

EXTENDED LEARNING: THE PROJECT APPROACH

What is the Project Approach?

The Project Approach is a preschool curriculum model based on research about how children learn and the value of integrating a curriculum.

What is a project?

A project is an in-depth investigation of a real world topic worthy of children's attention and effort. The goal of the topic is to learn more about the topic rather than to seek correct answers to questions posed by a teacher. The key feature of a project is that it is a research effort deliberately focused on finding answers to questions about a topic posed by the children, the teacher, or a collaboration between the two.

What is the role of the teacher?

The teacher uses a set of teaching strategies that help to guide children through in-depth studies of real world topics. There is a complex, but flexible framework with features that characterize the teacher-learning interaction. It is not unstructured.

What are the benefits?

In small group investigation, children can be highly motivated, actively involved in their own learning, and produce work of high quality. Projects enrich young children's dramatic play, construction, painting and drawing by relating these activities to life outside of school. Project work in the early childhood curriculum provides children with contexts for applying the skills that they learn and for group cooperation. It also supports children's natural impulse to investigate things around them.

"A project topic should be something concrete, close to children's personal experience, interesting and important to the children, and 'dense' in potential meanings (emotional and intellectual), so that it is rich in possibilities for varied activity and for sustaining long-term interest."