

Investigators

Project Work

Children are naturally curious about the world around them. They often ask questions about what they observe in the world and their questions should be taken seriously. A project is an in-depth investigation through which children seek answers to their questions. Dr. Lilian Katz has written that "...an appropriate curriculum for young children is one that puts a high priority on intellectual goals. By this we mean that children's minds are engaged in ways that deepen their understanding of their own experiences and environment and thereby strengthen their confidence in their own intellectual powers, that is, their dispositions to observe and investigate..."



Do Fish Have Brains?

Projects begin in a number of ways. Sometimes teachers bring something in to provoke interest and sometimes projects bubble up from the children themselves. The above photo was taken during a project titled, "Do Fish Have Brains?" This project began with a child's question that he uttered aloud as he observed the goldfish in his class aquarium. His question was shared with his classmates who all became very curious to learn whether or not fish do have brains. After conducting extensive research for several weeks on the topic, the children finally decided the only way to be sure would be to dissect a fish to see if there was a brain inside. The children learned that fish really do have brains.



The Teacher's Role in Project-Based Learning

"Loris Malaguzzi, architect of the pedagogical and philosophical thinking that permeates the Reggio experience, once said that we need a teacher who is sometimes the director, sometimes the set designer, sometimes the curtain and the backdrop, and sometimes the prompter. A teacher who is both sweet and stern, who is the electrician, who dispenses the paints, and who is even the audience — the audience who watches, sometimes claps, sometimes remains silent, full of emotion, who sometimes judges with skepticism, and at other times applauds with enthusiasm"

Carla Rinaldi, *Making Learning Visible* 2001

We Believe...

*We believe when children are **engaged** in a topic that relates to their experience, they enjoy learning.*

*We believe support from **families**, community, and teachers encourages the child's development.*

*We believe in order to build on a child's experience, teachers must be keen **observers**.*

*We believe open-ended activities and questions support children's cognitive development because they allow children to **think**.*

*We believe teachers should be **lifelong learners** who constantly reevaluate their personal "image of the child" and continue to study the theories and ideas of early childhood experts.*

*We believe it is important for young children to have long, uninterrupted periods of **exploration and play** because play is an important way children learn.*

*We believe children should have the opportunity to explore **nature**, so that they will learn about the world in which they live.*

*We believe the physical environment can **create** opportunities for learning.*

*We believe teachers **guide** children as they build their own understandings of the world through the things they do each day.*

*We believe children should be encouraged to be **independent**.*

*We believe in focusing on **growth**, not on the mistakes made along the way.*

*We believe if we encourage children to be **active**, not passive learners, their confidence will grow and their competence will increase.*



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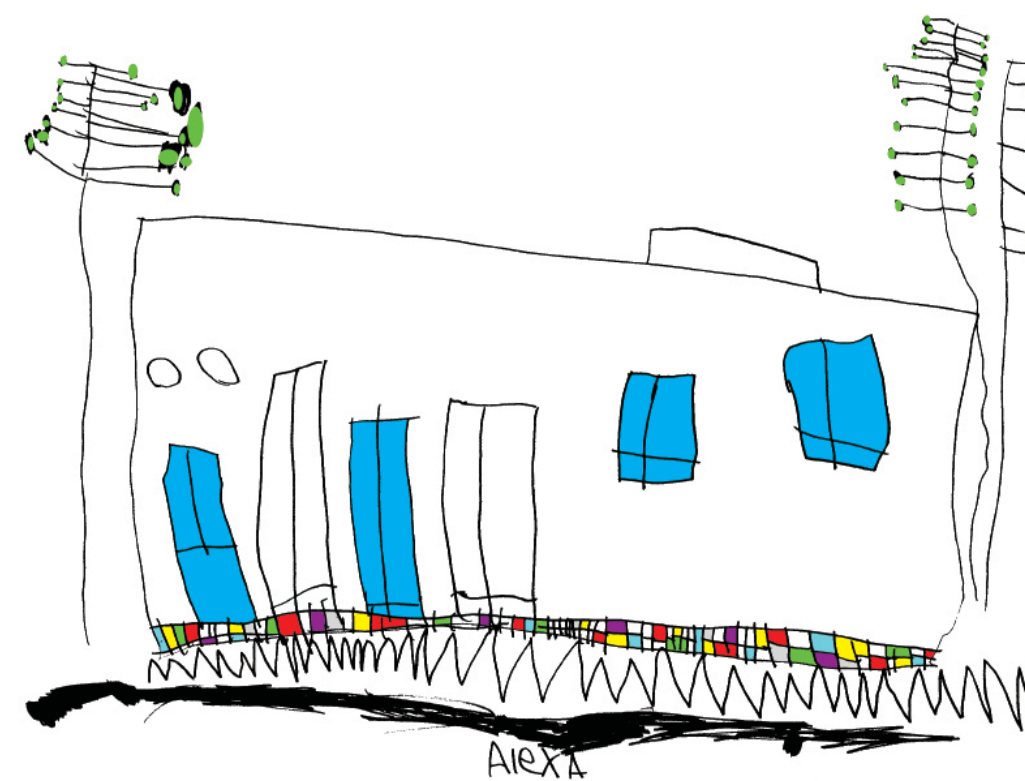
Warren Early Childhood Center



We believe children are

**capable,
unique,
creative,
investigators.**

We are committed to working with children, families, the community and one another to build a learning community that values, enhances, promotes and respects the intellectual and social-emotional growth of young children.



Warren Early Childhood Center
by Alexa, Age 4

Capable



Materials are neatly organized on open shelves at the child's level and the children take responsibility for the care of the materials they choose to use during center time.

Classroom environments at WECC are designed to reflect our belief that children are capable and responsible. The housekeeping center below has real ceramic dishes instead of toy dishes.



Rather than filling the classroom with decorations purchased at a teacher's store, the displays at WECC such as this color display are created by the children.



Evidence of project-based learning fills the walls of WECC. The "documentation" tells stories of in-depth learning experiences children have had at school.

Unique



The Warren Early Childhood Center is filled with ethnic, family, cultural and socioeconomic diversity. Diversity of gifts and abilities is also a feature that strengthens our school. By living and learning at school surrounded by such a variety of distinctive individuals, our students, staff members and families learn that each child is unique and offers his/her own gifts and perspective to those he/she encounters each day.

Our students' families and cultures are appreciated and celebrated by the placement of family photos and student identity displays in the classrooms because we believe programs for young children represent an important transition from home life to school life. Our classroom environments are designed to help the children feel as though school is another home where they not only learn, but richly live a significant portion of their lives.

Sammy's Story

Sammy attended the Warren Early Childhood Center from 2006 through December of 2007. Diagnosed with holoprosencephaly, it would have been easy to focus on Sammy's needs and physical condition, but Sammy's story is one of **strengths** not needs. When those who were privileged to know Sammy remember him, they think of the wonderful gifts he gave to those around him. To his classmates, Sammy was a **friend** who taught them to appreciate everyone for who they are. To his teachers, Sammy was a **student** who fully participated with his peers each day he attended school. To the families, Sammy was a **classmate** and friend about whom their child spoke of most.



Sammy lost his fight for life on January 7, 2008. After his passing, his parents were presented with a gift prepared by those from school who knew Sammy best. The gift contained numerous wire sculptures each representing what Sammy meant to those who made them. Examples included a lion's face representing **courage** and a pair of glasses representing how Sammy helped us all see the world differently. Although Sammy's impact on our school community was significant, his is one of numerous stories that make up the beautiful and diverse fabric of our school community.

Creative



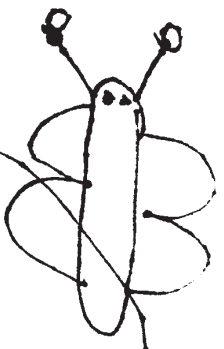
Zebra by Destiny, Age 4



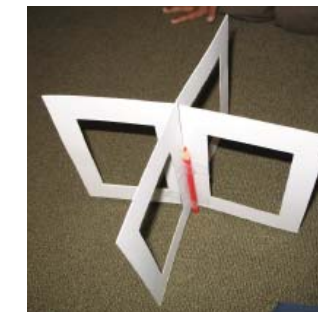
Light Display by J.P., Age 4



Life Cycle of Butterfly by Connor, Age 4



Tall Building by Unknown Student, Age 4



Revolving Door by Garrett, Age 4



Flowers in the Rain by Jonathan, Age 4

