why is she crying?”

Me: “I think she may be sad.”

Evi: “She misses her mommy? Do you miss your mommy?”

Me: “I do miss my mommy sometimes. Do you?”

Evi: “Yeah.”

**A**t the beginning of the school year, the children tend to seek comfort in the teachers. They have some awareness of each other’s distress, and their curiosity sparks many questions. In this case, Evi asked me an initial *why* question. I responded with what I thought was happening. Evi used her knowledge and personal experiences to connect with me and tried to make sense of what was happening.

Dr. Edith Dowley, Bing’s founding director, believed that children’s interactions with significant people in their lives have a substantial impact on their development. She also believed that “in order to invest themselves in exploring the world around them, children must experience

physical and psychological safety.” Bing teachers strive to provide a nurturing environment where children feel safe and valued. We play an important role in modeling kindness and empathy for the children; in times of distress, we might offer a hug or sit down next to the child and read them a book. We meet children in the present moment, and we respond by appreciating the totality of the child’s experience, moment to moment.

For some children, the Twos program is their first school experience that takes them away from their family. It’s a big transition—sometimes easy and sometimes complex. At the beginning of this year, we asked families to send in a family photo. We printed and laminated the photos and kept them in the classroom as a transitional tool for the children. The children carried their family photos as they explored the classroom. The family photo in this context forged a connection between family and school. The children found comfort in holding the photo and identifying each family member to a teacher or a peer. Their family photos traveled around the classroom as the children formed relationships with their teachers and one another. Feeling secure and safe in a classroom setting is integral to forming strong relationships with the people around them.

The roots of empathy start in the early years and develop throughout a person’s lifetime. Empathy is essential for the development of healthy social relationships and character traits like caring and kindness. Empathy does not simply unfold automatically in children; it is an important component of social and emotional development and a skill children learn through practice and exposure to kind, supportive adults who model it for them.



The children in our Twos classroom are beginning to be more demonstrative of empathy toward their families, peers, and favorite stuffed animals. Walk through our Twos classroom and you will see children tending with care to our baby dolls, our classroom pet rabbit Charlie Brown, our stuffed animals, and each other. The children are also beginning to form deeper social connections with one another, demonstrating kindness and empathy in a variety of ways.

Our students are always thinking of their loved ones and their favorite stuffed animals, and they often paint pictures or make food for those dear to them.

*One day, while cooking, Asher announced: “I’m going to cook super yummy strawberries for Anna” (his beloved stuffed animal). Tessa added: “I’m going to make a pear for my Bee” (her favorite stuffed animal). “I’m going to make peas for my baby,” Pippa added, looking over at a doll she had seated in a classroom chair.*

*On another day, Eslan and Pippa were taking care of their beloved stuffed animals.*



Eslan: "What's your cat's name?"  
 Pippa: "It's only a kitty. It's called a kitty."  
 Eslan: "What do your kitty eats?"  
 Pippa: "It's a pretend kitty. It's a kitty stuffy."  
 Eslan: "What does your kitty stuffy eat?"  
 Pippa: "Cat food. It eats cat food."  
 Eslan: "I don't have a cat. I have a bunny."  
 Pippa: "I have a cat stuffy and a pig stuffy."  
 Eslan: "My bunny is cold. I need to get him a blanket. Pippa, does your stuffed kitty needs a blanket?"  
 Pippa: "Yeah, it's cold."

They walked inside the classroom together to get the kitty and the bunny a blanket to keep them warm.

In these two scenarios, the children were taking care of their stuffed toys. The children appeared to be familiar with receiving this nurturing attention from important people in their lives and were in turn tending to the imaginary physical and emotional needs of their beloved stuffies. Eslan was not only concerned about her bunny being cold, but she was also wondering if Pippa's kitty needed a blanket too. Although perspective-taking doesn't always happen in young children, those in our

Two's classroom are well on their way to developing these important empathetic skills.

When the children heard peers in distress, they quickly approached them. Sometimes they asked, "What happened?" and sometimes they immediately brought over the child's family photo. They demonstrated concern for their peer's well-being and took action to try and help them feel better. The children contributed to a classroom community that is kind and nurturing and reflects the empathy they feel for one another, modeling back to us the behavior we do our best to model for them. **B**

## A Tree Is Nice: How Acorns Planted Trees into the East AM Curriculum

By Todd Erickson, Head Teacher

In East AM (EAM), the teachers are always watching and listening like detectives to the words and actions of the children. Through our careful observation and documentation, not only do we understand their motivations, aspirations, and temperaments more readily, but we also discover their wonderings and their passions. This allows us to team with them as we co-construct meaningful curriculum.

In the autumn quarter, for example, a handful of children were fascinated with the acorns that were falling from one of our mature oak trees. After spending many days collecting and studying the acorns, the teachers asked some open-ended questions to extend the children's thinking. "I wonder what's inside the acorn," a teacher said. Another asked, "Can we find all the acorns that are the same color?" and "How many acorns did you find today?" This keen interest in acorns took hold with both younger and older members of our mixed-age classroom, and soon children were examining not only the acorns but also the array of



leaves that were falling from the various trees in our outdoor classroom.

The EAM teachers knew we had something worth investigating more deeply, so we decided to launch an extensive and active study (what we refer to as a "project") about trees. Children, in collaboration with teachers, systematically and scientifically uncovered individual and collective pieces of meaning springing from their focal point. Recent EAM project subjects have included newspapers and helpers in our community.



At the beginning of a project, the teachers often ask the children a few basic questions, such as "What do you know about trees?"

Eloise: "Can I tell you something? The leaves start to fall when it's winter or fall."  
 Makena: "They have sap on them sometimes."  
 Gil: "They have leaves."  
 Kian: "I don't have trees inside my house; I have trees in the backyard."

Amelie: "They have roots to hold them up."  
 Oliver: "I climb trees. I am a squirrel. I can almost reach the sky."  
 Chloe: "Sometimes when trees fall, they could hurt people."  
 Jared: "I love trees."

As we talked about trees, we were reading and singing about them too. During story time and music time, we shared songs and books that featured and celebrated trees. Books such as *A Tree Is Nice*, a Caldecott Medal-winning book by Janice May Udry; *Stuck* by Oliver Jeffers; *Caps for Sale* by Esphyr Slobodkina; and *Kate, Who Tamed the Wind* by Liz Garton Scanlon allowed us to continue thinking about trees during our mornings together, including during daily story time. The children also loved to sing any number of tree-related songs, including "The Green Grass Grew All Around," "There Are Many Pretty Trees (All Around Bing School)," and "Way Up High in the Apple Tree."

All around EAM, the children and teachers continued their collective and interactive inquiry into trees. The outdoor classroom was home to scavenger hunts related to the various types of trees and leaves found in EAM, as well as observational drawings and paintings of our numerous trees. In the sand area, children planted "forests" using fallen sticks, and they sorted tree-related material (bark, leaves, sticks, pine cones) they had discovered on the ground. At the language table, teachers asked children, "What is your favorite type of tree?" and invited them to pick their favorite tree (all found at Bing) from three choices. On the patio, children created forest murals out of paper, cardboard, paper tubes, popsicle sticks, and found materials like twigs and leaves.

After our intrepid children listened to readings of *The Gruffalo* (which takes place in a forest), they were asked, "What do you know about forests?" They had a lot to share in response:

Tommy: "I know! Trees! And rocks! And lakes! And bears. And dirt."  
 Siena: "The forest is in the book."  
 Eri: "Snakes!"  
 Aria: "Watch out!"  
 Will: "Forests are dark."

As fall turned to winter, the EAM community came to appreciate the prescience of our tree project. First, one of our mature maple trees began to split due to the weight of its branches. It was removed and replaced by a much younger incense cedar tree that was cordoned off at first. The EAM children had many thoughts and questions as they welcomed this new tree to our school:

Kiren: "I wonder if it's a flower tree or an evergreen tree."  
 Larkin: "I wonder if it's a Christmas tree. Should we put presents under the tree?"  
 Liam: "Big Frank [classroom bunny] was eating part of the tree. He was eating the leaves."  
 Addie: "The tree is growing for 300 years."  
 Emmeline: "When can we touch it?"  
 Gray: "Will it be taller than the other trees? It will grow for 100 years."

Our ferocious winter storms loosened the roots of one of our mature oak trees, which began to tilt one Friday morning. The children observed from a safe distance, drawing what they noticed and sharing their wonderings:

Tilly: "Are they gonna put the tree back up?"  
 Olivia D.: "These two [trees] are leaning. How did they get leaning?"

Over the weekend, arborists removed our tilting oak tree (which they estimated was well over 100 years old) and left a 20-foot-long section of the trunk and many smaller sections for the children to



explore. The trunk has become a site for sitting, climbing, and jumping. Dramatic play has also sprung out of this large trunk, which has at various times become a pirate ship, a spaceship, a dragon, a home, and a mountain. The smaller pieces from the tree have been employed as tables, seats, wheels, and obstacle course steps. Lastly, the tree stump has transformed into an observation perch, a climbing and jumping challenge, and a spot to honor our old, fallen friend.

Our tree project served as an excellent reminder for children, teachers, and families alike of the vitality of trees and the power of nature. When Bing's founding director, Dr. Edith Dowley, arranged to plant one tree for each child when the school was built in 1966, little did she know how much a part of the community her trees would remain. Dr. Dowley would certainly have been pleased with the vital role the trees played in our hands-on, meaningful classroom curriculum. The children's awareness, connection, and competence grew right along with the trees they were studying! **B**



It's the tree that's falling. By Larkin F., 5 years

# “Strings and Things”: Investigating String, Yarn, and Wire

By Nandini Bhattacharjya, Head Teacher, and Betsy Koning, Teacher

One cold morning in late fall, a group of children in West AM began to industriously wrap yarn around a tree trunk. The teachers had recently observed children using spools of yarn found in open bins of materials in the design area in a variety of ways, but this was out of the ordinary. This child-led activity reminded the teachers of the book *Extra Yarn* by Mac Barnett, which was read for the following week’s story time. Inspired by the book’s main character Annabelle, more children began to wind yarn around the tree and talk about how the yarn was keeping the tree warm on the chilly mornings.

The next week, to honor and encourage their interest in this activity, we gave the children an opportunity to engage with these materials on a smaller scale by providing them with a variety of twigs and yarn at the art table. After working on this project, children spontaneously began searching for twigs in our yard, then found string at the design table and continued experimenting with wrapping. At this point in our process, we had reached the winter break and wondered what would happen when we returned to school after three weeks.

As the children returned to school in the new year, the teachers set up an array of activities involving string to determine if the interest from fall was still present, and if so, to further explore uses for this material with them. The teachers provided opportunities for the class to try out a “phone” made of tin cans and string. Our music specialist introduced the idea of string instruments like the ukulele and violin, which gave rise to a whole new type of woodworking project incorporating string and wire. We used yarn in the water table to show how water would wick along it following the fibers.

As children participated in various string-centered activities, we observed



that they were particularly motivated by two uses for this material: wrapping string around something and threading it through holes. We heard comments like, “This feels like knitting,” and “You can put string through the holes.” Teachers brainstormed ideas for more projects to incorporate these activities and to help make children aware of other ways they could use string.

One of the children pointed out, “We can fly a kite with string.” So out in the yard, teachers offered triangular construction paper, masking tape, string, and hole punchers, and children created colorful kites. They ran across the yard with their kites tethered to a string happily watching them flutter and spin. Some who chose to add a very long string to their kite found it was helpful to wrap their strings around a craft stick to create something like a spool. Singing “Let’s Go Fly a Kite” at story time provided a chance to highlight this activity and share samples of the children’s work with the whole class.

During the same week, we offered a large-scale communal weaving project in the art area. We used garden netting as a base structure, and children wove colored string, yarn, and ribbon through the holes. Children enjoyed this free-form

style of weaving. As they cut long pieces of string and stretched their arms (in some cases walking across the room) to pull them through the grid, we saw them using both fine- and gross-motor skills.

As children demonstrated their delight in threading string through openings, we provided a variety of small materials with holes that could be strung on a length of baker’s twine, such as beads, small sections of paper straws, coiled pipe cleaners, lacy pieces of a balsa wood fan, and craft foam shapes. The children threaded these onto the string to create jewelry, keychains, crowns, decorations, and fishing poles. Some created repeating patterns or sorted through all the baskets to find a favorite material or color.

While talking about uses for fibers, children also pointed out that spiders use a type of “string” to make their webs. They began to make spiders and webs out of art materials, showing an interest in nature’s most skillful weavers. To support and encourage the children’s interest in this topic, we decided to read *The Very Busy Spider* by Eric Carle. We introduced pictures of different kinds of spider webs, and the children were intrigued by the variety of patterns and structures. They learned that a single web might contain different types of sticky thread, and that each category of web captures prey differently. The children studied





the images and started to follow the lines of the webs to make their own versions with white string and double-sided tape. Eric Carle’s story also lends itself to being acted out as a play, and many children attached strings to themselves so that they could pretend to be spiders in their dramatic play. At music time we used string to make a spider’s web and played a game where children pretended to be flies trying to pass through a web without getting caught.



beginning and end of each session. Children remarked animatedly, “It’s getting so long,” “It’s getting longer and longer! Keep knitting!”

Some children learned to finger-knit without needles and were proud of their finished projects that included items like scarves and

snakes. Their interest in knitting led us to explore how yarn is made from sheep’s wool. We wanted to examine the steps involved in making fleece into a ball of yarn. *Farmer Brown Shears His Sheep* by Teri Sloat helped us learn the process in an amusing way.

Toward the end of the quarter, we offered children an opportunity to experiment with wire. They found that although it came wound on a spool like string, its properties were quite different. It was less flexible but stronger and held its shape after using fingers or tools to form it into a shape. Using wire, they found new ways of making sculptures, jewelry, and wands.

We revisited the question: “What can you do with a string?” with the children throughout the quarter and used their answers to inspire new activities. We

made a string trellis in the garden for the sweet peas to grow on and used geoboards to make designs with yarn by wrapping it around rows of nails hammered into wood. Out in the sand area, we explored suspending objects in the air with string, an activity that started out as an attempt to give toy farm animals a ride on a swing and expanded to hanging planets from our willow tree and inventing and then playing a game resembling tetherball. As we gave children occasions to use “string and things,” we saw them start to use string fringed skirts, string hats, purses with handles, stringy tails for ponies, and leashes for their stuffed animals. As Rafaela aptly noted, “A string is long, it’s stretchy and you can knot it. You can wrap a tree with it and make a loopy-loop with it. You can do so many things with it.”

We were delighted to observe the children demonstrating their ability to differentiate between string, yarn, wire, ribbon, and pipe cleaners. For our two-week-long culminating project consisting of small individual weavings, they chose among these materials and found a host of creative ways to use them. We were reminded, as we watched them cut both short and long pieces of the materials and use them with intention, of the words from *Just How Long Can a Long String Be?!?* by Keith Baker: “A string is just as long as you need it to be.” **B**

## Dr. Dowley’s Trees

By Mary Munday, Head Teacher

Looking at Bing Nursery School today, it is hard to imagine that it sits on land that was once nothing more than a hayfield. Prior to the school’s opening in 1966, the architects had told Bing’s founding director, Dr. Edith Dowley, to dream big and she didn’t hesitate to share her vision for creating an environment integrated with nature. Conceiving of an indoor/outdoor education program, she knew that the outdoor area had to be designed in

**“We made the outdoors more important than the indoors so that they would be lured out there,” Dr. Dowley said.**

such a way that it would spark children’s curiosity and desire to learn. “We made the outdoors more important than the indoors so that they would be lured out there,” Dr. Dowley said. “All the outside things—flowers and trees and all the

equipment—were to help children to be intrigued by what they found outside.”

Under her leadership, the architects designed three classrooms, each with its own half-acre play yard with rolling hills. Each classroom has large windows opening to the yard to beckon the children outside. Dr. Dowley planted a variety of trees, with different shapes and heights, branches and leaves, so the children would be inspired to ask

questions about them. “The ecologists would love us,” said Dowley. “There’s one [tree] for everybody. The air is kept nice and clean.”

Nearly six decades later, Bing children are still asking questions about Dr. Dowley’s trees. They collect the fallen leaves and branches and use them in their art and design projects during imaginative play, sensory play, and more. There are a few trees that were not part of the original architectural design, including two in East Room: an olive tree planted by a resident squirrel and a 100-year-old oak that was worked into the design of the half-acre outdoor space.

One Friday morning last winter, teachers arrived after a heavy storm and noticed the roots of the two trees were becoming exposed. Tree experts visited the site and concluded that the trees could not be saved and would have to come down. The section of the yard near the two damaged trees was cordoned off, prompting the children to ask questions. They were curious as to why they could not cross into that part of the yard, and teachers informed them that the trees were moving, making it unsafe. Children gathered clipboards and pencils like scientists and began to draw their observations; they created signs with warnings like “tilted trees,” “wind,” and “do not enter.”

Teachers asked, “Why do you think the tree is falling?”

*“It started last night. Maybe because of the wind.” —Poppy*  
*“Maybe they are too old.” —Hudson*  
*“I want to draw the tree falling down. I want to draw it tilted.”*  
*—Aaron*

When the teachers explained that the arborists needed to cut down the trees so the yard would once again be a safe place to play and learn, the children reacted:

*“I think our trees are saying OW!”*  
*—Ellie*



*“You can make stairs out of the tree so you can go to the top of the house and then stairs so you can go down.” —Adam*

*“This stump is older than Bing.”*  
*—Adam*  
*“My dad’s job is to cut trees.”*  
*—Ellie*

On Monday, when children returned to school, they were quick to notice that the two damaged trees were gone, leaving behind tall stumps and assorted branches and pieces of bough. The teachers wondered: How would the children feel about the change in scenery? How might they use the large branches and large pieces of wood?

**“Look, we found the heart of the tree!”**

As children and parents walked out to survey the change, one parent commented, “Look, we found the heart of the tree!” The arborists had thoughtfully carved a heart into one of the trees and placed smaller stumps around the tall tree stump. Adam walked around to find stairs on one of the stumps and he began to climb carefully. I asked if he remembered his suggestion for what to do once the tree was cut down. “You can make stairs to go to the top of the house and to go back down,” he recalled and then took a flying leap off the stump, landing on the spongy ground below. Other children joined in, climbing, leaping, smiling, and laughing together.

*“This is so fun!” —Sisi*  
*“I like the steps. The steps can hold all of our weight. Heavy people and light people because it is stronger than us.” —Max*  
*“I just love this tree so much. It’s cool.” —James*

In keeping with Dr. Dowley’s vision, Bing’s trees were never just trees but rather vehicles to unleash the children’s imaginations. That’s why even when a pair came down, the children instantly transformed the tree stumps and long branches into restaurants, doctor’s offices, police stations, rocket ships, cars, homes, and a multitude of settings for collaborative play.

We watched the ideas spark and expand each day as more children joined in to devise new scenarios. Props created by the children were brought in—from pretend menus and food made from natural materials to plates and utensils made from the bark and small sticks collected near the stumps. The children even constructed a “hotel” using large blocks and more stumps so that there was a place to stay near the restaurant.

The children in East PM show up every day ready to embrace each new moment, and it is fascinating to see the wonder, discovery, and love they feel in the company of Dr. Dowley’s trees. We look forward to much more adventure and learning in the East Room yard, thanks to the extraordinary vision of one woman who understood that nature is a classroom all its own. **B**

*Please visit Bing’s YouTube channel or <http://lbit.ly/Dowley> for a video featuring Dr. Edith Dowley’s reflection on Bing Nursery School.*

# Learning with Loose Parts

By Nancy Verdtzabella, Head Teacher

*“The materials have their own inner life and their own story to tell. Yet they can be transformed only through their encounters with people.”*

—Elena Giacomini, Reggio Children

In West PM, we select “loose parts” for their open-ended and unlimited potential for use by the children. They can be recycled materials, objects found in nature, or manufactured items. These parts can be moved from place to place, used alone, or combined with other materials. Importantly, there are no prescribed instructions on how to use these parts.

The teachers of West PM are grateful to have access to generous amounts of nature-provided loose parts found in our lush and expansive outdoor setting. The range of natural objects—from sticks, rocks, and pinecones to pieces of wood, tree stumps, branches, and leaves—are freely available and ready to captivate each child’s mind. Some loose parts are available throughout the year, while others come and go with the seasons.

This past school year, the teachers were intentional about highlighting loose parts as an everyday part of our curriculum. In all areas of the learning environment, we designed spaces that allowed for loose parts exploration. In the sand, large fallen branches from a winter storm were transformed by children into a hiding place for safari animals or food



for a hungry dinosaur. In the section of the yard known as the Back 40, wooden blocks, branch stumps, and discarded pieces of wood from a construction project were used by children to create a pinball machine. On the patio, rocks, woodworking pieces, and fallen leaves were assembled to create housing for animals. The two- to three-inch wood pieces we use at Bing for woodworking projects also became loose parts for studying geometry and arithmetic. Indoors, children selected materials from the design area filled with open-ended art and recycled materials to craft robots, remote controls, and bug traps. During a face-making project, loose parts such as wooden blocks, felt, rocks, and buttons became essential components for children to use in recreating facial features.

The materials we use for these types of learning experiences serve as a foundation for a curriculum that fosters engagement in the West PM children.



With repeated encounters, children begin to build a relationship with the many loose parts, revealing their ability to construct their own learning, driven by their curiosity about and

enjoyment in the materials. They use the parts to manipulate, create, and problem-solve. This allows children to decide what they’d like to create or what needs to be solved, granting them a sense of satisfaction and mastery in achieving their personal learning goals.

When teachers intentionally highlight loose parts from nature, the children start to view such materials differently. For instance, rather than running past fallen pinecones, the children noticed, collected, and used them as ingredients for mud pies and soup, as pillars for bridges, bumpers for a pinball machine, and as helpful objects with which to count, explore, and balance.

As the children continued to interact with the natural materials, we observed how their play was sustained by working with loose parts. They maintained focus and did not rush to complete open-ended projects. The children, learning intentionally, were particular about how and where to place the materials. They were careful to problem-solve with the materials to their satisfaction before moving on to another activity. This was evidence of self-efficacy in planning and completing a project from start to finish.

Through repeated experiences with loose parts, the children demonstrated to their teachers and peers the multiple ways loose parts contribute to their creative and cognitive growth. It is awe-inspiring how something as simple as a stick can turn into a valuable resource for creating meaningful early childhood curriculum experiences driven by the children themselves. We wholeheartedly agree with Loris Malaguzzi, the creative mind and visionary behind the Reggio Emilia approach in Italy, when he said, “The wider the range of possibilities we offer children, the more intense will be their motivation, and the richer their experiences.” **B**

# It's More Than a Book: Storybook Extensions

By Parul Chandra, Head Teacher, and contributors Coco Delaporte, Alice Findsen, Sadie Parrinello, Jessica Predom, Amy Shin, Teachers

**Y**ou monkeys, you, give me back my caps! You monkeys, you, give me back my caps!” The children chanted this refrain from *Caps for Sale*, a tale of some monkeys and a peddler, during their dramatic play near the hatstand. They enjoyed revisiting the story we had read a month prior through their play. Many children who typically did not play together were gathered around the hatstand, donning a hat and waving their fingers at the peddler who was demanding his caps back. The shared book experience, the colorful variety of hats on offer, and the mastery over the storyline brought these children together in their dramatic play.

I once had a friend who watched several episodes from *The Office* over and over again. When I asked her why, she said she just felt like it and couldn't explain why. Another friend told me that when she was a child, there were hardly any books in her house except for her grandparents' copy of *The Book of Knowledge: The Children's Encyclopedia* from the 1940s. It included many Grimm's Fairy Tales, but my friend read only her favorite ones repeatedly. When she grew older and got her own copy of *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, she tracked down her favorites from *The Book of Knowledge* and just kept reading them over and over. Yet another friend continues to reread her favorite novels every year, even though she's practically memorized them.

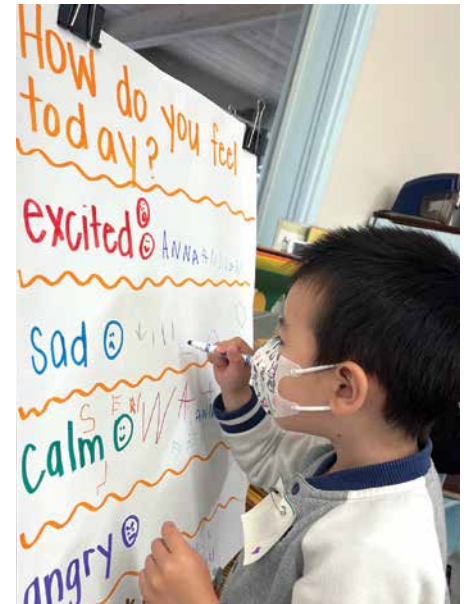
It's a phenomenon we see at Bing and hear about from parents: If a child responds positively to a book, chances are they will ask to have it read multiple times. There's much in the education literature about the benefits to children from hearing a story again and again. But why is this human nature? Is it our need for mastery? Our need for comfort and finding comfort in what's familiar? Is it that we all share a desire to find something in

a story that reflects back to us what we most need to see? At Bing, we observe and honor this phenomenon by rereading books and hearing stories repeatedly, and we use this human need to enhance and expand the classroom experience.

Teachers choose a “key book” to be read at story time for an entire week. This is a book the teachers feel has potential for sustained engagement, as the book will be read aloud every day. In addition, activities connected to the book—both planned and spontaneous—take place outside of story time. The key book is set out on a table for any child to examine on their own. By rereading a book, children become more familiar with the storyline and enjoy retellings. Even after the book is reread throughout the week, children have opportunities for independent exploration, allowing them to enjoy more activities related to the key book. At Bing a book is much more than a physical object—it is as big as a child's imagination. These book-sharing interactions help them build knowledge they then transfer beyond the storybook to everyday meaningful situations. This transfer goes beyond learning: It's the ability to apply newly acquired information to their existing understanding/theories.

This past autumn quarter, story time in Center AM began with reading *Caps for Sale*. At the end of that week, a group of children decided to enact the story as a play. They selected characters, designed costumes, practiced their lines, and acted out the story in front of one another. The book traveled to the patio the following week and was revisited at music time with the children performing their version of the story play accompanied by musical instruments.

Weeks after we'd introduced *Caps for Sale*, the children were still engrossed in their reenactment of the book. The



hatstands in the classroom, adorned with a plethora of hats, served as an invitation for dramatic play as children used them to reenact scenes from the book. By doing so independent of the teachers, the children built on a shared experience that was meaningful to them and allowed them to express themselves in fun and creative ways. For example, while the children played in the Redwood Grove in the yard, they imagined the monkeys hiding behind trees and teased the peddler who was demanding his caps back. Over time, the children came up with a myriad of ways to expand their understanding and love for the book. *Caps for Sale* may have been published over 80 years ago, but the children continually find new opportunities to draw meaning, joy, and creativity from this beloved classic.

At Bing, choosing a key book every week is part of our larger mission to promote literacy in the classroom. We use the word “literacy” to describe the ability to read, write, and comprehend the written word. Although Bing does not “teach” the alphabet and reading to children using a didactic approach, children have



School Friend Is Hiding,” teachers placed images of the children behind colorful houses, and throughout the song the person in each house was revealed. We then asked the children to demonstrate different emotions for their pictures. As each face was revealed, the group was invited to share their hypothesis for how the

person might be feeling, which further expanded the children’s exposure to emotions-based vocabulary.

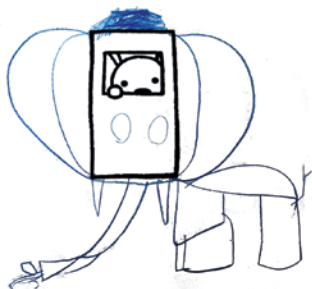
many opportunities to explore literacy in both traditional and nontraditional ways. Beginning with name tags, children identify the written word associated with a friend’s name. They understand that the letters are symbols and, joined together, they make a word. In Ezra Jack Keats’ *A Letter to Amy*, the main character, Peter, writes a letter to his friend. Thanks to the introduction of our classroom mailboxes, where each child has their own, the book inspired the children to write and send letters to their friends. Each year, in our multi-aged classrooms, there are children who are developmentally ready to take this activity to the next level, and, supported by the teachers, they go beyond inventive spelling and begin to read and write through letter writing and mailbox play.

At the start of the week, children defined a box as a thing to put objects in. Inspired by the book and fueled by their imaginations, children began creating boxes using found materials or drawings and articulated diverse purposes for their boxes. Story time served as an outlet for children to share and express their ideas through their own versions of a box. Toward the end of the week, the simple act of drawing a box on paper transformed into fairies, elephants, houses, helicopters, and apples as the children embellished their boxes. Creative and imaginative ideas flowed as the children thought about what they might add to a basic square box. We collected the drawings and compiled them into *Not a Box by Center AM Children*—which became the key book that week, much to the children’s delight. Revisiting their drawings in book form prompted them to imagine many more things a box could represent—from a rainbow, magnet, or elephant to a submarine being washed by a bunny.

During story time, we read the key book but also make time and space for children to share their experiences and creations from the morning. The week spent reading *Not a Box*, by Antoinette Portis, highlighted all the possibilities presented by a simple cardboard box.

In addition to promoting literacy and spurring creativity, books can be a vehicle for children to describe and manage their feelings. *Sometimes I’m Bombaloo*, by Rachel Vail, tells the story of a girl who transforms from her fun-loving self into an angry “Bombaloo” when her baby brother knocks down her block tower. It’s a story that helps children witness an emotional and difficult experience in a playful, relatable way, and we used it beyond story time to expand the children’s vocabulary of expressive language. For example, when story time was centered around the song “My Bing

The classroom focus on story extensions offer Bing’s multi-age groupings the opportunity to develop their emergent literacy in joyful and meaningful ways. These experiences, which start with a key book selection and continue throughout the week, integrate multiple disciplines, including dramatic play, language, music, math, science, and art. Returning to the book at story time creates the framework within which children master the storyline while also serving as a launching pad to make their own stories. Children thrill at being active participants in a story when they are encouraged to extend the story through their play. They are planting the seeds for a love of literature and language that will grow bigger as they do. **B**



An elephant. By Dev C., 4 years 10 months

# From Playing the Erhu to Making Pizza: Parent Participation and Family Engagement in the Classroom

By Chia-wa Yeh, Head Teacher and Research Coordinator, and Kay Erikson, Teacher

One day last winter, a group of children gathered on the rug and listened attentively to a special guest. Evelyn's grandfather, Tian Xiong Wei, demonstrated for the children how to use a bow to play the erhu, a two-stringed Chinese instrument. He played familiar children's songs and an evocative piece about horses galloping across green fields. The children were mesmerized by the distinct and expressive sounds the instrument made. Another morning, Center Room was suffused with the aroma of Indian spices like cumin, mustard seeds, and turmeric as children helped to make curried potatoes for masala dosa with Angelina's grandmother, Dolly Puravath, and mother, Feby Maria Puravath Manikat. "There's more than one way to eat a potato!" exclaimed Parul Chandra, head teacher in Center AM. Kan's grandmother, Zhongmei Zhao, was visiting from China and demonstrated Chinese calligraphy in West AM. Anna's grandfather Mark Volcheff described what it's like to fly planes when he visited Center AM from Colorado. He crafted paper airplanes, read a book about planes, and answered the children's questions.

Parent participation has long been a tradition at Bing Nursery School. Parents might read books aloud, help children explore basic, open-ended materials (blocks, clay, paint, sand, water), and engage in other classroom activities. But

many parents, and grandparents, come to the classroom to share a bit about their backgrounds and cultures, whether by cooking a dish they eat at home, such as buttermilk pancakes, buregs (Armenian cheese pastry), dosas (South Indian pancake), jiao zi (Chinese dumplings), and pizza; demonstrating a hobby or talent, such as calligraphy and music; or describing a work experience like flying cargo planes while serving in the Air Force.

The benefits of parent participation for children and families are manifold. Parents get to share in "funds of knowledge," a concept first coined in 1992 to describe knowledge embedded in the daily practices and routines of families. Decades later, education scholar Luis Moll and his colleagues published *Funds of Knowledge*, a book that explores the concept that families have an abundance of knowledge "generated...on the basis of their experiences, especially their work experiences, their social experiences, and their social history." According to Mariana Souto-Manning, professor of early childhood education at Columbia University, bringing this knowledge to the classroom enriches the curriculum while enhancing children's deeper understanding of their identities and boosting their self-esteem. Family involvement in the classroom not only strengthens the connection between home and school but also benefits the entire class by exposing them to different cultures. Teachers at Bing always strive to nurture an environment that is culturally relevant and responsive to the children and families in their classroom.



What's more, a strong connection between home and school helps parents and teachers build a collaborative, reciprocal partnership, which in turn fosters a supportive and trusting school environment where children can thrive socially, emotionally, and intellectually. When families share treasured recipes, translate songs to home languages, and celebrate musical talents, children develop self-confidence and learn leadership skills. Sharing familial culture also builds a more inclusive classroom community as connections are made and children learn about our similarities and differences.

That inclusive environment extends beyond parents: Collier and Berend's grandfather, Ron Smith, a professional musician who lives in the Netherlands, brought in his guitar and played for the children in East PM. Tyler's 10-year-old sister, Alex, played the cello for the children in Center PM. Abraham's mom, Liza Wang, and nanny, Julie Zhao, prepared jiao zi with the children in Center AM in celebration of the Lunar New Year.

Sharing a home language is another meaningful way that parents have participated in the classroom. When teacher Lindsay Damiano in Center PM invited





families to translate a simple song that was part of her story time, she did not receive any responses. But after the children learned “The Trees in the Woods Go Swish/Swish/Swish” (sung to a familiar tune) in French and Spanish on Monday, she was flooded with audio recordings and translations into the children’s home languages. Parents joined Lindsay in the classroom that week as children learned the song in Turkish, Swiss-German, Greek, and Hindi, and the children continued to practice the languages the following week during music time.

A couple of months later, teachers Amanda Brannon and Paloma Moreno in Center PM featured *The Very Hungry*

*Caterpillar* by Eric Carle at story time. Amanda read the beloved children’s book in English for one week and invited parents via email to read the book in their home language the following week. Parents signed up immediately! They read the story in Farsi, Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, Italian, and Turkish. Children were excited to hear the story narrated in their home language (“I speak that at home with my mom!”) while their peers listened attentively, drawn to the different sounds. Since the children all knew the story well, they were able to follow along with the help of pictures. While reinforcing the partnership between home and school, such experiences also promote children’s curiosity about

and awareness of different languages and emphasize the value of multilingualism.

Family participation and involvement in the classroom doesn’t end when the activity is over. In February, Anthony Sandrik, who had helped the children make Armenian cheese pastry, shared that his daughter, Tilda, asked for Chinese music to be played at home. When he asked why, she explained that it was the Lunar New Year. Tilda had learned about the holiday through cooking projects, music, and stories in her classroom. Her father was only too happy to put some Chinese music on, welcoming an aspect of the Bing classroom—and her learning—into their home. **B**

**M**y husband, Mayank, and I were so excited when our son’s teacher Parul invited us to do a pizza-making activity in Center AM that we changed our travel plans for that long weekend! Alexander was eager to share with his friends how he makes pizza, which he learned from his Italian grandma. We were thrilled to be able to participate in Alexander’s classroom in such a hands-on manner—and even stayed for snack time!



I often cook at home with Alexander, and it was a lot of fun to share the experience with the whole classroom. On that Friday, I was immediately impressed by the children’s curiosity about pizza-making and their unbridled enthusiasm. Each child’s unique approach was a joy to witness—some relished chopping peppers and mushrooms or hand-shredding the cheese, while others took on the challenge of stretching the unwieldy pizza dough. The more adventurous ones were sniffing herbs and tasting the mozzarella as they went. The creatives and scientists alike enjoyed decorating the dough with sauce and toppings—some systematically and some in surprisingly colorful and creative ways. It was also fun to

see parents at drop-off stop by to share their experiences making—and eating—pizza!

After all the hard work by the budding pizzaioli (chefs trained to make authentic Italian pizza), it was satisfying to watch the children devour their artful creations at snack time, trying flavors they had never tasted before, such as oregano, basil, or the combination of peppers and mozzarella.

It was also a learning experience for me to let go of how to “properly” make pizza and embrace experimentation in the way children do. Some of their original flavor combinations are now part of my culinary repertoire!

But the best part of all was a couple of days later when one of the children came up to me at drop-off and said: “I loved your pizza last week! I’m going to start making it at home as well!”

—By Maria Pasquale, Bing parent

# Bringing a Bird's-Eye View into Bing

By Mark Mabry, Head Teacher, with Mischa Rosenberg, Teacher

One of the most compelling parts of Bing's classroom environment for young children is the continuous availability of our natural outdoor spaces. Bing's founding director, Dr. Edith Dowley, wanted to ensure that children would have constant access to the outdoors, and Bing has equipped each nursery room with its own half-acre of rolling hills, lush grass, flowers in perennial bloom, and deciduous and evergreen trees that form a beautiful canopy over their alfresco play spaces. The always-open doors and tall windows in the classrooms beckon children to explore the natural world that awaits them outside. The children eagerly respond to the invitation and embrace rolling down hills; climbing trees; incorporating flowers, falling leaves, blossoms, and seedpods into their cooking play; and having the freedom to run and explore. Often we observe our young students simply lying in the grass, taking the time to stare up at the sky.

In addition to the flora available to children in our yards, there are opportunities for them to interact with the fauna that inhabit these spaces. On rainy days, children are fascinated with the earthworms emerging from their flooded tunnels. They also enjoy upending stumps, peeking under stones, and digging into soil to discover a plethora of tiny creatures: pill bugs, grubs, earwigs, millipedes, and more. Squirrels are often seen dashing through the yards and scampering up the tall redwoods; we even had a pocket gopher make repeated pop-up appearances out of its tunnel this year. Most of the creatures children notice tend to be at ground level, and they often miss those living above their line of vision.

We have been fortunate to have a teacher in Center PM who has brought her passion for "looking up" to our classroom. Mischa Rosenberg is an avid bird-watcher and avian enthusiast who enhanced



her already formidable knowledge about our flying friends by attending what she affectionately refers to as "bird camp" last summer at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in Ithaca, New York. Having a teacher who is excited and knowledgeable about a topic—and being in a perfect "laboratory" to share her interest—inspires children, teachers, and parents.

Mischa started by putting together a chart of indigenous birds, some birding reference books, and binoculars. With her tools assembled, she offered an activity in Center Room's Redwood Grove to any children who might be interested. There were a few children who were immediately engaged and enchanted by the prospect. They were eager to identify the various birds, learn their names, and try to spot them as they made their way from branch to branch, climbing up tree trunks, or flitting and foraging on the ground. Their enthusiasm proved contagious, and soon more children were poring over the charts and trying to catch glimpses of our feathered companions.

As interest in birding in our classroom spread, so did the ways in which children paid attention to the environment around them. They became attuned to

looking up at tree branches to spot birds, and grew excited when they noticed them alighting on the ground. Children were now not only looking for birds but also becoming more alert to hearing birdsong as a clue to their presence.

We often offer "scavenger hunts" in our grove, where children have a list of items to find hidden among the trees, gardens, and structures—usually laminated photos or illustrations affixed with tape. With our growing birding interest, we were able to design hunts involving the actual birds that inhabit our little forest. Children also became adept at knowing the names of the different species they encountered: juncos, titmice, nuthatches, etc.

Mischa offered the children additional resources to enhance their growing fascination with our avian community. She shared illustrated birding fact cards, a digital book of audio birdsongs, and pairs of binoculars, as well as her own extensive birding knowledge. When children wanted to know more about a bird they had spotted or some interesting behavior they had noticed, they would declare, "Let's go ask Mischa!"

We also saw children spontaneously incorporate their interest in our neighborhood birds into their play. Nest-building with natural materials such as pine needles, leaves, and fallen branches as well as recycled materials from our design table became a favorite activity. We had introduced a few songs during story time that feature birds, and children would spontaneously sing these while playing among the redwoods. They would also pause their play to report to a teacher or inform their friends that they had heard a crow cawing, or noticed a junco hopping along the ground adjacent to where they were playing. Indeed, the birds of Center Room had become part of our classroom community.



One of the most fascinating additions to our classroom was a suet feeder placed on the trunk of a mulberry tree near our patio. Many birds wanted to partake of this feast, and children were delighted to see the variety of species that stopped for a snack. Mark Mabry, a teacher who grew up in the Midwest, recalled fondly that when he was a boy, his family would hang suet on trees and watch for chickadees to approach. To his surprise, Mischa pointed out that chickadees are in fact one of our local birds, and if Mark kept watching, he'd see them alight on the feeder!

Unfortunately, our opportunistic squirrels were also drawn to the suet feeder, much to our indignation. In an effort to thwart the furry thieves' efforts,



Mischa and the children at her snack table brainstormed ways to deter the squirrels, including battling them with light sabers, making the suet spicy, and practicing their scariest faces. However, it was our unexpected but welcome winter rainstorms that finally kept the squirrels

from raiding the suet feeder. It turned out that our birds were undaunted by the showers, whereas the squirrels retreated far up into the redwoods to noisily complain about the weather.

Throughout the year, our exploration of our feathered neighbors has been a rich experience in paying much closer attention to the natural world surrounding us and helped us feel a kinship and empathy with the creatures that share our play space. The children at Bing

Nursery School have been gifted with an expansive outdoor environment that not only allows them daily opportunities to run, jump, and cavort outside, but also affords them a stronger connection to and appreciation for the beautiful sights and sounds of the lives all around us. **B**

#### STAFF DEVELOPMENT

## Fall Staff Development Day: The Foundational Principles of Bing, Research, and Dual Language Learning

By Jessica Van Westering, Teacher

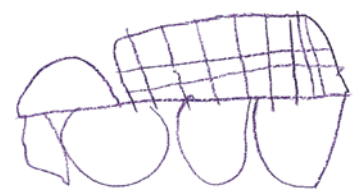
On October 11, the Bing teachers came together for a staff development day, when we discussed (1) child-centered and play-based programs, (2) Stanford research on children's visual exploratory behaviors, and (3) how to incorporate children's home languages into our classrooms more effectively.

We started the day by discussing *Lisa Murphy on Being Child-Centered*, a book that delves into the importance of child-centered and play-based programs, two ideologies the Bing Nursery School was founded on. As teachers, we know that play-based programs are not merely about children "playing." The curriculums we develop, such as games, materials, and projects, are specifically curated to foster children's

foundational skills. This includes social, emotional, and physical development; learning flexibility; creativity; and imagination. Sometimes the children don't even realize their math, literacy, and science skills are being strengthened through their experiential play. For example, building with blocks challenges children to carefully think about the their size, shape, and organization—all components of spatial awareness.

During the same session, Bing teachers discussed the significance of a child-centered learning environment. "Child-centered spaces," Murphy writes, "are structured," though not controlling; "there are boundaries, guidelines, expectations, and adults who are paying attention and acting with intention." This holds true

for the space we create at Bing, where children have freedom of movement, one of the school's founding principles. Each child is in control of what activity they pursue and how long they engage with that activity. Being child-centered also means that the children choose the direction of their learning, with teachers serving as their guides. For example, if a child chooses to build a tower, teachers



A horse truck. By Blaise W., 3 years 8 months

may foster that interest by showing them different building materials, construction tools, or books about towers.

Later in the day, Anjie Cao, a third-year psychology doctoral student at Stanford, presented her research conducted at Bing on visual exploratory behaviors in young children. Her study documented children's visual attention by examining how long they look at animations of appealing characters on a computer. These animations would show up repeatedly, and occasionally novel creatures would

appear. Although the results did not find any developmental patterns, the study was able to provide insight into “looking time” in preschool-aged children.

The day continued with discussions about children for whom English is not their first language, as many of the children enrolled at Bing speak a language other than English at home. Following the practices of Dr. Isauro M. Escamilla, who presented at our spring 2022 staff development day, we discussed ways to better incorporate cultural diversity into

our classrooms. Some ideas we brainstormed include singing songs and reading books incorporating children's home languages and learning common phrases in those languages. We quickly attempted to add these ideas into our practices—much to the enjoyment of the children!

At Bing, we are not only teachers—we are also lifelong learners. Staff development days are the perfect opportunity to reflect on what we have done, actively learn about new ideas, and brainstorm the future possibilities of Bing. **B**

## Winter Staff Development Day: Documentation, Storybook Analysis, and Dual Language Learning

By Coco Delaporte and Amy Shin, Teachers

**O**n an especially windy winter day in February, the Bing staff came together to delve into the topic of pedagogical documentation. Adrienne Lomangino, our pedagogical specialist, and Emma Vallarino, the manager of Bing's Kordestani Family Program for Parents and Educators, led the session by asking us to tease apart a portion of the book *Pedagogical Documentation in Early Childhood: Sharing Children's Learning and Teachers' Thinking* by Susan Stacey.

The community at Bing sees documentation as an essential component of teacher learning and setting a successful stage for children in the classroom. Documentation is collected in the classrooms by taking photos and videos, note-taking, drawing, and transcribing children's words. While most visitors may only get a glimpse of the work on the display boards throughout the school, there's a host of intentions and value that goes unseen. In this article, we will break down the various aspects of play documentation in the classroom and explore actions our teachers take to continuously expand on our current practice.

The portion of Stacey's book the teaching staff examined speaks about using



documentation in the classroom as a means to reflect and highlight experiences that happen on a daily basis. We sift through collected information in order to identify dominant strands of children's thoughts or ideas. Documentation showcases *what* children are doing and what is valuable. The act of synthesizing collected information also serves as a guide for teachers to hone in on what needs support, scaffolding, and further support learning.

Documentation can also be a means for visually presenting what is valuable and important to the community where the children belong. A display of this information can be summarized using

a documentation board displayed in the classroom. This allows for staff and visitors alike to understand and view a classroom's philosophy, approaches, and beliefs. It reflects and illustrates our learning environment, drawing readers in to understand and follow what is happening in the classroom community. Documentation boards can be found in each Bing classroom as well as in the atrium.

Once the teaching teams had an opportunity to discuss the various aspects of pedagogical documentation, we gathered to share our findings. We found that documentation allows teachers to be more mindful of children's interactions and our own biases, misconceptions, and

perceptions about children. They allow us to uncover themes in children's play and reveal next steps to best support their learning. The teams found that they all shared the desire to build a more sustainable culture of documentation.

Another finding from the discussion was the need to revisit photos to analyze patterns of children's interests as they emerge. One strategy was to create a binder for compiling photos and short documentation notes from each area of the classroom to provide quick insight about the classroom in its entirety. Another suggested method was to create a template that can help structure and standardize documentation. Some stated the importance of including one strong anecdote in their documentation per week, while others spoke about placing priority on speaking about documentation during their team meetings.

After the documentation discussion, we delved into an analysis of story time books. Choosing a good storybook is a foundational component of a meaningful story time. To refresh our repertoire and consider the nuances of new and classic books, teachers broke into small groups to examine what to

consider when selecting a high-quality storybook. Some of the visual aspects to consider include whether the book has clear text and illustrations that are also clear and easy to interpret. Other considerations are whether the book is age appropriate, a topic of interest, and accessible for children with different learning needs. Because children feed off their teacher's energy, another important aspect is whether the storyteller is excited about the book. Teachers each brought a book they were excited about to reflect on and introduce to the group.

In the afternoon, director Jennifer Winters shared important statistics about the diversity of our Bing population; for example, there are 48 languages spoken across the Bing community and nearly three-fourths of the children are exposed to a language other than English at home. The floor was then open for teachers to share their own experiences highlighting and appreciating the diversity of languages and cultures in the classroom. Several teachers described how they invite children and their families during story time to translate songs to a language spoken at home. Teachers also shared how each child felt recognized and displayed a sense of pride

when their languages were represented. Mara Beckerman, Bing's music and movement specialist, remarked on how the song "Friends 1, 2, 3" is utilized to help represent the children's languages in the classroom. In addition to singing it in English, she explained how the song can be sung in various languages and how she observed children being overjoyed when their language was represented.

"Learning and teaching should not stand on opposite banks and just watch the river flow by; instead, they should embark together on a journey down the water. Through an active, reciprocal exchange, teaching can strengthen learning and how to learn," the late Loris Malaguzzi once said. He was the visionary thinker behind internationally renowned municipal infant-toddler centers and preschools in the small city of Reggio Emilia in northern Italy, famous for their innovative and progressive educational philosophy and practice. Just as their philosophy rests on the importance of reciprocal learning, the Bing community continues to strive to improve and sustain our learning journey with children and the rest of the community by thoughtfully representing and celebrating each child. **B**

## Spring Staff Development Day: Pedagogical Documentation and Research Exploring Children's Curiosity of the Self

By Amanda Brannon and Rylee Jackson, Teachers

The Bing staff joined together on April 28 to explore the significance of documentation within our classroom communities. We began the day with a presentation from Susan Stacey, early childhood educator, teacher educator, and author of *Pedagogical Documentation in Early Childhood: Sharing Children's Learning and Teachers' Thinking*. The talk, titled "Rethinking Documentation: Revisiting to Become Re-Inspired and Refreshed," demonstrated how documentation can be a way to make children's learning visible.

Through Stacey's presentation, Bing staff reexamined the purpose of our documentation, our intended audience, and our approach to communication. We established that instead of merely recounting events, our reflections should incorporate the *how* and *why* to emphasize the inherent value of sharing these experiences. Stacey drew our attention to the teachings and philosophy originating from Reggio Emilia, Italy. In Reggio-inspired programs, documentation serves as a powerful tool to track the development of young children and effectively

communicate this progress to families. Although Bing is not a Reggio-inspired program, we can see how several principles and practices from Reggio schools are consistent with Bing's philosophy. At Bing, we prioritize valuing the environment as a "third teacher," actively encouraging our colleagues to engage as co-learners alongside the children. Additionally, we place a strong emphasis on fostering child-led exploration and learning, allowing children's interests and natural curiosities to guide our teaching approach. Through these principles,

we create an enriching learning environment that serves as the foundation for our pedagogical documentation.

It became clear that it is crucial for our documentation to resonate with our individual and collective values and goals. During the discussion that followed Stacey's presentation, the Bing staff explored the diverse contexts and cultures within each classroom, recognizing that each piece of documentation can highlight a different facet of Bing's philosophy while also showcasing the children's involvement. Stacey posed myriad questions, inviting the Bing staff to delve deeper, dissect, and reflect upon the following:

- Who is our audience?
- What do we want them to see/understand?
- What can others learn from our documentation?
- Does it provoke thinking?
- What do we tend to document?
- Are we rushing to act or complete, or slowing down to reflect?
- Does our documentation represent our values around teaching and learning?
- What do you take from this documentation about children's ideas and learning?

Following Stacey's presentation, Bing staff walked through the classrooms, taking close looks at each other's bulletin boards, reading the documentation from a stance of curiosity, forming their own questions, and thinking about documentation as a form of research. Some guiding questions to consider were: What does

the documentation tell us about children's thinking? What can viewers learn from this documentation? Teachers engaged in reflective conversations during the walkabout, discussing choice-making and presenting information in different ways.

We then heard from Peter Zhu, a second-year psychology graduate student working alongside Professor Hyowon Gweon in the Stanford Social Learning Lab, who presented on "Investigating Children's Social Curiosity About the Self." We already know that, as humans, we are curious to learn about ourselves (our abilities, traits, personality, and more), but are children curious about themselves and motivated to learn about themselves from others? According to a survey Zhu sent to parents of 2- to 7-year-olds around the country, children regularly exhibit behaviors displaying their curiosity about themselves, such as asking their parent for feedback on something they did. Zhu decided to examine how strong this curiosity is and to try to measure it.

In Zhu's study, children were invited to play a drawing game. They made their own drawings and were introduced to "Jordan" (a child they did not know and who does not in fact exist), who also made a drawing. Zhu then told the children that he would look at each drawing and place them in separate folders, adding a mark if he thought the drawing was "really good" but not if the drawing was "just okay" (unbeknownst to them, all children received the mark). The drawings were "evaluated" out of sight and then offered to the children, but before they were able to look inside

the folders, the researcher "got a phone call" they needed to take outside the room. The researcher exited the room, leaving behind one of the two folders while still keeping an eye on the children. The key question was whether children would peek inside the folder when left alone, and the important difference was which folder they were left with (the one containing their own drawing or Jordan's).

Zhu found that children were more likely to peek inside the folder when they had the opportunity to view their own evaluation (65%) rather than Jordan's (20%). Children were willing to violate an implicit social norm (i.e., not peeking when the researcher leaves the room) to gain information that pertained to them. In future work, Zhu and his team plan to continue this research by using tasks beyond drawing and different forms of evaluation.

There has been plenty of prior work studying concepts of the self, but this research has not yet explored how children are curious to learn about themselves. Zhu's preliminary research suggests that children are indeed motivated to learn what others think of them—early research that has broad implications for children's developing minds.

In the afternoon, we revisited our previous discussion of pedagogical documentation and explored how it manifests in individual classrooms. Each teaching team guided us through its documentation boards and emphasized certain elements they were experimenting with. For instance, the East AM teaching team chose to highlight children's works on a weekly basis to gain fresh perspectives, while the West PM team focused on showcasing open-ended materials, aligning with Bing's philosophy.

Throughout this activity, the Bing staff had ample time to observe, reflect upon, comment, and inquire about the documentation boards in each classroom. This provided valuable opportunities to discuss the intention and purpose behind the topics each team chose for their boards. The staff collectively agreed that documentation is a continuous, fluid process that requires dedicated time for reflection among educators, as well as meaningful conversations and reflections with the children. After all, in a world dominated by adult voices, it is crucial that we as educators highlight the work and amplify the voices of young children whenever we have the opportunity. **B**

### SELF-PORTRAITS



By Asher M.,  
3 years 6 months



By Neil B.,  
3 years 9 months

# NAEYC Annual Conference 2022: Advances in Early Education

By Laura Benard, Amanda Brannon, and Mischa Rosenberg, Teachers

From November 16–19, 2022, in Washington, D.C., 10 Bing teachers joined 6,000 early childhood professionals from across the United States at the Annual Conference of the National Association for the Education of Young Children. The conference featured over 500 presentations, discussions, and events. Attendees were offered an abundance of opportunities to learn from experts and peers, exchange diverse ideas and opinions, and gain inspiration for ways to bring research and curriculum ideas into our Bing classrooms and community. Bing teachers Kathryn Carruthers and Melissa Gier and head teacher Todd Erickson presented “Read All About It!,” describing a yearlong project on daily classroom newspapers. (Please see <https://bit.ly/classroom-newspapers> for Erickson’s article about the project in the 2022 *Bing Times*.) Following are a few highlights:

## Toddlers as Investigators: Making a Shift from Thematic Curriculum to Inquiry-Based Learning; Developing an Emergent Curriculum in Toddler Programs

Melissa Pinkham, author of *Emergent Curriculum with Toddlers: Learning Through Play*, opened her session on emergent curriculum for toddlers by saying that after 35 years as an early childhood educator, she has come to view herself as a combination of teacher, social constructivist, and play methodologist.

“What kinds of play are you observing in 2-year-olds in your programs?” Pinkham asked the attendees. The room reverberated with similar responses: “dumping,” “imitation,” “messy sensory play,” “parallel play,” “knocking things down,” “gross motor play,” “climbing and running.”

The answers might sound to some like activities that are destructive, counterproductive, or risky. However, they

are all important parts of the inquiry-based lens through which toddlers learn about and explore the world.

Pinkham, who leads a toddler program (much like Bing’s Twos Room) at Northeast Los Angeles Forest School, views toddlers as individuals with a strong love of learning and discovery. “You don’t have to observe a toddler for long to recognize that they have a tremendous sense of inquiry and like to test out theories again and again,” she said while projecting images of children in her classroom. The images showed the children experimenting spontaneously with force, motion, and momentum by rolling pumpkins down a hill and with fluid dynamics by carefully observing rocks in flowing water. Ninety percent of human brain development occurs by age 5, and this vital time requires creative and flexible educators who are using developmentally appropriate practices to support cognitive inquiry and growth. Pinkham believes that the best way to support learning and growth at this stage of development is by carefully observing toddlers’ inquiries and developing curriculum that builds on the children’s investigations. That is the cornerstone of an emergent curriculum (and something we wholeheartedly support in our Twos Program at Bing).

Pinkham pointed out the importance of embracing and running with serendipitous moments—like finding insects underneath a stump—since they are rich with educational moments. Following children’s leads and

giving them autonomy and a voice, while scaffolding their learning, allows them to explore the world authentically and starts them on a journey of being lifelong learners and explorers.

In her session, Pinkham shared a quote by Madga Gerber, a world-renowned infant specialist: “Be careful what you

### About Emergent Curriculum

In her presentation, Pinkham clarified what emergent curriculum is—and is not. She also addressed both the challenges and benefits of incorporating this fluid framework into classrooms. To summarize:

#### What it is

- Understanding children’s inquiries.
- Breaking away from scripts.
- Trusting that children have ideas that are meaningful and relevant to them.

#### Why practice emergent curriculum?

- It is child-initiated and respects the voice of the child.
- It allows teachers to build on existing interests of toddlers.
- It provides children with opportunities to further their knowledge.
- It is flexible, allowing the curriculum to be constantly developed.

#### How can we best support and scaffold toddlers’ learning and inquiry in our classrooms (and in our homes)?

Pinkham suggests that educators (and parents):

- Slow down and be present.
- Meet toddlers where they are.
- Model for children and co-regulate with them.
- Let play happen naturally.
- Set appropriate boundaries.
- Pay attention to how you observe. Try not to be obtrusive or too eager with questions or to interject with “direct teaching.”



Rainbow. By Luka L. A., 3 years 9 months

teach, it might interfere with what they are learning.”

**Developmentally Appropriate Practice: What Early Childhood Teachers Need to Know About the Changes in the Fourth Edition of *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs***

In this interactive session, presenters Zlata Stankovic-Ramirez, assistant professor of early childhood education at Coastal Carolina University, and Josh Thompson, professor of early childhood education at Texas A&M University-Commerce, invited attendees to explore the changes in the fourth edition of *Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP)*, a position statement published by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. The presenters also asked us to share reflections of how the changes will influence our individual programs and classrooms. Some of the changes include:

1. Adopting the idea of children’s development resembling waves and cycles rather than the long-standing assumption of development being a linear process.
2. Emphasizing the importance of cultural and community contexts in which young children learn.
3. Expanding the emphasis on the right to equitable learning opportunities for young children and dismantling systems of bias.

These changes closely align with Bing’s emphasis on best practices and our constant striving for innovation and

reflection to maintain developmentally appropriate instruction. Reimagining children’s learning as an ocean wave invites us to reflect on our own development as humans and teachers. Often, we feel we are progressing in certain aspects of life, and sometimes we have regression. The same can be said for young children, and as we learn new skills, there may be minor setbacks. It is also important to recognize that young children are raised in different environments, and our obligation as educators is to understand and embrace each child’s individual social, cultural, and linguistic contexts. The more informed we are as teachers, the easier it becomes to challenge our own biases and assumptions to form a healthy and positive view of the children. This view reminds us that each child has individual learning needs, and it is our job to assess where a child is developmentally in order to meet them where they are.

**Meeting Up with Children’s Lively Minds by Understanding Schemas**

Nadia Jaboneta and Brian Silveira, both classroom teachers and educational consultants from Pacific Primary School in San Francisco, presented “Meeting Up with Children’s Lively Minds by Understanding Schemas.” Jaboneta is the co-author, with Deb Curtis, of *Children’s Lively Minds: Schema Theory Made Visible*.

Schemas are types of play exploration that young children are drawn to naturally and repeatedly. Using anecdotes and photographs, Jaboneta and Silveira discussed eight types of schemas: transporting; transforming; trajectory; rotation and circularity; enclosing and enveloping; connecting and disconnect-

ing; positioning, ordering, and classifying; and orientation and perspective. When adults observe play through these categories, they can notice patterns through which children build cognitive skills and display their astounding capability for learning. Below is a selection of schemas (all eight are discussed at length in *Children’s Lively Minds*):

- **Transporting**, at its most basic level, involves moving objects from one place to another. Stuffing a backpack to the brim with play food and carrying it across the yard is one example. Once a child has arrived at their destination, Jaboneta and Silveira noted, they often “do nothing” with the transported items because it is the process of moving objects that is satisfying.
- **Transforming** involves a child’s power to create change. When a child mixes red and yellow paint for the first time and exclaims, “I made orange!” or when they make a pretend cake by mixing sand and water, they are transforming. Open-ended materials are particularly conducive to this schema as they offer children more freedom to imagine, explore, and see how they can effect change without a pre-designated goal.
- **Positioning, ordering, and classifying** can be seen when children line up vehicles, categorize animals into groups, or create patterns with blocks. “Young children are constantly noticing similarities and differences,” said Jaboneta and Silveira, “and sorting and classifying everything.”
- **Orientation and perspective** involves a literal shift in how a child sees their surroundings. Climbing trees, crouching under tables, peering through holes, or hanging upside down offers opportunities to explore orientation and perspective. High, low, upside down or inside out, if there is an alternate angle to look at the world, children will find it. **B**



Special pumpkins. By Sisi de M., 4 years 5 months



Watermelon. By Rafaela S.-J., 4 years 7 months

# CAAAYC Conference 2023: The Answer Is Play!

By Kay Erikson, Teacher, and Chia-wa Yeh, Head Teacher and Research Coordinator

---

“We’re back!” Adria Taha-Resnick, president of the California Association of Education of Young Children (CAAAYC), joyfully announced at the start of the keynote during the CAAAYC conference. Held in Santa Clara over three days in April, the conference drew over 1,500 early childhood educators—including Bing teachers Kay Erikson and Chia-wa Yeh and doubling the total number of attendees in 2022. The energy in the room was palpable, as teachers and administrators gathered to gain insights from this year’s theme: “Inspiring Curiosity and Exploration.” The conference offered nearly 150 workshops on a broad range of topics, from the latest in neuroscience to exploring developmentally informed environments.

Sally Haughey, founder of Fairy Dust Teaching, an online platform with over a quarter million followers, kicked off the conference with a keynote titled “Bringing Back the Fire.” After addressing the challenges early childhood educators continue to face as a result of the pandemic, she delivered a rousing speech advocating for the power of play. Sharing personal stories from her early years as teacher, she eloquently illustrated how play can strengthen relationships, ignite passion, and bring back joy.

Play was a throughline for a significant number of workshops at this year’s conference, one of which was titled “It’s Not Just Play: Articulating the Importance of Play to Parents.” Presented by Bev Hartman, Bing’s former assistant director, together with Janet Vanides, an early childhood educator, the workshop shared a framework articulating the value of what children learn through play. Using open-ended design materials to illustrate why play is important, attendees were given a small bag of materials and challenged to create something from the contents in five minutes. It quickly became evident

that this “MacGyver” exercise called on critical thinking, communication and collaboration, and creativity—just some of the skills children need to develop and thrive in the 21st century. Workshop attendees left having completed a creative and fun exercise—and having developed their own “statement of play” they could use to articulate the value of children’s play to others. Reflecting on their “play history,” educators discussed modern influences and generational changes that can impact children’s play. Hartman asked, “What is play?” and invited participants to consider a number of thought leaders, like Betty Jones, who have written extensively on children’s play. Quoting Jones, Hartman said, “Young children learn the most important things not by being told, but by constructing knowledge for themselves in interaction with the physical world, and the way they do this is by playing.”

Gregg Behr and Ryan Rydzewski, co-authors of *When You Wonder, You’re Learning: Mister Rogers’ Enduring Lessons for Raising Creative, Curious, Caring Kids*, shared key principles from Fred Rogers’ legacy hosting *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood*. In the second keynote of the conference, “When You Wonder, You’re Learning,” they presented recent evidence that continues to support what Rogers promoted decades ago, such as the importance of connection-building, creativity, and curiosity that were the hallmarks of the *Neighborhood* program.

To nurture children’s creativity, Rogers would introduce children to guests who love what they do—from cellist Yo-Yo Ma and trumpeter Wynton Marsalis to everyday people—to share what brings them joy. Rogers would also regularly engage in painting, cutting construction paper, and building projects that some adults might consider childish, but he made a point of telling children how much he enjoyed those activities. Such

enthusiasm is contagious and can spark children’s desire to try out for themselves what they see others enjoying.

Rogers also encouraged curiosity, modeling how eager he was to learn about the world. He’d show videos of how materials were made (e.g., crayons, spoons) and, in one instance, featured a guest who played music using two spoons. And in his song “Did You Know?,” he would sing, “Did you know? Did you know? Did you know that it’s all right to wonder?...Did you know that when you wonder, you’re learning?...We learn so much by wondering.”

The speakers shared several insightful quotes from Rogers. Among them: “It’s what you bring to the children every day—your listening, your caring, your enthusiasm, and your responding to their ideas, thoughts, and feelings—that encourages and inspires children to ask questions and to be imaginative. By responding thoughtfully to children’s questions...you’re encouraging their curiosity. Even when you don’t know the answer, you’re letting them know it’s good to wonder and ask.”

Behr and Rydzewski also referenced *The House of Make-Believe: Children’s Play and the Developing Imagination* by psychologists Dorothy and Jerome Singer, sharing four basic elements for fostering creativity: 1) an adult who inspires, encourages, and joins in children’s play; 2) a dedicated “sacred space” for that play; 3) unstructured play time; 4) simple objects that enrich the imagination. Our practice at Bing utilizes all these elements.

Bing’s music and movement specialist, Mara Beckerman, presented on the last day of the conference. Her high-energy workshop, “The Power of Creative Movement: Easy, Fun Activities That Build Strength, Focus, Confidence, Creativity, Rhythm, Communication,

and Community,” had the participants singing and dancing for 90 minutes. Starting with warm-up activities, Beckerman shared various movement activities based on patterns that naturally occur during the first two years of a child’s life. These included cross-lateral movement (moving across the body), core distal movement (small and closed to big and open), and vestibular movement (swinging). Then attendees learned dance concepts like space, body, time, and force to consider integrating when

working with young children. The scarf dance was an exuberant activity that put theory into practice as attendees were challenged to explore different ways of waving scarves in the air. Beckerman’s workshop included additional movement exercises like the teapot dance, a clever twist on the song “Polly Put the Kettle On.” “It’s important for children to learn how to move their bodies,” Beckerman shared, and by the end of 90 minutes, educators had learned a host of imaginative ways to help them do just that.

“Play is the powerhouse that drives development,” shared Sally Haughey in her keynote address, and “underneath play is passion.” There was no shortage of play or passion among the attendees and presenters at the CAAEYC conference. With the field of early childhood education entering a unique period, as we welcome children from “Gen C” or Generation COVID into our classrooms, now more than ever, to support both children and educators, “the answer is play.” **B**

## Celebration and Connection Among Campus Children’s Centers

By Marisa S. Chin-Calubaquib, Teacher

---

**T**his past March, I had the opportunity to participate in the spring board meetings for the National Coalition for Campus Children’s Centers (N4C) as secretary of the organization. This nonprofit supports programs for children in higher learning communities through opportunities for leadership, professional development, research, networking, and advocacy. Immediately following the board meetings, N4C held its annual conference and professional institute in New Orleans, welcoming around 200 attendees, and I presented two interactive workshops: “Nature Play and Aesthetics: Organic Pathways for Holistic Learning” and “Reshaping the Look and Feel of Leadership in Early Childhood Education.”

My first presentation focused on clarifying conceptions of nature play and aesthetics while emphasizing their important role in young children’s holistic learning and development. This topic is of particular urgency given widespread concerns about learning loss during the pandemic, and the consequential focus on academics at an earlier stage. The aim was to encourage educators to see that they can nurture development in all areas by organically integrating nature play and aesthetics that promote an inquiry mindset, wonder, curiosity, and creativity—dispositions necessary for academic

excellence and lifelong learning. The presentation included stories, activities, opportunities to discuss and share, photos of nature play and aesthetics in progress, as well as examples of how nature and aesthetics support different learning domains. I also drew from the work of educators from Reggio Emilia such as Lella Gandini, Claudia Guidici, and Loris Malaguzzi to describe and detail aesthetics, as well as the conservation and environmental education of Rachel Carson, Shelburne Farms, and others as they relate to nature play and its benefits to young children and adults alike. Shelburne Farms, a working educational farm in Vermont, has been a place of personal inspiration and growth where I have participated in and facilitated professional development focusing on education for sustainability; cultivating joy and wonder of the outdoors; and farm-to-school connections.

In my second session, I collaborated with three colleagues from other campus schools: Dana Keller Bush, chair of the Department of Applied Human Sciences at Eastern Kentucky University; Kelly Jamison, assistant director of the Collaboratory at the University of Florida; and Stacey Smith-Clark, director of the Pacific Coast Campus Child Development Center at Long Beach City College. This presentation explored the

ever-changing field of early childhood education (ECE), the demands that face the industry, how leaders are being cultivated and forced to change how they direct and manage, and the impacts these changes will have on our campuses and in our communities. External changes trigger the need for internal changes as well. Leadership in ECE can be exhausting and demanding, but with variations in the types of care (including lab schools, center-based, pre-kindergartens, family home childcare, and Head Start programs) and the expectations of those served that differ from family to family, educators are also being forced to adapt. Most ECE professionals aspire to step up and be changemakers, advocating for best practices not only for children and their families but also for staff, students, and higher education partners. Lab schools lead the field for good reason and will be a guiding force for reshaping and reorienting ECE in the future.

This rich presentation considered four varied perspectives from across the country and how these educators and administrators adapted their concept of leadership within themselves, on their teams, and with those around them. Various approaches were shared, examples highlighted, and discussion built in. Topics included accountability in leadership; empowering individuals who are not in



traditional “leadership” roles; the ability to diversify your program by reshaping your leadership approach; the value and importance of self-reflection and self-care; and the impact of re-envisioning not only on the individuals with whom you work but also in your program (the children, families, and overall success) and in the wider community.

I also attended several compelling conference sessions that complemented my presentations and promoted my own professional learning and growth. These included the keynote by Michelle Rupiper, formerly of University of Nebraska, entitled “Growing Forward: Reimagining Our Work,” which emphasized embracing lessons on resilience, reconnecting with our needs, revisiting our pedagogical roots, and redefining ourselves. Sylvia Kohn-Levitt and Daria Bandini of Brandeis University offered “Gardening Together: Building Commu-

nity Connections and School Programs Through Environmental Education.” They explored how centers can use a garden space to grow relationships, funding, interdepartmental collaborations, and university-city goodwill, in addition to joy, outdoor skills, awareness of nature, and meaningful careers. Another informative session, “Designing to Support Teacher Well-Being and Reduce Turnover,” led by Mike Lindstrom and Joanne Hiromura of studioMLA Architects, discussed healthy early education workspaces and shared a wide range of thoughtful design and renovation strategies to improve teachers’ well-being and workplace satisfaction. Amy Bryan of the University of Texas at Austin and Amy Kay of the University of Georgia presented a workshop entitled “The Administrator’s Toolbox: Essential Skills for Reflective Leadership.” The speakers introduced strategies for self-reflection that could support participants in

identifying the important interpersonal skills they already possess, areas for self-growth, and ways to integrate new skills into their professional interactions.

This year’s N4C conference and professional institute prioritized reflecting on the practices and skills honed while we were apart, particularly during the three years of pandemic when the conference was held online, while simultaneously celebrating the opportunity to reconnect with colleagues and programs that inspire and challenge. The organization also made a commitment to refine and refocus to better support and utilize campus children’s centers for the benefit of children, families, students, and the field of early childhood education at large—a commitment that was clearly in evidence in the many sessions spotlighting faculty collaboration and university connection, and reflective leadership and administration from noted programs. **B**

## Creating Cultures of Learning at the International Association of Laboratory Schools Conference 2023

By Jenna Valasek, Teacher

Laboratory schools like Bing serve missions that go beyond educating our youngest learners to include research, instructing university students, and, for some, teacher training. It was therefore inspiring and thought-provoking to join forces with like-minded educators at this year’s International Association of Laboratory Schools Conference in Toronto. The three-day meeting was aptly summarized in the closing remarks by IALS president-elect Chriss Bogert when she reminded attendees, “The work that you do matters. You matter.”

Bing teachers Lauren Matheou and Jenna Valasek were among more than 200 educators from eight countries who attended the conference in late April. The event kicked off with a morning of observing and participating in the nursery

and senior kindergarten classes at the Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Studies Laboratory School at the University of Toronto, which hosted the conference. Organizers gave participants the opportunity to speak with the classroom teachers about curriculum and pedagogy and ask questions about the award-winning laboratory school and research center for learning about child development.

The opening day of the conference was rounded out by workshop sessions, dinner conversations, and the first keynote address from Dr. Pam Baer, an educator and activist who focuses on educational research; gender, sexuality, and schooling; and critical arts-based pedagogy. Baer challenged the audience to think about how we teach about equity and encouraged educators to make room in their practice to share their vulnerability

and personal stories as a way to deepen and advance discussions. The second day included tours of two of George Brown College’s 12 laboratory schools, which range from nursery through high school, both public and private, each with their own teaching, learning, and research missions. Later we enjoyed dinner at GBC’s Waterfront Campus and listened to the evening’s keynote address by



A wildflower for my mom. By Collier M.,  
4 years 11 months

Dr. Niigaan Sinclair, who used the beautiful setting to invite reflections on how Indigenous education informs lab schools.

The final day of the conference offered 30 workshops for participants to choose from, including one of our own, “Be

Our Guest: Seeing Young Children as Honored Guests.” The workshop was an opportunity for us to explain Dr. Edith Dowley’s guiding principle that children at Bing are “treated as honored guests.” We shared ways in which we embody that core philosophy and challenged fellow educators to reflect on how they

too might integrate the practice in their schools. We examined what it means to honor 2-, 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds in our school, both practically and pedagogically, by examining what it means to be child-centered, ways of showing respect, and the role and presence of the educator. **B**

## EVENTS AND INFORMATION

# From Bing to Kindergarten: How Bing Prepares Children for the Next Steps

By Andrea Alexander Gorgazzi and Rylee Jackson, Teachers

**A**s families settle into the new year, parents already have kindergarten on their minds, wondering how to get their children ready for kindergarten, and often asking what readiness even means in this context. These concerns and many others were addressed at the annual Bing Kindergarten Information Night on January 18. Bing staff Nandini Bhattacharjya, Lindsay Damiano, Todd Erickson, Adrienne Lomangino, and Emma Vallarino presented “Perspectives on Kindergarten: The Transition to Elementary School” to an audience of approximately 50 Bing parents.

Todd began the talk by reassuring parents that their children are already off to a great start at Bing. He explained how Bing encourages children to be present in the here and now, something that is often difficult for adults. The importance of Bing as a nursery school as opposed to a

preschool was also noted. The purpose of traditional preschools is to prepare children for the start of formal schooling, whereas our foundational work is based in the inherent nature of the child, promoting exploration, discovery, and learning through play. Through play, children are learning the basic skills they will carry to kindergarten and through the rest of school. Block-building engages cooperation, collaboration, scientific theory, and critical thinking. A game of hide-and-seek with peers connects friendship with teamwork and physical activity. Through games and collaboration, children learn to be a member of a group and community. Children learn they have gifts to contribute while accepting the contributions of others.

Confidence and self-esteem came up repeatedly throughout the night. These terms were clarified when Adrienne

presented the results of a kindergarten transition survey completed by former Bing parents whose children had transitioned to kindergarten the previous year. The survey concluded that children, for the most part, are excited about kindergarten before, during, and after the transition; that the transition tends to be easy or somewhat easy; and that children’s experiences at Bing positively influence their transition to kindergarten in numerous ways. Bing engages children in play that allows confidence and self-esteem to blossom.

As part of Adrienne’s presentation, she shared advice from parents whose children have made the transition to kindergarten. These bits of wisdom included the importance of being positive about the transition—advice that was also emphasized by our Bing teachers—and the encouragement to visit the new school, if possible. Parents suggested preparing the children for what would be different at their new school, such as having a different schedule than Bing’s and fewer teachers. Parents stressed that starting kindergarten is a *transition*, not a one-day event, and to expect possible fatigue and big emotions from the children during the transition time. Both parents and teachers highlighted the importance of ensuring that the children get lots of rest and a healthy diet and not talking about

## SELF-PORTRAITS



By Oma M.-G.,  
4 years 3 months



By Hugo H.,  
4 years 5 months



By Elise F.,  
4 years 6 months



By Zoe H.,  
5 years 5 months

the upcoming transition too much, so as to not create anxiety for the child.

Much of the evening focused on expanding upon the pyramid of building blocks of kindergarten readiness included in a study on the topic called “Are Children Ready for School?: Assessment of Kindergarten Readiness in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties: Comprehensive Report 2005.” The presenters outlined each aspect of the pyramid, underscoring how both Bing and parents can support kindergarten readiness competencies in the pyramid.

Taking inspiration from the pyramid of building blocks, the presenters took turns focusing on the five major areas of readiness: self-care and motor development; social-emotional skills; self-regulation skills; language, communication, and literacy; and mathematical thinking. Self-care and motor development are the foundational skills at the base of the pyramid. The middle section includes self-regulation and social-emotional skills. Academic skills are at the top of the pyramid. Emma emphasized that although kindergarten readiness is holistic, involving all of these competencies working together, the self-care and motor skills form an important base that warrants particular attention. She shared that teachers in the study report that when children come to kindergarten without the academic skills but have the rest of the foundational skills, the teachers can easily teach them the basic academic skills—but it’s more challenging when children show up with academic skills but lacking the other foundational skills.

Emma highlighted the wide range of opportunities children have at Bing to work on the foundational skills of self-care and motor development. From running, jumping, and climbing through Bing’s intentionally designed outdoor classrooms, to molding clay, painting, and writing, children are actively advancing their gross- and fine-motor skills. Children also develop self-care skills by washing their hands independently and managing their backpacks and belongings.

The middle section of the pyramid includes social-emotional and self-regulation skills. Bing teachers foster opportunities for social-emotional growth by encouraging children to play cooperatively, to recognize and label emotions, and to persevere. Ultimately, social-emotional skills are learned through meaningful experiences, which Bing provides. The self-regulation skills are built through following the daily routines, waiting for turns, and participating appropriately in group activities, all of which are practiced every day at Bing.

Looking at the top tier of the pyramid, academic skills are woven into the play-based curriculum throughout the children’s session at the nursery school. Children at Bing develop a love for language and literacy both by listening to and telling stories. They have meaningful opportunities during everyday play activities to practice identifying and writing letters and numbers, and are exposed to songs that promote both literacy and

math skills. They organically engage with numbers, counting, and patterns through games, art projects, and block building.

The night concluded with advice on how to best prepare during the final few weeks before the transition to kindergarten. Lindsay recommended being home for a few weeks before kindergarten starts and to begin adjusting the child’s sleep and eating schedules to their new school schedule. She also suggested practicing morning routines and minimizing changes in the child’s activity before and during the transition.

Ultimately, the takeaway from the night was that kindergarten is a transition, not an event to be treated in isolation. While the first few weeks and months are dynamic and sometimes stressful, it is important to stay positive because the children who leave Bing are both excited for the next step and prepared with the foundational skills necessary for a successful transition to kindergarten. **B**

**END-OF-YEAR CONCERT AND PICNIC** on the lawn with former Bing parents Karla Kane and Khoi Huynh and their daughter, and Bing alumna, Octavia.



# Bing Children's Fair 2023

By Sandi Gedeon, Administrative Director

**A**fter a three-year hiatus due to COVID-19, we were finally able to hold our annual Bing Children's Fair on May 21. Since there were many graduating families who were never able to experience a Bing Fair, we had a tremendous turnout this year at both the Alumni Breakfast and the fair itself. The attendees enjoyed activity and craft booths as well as entertainment, which included live music from Bear Necessity Jazz and Stanford Bhangra Dancers, along with a puppet show from Fratello Marionettes. The incomparable Leland Stanford Junior University Marching Band closed the fair and was a huge hit among children and adults alike.

Over 200 parents prepared goods for the bake sale and the food booths. Cupcakes, brownies, and sweets of all kinds were popular, and nobody could pass up the delicious variety of food, from penne Alfredo to Chinese dumplings to bean and cheese burritos. Many local businesses also donated food and gift cards—an especially meaningful gesture after our three-year hiatus. We want to extend an extra special thanks to our generous donors: Ana's Bakery, Boichik Bagels, Celia's Mexican Restaurant, Coupa Café, Crumbl Cookies, Curry Pizza House, Douce France, Joanie's Café, La Baguette, Lulu's, Pizza My Heart, Jenny



Rahn, Sigona's Farmers Market, Liz Stinson, TaskRabbit, True Food Kitchen, and Vina Enoteca.

On the morning of the fair, we had a record-breaking Bing Alumni Breakfast, with approximately 250 alumni families joining the Bing staff for breakfast. It was wonderful to connect with so many alumni children, as well as their parents, both first-timers and those who have joined our festivities in the past.

We would like to thank our Bing Fair co-chairs, Maureen Fan, Poonam Sidhu, and Alice Siu, for organizing a beautiful fair, as well as the over 200 parent volunteers and Bing teachers and staff who helped with the activity and food booths. Proceeds from the fair benefit the Bing Nursery School Schol-

arship Fund. Bing provides approximately \$350,000 in financial assistance yearly to 20% of our families. **B**



**FAIR CO-CHAIRS:** Maureen Fan, Poonam Sidhu, Alice Siu

**ACTIVITY CHAIRS:** Ticket Sales at Alumni Breakfast: Natalie Chang, Nate Coombs • Bake Sale: Dani Chammas, Amanda Donohue, Jenny Fandrianto • Baseball Toss: Jeff Greenwald • Beanbag Toss: Genevieve Gaines • Cake Walk: Andrea Joseph • Challenge Course: Mary Dicou • Cookie Painting: Liz Stinson • Duck Pond: Miao Li • Easel Painting: Jess Gao, Ping Li • Face Painting: Marina McIver • Finance/Ticket Sales: Shih Ku • Fruit Juice Bars: Gina Kwon • Handprints: Helen Hwang • International/American Foods: Summer Karam • International/American Foods Kitchen: Nandini Bhattacharjya, Jenny Rahn • Pizza Booth: Sarah Davis • Runners Team: Andrew Fandrianto • Saturday Set-Up: Xiaoyu Zang • Spirit Shop: Jane Bryson, Siejen Stevenson • Sunday Set-Up: Robert Luo • Treasure Bags: Danielle Nakamatsu-Wong

# Harvest Moon Auction 2022

By Sandi Gedeon, Administrative Director

On November 12, 2022, after the COVID-19 pandemic had suspended our in-person auction for two years, we gathered for “Bing Goes to Bollywood,” our 33rd annual Bing Harvest Moon Auction, at the beautiful Frances C. Arrillaga Alumni Center on the Stanford University campus. It was a time to celebrate Bollywood style, and mingle with current, alumni, and prospective families. The event supports the Bing Nursery School Scholarship Fund, which provides financial assistance for families in need. As in past years, Helen and Peter Bing were major benefactors with their gift of \$50,000, and in total the auction raised over \$370,000.

Guests arrived in Bollywood-themed garb, entering a tent that had been transformed into an exotic bazaar-like setting decorated with colorful scarves, flowers, elephant statues, and a beautiful gold backdrop on the stage. They were greeted with entertainment by Stanford Raagapella and enjoyed a special Tamarind Twist cocktail and a delicious Indian buffet, including tandoori chicken sliders, samosas with tamarind-date chutney, and spiced shrimp. Desserts were donated by Cocola Bakery & Pastry, Little Sky Bakery, and the Slamkowski family, and coffee by Konditorei. Beverages were a gift of the Hilderbrandt family, J. Lohr Vineyards, and Guayaki Yerba Mate, and some of the festive decorations were donated by GN Event Rental.

Once the bazaar opened, guests perused over 300 silent auction items. As in years past, family-sponsored buy-a-spot events were highly coveted. Attendees rushed to purchase spots at events that ranged from a springtime hike and picnic with teacher Brianna Kirby to a sushi-making class and sake tasting, a children’s cooking class, a champagne tasting with Moët Hennessy, salsa dancing with teacher Paloma Moreno, a make-your-own clay piece, and our first-ever “Bing Under the Stars” campout! We were so grateful to parents in each classroom for their hard work and donations that resulted in over 35 auction baskets with themes including “Children Can Cook,” “Animals from Around the World,” and “Music and Dance.”

Moments before the live auction began, Stanford Basmati Raas performed a traditional Indian dance, and then, dressed in sherwanis, Bing head teacher Todd Erickson and his co-auctioneer and former Bing parent, Adam Tobin, kicked things off. Bollywood partygoers enthusiastically bid on a host of exciting live auction items, including a one-week stay at an oceanfront home in Carmel, California; Golden State Warriors floor seats and autographed jerseys; a story/song by Bing’s own music and



Auction co-chairs: Shara Watkins, at left, and Sonia Chang.

movement specialist, Mara Beckerman; and childcare for a parents’ night out provided by teachers Vanessa Ortega and Melissa Gier. This last item started a bidding war that ended with two nights of childcare, each raising \$13,500. As is tradition, Bing’s resident carpenter, Gene Aiken,

made a beautiful hand-crafted table and chairs—a set that sold for \$11,000. The live auction raised over \$110,000, with another \$230,000 in cash donations made online prior to the auction for the ever-popular Fund-a-Scholarship.

In addition to our longtime donors Helen and Peter Bing, we would like to extend our gratitude to our generous Platinum and Gold family sponsors: the Acton Family, Charlotte and Peter Deng, Ilya and Ewa Fushman, Zubin and Marita Irani, Christina and Jay Kang, Christopher and Mikel Ré, and Laura Yip and Perry Tam. We would also like to thank alumni parent Virginia Gutiérrez-Porter for her beautiful design work, and our very own teacher Mischa Rosenberg for putting together the auction catalog.

A big thank-you to our parent auction co-chairs, Sonia Chang and Shara Watkins, for their vision, leadership, creativity, and dedication. We are also extremely grateful to all of our parent volunteers who devoted time and energy as members of 16 committees. A special thank-you to everyone who donated to the auction and to those who attended. The tremendous dedication of our parents, Bing teachers, and staff made the auction a stunning success! We look forward to seeing everyone at next year’s celebration and auction, which will be held back at Bing Nursery School, on Saturday, April 20, 2024. **B**

## AUCTION CO-CHAIRS: Sonia Chang and Shara Watkins

COMMITTEE CHAIRS: Check-In: Carrie Friedberg, Justin Snapp • Class Gifts: Yan Yu • Cleanup: Nick Mangini, Jeffrey Nagashima • Closing Auction Tables: Zhen Fang, Joey Klein • Creative Writing: Stephanie Bravo, Rebecca Brown • Data Entry: Keri Brenner, Dani Chammas • Decorations: Sangeeta Das, Gayathri Lakshminarayan • Display and Setup: Robert Luo, Aabed Meer, Sharada Sundaram • Events and Parties: Stephanie Lau, Sabah Mansoor • Food and Beverage: Charlotte Fuller, Laura Slamkowski • Graphic Design: Virginia Gutiérrez-Porter, Mischa Rosenberg • Inventory: Susan Klein • Online Auction: Siddhartha Singh • Packers and Movers: Rodrigo Gorgazzi, Ricardo Maldonado • Runners: Ping Li, Garry Sotnik • Solicitations/Scholarships: Mayank Girdhar, Carolyn Kiang, Vu Van • Ticket Trackers: Tim Nguyen

The Bing Annual Fundraising Auction  
(Harvest Moon) is moving to the spring!  
And we are returning to our roots and  
holding the auction back at Bing!

Please Save the Date

# **THE BING SPRING GALA: THE ROARING '20S**

**SATURDAY, APRIL 20, 2024  
6:30 PM AT  
BING NURSERY SCHOOL**

Exciting live and silent auction items,  
children's class baskets and events will  
be available for bidding. We will also  
feature an expanded online auction with  
hundreds of items to bid on.

**WE HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE IN  
YOUR ROARING '20S ATTIRE!**

**ALL PROCEEDS BENEFIT THE BING NURSERY SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIP FUND**