

OEL Newsletter

Volume 1, Issue 1

January 2015

Staff Additions

- The Office of Early Learning welcomes Betsy Kenney as Supervisor of Early Care and Education Programs. Also joining the OEL are Estralita Cromartie and Sabrina Wilmot.
- Our team will continue to grow in response to New York's successful application for a federal Preschool Development Expansion Grant (see below). Stay tuned!

Greetings!

The New York State Education Department's Office of Early Learning (OEL) is pleased to publish its first newsletter. In an effort to serve the agencies, schools, and families that support young children, this newsletter will aim to facilitate communication regarding:

- best practices for classroom instruction and program administration;
- ideas and resources for supporting early learners at home;
- OEL programs and important dates;

- and other news pertaining to P-3 education.

Please forward the newsletter to teachers, administrators, directors, families, and anyone else who may find the material useful. The newsletter is also available on the OEL website (<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/earlylearning/>). Check our website for new training opportunities, grant information, and early learning resources between publications.

In this first issue, the OEL provides a few ideas for



winter reading activities that can be completed in the classroom or at home and a page for administrators on family engagement. Our staff welcome feedback and suggestions for newsletter content. Let us know what you might like to see included in future volumes by emailing OEL@nysed.gov.

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NYS awarded \$100M for preschool programs

The U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services awarded more than \$226 million per year under the Preschool Development Grants program. Through this program, New York State was awarded \$100 million over four years.

Preschool Development Grants support states to build or enhance their infrastructure and to provide high-quality preschool programs. This program will expand high-quality pre-

school programs in high-need communities. For more information, visit <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/preschooldevelopmentgrants/index.html>.

With this funding, New York State will expand high-quality prekindergarten in New York City, Yonkers, Uniondale, Indian River, and Port Chester school districts. These five geographically diverse communities serve high numbers of children who

are Dual Language Learners and live in high-need communities.

The State will be supported by a broad group of stakeholders including members of the Early Childhood Advisory Council*, such as the NYS Association for the Education of Young Children, the Head Start Collaboration Office, NYS Pre-K to Third Grade Administrators Association, and Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies.

*The NYS Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) was formed in 2009 to provide counsel to the Governor on issues related to young children and their families. The ECAC is comprised of experts in education, health care, child welfare, family support, and mental health. Members represent state agencies, advocacy groups, foundations, higher education, unions and other key organizations concerned with the wellbeing of young children and their families.

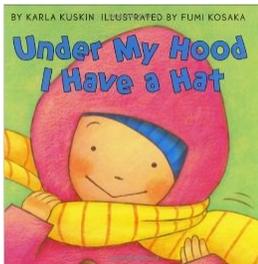
Winter Reading Suggestions

Young children enjoy and benefit from an adult reading to them. When you read to children, you are developing their language and literacy skills – children acquire new vocabulary, hear how language functions in different contexts, observe concepts of print, and establish an interest in reading. While you are reading to children, engage in meaningful conversations about the book. Ask them not only questions about what is happening in the book, but also if they enjoyed the book and why. Tell children about a connection you have to the text. Encourage them to talk with their peers about what you have read.

Sitting down with a good book in a warm place is the perfect way to spend a cold, winter day. Here are some enjoyable winter books to read with children, along with suggested activities to enhance learning:

Infant/Toddler (Birth-3 years)

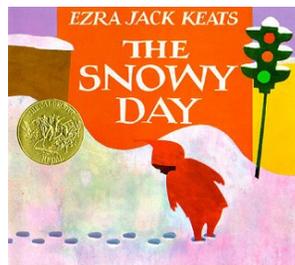
Under My Hood I Have a Hat
by Karla Kuskin



- * Identify vocabulary (colors, names of clothing items).
- * Point out rhyming words.
- * Sort winter accessories by type (e.g., mittens/gloves, scarves, hats) or color.
- * Provide a flannel board with figures and winter clothing; provide winter accessories for children to dress themselves, dolls, or stuffed animals.

Preschool (3-5 years)

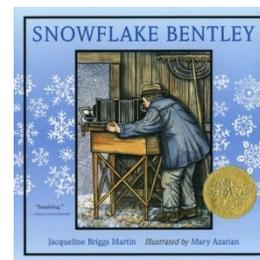
The Snowy Day
by Ezra Jack Keats



- * Paint a snowy day scene.
- * At the sand table, use a “stick” to make given patterns, shapes, or letters in the “snow.”
- * Conduct a science experiment – Which ice cube melts first?
 - Materials needed for each group/child: 4 ice cubes; a tray; sugar; salt; mitten/glove; and 4 paper towel pieces (each labeled: control, salt, sugar, mitten/glove).
 - Arrange the paper towel pieces on the tray, and place one ice cube on each. Cover one cube with sugar, cover one with salt, put one inside the mitten or glove, and leave one as the control.
 - Predict which will melt the fastest and record predictions using a chart or graph.

Primary (Grades K-3)

Snowflake Bentley
by Jacqueline Briggs Martin



- * Support students in determining genre and text structure. This book includes both fiction and nonfiction.
- * Publish a book about a nonfiction topic of children’s choice.
- * Examine objects under a microscope and compare/contrast with how they normally look.
- * Create a Borax snowflake, designed after one of the snowflake types discussed in the book.
 - Materials needed: box of Borax laundry detergent; hot water; wide-mouthed jar; pipe cleaners; and string.
 - Shape pipe cleaners into snowflakes (must fit into the jars). Tie string to the top of snowflake. Fill jar with hot water and add three tablespoons of Borax. Lower string until the snowflake is completely covered. Tie string around top of open jar to keep in place. Leave snowflake in water overnight. The next day, the Borax will have crystallized in the water and become attached to the pipe cleaner snowflakes.

For Administrators

Family Engagement

Families play a critical role in children's learning and development. Children are successful when their families and educational programs establish a partnership. While families are responsible for supporting children at home, programs are responsible for meeting the needs of children in addition to providing procedures to actively involve and support families.

What can administrators do to promote family engagement?

- Create environments that encourage the active involvement of families.
 - * Ensure facilities are accessible to all children and adults.
 - * Designate a space for parent meetings and gatherings.
 - * Establish policies that allow families to visit during program hours.
- Provide multiple opportunities for families to become involved.
 - * Consider families' schedules when planning events by offering evening and weekend options.
 - * Plan a variety of possibilities for involvement (e.g., parent-teacher organizations, volunteer opportunities, guest readers, team sports).
 - * Hold meetings in a variety of community locations (e.g., churches, libraries)
- Demonstrate awareness of families' strengths and needs.
 - * Sponsor workshops and activities that aim to meet families' needs.
 - * Link families with community resources and services.
 - * Ensure frequent communication (both teacher-family and program-family communication) in a format and language that is comfortable for families.
 - * Involve families in processes to make program decisions and set program policies.

Resources for Administrators

Core Body of Knowledge: New York State's Core Competencies for Early Childhood Educators

NYC Early Childhood Professional Development Institute

<http://www.earlychildhood.org/pdfs/CoreBody.pdf>

The New York State Education Department's Tool to Assess the Effectiveness of Transitions from Prekindergarten to Kindergarten

http://www.p12.nysed.gov/earlylearning/documents/FinalDistrictPKKTransitionSelfAssessmentmar19FINAL_1.pdf

The PreK-3rd Grade National Work Group

<http://www.prek-3rdgradenationalworkgroup.org/>

Preschool Planning Guide: Building a Foundation for Development of Language and Literacy in the Early Years

NYS Education Department

<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/pub/pubother.html>



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Under the leadership of Assistant Commissioner, Renee Rider, the Office of Early Learning (OEL) is responsible for a wide range of educational programs and works closely with parents, early care and education agencies, schools and state agencies to coordinate programs and resources with the goal of making New York's early learning system as comprehensive and seamless as possible. The OEL is tasked with implementing over \$750 million per year in State grants for prekindergarten programs with the goal of providing high-quality programs for early learners to all children.

For more information and helpful resources, please visit our website at:
<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/earlylearning/>

Guidance on contacting other NYSED Offices

The State Education Department is comprised of many offices, each with its own set of responsibilities. We recognize that this can be confusing, so we are providing some contact information to assist you in reaching the appropriate parties.

<i>You would like to speak with someone about...</i>	<i>The office that would best be able to assist you is...</i>	<i>The contact information for that office is...</i>
Health Services; Residency; School Discipline	Student Support Services	(518) 486-6090 studentsupportservices@nysed.gov
Preschool Special Education	Office of Special Education— Preschool Unit	(518) 473-6108 speced@nysed.gov
Teacher Certification	Office of Teaching Initiatives	(518) 474-3901 http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/
Grant Financial Management	Grants Finance	(518) 474-4815 grantsweb@nysed.gov

The NYS Office of Children and Family Services can provide regulatory information for Child Care Services, and the phone number is (518) 474-9454. Regional office numbers can be found at <http://ocfs.ny.gov/main/childcare/regionaloffices.asp>.

In New York City, the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene can provide regulatory information for Child Care, and the borough office numbers can be found at <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/living/childcare.shtml>.