Opal School Professional Development Visit -

Kay Cutler, Ph.D.

In January - during the first week of the semester, four of the SDSU Preschool teachers, Tammy Clark from the Family Resource Network, and I traveled to Portland, Oregon to visit the Opal School and its teachers.

The Opal School (https://www.portlandcm.org/center/opal-school-main/) is a charter school that is connected to the Portland Children’s Museum. The school enrolls children from age three to twelve years (Preschool through 5th Grade). It is a Reggio-inspired, inquiry-based and nature-based school.

We went with questions about (1) How does Reggio-inspired practices translate into another school, what is different, what is the same as the Fishback Center?, (2) How do teachers at the Opal school move from raw documentation which is the foundation for lesson... (Continued on page 2)

Director’s News

Kay Cutler, Ph.D.

Throughout March, the Fishback Center teachers have scheduled Hearing and Vision Screening dates for all of the different classes in the center. Please consider signing up your child(ren) for his/her or their hearing and vision screening. We have contracted with the Brookings Health Center Systems to schedule screenings. It is a free service for families.

Deb Konatser, who is a Registered Nurse, comes to the center and integrates screenings during the children’s center time, or outside time. Children’s learning relies on being able to use all their senses while exploring and discovering by making connections about their environment and world. If a child’s sense of hearing or sense of vision isn’t working in optimal ways, then the child will be missing out on details while learning through play and exploration.

Friendly Reminder: Just a friendly reminder that the Fishback Center collects HyVee receipts to support our scholarships for tuition program. For each $150,000.00 of receipts that we collect, we can receive $1,000.00. Also, the Fishback Center collects Box Tops. Please save your HyVee receipts and Box Tops. There are collection boxes at the front communication table.

Finally, the Fishback Center recycles old cell phones and empty printer cartridges (of all kinds). We send collections to the Funding Factory and then purchase equipment from the proceeds. This spring, we will be purchasing 2 portable Now!Boards which can turn walls into interactive ‘Smart’ Boards.
planning to documentation panels which would appeal
to many different audiences? and (3) What strategies
do the teachers use to facilitate detail in children’s
drawings?

Visiting answered many of our questions. We spent
time observing in the classrooms, seeing the teachers
in action, talking with the teachers after school, and
studying documentation together, both theirs and ours.

During our observation time on the first day, Laura
Gloege, Amber Engelhardt, and Matt Karlsen
(Professional Development Facilitator from the Opal
School) encountered an interaction between children
in Opal 1 with Mary Gage (the Curriculum
Coordinator). She was talking with the children from
Opal 1 about drawing with detail and looking closely to
see detail. Matt Karlsen, Professional Development
Facilitator from the Opal School blogged about this
encounter on the Opal School Blog in the Jan. 21

We enjoyed talking with the teachers at the end of the day
to gain further insights into what we saw when observing.
Their down-to-Earth natures and openness to share were refreshing. We noticed that the Opal School was a community of sincere relationships both with each other and with the world around them.

Finally, we were impressed by their commitment, their
engagement, and their confidence to take risks when
using new inquiry questions. All that we saw and
discussed inspired us!

During the last month, I have been looking for ways
that our professional development visit has influenced
our practices. Here are a few direct examples.

Laura Gloege, Amber Engelhardt, and Ashlee
Haselhorst hosted a drawing workshop to share what
they learned with the teacher candidates before the
first day of preschool.

The teachers also committed to re-examining the
center’s values on the values wall. They have
designated a bulletin board to collect everyone’s
definitions of one word with the hope of distilling a rich
shared definition of each value. The
curriculum/methods students who meet in the
afternoons will become involved with this project by
(continued on page 3).
using their newly learned qualitative teacher-research skills to find common patterns and shared definitions. So, please add your voice to the definition of each word and help us, “Crack it Open.” We hope that these experiences will further grow our commitment to innovative practices.
Scholastic Book Fair – Follow-Up

Feb. 3rd to Feb. 7th, 2014

A few weeks ago, we held the Scholastic Book Fair. The Book Fair proceeds help support the center’s library purchases each year. During the week, we sold $2,328.44 in books and literacy related materials. This translates into $1,198.32 for library/literacy materials for the Fishback Center!! The Scholastic Books website has a literacy calculator that converts amount of books sold into total number of Reading minutes and it calculated our sales into 83,880 Reading Minutes!! That’s a lot of time – and we all know that reading a book once is highly uncommon. Books are read multiple times! Thank you all for supporting the Fishback Center’s literacy efforts!

Team Member Corner – Who is Amber Engelhardt?

Amber Engelhardt is the 3 & 4 Morning Lab Mentor Teacher. She was born and raised in Apple Valley, MN. She grew up with 2 sisters, one older and one younger, and her mom and dad. She graduated with almost 700 people from Apple Valley High School in 2008. That was the largest class to go through the high school then. She graduated from South Dakota State University with a Bachelors Degree in Early Childhood Education Birth-8. Since then, she met her boyfriend Isaac Hansen. Together they put together the Trick or Trot 5k for Multiple Sclerosis and have raised over $1000 for the National MS Society. Amber has a passion for children and believes they are capable of anything they set their minds to. Their curiosities and open minds have helped her be more creative and mindful of the world around her.

Did you know that there is a Parent Lending Library in the Gathering Space?

In the Gathering Space, there is a Parents bookshelf at the ‘north’ end of the room. These books are marked with orange spine labels. Family members are able to check out these books through Mentor Teachers. When the group of teachers travelled to Portland, OR to visit the Opal School, we also visited the Powell’s Book Store in downtown Portland. Powell’s Books is the largest bookstore in the continental US. It is two city blocks and has four levels! Powell’s has a recommended book list for Parents. While visiting, I took advantage of their recommendations and ordered many of them on the list. The books listed below are new to the Parents’ bookshelf and are recommended by Powell’s bookstore staff!

I Love You Rituals - by: Becky A. Bailey
Playful Parenting - by: Lawrence J. Cohen
Encouraging Your Child’s Imagination - by: Carol E. Bouzoukis
The Element - by: Ken Robinson
Finding Your Element - by: Ken Robinson
You Are Your Child’s First Teacher - by: Rahima Baldwin Dancy
The Parent Backpack for Kindergarten through Grade 5 - by: ML Nichols
The Book of New Family Traditions - by: Meg Cox
Dad’s Book of Awesome Projects - by: Mike Adamick
Raising Our Children, Raising Ourselves - by: Naomi Aldort
The Artful Parent - by: Jean Van’t Hul
The Genius in Every Child - by: Rick Ackerly
The Art of Roughhousing - by: Anthony T. DeBendet
Parent Talk - by: Chick Moorman
Peaceful Parent, Happy Kids - by: Laura Markham

Happy Reading!!