Many people are responsible for the glorious day we enjoyed on June 3! Bing staff and parents met, behind the scenes, each week for six months prior to our 40th Anniversary celebration and swung into action on the day of the event. Our heartfelt thanks to each of them, to the distinguished participants in the research symposium and to Helen and Peter Bing. This memorable occasion exceeded all expectations! A special acknowledgement goes to Bing parent Jean Zambelli (pictured far right with daughters Georgia and Isabel) for designing the lovely invitation and program. The event gave us a feeling of coming “full circle.” Many of us remember founding director, Dr. Edith Dowley, and we were delighted to welcome her nieces and nephews, and their children, to this reunion. It was especially gratifying to see so many Bing graduates and their families return so we could share in their memories of the important early years they spent at Bing and to hear news of their growing-up.

The multiple functions of Bing School — education of young children, research, and training — allow us to promote the importance of the discipline of child study. Many Stanford students who participate at the school go on to be advocates for children in diverse settings. It was a pleasure to hear from parents that the symposium provided information that was practical, useful and inspiring. One parent described the day as follows: “It was so heart warming to see all of the teachers and staff intently soaking in the presentations of Stanford’s and Bing’s famous professors — what incredible...continued on page 4

At Bing Nursery School’s 40th anniversary Stanford psychology professor Albert Bandura, wearing tie, talks to Bing alumni and alumni parents in a Bing research room about his early studies at the nursery school and his subsequent research on self-efficacy.

Bing Nursery School Celebrates Its 40th Anniversary
By Simon Firth, Writer and Bing Parent

A bright day this past June 3rd saw friends, staff, parents, students and university faculty associated with Bing Nursery School gather to celebrate the school’s 40th anniversary.

Bing was designed both as a model nursery school and an on-campus research laboratory for Stanford’s department of psychology, of which the school is officially a part. Almost from its opening day in January 1966, Bing has excelled in these dual roles. The school is internationally recognized for the quality of its teaching and for the influential studies in child development it has enabled.

A review of that research was the focus of the morning’s events. In a symposium titled “Toward a Deeper Understanding of the Development of the Young Child,” an audience of several hundred in Jordan Hall heard two panels of former and current Stanford researchers pay tribute to the school’s essential role in their studies and share some of the results of their work.

In the afternoon, symposium attendees were joined by hundreds more friends, former staff and students of Bing, along
with current Bing families, for a garden party at Bing school itself.

The Symposium
In opening the symposium Sharon Long, Stanford’s dean of humanities and sciences, noted that among the hundreds of studies conducted at Bing over the past 40 years have been “some of the most celebrated in the history of child development.” Bing School, said Long, “is an incredibly special place.”

Dean Long was joined by Laura Carstensen, PhD, chair of Stanford’s psychology department, in acknowledging the many people responsible for making the school a success, among them current and former teachers at the school, visionary Stanford administrators and faculty, and several generations of Bing parents and students.

Both Long and Carstensen paid particular tribute to the Bing family, for whom the school is named. In the early 1960s, Stanford’s psychology faculty wanted to replace an aging research nursery school it was running in Menlo Park with a new, state-of-the-art facility. In the first of the Bing family’s many gifts to the university, Peter Bing, who had just graduated from Stanford, and his mother, Anna Bing Arnold, matched a $250,000 grant from the National Science Foundation to make the department’s dream a reality.

The symposium’s first session focused on research undertaken at Bing on the social development of children. Detailing some of their studies in this area were professors Albert Bandura, PhD, Eleanor Maccoby, PhD, and Mark Lepper, PhD. After a short break Professor Emeritus John Flavell, PhD, and Professor Vikram Jaswal, PhD, of the University of Virginia spoke about their work in the field of children’s cognitive development. [See sidebar]

Symposium participants also found

Symposium Speakers Review Research Conducted at Bing

Leading psychologists shared some of the lessons they learned from their studies at Bing Nursery School, during a symposium held in honor of the school’s 40th anniversary.

In the first session of the symposium, held June 3rd, Albert Bandura, PhD, David Star Jordon Professor of Social Science in Psychology at Stanford, reviewed the studies in social modeling upon which he’d already embarked when Bing opened. The early sixties, he said, was a time “when television had enormously expanded the types of models available to children, including exposure to violence in the home.” The prevailing view was that observing aggression would drain viewers of violent feelings. However, he recalled, “we found the opposite to be true.” His “Bobo doll” experiments, demonstrating that children readily pattern their verbal and aggressive styles of behavior after televised models, underscored the power of modeling to change behavior. These studies are among the most cited in the entire history of psychology. Bandura went on to report how work on the therapeutic power of social modeling that he subsequently pioneered at Bing is being applied globally to change prejudices and detrimental social practices around the world.

The ways in which children and parents interact has been the focus of much of Eleanor Maccoby’s work. Maccoby, PhD, Barbara Kimball Browning Professor of Psychology Emerita at Stanford, spoke of her influential studies on the detrimental effects of stress on parent-child interactions. She also shared a study she ran at Bing with colleague Mary Parpal showing children could be persuaded to comply with a parent’s wishes without resorting to rewards or punishments. Mothers trained to play with their children in an open-ended fashion, she found, had more success in getting the children to follow directions than mothers who had no such system of reciprocity set up beforehand. “What we had done,” said Maccoby, “was to show that reciprocity between parent and child has power.”

Mark Lepper, PhD, Albert Ray Lang Professor of Psychology at Stanford, closed the session with an account of his work investigating children’s intrinsic motivation to learn. Studies he conducted at Bing famously showed that systems of rewards can undermine intrinsic motivations—children who were rewarded for undertaking tasks they’d already shown a preference for, he found, showed a marked decline in
time to reflect on the history of Bing. Former Provost and Professor Emeritus of Psychology Al Hastorf, PhD, recalled the commitment and vision of Edith Dowley, PhD, Bing’s first director, and Robert Sears, PhD, then-chair of the psychology department and incoming dean of School of Humanities and Sciences in the mid-1960s, who were the twin driving forces behind the school’s establishment.

Maccoby, who helped write the application for the original NSF grant, remembered seeing Dowley personally direct the bulldozers carving out the school’s grounds to make their contours varied and interesting to children.

In the break between sessions many other memories were shared. Bing alumnus Bill Bush, whose daughter Elizabeth now attends the school, recalled how, as a young boy, he’d been shown around the grounds of the new school by Dowley and remembered how excited she was about what they were creating.

Retired Bing teacher Bonnie Chandler recalled a favorite tongue-in-cheek aphorism of Dowley’s. “She would say,” laughed Chandler, “that our main job as teachers was to make children more attractive to their parents.” Chandler, who has been associated with Bing for 32 years as a student, class reader and then head teacher and lecturer, remarked that much about Bing hasn’t changed. However, she noted, just recently she was talking to some girls playing at a table in the East Room and had an encounter that seemed very “now.” “I asked the girls, ‘Are you having a tea party?’” recalled Chandler. “And the little girl who was arranging things said to me, ‘No, no, no. We’re doing a deal here!’”

Party at Bing
The afternoon saw the anniversary celebrations move to the Bing campus on Escondido Road where current families, Bing alumni, and former undergraduate students and researchers joined attendees of the morning symposium for a tea party.

Symposium speakers had their work featured in the five research rooms situated in the school’s central atrium. Many of their original studies had taken place in these same rooms. Photographs and graphic displays outlined their research, and for much of the time the researchers themselves were on hand to discuss their work.

Also featured in these rooms were studies in cognitive development by current psychology department faculty Natasha Kirkham, PhD, Ellen Markman, PhD, and Michael Ramscar, PhD, and Professor Eve Clark, PhD, in the department of linguistics, along with work in child social development by Stanford’s Carol
Dweck, PhD, and Walter Mischel, PhD, (now of Columbia).

The school’s play yards were festooned with flags and filled with children and their families enjoying tea sandwiches, fruit salad and cake. Stanford alumnus and Bing teacher Matt Linden roved the grounds with his old time banjo ensemble and the atrium echoed to classical music from Stanford’s Harbour Quartette.

Each of Bing’s three main classrooms was decorated for the day with current student projects and photos from past decades.

One popular display featured photographs of current Bing parents when they were students at the school, paired with pictures of their currently enrolled children. In another, former students were invited to share their memories on a note card headed “once upon a time at Bing I...”

Bing music specialist and head teacher Beth Wise became reacquainted with former Bing student Ty Ripma at the party. “I remembered her playing with dolls and having an interest in children,” says Wise of Ripma. Wise was delighted to see that Ripma’s interest had stuck. Ripma, now a student at UC Santa Cruz, told Wise that when she graduates she’s hoping to work with young children.

The day’s events honored Peter and Helen Bing, both of whom continue to be closely involved with the school. At the garden party, the Bings were greeted by old friends and new. Addressing the morning symposium, the school’s director for the last 17 years, Jeanne Lepper, had thanked the Bing family. “Your initial support to construct the school,” she told Helen and Peter Bing, “your commitment to our scholarship program, your renovation of the building and grounds, and your deep concern for the welfare of the children and the adults associated with the school mean a great deal to all of us.”

Lepper also shared messages of congratulation the school had received from around the world. In one such note Professor Kay Bussey, PhD, of Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia, wrote: “Bing has become the gold standard against which to measure all other nursery schools,” adding that, “In my view it is the greatest nursery school on Earth!”

Lepper was honored herself at the morning symposium, when Psychology Department Chair Laura Carstensen presented her with a plaque that read, in part, “You make the world a better place for children.”

Lepper said she hopes that’s something she and Bing Nursery School can long keep doing.

“This,” said Lepper in her closing remarks, “was a look back at the past 40 years. Now let’s look forward to the next 40.”

—Director’s Column, continued from p. 1

Acknowledgement

Bing Nursery School would like to thank Simon Firth, writer and Bing parent, for contributing the cover story on Bing’s 40th anniversary celebration. Firth’s children, Ada and Michael, currently attend Bing.

Bing Renovation Project Update

The extensive four-year renovation of Bing Nursery School has been completed. The final project, funded by Helen and Peter Bing, was the multi-purpose room patio. The patio was the perfect site for the 40th anniversary luncheon honoring the symposium speakers.
Professor Carstensen Speaks on Longevity
By Emma O’Hanlon, Teacher

When psychologist Laura Carstensen, PhD, watches children at play, she sees future senior citizens. At winter quarter’s staff development day in February, she encouraged teachers to see children from her perspective, at least for a little while.

Carstensen, chair of Stanford’s psychology department spoke about her research on aging and the planned Stanford Center on Longevity, which she will direct. She focused on how her research affects young children’s lives, our educational and cultural surroundings, and on how it will shape the future of our society.

Carstensen began her talk with a history of Bing Nursery School’s relationship with Stanford’s psychology department, highlighting Bing as the “jewel of the Psychology Department” and identifying much of the research done at Bing as responsible for making Stanford’s psychology program number one in the country for over 40 years. Carstensen noted that famous Bing studies like Albert Bandura’s “Bobo Doll Studies,” John Flavell’s research on the theory of mind, Mark Lepper’s work on intrinsic motivation, and Walter Michel’s “Marshmallow Studies,” have brought Stanford and Bing national attention, resulting in cultural change and impacting political and educational policy.

Carstensen’s research at Stanford has focused on the aging process, the emotional and social changes that accompany aging, and aging’s impact on goal setting, emotional experience and emotion regulation. Carstensen, a clinical psychologist, identifies the fields of aging and clinical psychology as complementary, in that old age has been popularly held as a period of “incompetence, loneliness, and depression” and, at one time, was considered a psychological disorder. However, Carstensen’s research has found that emotional well-being actually improves with age, that older people are less lonely than college students and that older adults are in better mental health than younger adults, creating what Carstensen calls the “paradox of aging”—that as life comes to an end people get happier. This finding jibes with the socioemotional selectivity theory, developed by Carstensen, which maintains that as individuals age they become more selective in their relationships, increasing the number of those that are emotionally satisfying and excluding those that are not meaningful. Carstensen also noted that increased happiness in old age has been linked to a decrease in future-oriented goals and expectations for life, reducing stress and pressure on individuals.

Carstensen not only spoke on her body of research on aging, but also commented on recent changes in our population, stressing that in less than a century, life expectancy, defined as the average length of life, has increased over 30 years. Today 12 to 13 percent of our population is over 65 years of age, in comparison to less than 5 percent in 1900, due in large part to the decrease in the infant mortality rate and an increased opportunity for young people to grow old.

Carstensen remarked on the exponential growth of populations in developing countries in comparison to the replacement-level population growth in developed countries and the possible impact of the disparity on political power, the world economy and global resources. The changes in life expectancy and world population demographics and their impact on life expectancy, economics and politics intensify the need for change in society and social institutions.

Carstensen foresees that health issues related to aging, like Alzheimer’s Disease, will become public health problems and that current programs, like Social Security and Medicare, must change to serve the aging population.

The problems associated with adding 30 years to average life expectancy and the changing age distribution worldwide inspired Carstensen to pursue issues that address the resulting political, economical, social and cultural issues. To further this research, she has launched the effort to establish the Stanford Center on Longevity. The center will aim to improve individual’s well-being by changing current models and policies regarding the issues of aging, and making scientific breakthroughs that improve quality of life at all ages. She seeks to bring together researchers from multiple fields to change the way we approach aging and the cultural conversation surrounding aging. The Stanford Center on Longevity already includes faculty from all of the Schools.

Carstensen concluded by discussing how her work pertains to children. She stressed that one of the most important things that needs to be addressed is to change the way we think about longevity and finding ways to help children lead healthier and better lives. Carstensen highlighted our role as teachers and parents in socializing children and shaping their ideas about aging. She also made the point that parents’ attitudes toward the elderly serve as models to their children and become powerful influences on behavior and culture. Carstensen finally discussed with teachers ways in which children’s lives might differ from our own. For example, our children may live through a time in which retirement is delayed in which people enter the workforce in a more graduated way and take a greater amount of time off in the middle of their lives with their families, rather than at the end.

Carstensen’s goal is an ambitious one, but a worthy one—to improve the quality of life for all and to make a better, more appropriate world for all of us to age in. At Bing, where we often focus on the details of growing up, on children’s individual interactions and on the social, cognitive, physical and emotional aspects of a child’s development, Carstensen challenged teachers to consider a bigger picture of the world our children will one day enter independently and the cultural forces that will shape their lives. They will likely be a force for many years. The question for Carstensen is how do we raise citizens who will impact society for decades.
Difficult situations have a tendency to bring out the best and the worst in people—offering an opportunity to rise to the challenge or succumb to the difficulties. Children are no different. Studies have long shown that older children (5th graders) have a tendency to exhibit one of two responses to a challenge. Some children display a mastery-oriented outlook. They maintain a positive attitude and tend to increase their problem-solving strategies. In other words, they rise to the challenge. Others display a helpless response, characterized by doubt in their own abilities and the belief that nothing they do will bring success. These are the ones that succumb.

Stanford psychology professor Carol Dweck, PhD, the Lewis and Virginia Eaton Professor of Psychology, specializes in examining these differences, and conducts some of her research at Bing. She spoke to Bing teachers about her work and how it relates to theirs on February 21 at winter quarter’s staff development day.

Dweck’s work bridges developmental, social, and personality psychology. She earned a doctorate in developmental and social psychology from Yale University and also served on the faculties of Harvard, the University of Illinois and Columbia. She joined the Stanford faculty in 2004, and this year published Mindset: The New Psychology of Success (Random House).

In her talk at Bing, Dweck said that researchers believe that a child’s response to challenge arises from his or her beliefs about intelligence. Helpless children tend to view their intelligence as a fixed trait, while mastery-oriented children tend to view their intelligence as something they can cultivate. Helpless children believe that having ability means not having to try, while mastery-oriented children believe that if they try they can gain ability. Despite a similar level of ability, helpless children are often worse at solving problems.

In the past, researchers thought that preschool age children were immune to such helpless tendencies, said Dweck. The thinking was that young children lack an understanding of what it means to have ability, and as a result were blissfully ignorant of failure. Others saw the blind spot as an evolutionary adaptation allowing young children to learn some of the most difficult tasks in their lives (walking, talking, etc.) without being negatively affected by the challenge.

But Dweck’s research shows that helpless attitudes start early, and that they’re tied to expectations of being punished for not being a “good” child. As described in a 1985 paper (Hebert and Dweck), Dweck and her colleague measured young children’s helpless and mastery-oriented responses using goodness as the frame of reference. They asked the children to complete several puzzles. Some of the puzzles were intentionally too challenging, while others were achievable. After completing the task, they asked the children if they could finish all the puzzles if they had more time and which puzzle they would like to do again if given the opportunity. The helpless children indicated they could not do the hard puzzles and chose to do easier ones, while the mastery-oriented children indicated they could do the more challenging puzzles if they had more time and chose to work on harder ones. The researchers also asked the children how their parents would respond to what they had done. The helpless children were more likely to worry that they would receive criticism or even punishment from their parents. The mastery-oriented children suggested their parents would offer constructive criticism.

Dweck and her colleagues then explored how young children viewed themselves during these situations. Upon receiving negative feedback, two-thirds of the children displayed a mastery-oriented response, characterized by the thought that the setbacks were acceptable, but needed to be fixed. The other third displayed a helpless response, taking the feedback as a measure of self worth that indicated he or she was not a good child. This outlook also affected their ability to find a solution. When asked to finish a story that included a challenge, the mastery-oriented children found a constructive solution to end the story. The helpless children were not able to find a solution and left the story unresolved.

Now Dweck is trying to discover how children get these ideas. One possible factor is shyness. Doctoral student Allison Master is working with Dweck to examine the possible correlation between shyness and the helpless response. Discovering the source of children’s ideas could lead to ways to help them change their ideas.

Dweck is convinced that the mastery-oriented outlook is a more functional model for children. But the question remains, how can people working with young children help them develop this response? Possible interventions include teaching children to attribute results to effort, and teaching them to think of intelligence as something they can cultivate. Dweck has found that the most beneficial criticism focuses on effort or strategy—not on the child’s traits, such as intelligence. Praise of a child’s traits generalizes a specific instance to the whole child and later during times of failure lowers the child’s self-esteem.

Once upon a time, there was a mommy, a daddy, and a baby dragon. They lived in a big castle in China. They sleep under a tree and play at home. By Rachel R., 3 years 6 months
Stanford psychology student Andrei Cimpian spends much of his time at Bing Nursery School. He can often be seen reading stories at snack time and pushing children on the swings. In the past four years, more than 500 children at Bing have participated in his studies in the research game rooms.

Cimpian, now in his fourth year of graduate studies, grew up in Constanța, a port city by the Black Sea, in Romania. He received a scholarship to study at Franklin and Marshall College in 1998. Majoring in psychology and philosophy, Cimpian graduated with honors in both. While at Franklin and Marshall, Cimpian conducted studies on spatial memory with adults and tool use with capuchin monkeys. When asked what he likes about studying in the United States, Cimpian said that he appreciated the opportunity to decide on a major while in college. In Romania, students decide on their majors before starting college and then take an entrance examination for the subject they’ve chosen. “I also like the focus on research and the fact that there are so many professors who are genuinely interested in and dedicated to their research and also to mentoring students,” said Cimpian.

After graduation, Cimpian received a Stanford Graduate Fellowship to study at Stanford under the guidance of Psychology Professor Ellen Markman, PhD. Now at Stanford, Cimpian’s research explores the impact of language on young children’s thought. More specifically, he focuses on a particular type of linguistic construction—the generic sentence. “Generics are sentences that express generalizations about categories—such as, “Kittens are playful”—or individuals—such as, “John likes chocolate,” explained Cimpian. For the past several years, his research has explored a number of questions: How do generic sentences shape preschoolers’ inferences about natural categories? What effects do generic and non-generic praise have on children’s motivation? How do preschoolers determine which sentences are generic?

Cimpian is interested in generics because they are such an important means of conveying knowledge about the world. For example, generic sentences about natural categories—objects that occur naturally in the world, such as cats, dogs, trees, clouds—help children grasp common properties that apply to a category. Similarly, generics about social categories, such as occupational and ethnic groups, might also shape children’s worldview. In contrast, non-generic sentences point out features of individual objects in a category (e.g., “That kitten is playful”; “My nurse is kind”).

The first study in the series looks at kind generics. According to Carlson and Pelletier, kind generics express a property that applies to an entire kind (e.g., “Bananas are sweet”, “Kittens are playful”). Cimpian and Markman hypothesized that children who hear a property phrased generically generalize more than those who hear a property in a non-generic sentence. In this study, 3- to 5-year-old children heard either a generic or non-generic sentence regarding a property of an object. For example, Cimpian showed them a picture of a bird and said either “They are afraid of raccoons” (generic) or “It is afraid of raccoons” (non-generic). The researcher then showed the children three other pictures—a typical bird, an atypical bird, and a giraffe—and asked them if these animals are also afraid of raccoons. The results confirmed the researchers’ hypothesis. Children who heard the generic sentence were more likely to infer that other members of the same category (e.g., the other two birds) are also afraid of raccoons.

One of Cimpian’s studies with particular relevance to parents and teachers looks at individual generics. Individual generics express a property that applies across situations in an individual’s life (e.g., “John likes chocolate”). In contrast, non-generic sentences about an individual report a specific fact or event (e.g., “John had some chocolate last night.”) The goal of this study was to examine the impact of generic and non-generic praise on children’s reactions to challenges. Stanford professor Carol Dweck’s research on helplessness showed that children who receive praise about the whole person (e.g., “You’re a good boy/girl”) are more likely to feel helpless when faced with subsequent mistakes than those who receive praise on process (e.g., “You found a good way to do it.”). This result, Cimpian and Markman argue, might have been obtained because praise about the whole person is generic whereas praise about process is non-generic.

To test this hypothesis, Cimpian and Markman used generic and non-generic praise sentences that were more similar in content than those previously used by Dweck. For example, “You are a good drawer” was the generic praise whereas “You did a good job drawing” was the non-generic praise. Cimpian and Markman were interested in finding out whether children’s motivation would be influenced by this subtle linguistic cue.

In this study, children participated in role-playing with honors student Holly Arce, Stanford senior, using two small dolls. The children had their dolls play the role of a child and the researcher had her doll play the role of the teacher; each held a small piece of pipe cleaner that was used as a pretend pencil.

The researcher narrated stories involving drawing. In the first few stories, the teacher doll gave either generic or non-generic praise of the child doll’s pretend drawing. The researcher simply talked about the drawing without presenting any actual pictures. In a later story, the teacher doll pointed out some missing parts in the pretend drawing. The children...
then answered questions meant to uncover how they thought about the mistake story and whether they would be able to generate strategies for repairing the mistake. At the end of the session, the researcher repeated the scenarios and provided children with positive responses and supportive comments. As predicted, the results showed that children who received non-generic praise (“You did a good job drawing”) were more motivated to repair their mistakes and felt better about themselves and their skill at drawing. Cimpian hopes this study will encourage parents and teachers to be mindful of their own language when speaking to children, since sometimes even praise can backfire.

How do children distinguish between generic and non-generic sentences? Cimpian and Markman investigated whether preschoolers can determine if an ambiguous sentence is generic (e.g., “They like to play with toy cars,” uttered in the presence of a picture of two cats). In this study, Cimpian showed children a picture of two animals, for example, two cats, and told them either, “Let me tell you something about cats” or “Let me tell you something about these two cats,” followed by, “They like to play with toy cars.” Cimpian then put away the picture and asked the children to tell Mr. Elephant (a stuffed animal) what they just learned. To respond without the picture in view, the children needed to decide if the property—playing with toy cars—can be applied to cats as a category. On the other hand, “The cats/those two cats like to play with toy cars,” then they under-stood the property only to the two cats shown in the picture. The findings from this study show that most preschoolers are able to use linguistic information (e.g., “about cats” or “about these two cats”) to determine if an ambiguous sentence is generic or non-generic.

Cimpian’s current research focuses on how children are able to use linguistic information to decide if the property—playing with toy cars—can be applied to cats as a category. This research will constitute part of his dissertation and will further our understanding of the role of linguistic input in children’s development.

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**How to Talk to Children**

*By Neely Zangenehzadeh, Assistant Teacher*

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_Have you ever felt like you didn’t know the right thing to say when helping a child in a challenging situation? Here’s the good news: There is no single right answer. As explained at the parent seminar held April 19, there are many effective ways of handling challenging situations with children. Four panelists, teachers Peckie Peters, Emma O’Hanlon, Quan Ho and Tom Limbert, outlined methods that teachers use to promote effective communication in the dynamic classrooms at Bing Nursery School._

_When children enter their classroom at Bing, they are presented with a multitude of activities from which they can choose to spend their day. Some immediately run to the sand area, where teachers have carefully arranged shovels, buckets and pitchers of colored water that may be used for cooking. Others paint pictures on the easels or ask teachers to help them use a hammer and nails at the woodworking table. Bing overflows with enriching activities for children. However, along with these engaging activities come challenges._

_Children constantly face social situations that require them to negotiate with their peers. For example, Mateo runs to the sand area to dig a hole with his favorite red shovel, but Tommy is already using it to make a volcano. Mei-Mei is building a tall tower for the princess puppet that she made, but Alex walks by and knocks it down. These are common situations that occur at school that call for teachers to carefully guide young children in order to effectively solve problems with their peers._

_The panelists discussed methods used at Bing to promote effective communication during challenging social situations. They explained to a crowd of roughly 80 Bing parents that learning effective communication is an ongoing process that lasts a lifetime. As parents and teachers, we work together to offer children the best tools possible to express themselves. In her introduction, head teacher Peckie Peters comforted parents by explaining that it is natural for children to experience a variety of emotions. But sometimes a child’s manner of expressing those emotions is unacceptable. It is our job as parents and teachers to show children the appropriate words and actions they can use to express themselves._

_Center PM teacher Emma O’Hanlon gave an overview of Bing’s philosophy on how to guide children in their play. She posed the question, “What can we do to help children become better communicators?” and gave suggestions for parents on how they can maximize time spent with their children. Everyday strategies such as talking to children at eye level, using a calm voice and actively listening model strong daily communication skills for children. O’Hanlon stressed the importance of “floor time,” a block of time as short as 15 or 20 minutes each day during which parents participate in their child’s play while following their lead. She emphasized that giving children full..._

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**BING PARENT SEMINAR SERIES**

*How to Talk to Children*

*By Neely Zangenehzadeh, Assistant Teacher*

_Peckie Peters_  
_Emma O’Hanlon_

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_The Bing Parent Seminar Series is made possible through the generosity of Bing parents Violet and Evan Brooks._
attention, communicating with them at eye level and letting them take the lead helps develop a trusting relationship that may counterbalance other moments of frustration. Narrating their behavior vocally can also be beneficial, particularly for children who are learning to speak. For older children, asking open-ended questions that are within their ability level can also help children become better problem solvers. For example, if you see your child is building a tall unstable tower, you might say, “I see your tower is shaking. What can we do to make it stronger?” This kind of open-ended question allows them to develop and test solutions for the problem.

O’Hanlon stressed the value to children of quality time spent with an adult. She explained that consistently modeling appropriate language and behavior for children and helping them identify their needs and read social cues is critical to the process of learning effective communication.

Next, teacher Quan Ho from the East AM classroom provided concrete examples of conflict resolution strategies. Ho posed specific conflicts involving children and walked through the steps of reaching a resolution. He explained that the adult’s role is to act as a mediator and to help children actively participate in conflict resolution themselves. Ho gave an example of two children arguing over the use of a swing at school.

Ho explained that teachers first try to defuse the conflict and make sure that the children are safe. In the case of the swing, the teacher makes sure the children move away from the swing until a solution is reached. Once teachers have created a safe environment they help children identify the problem and explain the situation. To achieve this, teachers position the children so they are facing one another in close proximity. This allows the children to look each other in the eye while the adult paraphrases the problem that they describe.

Having children actively participate by generating ideas and possible solutions is a key step in the learning process. It helps them gain multiple perspectives, said Ho. As adults we can listen to their ideas and offer possible solutions. Once the children reach a fair solution, teachers help them implement their plan. Perhaps most important, stressed Ho, is discussing what children can do “next time” when a conflict occurs.

The final panelist, head teacher Tom Limbert, stressed the importance of language and explained that often children enter conflicts due to the absence of specific language. Limbert explained, “Key phrases such as “Can I have a turn?” or “I don’t like that” are often missing in social conflict among young children. Adults can suggest these phrases to their children in times of conflict. He also explained that language is a tool to help children express frustration. As adults we can help them find the language they need to express themselves.

Limbert also discussed adult-to-child language when setting limits. He advised giving children an explanation when establishing boundaries. He explained that as adults offer explanations children begin to learn values. Then over time, children will develop an ability to be self-regulated when an adult is not present. However, Limbert emphasized the importance of being consistent when setting limits for children. “Set the standard and uphold it!” Limbert recommended.

A question and answer session concluded the evening with a broad array of topics ranging from questions like “Should I make new food if my daughter says her chicken is too slippery?” to “What do you do if you think your child is lying?” The panelists and other teachers in the audience gave a variety of solutions to each question. These suggestions reinforced the idea that many successful approaches to communication with children exist. Developing this skill is a lifelong learning process for people who interact with children.

Creative Expression and Young Children

By Janessa Morriss, Assistant Teacher

With easel paintings filling the drying racks and music filling the yards, Bing Nursery School presents each child numerous opportunities for creative expression each day. On Wednesday, April 26th, the Bing community gathered to learn more about creative expression at Bing and how parents can create opportunities in the home. A recurring theme: Continuous active involvement in open-ended activities both at school and at home boost development of creative expression skills.

Creating the Right Environment

Afternoon Two’s head teacher Kitti Pecka spoke first on creating an environment to promote creative expression. She stressed that children need repeated opportunities that both challenge and reinforce their creativity to help them reach their potential. She added that Bing’s multi-sensory environment offers children a chance to explore and experiment in their own unique way.

Music and Dramatic Play

Pecka and Beth Wise, a head teacher and music specialist, spoke about music as a medium for creative expression. Pecka noted that Bing’s music program is designed to provide many outlets for creativity. Singing, acting out songs, creating musical instruments or props for dramatic play, using musical instruments, watching and listening to musicians play instruments, engaging in rhythmic movement activities and setting literature to music are staples of the music program. These activities can also take place at home. Offering such a wide range of musical experiences helps Pecka and Wise find ways to reach each child. They stressed the importance of providing children with quality musical experiences as a part of
their daily lives. A simple way to do this, said Wise, is to listen to the environment to find musical cues.

From the sounds of a truck to the falling rain, there are rhythms all around us. Helping children hear them and tap them with their fingers or singing to them not only incorporates music into their daily lives but also increases children’s awareness of their world.

Additionally, exposing children to concerts and providing them with a wide range of musical experiences can help foster a lifelong appreciation of music.

**Visual Arts**

East AM teacher Betsy Koning and Center PM head teacher Nancy Howe spoke next on the role of the visual arts and experience. Koning emphasized the importance of the artistic process for a child, noting that while adults may put pencil to paper with a specific end in mind, children often find satisfaction in simply using the materials. She added that much of a child’s creative expression occurs during the artistic process; therefore, one misses much of the meaning by focusing on the end result. But the end result is of interest as well, added Howe. It offers a window into a child’s world—as long as the child has the opportunity to transform a blank paper into anything he chooses, she said.

Art projects can take place at home too, Koning said. She suggested giving children repeated exposure to the same art materials to help the children develop a sense of mastery of the materials and promote creative uses for them. A section for “found materials” in a child’s art caddy is also a good idea, she said. She noted that searching through the house for objects to use, such as milk caps, buttons and pieces of wrapping paper or fabric, can be a fun activity in itself for children.

Other found material activities included sorting, arranging or patterning, and collages. Koning also noted that found materials can easily lend themselves to creating inventions, sculptures and props or costumes for dramatic play.

Koning also discussed drawing and painting. She stressed that an artwork can represent more than just an object, such as sounds and movement, and that they can evolve over the course of the process. She encouraged parents to use affirmative, non-judgmental statements, such as noticing colors or lines used in the child’s work. This provides children with the opportunity to respond and communicate the meaning that they find in their work.

Howe spoke on incorporating a self-help art area or studio into the home. She suggested using a caddy with drawers to neatly store key items such as crayons, colored pencils, pencils, scissors, tape, glue, a stapler and paper of assorted sizes, shapes and colors. An easily accessible and organized space for art materials provides children with independence and can help them learn to care for their tools, she said.

Once the artwork is done, it’s time to display it or store it in a manner that validates the child’s efforts. Designating a bulletin board or even a simple clothesline to display children’s work are two good options. Howe also suggested using albums or binders for smaller items or photographs of three-dimensional work so children can revisit their creations and build upon the ideas in future works.

Visits to public art spaces—museums, sculpture gardens and galleries—also provide great inspiration for children.

Clay

Center AM head teacher Parul Chandra and West AM teacher Nandini Bhattacharjya spoke on the value of working with clay. Chandra began by pointing out the unique and important properties of clay, including its responsiveness and malleability. Its three dimensionality provides children with different spatial perspectives than a two-dimensional art form. Furthermore, Chandra spoke of clay as a forgiving medium since it offers the possibility of change. Working with clay is a very physical process that is beneficial to both upper body strength and fine motor skills, she added.

Bhattacharjya suggested ways to talk to children about clay. She reiterated the importance of talking about the process of children’s work, suggesting words such as flattening, rolling, pinching or poking when talking about the work. It’s best to leave the topic of what the clay object might represent to be initiated by children—should they choose to assign representational properties to their work.

In clay, as in other forms of creative expression, the experience of working in the medium might be more important to a child than the end result, Chandra and Bhattacharjya said. The creative experience is most valuable when children set their own goals and decide for themselves whether they have met them.
Fostering Literacy
By Amy Blasberg, Assistant Teacher

The third seminar in this spring’s parent seminar series, “Fostering Literacy in Young Children,” delved into the fundamentals of literacy, how Bing teachers promote literacy and strategies for “taking it home.” The speakers were East PM head teachers Sarah Wright and Adrienne Lomangino, East AM head teacher Beverley Hartman, East AM teacher Sue Gore, and Center AM teachers Karen Robinette and Meghan Olsen.

The Fundamentals
Acquiring literacy is often thought of as simply learning to read and write, but the very beginnings of literacy emerge as children learn to speak, listen, view and think. For example, literacy calls on thinking skills when a reader makes inferences about a section of text’s meaning and ascertains new words’ meanings from the context. Although oral and written language differ in that oral language is innate and written language is not, they are deeply intertwined and develop concurrently.

Many elements of oral language come into play when children learn to read and write. The first of these elements is a wide vocabulary. The more words a child has in his mental dictionary, the more easily he will recognize these words when he encounters them in a book. Therefore, it is important that parents take time to talk and read to children.

The second element is phonological awareness. Phonological awareness doesn’t necessarily have anything to do with letters, but involves children’s ability to play with sounds. Singing songs is a prime example of playing with sounds. Songs often have rhyming words, and rhyming is another measure of phonological awareness. Segmenting words into syllables also comes into the picture at this point. Clapping out the number of syllables in a word or in children’s names is one way to enhance this skill.

A more specific component of phonological awareness is phonemic awareness. This is the ability to recognize that a spoken word is composed of a sequence of individual sounds. Just like phonological awareness, this process doesn’t necessarily have to do with letters. A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound. It is often smaller than one syllable, but can be larger than one letter. For example, the word “splash” has one syllable, six letters but five phonemes: s/p/l/a/sh.

The fourth element is print awareness. Children begin to understand that print is all around us and is used in a variety of ways. From street signs to post-it notes to nametags, children see that words are used to convey information, which is a very powerful thing. Once they understand that print is everywhere, they can also begin to see that it follows basic rules and conventions.

As all of these levels of awareness come together in children’s minds, early letter and word recognition starts to take place. Recognizing the symbols of letters and labeling those symbols with letter names occurs at this point. Additionally, the critical step of being able to link letter names to letter sounds becomes a common practice.

An often overlooked aspect of early literacy is comprehension. Decoding the words serves little purpose if a child cannot piece together their meaning. Parents, caregivers and teachers should therefore attend to whether children are making sense of what is being said or read to them. Do they make comments or ask questions to show their understanding? Do they relate what is being said or read to experiences in their own lives?

Beyond children’s awareness of print and language, developing their motivation is also an important consideration. Children need not only to be able to read, but to want to read—and to want to challenge themselves as readers, writers and communicators. Children will read more if they associate enjoyment with reading experiences. Thus, it is important for reading to be fun, not a chore.

Literacy at Bing
Bing’s teachers consider literacy to be of prime importance. Fortunately, play serves as a platform for language and literacy, making Bing’s play-based environment an ideal climate for supporting emerging literacy. When teaching letters and conventional written language, it is important to follow the lead of the child. In Bing’s child-centered environment, following the child’s lead is the norm.

When the joy of reading is transferred to a child, the stage is set for developing literacy. Of all the experiences children can have, storybook reading seems to be the most powerful in helping to learn language and gain knowledge about the world. Reading has an important place in the classrooms at Bing. Each room has a cozy spot for reading with parents, teachers, friends and alone. It is important that children see themselves as readers, whether they are reading the exact printed words or not.

One strong example of literacy at Bing came about through East AM’s grocery store project. The idea for the grocery store arose when a teacher chose the book Bunny Cakes by Rosemary Wells for story time. In the story, one character makes repeated trips to the grocery store for cake ingredients. Children took this concept and ran with it. Almost spontaneously, a bakery moved out to the play yard and quickly morphed into a grocery store. Children learned to negotiate with each other over how much of a product they wanted or how much it might cost. Signs sprouted up with pictures of different kinds of food. Materials for reading and writing (such as clipboards) were brought outside to encourage literacy in whatever form it happened to come.

Recalling their own grocery store experiences, the children proved to be enthusiastic shoppers. They also proved their ability to recall specific events in a
specific order, which lays the groundwork for recalling the narrative of a story. Keyboards were brought out to represent cash registers and younger children randomly pushed buttons while older ones looked for certain letters and numbers. Motor development also was apparent as children grappled with the task of opening grocery bags. This skill worked on fine motor muscles so that the same hands opening grocery bags would later have the strength to hold a pencil. The project was then continued inside the classroom as children created their own food items and wrote their own shopping lists. But above all, it is important to remember that play was the medium.

For a child, the single most important factor in developing literacy is being read to by a parent or other person. In addition to reading, an attentive person can spend time talking, listening and simply playing on the floor with the child. This “floor time” allows the child to feel important, understood and noticed. It is also a great time to learn about a child’s specific interests. Following those interests is necessary to create an environment in which children want to read. Checking books out of the library and allowing children to have their own personal collection of books is another way to promote literacy. Parents can model literacy by showing children that they enjoy reading and writing. Inviting children into the reading and writing process is another great way to get create awareness of literacy. From shopping lists to e-mails to homemade greeting cards, children can be involved in the writing process on many levels.

Although it may seem challenging to incorporate these activities, with a little planning they can happen in the car, at dinnertime and while running errands. Children love being involved in “grown-up” activities, and finding a role for them is a wonderful way to encourage their participation in early literacy.

Taking It Home

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Spring is Here... And So Are the Caterpillars

**By Parul Chandra, Head Teacher**

Young children are fascinated by the living things they encounter. They study them like naturalists. This study takes place over days and weeks, thus building their ability to sustain an interest. We began Spring Quarter in Center AM by introducing a monarch butterfly kit with five larvae—also known as caterpillars. These caterpillars provided children with ongoing opportunities to observe and appreciate the diversity of these organisms, to document the changes and develop their own theories about caterpillars. The simultaneous study of butterfly metamorphosis and discussions about developmental changes in plants, tadpoles, silkworms and moths enriched their experiences and extended their thinking.

The children were entranced with the larvae. We noticed that they were “getting bigger and bigger.” At group time we discussed the changes they were observing and made predictions about what they thought would happen next. Children watched them eat and get big and fuzzy. On the 12th day they crawled up and started making a “J” formation. Watching this Hitsch exclaimed: “I notice that there is something like a thumb finger hanging on the top.” We read books about the monarch butterflies because the children were not always present to see all the transformations happening. These books illustrated all the changes, thus clarifying the process for the children who had missed some of these stages. As children noticed what was happening to the butterfly garden, the classroom brimmed with energy and excitement. When children arrived they went straight to the garden to visit their new friends. They took ownership of the project and were very invested in taking care of our caterpillars. Children were able to observe the caterpillars’ skin splitting. We watched them hang in their chrysalises.

Mahmoud noticed:

“They are starting to wiggle and dance.”

Teachers asked the children what they thought it looked like inside the chrysalis. Many represented this understanding through drawings. Anna T. said: “They are growing wings, but we can’t see them. They are shy. They need privacy.” Alex thought: “What if two butterflies came out of one chrysalis?” Children were becoming investigators and researchers as they studied and recorded their observations. Children shared this excitement and newfound knowledge with their families and peers. They were making connections with their experiences inside the classroom and outside. Chloe and Anna encountered a moth at the Hidden Villa Farm and Jack discovered one on the patio in the classroom. Teachers took advantage of these discoveries to enrich the children’s understanding and get them to extend their thinking. We engaged in a discussion about similarities and differences between moths and butterflies. Many theories were generated.

Emilly: “Moths sting, but butterflies don’t.”

Mahmoud: “A moth is camouflaged but a butterfly is not.”

Anna: “Camouflaged means that if they are green, they are green. If they are black, they are black. If they are white, they are white.”

Ben: “Moths have brown wings with different kinds of things on their bodies. Butterflies have brighter wings.”

Children shared stories and anecdotes about what they saw with their families at home, in gardens and on nature walks. Those who were enthusiastic about sharing their experiences brought their parents to the language and discovery tables. Teachers supported this by bringing in books on the topic, researching and investigating with the children to gather information. At group time we focused on related key books to
reinforce and clarify the children’s understanding of what they were observing in the classroom. Teachers supported the children to go further in their initial observations by continually probing for details as children shared their observations and talked about their drawings.

**BAYLOR:** “One caterpillar is growing and growing and growing and growing.”

**EMILY:** “That black fuzzy thing is a baby caterpillar. We can’t see the others; they are in their chrysalis. If one has long wings, we can call it Spiky.”

**HITSCH:** “The black part is the baby caterpillar, maybe it is a baby. That is my idea. I notice that they are small chrysalises. I notice they use spider webs to hang from the top of the jar.”

**ALEX:** “We have to wait two days for the butterflies to come out. I am making a butterfly atlas. It tells us a lot about butterflies and where they live. First, I am doing Asia, now I’m doing North America.”

In a real inquiry into living things, much is unpredictable. Teachers recorded the children’s estimates of how many days it would take for each transformation stage and with the children’s help noted the caterpillars’ progress on a calendar. Many children made a calendar of their own. After making his, David said: “It has been 17 days for the caterpillars. It is going to be more days until they turn into butterflies.” A few days later, he checked his calendar. “It has been 20 days and it is still a chrysalis.” Children realized that sometimes growth is not predictable. Some of our caterpillars did not go through all the stages in their life cycle. Children saw differences in growth rates and even deaths. The children were becoming scientists as they observed and recorded data through their drawings, stories and theories. We waited for the final stage with much anticipation. On the 22nd day something amazing happened. The children witnessed a birth! The chrysalis changed color, becoming transparent. The children pressed their noses against the garden mesh; eyes wide open, looking at the newborn butterflies. They patientely awaited each butterfly’s arrival, preparing the garden with sugar water and fresh flowers, and singing songs to welcome them into the world.

Children extended their experiences with the butterflies to other areas of the classroom. They represented their understanding of the topic through their dramatic play. They wiggled like caterpillars and flew like butterflies during movement activities. They created three-dimensional representations of the different stages through clay, playdough, wood, blocks, paper, pipe cleaners and found materials. They narrated butterfly stories both descriptive and poetic. Documentation with photographs as well as observational drawings by the children helped to keep the process visible over the weeks. Children shared their observations and stories about the butterflies in group discussions, which gave them a chance to tell their stories and hear the perspectives of others. The discussions also helped us assess our group’s understanding of the topic, identify concepts that children were struggling with and plan ways to follow up. These were some of the additional questions examined throughout the project by the group:

- “How are the caterpillars going to turn into butterflies?”
- “What are butterflies eating?”
- “Why did one caterpillar die?”
- “What is the biggest butterfly of all?”
- “How are the caterpillars going to turn into butterflies?”
- “What do butterflies eat?”
- “Why did one caterpillar die?”
- “Why is the chrysalis shaking?”
- “What if we accidentally crack open the chrysalis?”
- “How do they hang from the lid?”
- “Why is there a spider web in the jar?”
- “What do butterflies eat?”
- “How are the caterpillars growing?”

Children were able to answer these questions as they explored and investigated together. Talking about what they had learned was easier as they revisited their observational drawings, photographs and other documentations of their daily recordings.

After a few days we released the butterflies near our garden. Children formed a circle and sang songs as we watched them strengthen their wings and take flight.

**JADAH:** “We are singing *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* and then it flew away. It was on the flower and then it flew high.”

**ADAM:** “Will it come back to our garden?”

This was an experience in which all the children could participate. It was important for the children to learn from their direct observations, watching things unfold right in front of their eyes while predicting what was to come. Most important, this project generated excitement and fascination among the children who became “experts” and “entomologists.” Children still remember the exciting events and we encourage them to revisit these memories to help bring the whole experience together.

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**Children’s representational drawings of the various stages of metamorphosis.**

*By Andrew G., 4 years 3 months*  
*By Maddie B., 4 years 11 months*
Weather: Children’s Thoughts, Theories and Observations
By Nancy Howe, Head Teacher

Whether the weather be fine, or whether the weather be not
Whether the weather be cold, or whether the weather be hot
We'll weather the weather, whatever the weather
Whether we like it or not.

A
At Bing we don’t weather the weather, we welcome it. The natural world is a valued and essential part of our curriculum and the doors to outside are always open. Our half-acre play yards were designed to directly engage children with nature. Large windows give children the opportunity to be aware of the outdoors even on rainy days. We encourage children to wear boots and raingear so they can really experience the rain, feeling it fall onto their cheeks or stepping in puddles.

Young children are very interested in the weather: why the sun shines, what clouds are made of and where rain comes from. They are especially sensitive to their area’s unique weather. In Florida, children are aware of hurricanes, while in Kansas they know about tornadoes. In the Northeast, children understand the dramatic changing of the seasons while children in Northern California know about earthquakes and rain.

This was a particularly rainy year in Northern California. One cloudy day in early fall, Luke came to school and wanted to know how he could find out if it was going to rain on Saturday. He knew that an outdoor event he was looking forward to going to would be canceled if it rained. We proposed searching the National Weather Service on the internet in puddles.

We proposed questions and the children responded. We recorded their ideas and collected their drawings and paintings. Their theories led to questions of their own. What follows is a window into children’s thinking and reveals their unique perspectives on weather.

Clouds
ANNA: Clouds live up in the sky. They just stay up there. Sometimes the sun gets covered with them and sometimes it’s sunny without clouds.
CLARKE: The sun goes behind the cloud and then it gets cloudy.
NICOLE: There was a cloud and then there was rain. The clouds made the sun hide.
JAKE: Clouds are different shapes.
Clouds are up in the air. Every time I drive they follow me.

JACK: Water makes the clouds. Clouds are just big bunches of water in the sky. Some days the cloud drops down little tiny pieces drop down so it’s raining.

ABBY: If there’s no clouds, someone wouldn’t know there’s clouds. There would just be blue.

Rain
JONATHAN: When it rains, the clouds have electricity inside and then there’s a thunderstorm. When it rains really hard, the rain turns to snow.
BRENDAN: Rain clouds … rain rain rain.

Photo not available online.

Nancy Howe, Head Teacher

Jake and Gabriella use binoculars to view the clouds in Center Room yard.

We’ll weather the weather, whatever the weather
Whether we like it or not.

Whether the weather be fine, or whether the weather be not
Whether the weather be cold, or whether the weather be hot
We’ll weather the weather, whatever the weather
Whether we like it or not.
comes from the lightning, but I don’t know. The word stays behind the sun so no one knows, only the weatherman.

MARK: The weatherman has a telescope and sees a circle that goes around and it has a button. There are a lot of circles and they are from the sky and they drop down. They are the raindrops.

Not all investigations lead to in-depth projects, nor are children’s theories and misconceptions always open to interpretation or correction. For this investigation of the weather, teachers chose to emphasize a particular phase of inquiry: posing questions, thinking, observing and theorizing.

The role of the teachers as co-collaborators in the investigation of weather was to propose questions that encouraged children to expand their thinking, to gather the children’s images, thoughts and theories and ultimately to share the children’s collective knowledge using a variety of media including classroom newsletter, educationally interpretive display board, notebook binder and three-paneled brochure.

We have included some of the resources and internet links that complemented and enhanced the investigation.

Books about the Weather:
- *Weather*, Brian Cosgrove
- *What is the Sun?*, Reeve Lindbergh
- *The Cloud Book*, Tomie De Paola
- *The Reasons for Seasons*, Gail Gibbons
- *Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain*, Verna Aardema
- *Umbrella*, Taro Yashima
- *Little Cloud*, Eric Carle
- *Gilberto and the Wind*, Marie Hall Ets

Links
- www.weather.com
- weather.yahoo.com

This is today’s rain and storm. By Olivia V., 4 years 6 months

A sunny day. By Ever M., 3 years 11 months

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**Live At Bing 2006 CD**

By Beth Wise, Head Teacher and Music Resource Specialist

The multi purpose room was transformed into a recording studio for two weeks in July as we recorded songs performed by children, parents, teachers and staff members. Over 40 songs were recorded in 10 different languages as we pooled our talent and resources to create our upcoming *Live At Bing 2006 CD*. 22 staff members participated in this project by offering a song or providing instrumental accompaniment.

Thanks to the generous sponsorship of Phyllis and Winston Chen, we were able to professionally record our new CD with the expertise of sound engineers Lars Hidde and Heidi Verlaine. Winston became a fan of the CD project after listening to last year’s volume and realizing how much it helped his girls learn new songs, including many used in the classroom for music and story times. He also saw the advantage of bringing home the voices of familiar teachers.

This year’s CD will serve as an archive of our songs for new teachers, while providing children with traditional songs that are beneficial for language and musical development.

To create the CD, we brought groups of children to the multi-purpose room where they had the opportunity to find out a bit about the equipment used and the process of recording. Several children wanted to come back and sing by themselves and a few former students returned to participate in the project. We used this opportunity to work together on an activity that was both beneficial to the school and exciting to undertake.

This year’s CD will be available at the 2006 Harvest Moon action on October 28th. We are pleased to say that all of the money generated by the CD will go directly to the scholarship fund.

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Children sing with teachers for the recording of the Live at Bing 2006 CD.
Let’s Play Store: Learning Through Play

By Beverley Hartman, Head Teacher

John Dewey, the founding father of the developmental movement in education wrote in The School and Society, “There is the instinct of making—the constructive impulse. The child’s impulse to do finds expression first in play, in movement, gesture, and make believe, becomes more definite, and seeks outlet in shaping materials into tangible forms and permanent embodiment.”

Play provides the foundation of the curriculum at Bing Nursery School, offering children opportunities to collaborate, explore ideas and develop critical thinking skills. Bing’s child-centered approach taps into the child’s intrinsic motivation to play. They learn as they play.

Theorists and researchers support play’s importance as an essential means of development for young children. At Bing, play themes often emerge from the children’s interests. The teachers recognize the themes and guide the group in a more in-depth study of the topics. For example, consider the East AM children at work on a baking project that is a math, science, fine-motor and social experience. When the baking activity is partnered with the book Bunny Cakes by Rosemary Wells, we start a long-term project. A bakery is created in an outside playhouse and evolves into the broader topic of “Let’s Play Store.”

All of this play takes place in a laboratory setting that enables research and child study. Members of the Stanford psychology department are fundamental to the laboratory school and inform our practice. Professor John Flavell, PhD, writes in Cognitive Development: “Life is eventful. People and objects in a young child’s world do things; children observe these events and enter into them, thus joining the flow of the world around them. They mentally represent these events (event knowledge). Some of these event representations are generalized and abstract (scripts). This event knowledge, including scripts, of everyday life may be the young child’s most powerful mental tool for understanding the world.”

We strive to select projects with universal themes because they because they lend themselves to dramatic play, are part of children’s experience or interest and can be explored in depth. The project’s topic should appeal to children at various experience levels in a mixed-age grouping. The subject should also lend itself to developing the play scripts that Flavell describes as a means for further understanding.

Rich with possibilities, the theme of “Let’s Play Store” sets the scene for sociodramatic play. Children develop skills as they take on roles such as storekeeper and customer. They learn the complex structure of owning a business. Through play, concepts of supply and demand, delegation of jobs and creating a market for their goods emerge.

Imaginary play is essential to children as they strive to gain a better understanding of the world around them. The original “owners” (Kai, Diego, and Christian) first assemble the supplies to form a bakery. Their classmates are drawn into the play by the excitement and interest. As in the real world, the business evolves over time.

The bakery theme attracts children to join and incorporate their ideas. This leads to expansions such as adding a store in front of the bakery and another oven. Children contribute in various ways: some create signs for the baked goods and others gather more supplies such as dishes and baskets. The children’s play helps form a community as they invest in the business and take pride in their work.

Socially, the nursery school is a place for children to be creative and to interact with peers. A store that children co-construct becomes a platform for developing social skills. Children are able to recall their own experiences from past shopping trips to build an environment in which to develop their ideas.

Early childhood educators Elizabeth Jones and Gretchen Reynolds describe the role of play in this excerpt from their book The Play’s the Thing: “Imaginative play is the medium that, according to Vygostsky (1978), frees young children’s
As children move through the classroom environment, they manipulate objects to gain a better understanding of how their bodies work in relationship to materials. In the “Let’s Play Store” experience, children build shelves to display products and collect supplies to sustain the business. This level of activity fosters opportunities to develop muscles, stamina, agility and coordination. Multiple tasks can be complex. Children achieve a high level of physical competence when they actually help design the environment. Through practice and repeated experience, they gain mastery over physical skills.

Play is also a platform for emerging literacy. The bakery scenario gives children opportunities to use language to communicate their needs and ideas. The business opens with, “Who wants some bread?” Peers reply by bargaining for goods, asking, “How much?” As children collaborate through play, they continually use and respond to language. They explain, describe and negotiate, thereby developing a vocabulary through which they communicate meaning—an important step in becoming readers and writers. By including literacy props and writing materials near the play area, we encourage children to read and write as they make shopping lists, menus, signs and more.

The quality of the play is enhanced by the group dynamic of the children. Mixed-age grouping allows less-experienced children to observe more-advanced players. Seasoned players perform complex play and serve as role models, allowing new players to act at a higher level. Predictable sequences of interaction become evident and children learn how to conduct their role in the business exchange. Experienced children also benefit by demonstrating their deeper level of understanding of the play topic.

We embrace play as the base of our curriculum and understand that it prepares children to be ready for everything, including the next levels of education. The science of child development enables educators of young children to facilitate age-appropriate learning experiences. Educator Vivian Gussin Paley explains the value of play in A Child’s Work: The Importance of Fantasy Play: “From the earliest ‘pretend I’m the mama and you’re the baby,’ play is the model for the lifelong practice of trying out new ideas. Pretending is the most open-ended of all activities, providing the opportunity to escape the limitations of established rituals. Pretending enables us to ask ‘What if?’” The example of “Let’s Play Store” as a sociodramatic theme reveals the framework for learning through play. Likewise, the joy and power of play sparks the desire in young children to be lifelong learners.

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TEACHER: Wouldn’t it run all over and leak out of a truck?
BEN: But first they’ll put it in a bottle that says chocolate milk.
TOM: And people and animals can buy it at the store.

BEN: Look! We’ll use cups and ladles to put the milk in bottles. Look! Tom’s doing it right now!
TOM: And look, there’s whip cream on top!

(Then sings)
Whip cream on chocolate milk
Whip cream on chocolate milk
Whip cream on chocolate milk
Chocolate milk to drink
Yummy, Yummy
Chocolate milk
Chocolate milk
Chocolate milk
Yummy, Yummy to drink.

BEN: Who will go around and sell it now?

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TEACHER: I don’t know. Who do you think should do it?
BEN: I could!
TEACHER: But, before you do that, I’m noticing that the bottle you have still says pineapple juice.

Ben: We need to make a label.
TEACHER: What should it say?

TOM: Chocolate Milk.

BEN: “With yummy whip cream,” It should say also.

As the teacher writes on the label...

BEN: Why are you writing so much?

TEACHER: These are the words you said. Do you see how much writing is on the pineapple juice label?

BEN: What does all the writing say?

The teacher reads the label and explains that it says what’s in it, who made it, where it was made, etc.

BEN: Then let’s write, “Ben, Tom and Seamus. Chocolate Milk with whip cream in it.”

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Props can promote dramatic play as well as early literacy. Children learn to read as they work with realistic props or props they have made themselves. In this re-enactment of a grocery store transaction, Meg purchases Cheerios from Mason.
Are Children Making Sense of What is Being Said or Read to Them?
By Sarah Wright, Head Teacher

It is often thought that learning to read begins by being read to. This is a crucial stage in the reading process, as it enables children to realize that the squiggles on the page capture language that can be comprehended, and also introduces the child to the notion that words are composed of a code of alphabetic characters. But recent research illuminates the need for a greater focus on developing communication skills during the formative years. According to research, children’s ability to communicate for real life purposes affects their reading progress in later schooling.

Researchers examining academic achievement in the United States have found that children often learn to read without learning to make sense of what they read. Before they can read, children’s oral language comprehension must be fostered.

Activities designed to help young children express their ideas and feelings clearly, to listen carefully and reflect on what is being said, have unquestionable merit. Indeed, if taught imaginatively and qualitatively, the development of communication skills augments and enhances a child’s ability in perceiving, questioning, analyzing, reasoning, comprehending and building a wide and varied vocabulary.

Snack time at Bing is a daily event that is conducive, and indeed designed, to promote communication skills. During this half-hour session, children have numerous opportunities to contribute to group discussion and actively participate in group decision making. Activities are designed to help children distinguish between problems they can solve alone and those that require co-operation.

A recent problem that required active group co-operation involved devising a strategy that would ensure that every member of the table would receive a birthday treat popsicle, even though a child had to leave early, missing the birthday celebration. After a number of children expressed their ideas, the group decided that labeling the popsicle box with the child’s name was not enough to make sure the popsicle was not eaten overnight. The consensus was instead to label it, “PLEASE DO NOT EAT.” The strategy worked well, and every member of the group was able to “read” the instructions on the label. When text becomes part of solving a real problem in context, real learning takes place.

Picture books offer a delightful stimulus for discussion. Would You Rather… by John Burningham contains a host of preposterous choices to make: Would you rather have a monkey to tickle, a pig to ride, or a goat to dance with? The Surprise Party by Pat Hutchins is an excellent example of the importance of communication skills. A rabbit invites friends to a party by word of mouth, but the message becomes increasingly garbled and results in no one attending the party.

But developing an awareness of another’s perspective does not just happen from reading good quality books. Co-operative learning, group collaboration and democratizing the learning environment all contribute to developing this awareness. Giving children the chance to participate in decisions, provides an opportunity for them to learn through the process of co-operation itself.

Co-operative storytelling, an exercise that requires children to choose between alternatives and make decisions, is common practice at Bing. Children must listen to each other carefully to create a coherent story.

During snack time, head teacher Adrienne Lomangino often guides the children through the creation of a story. The ideas come from the children but Lomangino makes sure they add up to a coherent story. For example, if anyone adds a character or event with no obvious relevance, she recaps the story and helps the children work out how the development could relate to the existing story line. The fruit of one such effort follows:

**The Crab Pinched the Teeth**

By Demetrius, Louis, Jake L., Natalie H., Maya, Bella

One day there was a hermit crab. He lived in a boat. A hook got him. Then the hermit crab went in the water and a leopard shark ate him. He got out of the shark’s mouth by pinching the shark’s teeth and climbed up on the boat again. He had binoculars to see where he was going. A plant on the boat had two little tiny arms. It fed the crab a magic marker. The magic marker made the crab wobble wobble. The crab pinched off a piece of cheese. Then the crab ate that cheese. There was a dog on the boat. It was the crab’s pet. The dog ate the crab. There was a hen on the boat. The hen tried to scratch the dog. They fell in the water. The dog scratched the hen. The crab was magic. He disappeared. He reappeared on the boat and pinched the dog’s teeth. The End.

Especially since effective communication skills are fundamental to reading achievement, it is vital that we continue to view the development of personal and social skills as essential parts of the early years curriculum. At Bing we strive to help children develop their abilities to:

- Develop the ability to listen with understanding, to absorb information, to question and to appreciate other perspectives
- Develop an ability to take the point of view of another, to understand their feelings and intentions
- Have the chance to make real decisions, or the chance to make real choices between alternatives, rather than relying on the adult as the ultimate decision-making authority.

Such skills are an integral part of the school experience. A curriculum designed to develop communication and co-operation will ensure young children have numerous reading comprehension opportunities and still have time to learn their ABC’s.
Step into a classroom at Bing Nursery School when children are present and you are bound to see a child creating with classroom materials and describing her work to a nearby teacher. The school has designed its environment to inspire children to create, discover, play and explore. With the presence and guidance of skilled teachers, children become more eager to express themselves through both their chosen materials and their language. Quite often, a conversation ensues: “My building is a hotel,” Calla explains, “I’m going to make steps on the second so you can climb onto the third floor.” When a teacher expresses genuine interest through careful observation and delicate questioning, children begin to understand that their ideas are valued. It is a deep respect for children’s ideas that makes Bing an ideal environment for children to learn and develop. This respect is embedded in Bing’s philosophy, our curriculum and in teachers’ practices.

The most concise way to describe Bing’s philosophy of early childhood education is to say that we are child-centered and play-based. By child-centered we mean that we allow children to choose among learning experiences and activities, and to explore at their own chosen pace. When a child is encouraged to decide whether to paint, build with blocks or run with a friend, she learns a valuable skill that will help her throughout her educational process and indeed her life. She grows emotionally in terms of independence and self-esteem. It is her own wishes and ideas that guide her experience and development at school. At Bing, young children are invited to play. Through their play, children begin to express their own ideas. Gradually, they learn to listen to and respect the ideas of their peers as well. Take a close look at children at play and you will find ideas being instinctively generated and continuously shared. In a child-centered and play-based school like Bing, ideas are encouraged and plentiful.

Children’s ideas are also at the forefront of Bing’s curriculum. Much of the curriculum involves the open-ended use of basic materials: blocks, sand, water, clay and paint. The teachers encourage children to create and construct with these resources as they wish. As children repeatedly explore these materials, they learn new ways to use them to express their ideas. “This tree is really tall,” Jack V. explains as he adds layer upon layer of clay to his growing sculpture, “From the bottom to the top it takes nine minutes to climb it!” Often children’s play with basic materials reveals recurring ideas and themes. At times, communal interests develop from the children and the teachers will acknowledge the children’s ideas and interests and develop the topic into a more in-depth study, or project. This development of projects or what Lilian Katz, PhD, a renowned early childhood educator, coined “The Project Approach,” is another integral element of the Bing curriculum. The course of these extended studies is determined by the children’s own questions and ideas. Katz explains, “Each child is involved in representing what he or she is learning, and each child can work at his or her own level in terms of basic skills, constructions, drawing, music and dramatic play.” At Bing, on a daily basis, one can see an emergent curriculum developing through the children’s use of basic materials. With a philosophy that encourages children to express themselves and a curriculum that is also supportive and responsive to children’s ideas, Bing provides an excellent foundation for early learning.

In a learning environment that invites young children to play and explore, with the goal of a curriculum that emerges from the children, the role of the teacher is critical for encouraging and highlighting the children’s expressions and ideas. Teachers in play-based early childhood programs are first and foremost observers. With a philosophy that encourages children to express themselves and a curriculum that is also supportive and responsive to children’s ideas, Bing provides an excellent foundation for early learning.

Through practice and experience, teachers learn how to best extend children’s play and facilitate communication among peers. Teachers at Bing support and gently guide children in an effort to help them express themselves effectively both in their play and through their use of basic materials. We always encourage children to communicate their ideas both through language and their creations. We document, record and highlight children’s ideas. By drawing attention to a child’s ideas and achievements, we teach that child to take pride in her own work and also help peers learn to observe, respect and admire their classmates’ efforts and perspectives. Learning to appreciate another person’s perspective can often be challenging for young children, but with careful guidance and support from skilled teachers, children can develop and flourish cognitively, socially and emotionally. Together we learn to value each other’s ideas as well as our own.

There are many factors that help make Bing an exceptional learning environment for children, parents and teachers alike. It is exciting and inspiring to be a part of a school that has been the home for so many studies involving child development over the years. Each member of the adult community — parents, teachers, administrators and researchers — shares a common goal and desire to learn more about how young children think and how to best foster their development in all capacities. When we take the time to observe children at work and at play, and truly listen and respond to their ideas, we find there is so much they can teach us, and so much we all have yet to learn.

Photo not available online.

Teacher Andrea Rees carefully listens to Katie’s ideas and writes them down on a clipboard. Her documentation conveys to children that their ideas are valued.
Wasting a group of seven children run a “chocolate factory” in the sand one day, I observe a clear illustration of the significance of play in children’s lives. Some children are “loaders,” using shovels to load sand onto a gutter that is suspended between two A-frame structures. Others have an assembly line system for transporting water from a silver galvanized bucket using pitchers and buckets, which they empty onto the high end of the gutter. Still others stir the deep brown mixture that flows into a larger container at the bottom of the gutter, overflowing to form a river of chocolate throughout the sand area. It is an intricate balance, which children maintain by talking to each other, solving problems as they arise and adjusting their behavior as the flow of chocolate indicates a need to shift. Having time to respond to their environment and play freely without an imposed structure allows these children to develop skills that they will carry on into adulthood. As Gaye Gronlund, an early childhood educational consultant so aptly states, “Play is how children begin to understand their world.” Renowned educator David Elkind, PhD, states it even more strongly: “Children’s play is a biological imperative, essential to healthy early-childhood growth and development.” The children at Bing Nursery School experience a world where play is primary as they actively explore, ponder, question and reflect.

A play-based program like Bing enables children to develop appropriately, while also giving them a foundation on which to build skills and knowledge. Numerous examples of this phenomenon are visible as one spends a session at Bing. Abby and Bridget cut circles at the self-help table, which they will later make into awards. They use the masking tape to trace the shape and give each other suggestions about how to stay closest to the lines. Abby hops up to get scotch tape from the self-help cart which contains materials that children can use for several purposes: staplers, a variety of hole punchers, pencils and scissors. These girls are experts in this area. Their competence and confidence comes from having sufficient time to explore the tools and to independently plan a project, select which tool is most appropriate for the task and experiment with concepts through play rather than learning through direct instruction, they can build on this foundation when more symbolic math instruction begins in kindergarten. As Katie and Mary build a farm for animals, they experiment with different sizes of blocks as they try to achieve the look they envision. They exchange ideas about different ways to accomplish their plan and make choices that they both agree on. At one point a teacher inquires: “What do you think will happen if you put the block here?” a suggestion that the girls ponder and seem to consider integrating into their structure.

At the writing table Kristopher draws several lines on a pre-made book and slips it into the mailbox of his friend John. “You’ve got mail!” he squeals to John as he runs outside. John approaches his mailbox and smiles a wide grin as he sees the mail in his box. “What does it say?” he asks a teacher. “It’s a letter from your friend Kristopher,” she answers. “Oh, I better write him back,” answers John. He picks up a similar book, “writes” several lines on three different pages and then hunts for his friend’s mailbox. He spies the picture of Kristopher, then points to his name under the photo and happily inserts it. The teacher pulls out a stencil for tracing letters and shows it John. “You could also use this to write ‘John’
on your note, so Kristopher will know it’s
from you,” she suggests. John inspects
the tool. “Maybe next time” he responds
and runs out to join his friend. Maybe he
is not ready to use it yet but another day
he may choose to do so. “I’d like to use
it,” says Isabella who is drawing pictures
with colored pencils at the table. She
begins to carefully write the letters of
the alphabet. These children are both learning
information about the value of writing.
John and Kristopher know that print car-
ries meaning, that writing in a particular
format constitutes “mail” and are learn-
ing that letters are formed by making
lines in different directions. Next time
they may want to try a stencil or they
may watch another child writing their
name and decide to try it too. Isabella
knows that letters and pictures convey
different kinds of meaning and is devel-
oping better muscle control for forming
letters. She also gets the experience of
completing a task competently and inde-
pendently, both of which boost self-esteem
and confidence. These children are also
improving the fine motor muscles needed
when children undertake the process of
learning to form letters. Concurrently
they are learning that writing and reading
have a purpose, which is ultimately what
motivates children to want to become
readers and writers.

Outside, Jonathan, Victor, K.C.,
Andres and Max play a running game.
They are developing large muscle coordi-
nation as they run, climb and jump.
Having opportunities to develop solid
gross motor skills gives children a foun-
dation on which to build and refine their
fine motor skills. They are learning about
self control as they move freely through-
out the outdoor space while also develop-
ing the socialization skills which come
with playing with other children. They
spot a table on the top of the hill with
strips of construction paper, scissors, tape
and gold paper. “Would headbands be a
good costume for your game?” asks a
teacher. The boys’ attention is focused
for 15 minutes as they construct head-
bands, measuring pieces to fit their
heads, cutting “tails” to hang down their
backs. Later, the boys return to their
imaginative game.

Snack time provides an opportunity to
build community within a smaller group
in the classroom. Children master impor-
tant self-help skills as they wash hands
and use the bathroom independently.
They develop important language skills
as they engage in conversation, express
feelings and learn to take turns. Reading
stories give children positive experiences
with quality literature, and a context
where they can ask questions and devel-
op familiarity with print. Letter and even
sound awareness is encouraged as groups
play games related to identifying their
own names both aurally and in print.

Story time provides yet another time
for children to experience themselves
as part of a community. In a large group set-
ting, children can share ideas and practice
being attentive to an adult who is leading
the group. It also provides a forum for
sharing their expertise and their experi-
ences and developing the self confidence
that comes from receiving validation
from a group.

Observing and interacting with chil-
dren in the classroom provide examples
of children engaged in experiences that
help them develop curiosity about learn-
ing, a respect for the materials and peo-
ple around them and an appreciation
of themselves. A child reads a book, point-
ing with her index finger as she retells
the story. Another child spends more than
30 minutes each morning experimenting
with moves on the outdoor climbers.
Yet another walks around the snack table
gently touching each child’s head as he
counts how many children are present.
Each child is developing abilities in the
important areas of social-emotional com-
petence, communication skills, indepen-
dence, language and communication, and
fine and gross motor development in a
context that is developmentally appropri-
ate for them. I am reminded that learning
does not take place in a rigid sequence.
Rather, it is a complex interaction where
each child makes sense of life experi-
ences and challenges through active
interaction, support from responsive
adults and exposure to challenging but
engaging opportunities. It is on this foun-
dation that they will build as they move
into later stages of childhood. Having
sufficient time for play is critical for
children and is the foundation of learning.
Make time for play!
Two year olds entering school in the fall work hard to adjust to a new, enlarged world. Getting used to the unfamiliar books, materials, people and environment takes time. To aid their adjustment, we sing many familiar songs. Hearing music that they recognize eases them into group activities.

This year, we developed a curriculum for the Afternoon Twos to increase the occasions children sing and dance together. Concentrating our efforts on well-known folk songs and easy movement repertoires, we soon found that all the children were participating at music time. Even at story time when parents join us at the end of the day, the whole group was engaged in creating music together.

As a result of the emphasis on music, it was not long before spontaneous songs emerged as part of play. Some of these echoed the group’s repertoire and some were creative adaptations by individual children. The children sometimes included teachers in these new “musical plays” or games involving music. Occasionally, a child would request a special song from a teacher, as Sadie did of Megan. Singing Hush Little Baby also brought Karina into the play. Both girls became “babies” and curled up in the cradles as Megan sang. Soon they were themselves singing to soothe their babies, creating together a domestic musical.

Spontaneous musical play also occurred outside when Hudson decided a pot lid was a suitable instrument. He used a wooden spoon as a striker and became the leader of a band of friends marching all around the yard.

Another manifestation of music providing a social, emotional and cognitive connection for children came when they learned a new song. Slippery Fish not only increased their vocabulary, but also encouraged their creative dramatic abilities to emerge. Quan made a simple book of the animals in the song to aid memorization. Becoming a shark and a tuna “flashing in the water” opened an avenue of exciting adventure to children who looked at the book. Children continue to revisit the song when they see the felt fish that Quan assembled into his own book of Slippery Fish.

Brynn imitated each fish as Hudson sang and vice versa.

Singing songs again and again adds not only vocabulary but also images to a child’s repertoire. Jackson made a “mountain” of clay the week we were singing The Bear Went Over the Mountain. These experiences become interactive as well and contribute to a child’s social well being. Music provides all these opportunities and more for two year olds.

### Tower House Renovation

It’s happening! The Tower House is being renovated. Our sincere and deep thanks to Gioia and John Arrillaga and Helen and Peter Bing who have taken on the funding and oversight of this project. Closed since the 1989 earthquake, this building on the southern edge of the Bing campus will provide much needed adult space for our staff, researchers and Stanford students. Watch the progress as you drive by each week!

![Top: View of the tower library from East Room play yard. Bing children are watching the renovation and incorporating construction ideas into their play.](image-url)

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Music in the Two’s Room

By Kitt Pecka, Head Teacher

Photo not available online.
NAEYC Conference
By Mary Munday, Teacher

In the past decade, brain research has proven that music is more than frivolous fun. It’s an important part of young children’s education. Bing Nursery School head teacher Kitt Pecka described this research to a room full of teachers attending the annual conference of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, held last December in Washington, D.C. Music is a wonderful way to engage young children because it is a natural and enjoyable part of their everyday lives, Pecka said. Through music, you can individualize songs that will boost children’s learning. Music facilitates language acquisition.

Music is a great way to introduce new vocabulary, but also supports many other different areas such as self-expression, cooperative play, creativity, emotional well-being, and development of social, cognitive, communication and motor skills. Music and singing are a fun and effective way to help young children learn. Pecka shared many music ideas that teachers could use in their classrooms. The group became inspired and many teachers stayed after the session to discuss ways of implementing the ideas in their programs.

Pecka and six other Bing teachers joined thousands of early childhood educators and advocates at the largest early-childhood education professional development meeting of the year. In addition to Pecka and myself, Bing teachers Julia Carr, Lauren Gustafson, Quan Ho, Andrea Reese and Neely Zangenehzadeh took part in the three-day conference. What follows are insights gained from attending several of the sessions.

Talks focusing on children with special needs brought up many ideas that benefit work with all children. The presenters mainly discussed behaviors associated with autism spectrum disorder, social interaction among children with special needs and typically developing peers, and strategies to bring students together. Although they were primarily discussing children with special needs, I found many of their ideas to be beneficial for all children. With regards to social interaction, they discussed how teachers can facilitate peer-to-peer interactions. For example, if a child is having difficulty connecting with his peers, a teacher can go near the child, focus on what the child is working on, and then invite others to play. This teacher invitation increased social proximity and many times resulted in cooperative play. The teacher’s sensitivity and awareness to help bridge friendships helps the children to become more socially competent.

George Forman, professor emeritus at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, led a valuable session on the importance of observer intuitions for identifying the thinking in children’s play. Forman showed workshop attendees clips of children at play. The clips were stopped at precise moments so that we could discuss what we thought the child was thinking. One particular clip was showing a child stacking tires. She carefully planned her approach and adjusted the plan when necessary. Watching the clip, teachers were also able to come up with appropriate questions they could ask the child to help guide her play. After much time and many modifications, the girl was able to stack five tires on top of each other, creating a pile nearly as tall as she was. Persistence and flexibility ultimately lead her to success. This is an example of how teachers can review recorded play experiences, discuss ways to guide the children to success, and then share these valuable experiences with the parents.

Another session discussed how teachers can document children’s learning experiences and then use documentation as a point of exchange with children, parents, teachers and the community. The presenters described the major strategies: listening, observing, gathering, interpreting and revisiting. They explained that documentation can augment children’s learning experiences. For example, when children see the documented work they often become more interested, curious and confident. Documentation also shows children that we take their work seriously. This encourages the children to approach work responsibly and with energy and commitment. Ultimately, the children enjoy projects and experience delight and satisfaction in the process. Documentation also makes it possible for parents to be aware of their children’s experiences at school. Another key point is that documentation sharpens and focuses teachers’ attention on children’s plans and impressions and on their own role in children’s experiences.

Documentation is children’s learning made visible.

I felt all of the sessions I attended were valuable and inspirational. It was especially rewarding to reconnect with colleagues I have worked with in the past and discuss the sessions in depth. I was so fortunate to have had this experience to learn from early childhood educators from across the nation.

Visitors from Abroad
Sixteen early childhood educators and administrators from Taiwan visited Bing Nursery School on May 25. The group toured the classrooms, spent an hour observing, and then engaged in discussion with Bing staff. Afterwards the group enjoyed a lunch provided by Helen Bing, which allowed time for further exchange and sharing of ideas.
PAEYC Mini Conference at Bing Nursery School
By Jennifer Winters, Assistant Director

In an effort to promote and share knowledge and experience amongst the community of early childhood educators, the Peninsula Association for the Education of Young Children held a mini conference in February. Through the coordination of Bing teacher, Andrea Rees, a board member of the organization, Bing Nursery School stepped up to host this event. With over 125 teachers attending, the conference was a huge success, and one we plan to repeat next year.

A peek at this year’s presentations:
Bing teachers Nancy Howe and Betsy Koning led a session on “Sand and Water: Materials for building an understanding on the world.” They showed teachers that basic and inexpensive open-ended materials like sand and water can provide for young children a rich learning environment and allow them to build an understanding of their world.

PAEYC member at large Chris Morrison presented on “Science in the Classroom: a hands on approach to early childhood science.” He explored strategies to help children discover air pressure and learn about magnets, among other topics.

Bing’s assistant director, Jennifer Winters, offered a session on “The Cognitive Benefits of Block Building.” This presentation highlighted the history and function of unit blocks and examples of cognitive, social, emotional and physical benefits that young children gain from block building. The presentation highlighted the importance of block building as a foundation for children’s cognitive learning.

Bing teachers Peckie Peters and Seyon Verdzabella presented “The Value of Woodworking: Keys to effective set-ups and techniques for guiding young children in the empowering experience of woodworking.” Their presentation stressed the importance of exposing children to real tools as they begin the challenging and satisfying experience of working with wood.

Bing teachers Parul Chandra and Nandini Bhattacharjya discussed the value and potential of clay in the early childhood classroom in their presentation: “Make Room for Clay: an important medium for creative expression.” The session included ideas and suggestions about how to present and sustain interest in clay throughout the year.

And lastly, Jacque Sell, president of PAEYC, spoke about how teachers can promote the educational benefits of developmentally appropriate preschool. Her talk offered basic steps to sharing these benefits with parents.

In addition to the presentations, Bing teachers conducted school tours. Many of the visiting educators said they were impressed by the spacious yards and carefully planned indoor and outdoor environment. Their parting sentiments: They would like to come back and do it again next year!

CAEYC Conference
By Meghan Olsen, Teacher

This year’s major California conference for preschool educators included a number of excellent presentations, but three talks—focusing on emotional validation, neurological development and national academic standards—were especially interesting. The annual conference of the California Association for the Education of Young Children took place in April in Anaheim. Educators from across California attended, including Parul Chandra, Meghan Olsen and Rinna Sanchez-Baluuyt from Bing.

The conference emphasized the collaborative nature of early childhood education through the sharing of developmental research, curricula and theory in both large lectures and small group workshops. This year’s program included five featured speakers and over 200 workshop presenters. The workshops covered a diverse range of topics from music and dance curricula to future legislation affecting preschool education in California.

Bev Bos, author, musician and founder of the Roseville Community School, explored the importance of emotional validation in her workshop, “Helping Children Cope with Difficult Times.” Bos shared developmentally appropriate books, songs and conversations for teachers, families and children to use as they encounter challenging events in their lives. She stressed that validating children’s full range of emotions, i.e. happiness, joy, anger, sadness, fear and loneliness, is important because validating them helps children feel secure when the time comes for them to express these emotions again.

Another interesting presentation was the keynote seminar, “Exposure to Violence and the Developing Brain,” by Bruce Perry, MD, PhD., an internationally recognized specialist on children in crisis. Perry, senior fellow at the Houston-based non-profit, ChildTrauma Academy, spoke about neglect, high stress, abuse and exposure to violence and how these experiences impact early brain development. His neurological research confirms the significance of strong trusting relationships that teachers build with children and families, and highlights the necessity of prosocial experiences within the home, school and society.

In light of increased adoption of state and federal academic standards, early childhood consultant Pam Schiller, PhD, spoke about the importance of retaining a curriculum that supports social emotional development. In Schiller’s keynote, “Crucial Role of Social Emotional Development in School Readiness,” she explained that while schools are required to adhere to new standards, they must not lose focus of the significance of social emotional development. Social emotional development is crucial in the development of the whole child.
In the Spirit of the Studio: Learning from the Atelier of Reggio Emilia
By Karen Robinette, Head Teacher

How do young children benefit from having an art studio in their school—and how can they get more out of it? This spring, four Bing Nursery School teachers attended a conference to explore this question.


The conference explored the many ways in which art studios connected to classrooms for young people—as they are in Reggio Emilia, Italy—influence teaching and learning. Reggio Emilia is the origin of the influential model of preschool education known as the Reggio Emilia approach, an approach Bing teachers frequently draw on.

Vea Vecchi, a retired studio teacher at the Diana School in Reggio Emilia, set the stage with introductory remarks on the topics to come. Her first point was that the art world has the function of stimulus: It suggests new concepts to explore and to elaborate, offering us poetic, nonconformist views and unconventional interpretations of reality. Art also renders evident and visible, through observation and documentation, the vital interweaving of cognitive and imaginative ways of knowing. Third, although it’s a subject that both the children and senior adults initially experienced, so they held a day of fun activities for both the children and senior adults, including face painting. It was touching for us, as workshop participants, to view slides showing the senior adults painting the faces of the children. In later slides, the children were shown painting the faces of the senior adults!

This “activity day” turned the project around and was the catalyst for the reformation of the program. Eventually, the intergenerational art studio became the curricu-

mum. The process included establishing an art studio in a former storage space. The studio, or atelier, as it is referred to in Reggio Emilia schools, functions as a shared space for the children and senior adults to explore materials and review their artwork. Some of the many positive outcomes of their project include the establishment of positive relationships between the senior adults and children; the recognition of the power of materials to foster these relationships; the memory-building skills that the multi-part projects encouraged in the senior adults; a heightened sense of well-being among the senior adults; and a new comfort level for the children regarding older adults.

After the general presentations, the conference attendees were given the opportunity to select from among several specific workshops. The workshops were intended to build upon the theme of the art studio. The workshop choices included: “Studying Natural Forms with Clay,” “Thinking and Designing with Thread,” “Encounters with Natural Materials,” “Encounters with Recycled Materials,” “Encounters with Art” and “A Book-In-Hand: Leading Multiple Copy Storytimes.”

During the clay workshop, Smith College visual arts lecturer and studio art teacher Cathy Weisman Topal led an engaging session using materials found in the natural environment, such as bones, shells, rocks, seed pods, driftwood and the like. Working with a partner, the par-

Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art
125 West Bay Road • Amherst, MA 01002 • (413) 658-1100 www.picturebookart.org

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participants selected an item from the natural materials and tried to recreate it in clay, following a Reggio Emilia-influenced process. First the partners planned together how to go about recreating the material with the clay, then they worked with the clay itself to recreate the natural material selected, and finally, upon completion they discussed how the process evolved and whether they stuck with the original plan or made changes along the way. It was fascinating to view the participants’ completed projects. The workshop also provided an opportunity for teachers to think about and discuss ways to incorporate this inquiry method to approaching materials with children.

In addition to the many other events, an inspiring presentation by book illustrator and author Wendell Minor engaged conference participants. He followed his presentation and question-and-answer session with a book signing. Luckily, the museum’s wonderful bookstore carried all of his books. Minor has traveled throughout the United States to research his many books. He says, “A picture invites the viewer into it and offers a sense of mystery. It lets the viewer become part of the process. A good picture, like a good story, is timeless.” Minor particularly loves bringing scenes of the natural world to children. “If we lose touch with nature,” he says, “then we lose touch with ourselves.”

The museum, built in part with a gift from Bing Nursery School’s benefactors Helen and Peter Bing, offered many advantages as a location for this conference. The inclusion of an atelier within the museum was especially integral to the program’s success. The participants also spent time in the museum’s galleries and were encouraged to reflect upon their experience in the art gallery and record reactions. This process brought “voice” to visual literacy and enabled participants to understand and experience the potential of art as a tool for learning. The museum encourages participants to view art with three questions in mind: What do you see? How does it make you feel? What else do you see? The Bings’ support of the museum speaks to their continued sponsorship of high-quality programs for children and their families. Among their processes of their students? By documenting children’s work and making visible their experiences, said Rinaldi.

Rinaldi asserted that by making children’s learning visible, you are actually making an experience visible, which opens the door to dialogues about the experience among children and adults. According to Rinaldi, school is a place of education where all participants are involved (e.g., teachers, parents, children and community). School is a place where we can learn something new and where everyone can bring something and take something away. It also provides an avenue for teachers to become learners together with the children by understanding the learning processes that the children go through. “Children are rich and powerful citizens” who have “great resources and potential,” said Rinaldi. One can appreciate their knowledge, skills and understanding of life only through documenting their work. Once children’s work is carefully exhibited, it involves the parents and community, enabling everyone to learn together, she added.

Rinaldi emphasized that children are the quintessential researchers. They are trying to search for the meaning of life as they marvel, explore, question and discover the world around them. As researchers, children generate a new perspective about life and can give back to us the pleasure and the amazement of what life is. As teachers document their experiences and as children continue to explore, collaboration and dialogue occur. However, to document and to make children’s learning visible, one must truly listen.

According to Rinaldi, to listen is a suspension of judgment; it is an active verb, a moment of reciprocity. It is to welcome, to give value and honor. To listen to children is to let children know that they are valued and respected, that we do treasure them. Each documentation expresses what the teacher values; through documentation children understand that they are valued. The pedagogy of listening is an ongoing process of observation, interpretation and documentation, added Rinaldi. Without listening, making learning visible is impossible.
Take with a grain of salt anything that is said by a professional,” Rick Lloyd, MD, a Palo Alto Medical Foundation pediatrician and father of five, told Bing parents and other members of the Bing community at the 17th annual Kindergarten Information Night, in January. As in years past, Lloyd and Susan Charles, principal of Ohlone Elementary School, shared their expertise about young children and kindergarten readiness. Afterwards, members of a panel, including the featured speakers and Bing teachers—some of whom are former kindergarten teachers—answered questions from parents in the audience.

Lloyd began the evening by painting a portrait of a typical five-year-old child. First, however, he warned parents that since all children are unique, parents should not worry if their child failed to match the portrait. No one child perfectly fits any model, Lloyd said. He and other speakers encouraged parents to have confidence that they know their children better than anyone else does, and consequently that they should do what they think is best for their child.

Children who are five want to be good at home and at school “just to be good.” Lloyd contrasted this with the four-year-old child, who is more stubborn and difficult. At five, mom is still the center of the child’s life, and he wants to please her and everyone else he comes into contact with. A five-year-old has increased enthusiasm, more demonstrative affection, and an increased love of learning. At this age, eating and sleeping, as well as toileting problems are no longer as much of an issue. However, dreams become more real to him, and he may start to have nightmares. At five, the child begins to play mostly with other children of the same gender, but his play also becomes increasingly competitive. However, this is the age the child begins to have true friends. In fact, relationships with parents, grandparents, and siblings often improve vastly at this age. Mentally, a five-year-old lives in the here and now and has little sense of the past and future. Thus, he both has few worries, and he also views death as something temporary.

Most pertinent to kindergarten readiness, he also is more aware of his own abilities in comparison to the children around him. This child is proud of the facts he knows, and he enjoys showing them off. Lloyd said children this age “need a sense of their own competence.” For example, having the complete age-appropriate chores makes the child proud of himself, which increases his confidence. Also, because of the child’s desire to please others, as well as his growing sense of accomplishment, Lloyd warned parents to be increasingly aware of their own expectations that they are placing on their children at this time. Parents should be careful not to show too much disappointment when a child this age fails to live up to their expectations, Lloyd said. Because of the child’s desire to please others, falling short is especially upsetting.

Charles began her remarks by acknowledging that sending a child to kindergarten is “a big step.” But she reassured parents, “You are sending your children to good people and to good places...you cannot go wrong.” She told parents that there are 12 elementary schools in Palo Alto, and one Young Fives program. Each school is highly esteemed, she said, adding that all are wonderful but differ in their philosophies. Hoover is on one end of the spectrum, teaching in the most traditional, back-to-the-basics manner. Ohlone is on the other end, teaching in a less structured, free-form style. All the other schools are composed of some mix of both educational philosophies, Charles said.

Next, she emphasized that children are pushed too much these days. She pleaded with the parents to “let them be children.” She said kindergarten is not a contest, so she told parents to not feel concerned if, for example, their child is not reading when he enters kindergarten. She reminded parents that it is the teacher’s job to be educating the children after they enter kindergarten. “Parenting has become panic,” Charles continued. “If we are frightened, [children] are frightened.” Children now are “programmed to death.” It is best, she finished, to let young children play, for their work is their play. She encouraged parents to play with their children and have fun with them, and above all enjoy them.

After the formal presentations, the panel took questions from the parents. In addition to Lloyd and Charles, the panel included Beverley Hartman, Head Teacher in Bing East AM classroom and lecturer in Stanford’s psychology department; Sarah Wright, Head Teacher in Bing East PM classroom and former kindergarten teacher in England; Beth Wise, Head Teacher in Bing Friday Two’s Class, school music specialist and former kindergarten teacher at Nueva School; and Parul Chandra, Head Teacher in Bing Center AM classroom and TA for Psychology 147, “Development in Early Childhood.” A summary of several questions and their answers follows:

Should I hold my kindergarten-eligible child back or send him to kindergarten?
Parul Chandra addressed this question and said that the answer is never simple. Rather, it depends on the child and should always be addressed on an individual basis. “Opportunity Deferred or Opportunity Taken? An updated look at Delaying Kindergarten Entry” in the September 2003 issue of Young Children describes research that shows little benefit socially, emotionally, and cognitively to holding a child back who is ready for kindergarten, especially when the reason...
is simply so the child is older, bigger, etc., compared to his peers.

However, in the case where parents and teachers have legitimate concerns about a child’s readiness for kindergarten, the answer is different. Chandra reminded parents that “the reason [should be] compelling” to hold a child back. To help parents decide when this is the case, the panel agreed that parents should always talk to their child’s teachers, since they interact with and know the child well. The panel also encouraged parents to follow their own instincts about their child, since they know him best. It is so important for parents to “know [their] child,” Beverly Hartman added, and to “look at what they are competent in.” Parents should recognize that they know their child better than any kindergarten does, especially when a school will try to convince a parent to hold a borderline child back. One panelist reminded parents that there is always a one-year range of ages and abilities in a kindergarten classroom. Hartman was confident in concluding that every child will find his place along that continuum when he goes to kindergarten.

Q How do I know which kindergarten is the best fit for my child?

Susan Charles addressed this question. “Children are the most adaptable things on earth,” but “not all parents fit [every school].” Charles really wanted parents to understand that most children will fit in most schools because they so easily adapt to their surroundings. It is more important for both parents to find the school that best fits them, and enroll their child there. To help parents decide the school of best fit, Charles encouraged parents to both ask themselves what qualities they want in a school and then to directly ask the school questions in order to better understand the school’s philosophy. “There are no stupid questions to ask a school,” Charles said. Researching the schools is an important step in the process of choosing a kindergarten because, as she mentioned earlier, in Palo Alto there are 12 kindergartens. Parents must feel comfortable with the school they send their child to.

In closing, Charles said, “The child will be fine. If [the parents] are not fine, the child will feel it.”

Q Should parents enroll their child in the Spanish Immersion program even if they don’t speak Spanish themselves? Will the parents feel left out of the child’s educational processes since they don’t speak Spanish?

Charles reassured parents that the Spanish Immersion program is thriving and would have been closed if it were not being run well. Children in the Spanish Immersion program have API test scores equivalent to children in other schools. Charles admitted that some students who enter the program speak Spanish at home, whereas other children do not. In the latter case, Charles reassured parents that they can still be involved in their child’s education. She suggested parents could read a book in English to their child when he gets home from school. Furthermore, just because their child is learning in Spanish at school, Charles told parents that they should not be shy to help their children learn at home in their native language. Children are adaptable. Charles said, “Leave Spanish to the school. The other stuff, do in [the native language].”

Q At schools where there are more than one kindergarten class, should I request a specific teacher or let the school place my child?

Charles again addressed this question by noting that every school in the Palo Alto school district strives to make each classroom of about 20 children balanced in every way. The school can best match up a child to a classroom by learning about the child from parents’ and teachers’ comments. Those descriptions of a child are the most valuable source of information in placing her in a classroom. Charles urged parents who write to a school on behalf of a child to be honest in their comments because the school takes them very seriously.

The night ended on the same encouraging note as it started, likely quelling any anxiety parents felt and offering this advice: Slow down and enjoy your child in this day and age when young children are facing more and more pressure. Lloyd began the night by telling parents that “It [doesn’t] get better…truly [five] is one of the more enjoyable ages.” Towards the end of the night Beth Wise also encouraged parents to revel in their child. “Enjoy and appreciate the spirit of your child…notice what it is they have. Being there for them [is your] gift to your child…”

In closing, Wise shared this story from when she taught kindergarten at the Nueva School in Hillsborough. She gathered her students together and explained that learning new tasks is like having doors in their minds open, one by one. Behind each door in their mind is a new learning task, but in each child, doors open at different times. No child is smarter than another; each one has different timing. One child might have a “poetry door” that is wide open, but a “reading door” that is still closed. In time, all the doors will open gradually, Wise told her students. As the oldest Bing students enter kindergarten, may our community remember and take heart in what Wise depicted so beautifully for us. Each child has tremendous gifts and parents must know their child and be their best advocate in the days ahead.
In 1993 a group of Bing teachers attended a symposium in Washington, D.C., and visited the Model Early Learning Center (MELC), located above the Capital Children’s Museum. In 1994, Child magazine had selected MELC, along with Bing Nursery School, as one of the 10 best nursery schools in the United States.

Ann Lewin-Benham opened MELC in 1989 as a school for Head Start-eligible children. Inspired by a visit to the renowned preschool programs in Reggio Emilia, Italy, Lewin-Benham was determined to implement the Reggio approach to teaching in an urban American preschool. To help her realize her dream, Lewin-Benham enlisted the expertise of retired Reggio teacher, Amelia Gambetti, who worked closely with the MELC teachers.

Upon visiting MELC, the Bing teachers were struck by the Reggio aesthetic resulting from attention paid to the environment’s every detail: Panels of photographs documenting projects were placed so children could reflect upon them throughout the year, mobiles were hanging from the ceiling, collections of natural objects—leaves, cones, seeds and seashells—were arranged in jars and baskets. A four-foot-high mirrored kaleidoscope invited children to crawl in and view their reflected images. This effort resulted in large amounts of environment-guided activities, the classroom itself directing children in their discoveries.

MELC was unique on several accounts. Its urban location shaped daily experiences at the school. For example, the children had complete access at all times to the entire fifth floor of a rambling building within sight of the Capitol Dome, but no outside space was available to them. One great advantage of its location was unlimited access to the resources of the Children’s Museum, also run by Lewin-Benham and located downstairs in the same building.

The teachers were from middle class backgrounds while the children came from economically disadvantaged families, lacking the social and financial resources that staff took for granted. It became clear that “on stage” and “behind the scenes” of her school were passionate colleagues who did a superhuman job, working 60 hours each week with the children in the classrooms or together in meetings. Their reward was the creative process and the children’s growing self esteem.

Lewin-Benham, a longtime educational innovator and visionary, gave an account of her experiences with the MELC in her recent book Possible Schools: The Reggio Approach to Urban Education. She described how her school faced every imaginable obstacle, succeeded against all odds, achieved the highest form of accreditation and then, having lost its leadership and its funding simultaneously, closed down in 1997.

Last November Lewin-Benham, a social entrepreneur to her bones, came to Stanford’s psychology department as a guest speaker. Lewin-Benham was delighted to visit Bing’s classrooms.

As Lewin-Benham toured the Bing classrooms, she offered her thoughts on a variety of subjects: use of basic materials, the “pushed down” effect of over-emphasis on academic achievement in kindergarten, inclusion of children with special needs and the importance of social and economic diversity. After looking at the sand area in East Room she turned around and exclaimed, “You know, it’s funny; we give children sand and water and blocks when they’re three years old, and then we take them away and don’t give them back until we are trying to turn them into engineers.”

When standing on the bridge in West Room, she had a revelation: “I have heard so much about Bing and now I see for myself—your environment is your curriculum.” It brought back the memory of the project Bing teachers saw documented on the walls in her center in 1993. It started with the children observing out the school window the Statue of Freedom lifted by helicopter sky-crane off her pedestal on the U.S. Capitol!

Later that day Lewin-Benham presented her book Possible Schools to Bing teachers and local early childhood educators. Passionate and eloquent, Lewin-Benham described children’s accomplishments and their families’ involvement at her school, illustrating her talk with slides and examples of documentation put together by teachers.

Lewin-Benham talked about the history, philosophy and practice of a preschool in the tradition of progressive education in a challenging urban area. The inspiring account showed that children and families in poverty will thrive when their abilities are promoted and their intellect respected.

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**Bing Children’s Fair**

**Our Spring Event**

**What did you like best at the Bing Fair?**

Everything was my favorite. –*Maia*

I liked the fish. I got a little fish. –*Yuki*

I liked all the music. –*Sofia P.*

I saw all the teachers there, and I made a cookie and decorated it. My brother, Carson, ate all his, but I saved some of mine. –*Kennedy*

I liked the challenge course. –*Ethan*

I liked the singers. –*Jeremy*

I liked tossing the bean bags. –*Javy*

I liked playing in the sand box and climbing the trees. –*Mac*

I liked the obstacle course and the cheerleaders because they showed me how to shake the pompons and throw them in the air and catch them. –*Tyler*

I liked painting cookies and eating cupcakes. –*Ayinde*

I like the little muffins. –*George*
2005 Harvest Moon Auction:  
Kicking off 40 Years of Bing Nursery School  
By Jennifer Winters, Assistant Director

Last fall’s annual Harvest Moon Auction was a sensational event, which raised a record-breaking $320,000 for the Bing Nursery School Scholarship Fund. The auction was the kick-off celebration for the 40th anniversary of Bing.

The new Arrillaga Family Recreation Center was the perfect venue for the auction, providing ample room to display all of the 1,000-plus items waiting to be auctioned off. Balloons and topiaries filled the center, and to top it off the main stage was decorated as one gigantic birthday cake. Dan Chan the Magic Man and the incredible, and truly incomparable Leland Stanford Junior University Marching Band provided entertainment.

Bing is one of the few nursery schools in the country that offers a substantial scholarship program, providing financial aid to more than 20 percent of its families. The scholarship program is an important part of the mission of Bing and it enriches the experience for everyone at Bing.

Raising $320,000 in one evening is by no means an easy feat. First we owe a tremendous thank you to Helen and Peter Bing who generously gave a $50,000 gift. We also thank all of the hard-working volunteers who spent countless hours soliciting auction donations, picking up items, tracking and packing items, moving the inventory, assembling gift baskets, corresponding with donors, putting together the entertainment, setting up the venue, checking guests in and out, monitoring finances and tickets—and of course, cleaning up!

The auctioneer did a spectacular job getting everyone to empty their pockets during the live auction and brought in a record $35,000. Featured items included a road trip in a Lamborghini, a vacation in Kauai, a ski trip to Big White Resort in British Columbia, a perfect night in Napa with dinner at the French Laundry, an autographed Steve Young football helmet, gourmet meals for a month, a lunch and tour of KQED with Michael Krasny and a child’s birthday party put on by Bing teachers Nandini Krasny and a child’s birthday party put on by Bing teachers Nandini Bhattacharjya and Peckie Peters.

We extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to all who donated, volunteered, attended and participated and we look forward to seeing everyone at next year’s auction for a festive Harvest Haunt on October 28, 2006.

Special accolades goes to two parents who went above and beyond the call of duty—auction co-chairs Laurie Quinn and Diana Ekstrand—and to the auction committee chairs, whose tireless efforts made the entire event a magnificent success.

Harvest Moon Auction Co-Chairs: Laurie Quinn, left, and Diana Ekstrand

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2005-2006 Annual Fund Report

Thanks to the contributions of Bing parents, friends and our staff members, we raised $359,000 during the annual fund year September 1, 2005, through August 31, 2006. We would like to thank the parent fundraising chairs Doug and Jennifer Bernheim, Bob and Katrien Burlinson, Jennifer and Scott Sandell, Paul Holland and Linda Yates and their committee members for their efforts and support. In 2005-2006, the participation of our current Bing families reached 60 percent. In 2006-2007, we are striving for 100 percent participation!

The annual fund is an important part of the school budget. We depend on the fund to support the additional assistant teachers in each classroom, scholarships for children who would otherwise be unable to attend the school, the specialists and staff development. No gift is too small or too large. Our goal is for every family to participate in supporting the school. Please help us continue the level of excellence that makes Bing such a special place for our children. A big thank you to all.

[Graph showing the number of families and those who contributed to the fund]
Carve out some time and save the date! Saturday, October 28 at 6:00 p.m.

18th Annual Harvest Moon Auction
at the Arrillaga Family Recreation Center
341 Galvez Street
Stanford University Campus

Celebrate the evening with food, wine and exciting auction items.
All proceeds benefit the Bing Nursery School Scholarship Fund.

Thank you!
Laurie Quinn and Dale Race Hampton
2006 Harvest Moon Auction Co chairs

Bing Nursery School, 850 Escondido Road, Stanford University, Stanford, California 94305