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Graphic practice : a strategy for developing fine motor skills in the early childhood setting

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Graphic practice : a strategy for developing fine motor skills in the early childhood setting

Abstract

Graphic practice provides children with an opportunity to develop, not only fine motor skills, but also self-regulatory and alphabet knowledge skills. Research has indicated that a child's fine motor development can predict his or her educational achievement, specifically in the areas of reading, math, and attention. The purpose of this project is to organize thirty weekly lessons that will familiarize teachers with the components necessary to introduce, integrate, and extend graphic practice strategies within their early childhood classrooms. These lessons will be compiled into a step-by-step guide for teachers. An outline for professional development is included.

GRAPHIC PRACTICE: A STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPING FINE MOTOR SKILLS
IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD SETTING

A Graduate Project
Submitted to the
Division of Early Childhood
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Masters of Arts in Education
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

By
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in the Early Childhood Setting

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Chapter I

Introduction

As an early childhood educator for nearly twenty years, I have had the opportunity to witness how programming for our youngest students has evolved. During this time, a succession of trends has come into play. While some movements aligned more readily with The National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC) position on best practices for educating young children, each trend provided an opportunity for educators to evaluate and bolster, and, if they were so inclined, possibly even alter their teaching styles. This reflection and modification could, hopefully, better meet the educational needs of their pupils. Regardless, the past two decades have provided early childhood teachers with many varied opportunities to enhance and expand their personal goals as educators.

Until recently, formal early childhood curriculum was virtually nonexistent. Instead, teachers would utilize *foundational* curricula, such as Creative Curriculum, which provided a framework to guide them as they organized the classroom environment and selected activities to meet the needs of their students (Trister Dodge, Colker, Heroman, & Bickart, 2002). Most often weekly units or themes were implemented. These themes were designed to meet a child's needs in the physical, emotional, social, and cognitive domains of development rather than focusing on *academic skills* (Bredekamp, 1987/1992). It was also understood that play was the primary vehicle for, and indicator of, a child's mental growth and, therefore, child-initiated and child-directed play should be an essential component of a developmentally appropriate early childhood program (Bredekamp, 1987/1992).

However, around the turn of this century, the idea of standards, assessment, and accountability became major issues in this country's educational system. Standards were set; children were assessed, and school districts around the nation were penalized when children did not meet the expected range of achievement. Soon teachers were asked to *the basics*. This emphasis on academic performance began to trickle into the area of early childhood education. Early Reading First was “. . . created to address the growing concern that many of our nation's children were beginning kindergarten without the necessary foundation to fully benefit from formal school instruction” (U.S. Department of Education, 2008, Early Reading First in a Nutshell ¶ 1). Early childhood educators began looking for guidance in how to choose instructional practices that were not only developmentally appropriate, but also would produce consistent achievement gains (Bodrova & Leong, 2001).

My personal involvement in an Early Reading First (ERF) grant project has become a defining influence in my academic career. Under the tutelage of Dr. Elena Bodrova, my colleagues and I were introduced to the philosophies of Lev Vygotsky and shown how his theories and ideas could be utilized in the early childhood classroom. My teaching has become more deliberate and purposeful. I understand the need for teaching standards and benchmarks as tools to direct instruction. I see curriculum as a resource to organize my teaching. I rely on assessment to document my students' learning and personal reflection to see where *gaps* are evident in my students' achievement, and how I can better address their needs. However, I feel that I am internalizing all of these professional strategies while still utilizing play as the cornerstone of instruction for my

students. The ERF project has assisted me in understanding how direct and explicit teaching can still be developmentally appropriate.

Rationale for the Project

While virtually every component of my involvement in the Early Reading First project has become invaluable to the success of my preschool program, one element, graphic practice, has been particularly unique. Graphic practice is a strategy that assists in the development of a variety of early learning skills, such as self-regulation, fine motor acuity, alphabet knowledge, and early writing. Within their book, *Scaffolding Literacy Development in the Preschool Classroom*, Bodrova, Leong, Paynter, and Hensen (2003) defined the purpose of graphic practice as the following:

The purpose of the activity is to have children practice making specific kinds of marks and shapes on paper [or white boards] that are necessary for writing the letters of the alphabet. They do this in a pretend scenario that provides a meaningful context for the practice. Over the course of several days or weeks, children begin to gain more control over the writing instrument and learn that marks can be different and can be combined with each other to make different shapes. . . . As children begin to develop more knowledge about letters, they begin to see the relationship between the marks they make and the letters they are forming. (p. 44)

Originally, I aspired to conduct a research study comparing the fine motor skills of children who participated in graphic practice activities with children who did not. However, I found that few of my colleagues possessed enough of the information they needed to effectively implement graphic practice in their classrooms. Because it is unique

to Dr. Bodrova and Dr. Leong's *Scaffolding Literacy Development* curriculum, and because I am one of the few people fortunate to have been introduced to the procedure, I would like to provide a more standardized and systematic approach when I am asked by other early childhood educators to explain graphic practice and how I apply this strategy within my classroom curriculum.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to organize thirty weekly lessons that will familiarize teachers with the components necessary to introduce, integrate, and extend graphic practice strategies within their early childhood classrooms. These lessons will be compiled into a step-by-step guide for teachers. This information will be disseminated through a series of professional development workshops to teachers within my community.

Importance of the Project

Graphic practice provides children with an opportunity to develop, not only fine motor skills, but also self-regulatory and alphabet knowledge skills. Research has indicated that a child's fine motor development can predict his or her educational achievement, specifically in the areas of reading, math, and attention (Luo, Jose, Huntsinger, & Piggott, 2007; Son & Meisels, 2006; Stewart, Rule, & Giordano, 2007). Students with skills that were age-appropriate or better in the areas of fine and visual motor development appeared to have a greater chance at academic success by the end of kindergarten and first grade than their peers who had lesser control and coordination of the muscles in the fingers and hands (Luo et al., 2007; Son & Meisels, 2006; Stewart et al., 2007).

Limitations

Since graphic practice is the brainchild of Dr. Bodrova and Dr. Leong within their Tools of the Mind project (2001), there have been no formal research studies as to the effectiveness of this specific strategy. However, there are studies validating the successfulness of the Tools of the Mind project as a whole (Barnett, Jung, Yarosz, Thomas, Hornbeck, Stechuk, & Burns, 2008; Diamond, Barnett, Thomas, & Munro, 2007).

Terminology

Alphabet Knowledge – The ability to recognize the shape of a letter and attach the letter name; naming letters of the alphabet (Venn & Jahn, 2004).

Developmentally Appropriate Practice – The National Association for the Education of Young Children defines developmental appropriateness as having three dimensions: age appropriateness, individual appropriateness and cultural appropriateness. Age appropriateness refers to the universal and predictable sequences of growth and change that occur in children during the first nine years of life. Knowledge of typical development provides a framework from which teachers can prepare the learning environment and plan appropriate experiences. Individual appropriateness recognizes that each child is a unique person with an individual pattern and time of growth. Both the curriculum and the adults' interactions with children should be responsive to individual differences (Bredekamp, 1992). Cultural appropriateness refers to the knowledge of the social and cultural contexts in which children live to ensure that learning experiences are

meaningful, relevant and respectful for participating children and their families (NAEYC, 1997).

Early Reading First Grant Project - The mission of Early Reading First, a federal initiative, is to ensure that all children enter kindergarten with the necessary language, cognitive, and early reading skills for continued success in school (U.S. Department of Education, 2008).

Executive Function – Core skills include: inhibitory control (resisting habits, temptations, or distractions), working memory (mentally holding and using information), and cognitive flexibility (adjusting to change) (Diamond, Barnett, Thomas, & Munro, 2007). Executive function may also be referred to as cognitive control (Diamond, et al., 2007), metacognition (Fox & Riconscente, 2008), metacognitive processes, or higher mental functions (Bodrova & Leong, 1996/2007).

Explicit Instruction – Deliberate teaching designed to focus children's attention on a specific competency or goal. It is clear, overt, intentional, and teacher directed (Venn & Jahn, 2004).

Fine Motor Skills – The development of fine motor skills is essential for children to become independent in daily living and in cognitive and physical tasks. Fine motor skills are necessary for manipulating objects and tools, and they require strength, control and coordination of the smaller muscles in the fingers and hands with the child's sight (Venn & Jahn, 2004).

Graphic Practice – Children practice making dots, lines, circles, squares, and triangles with markers on small dry-erase boards, usually while music is playing. The marks and shapes are necessary for writing letters of the alphabet. Pretend

scenarios, which may be tied to classroom curriculum, provide a meaningful context for the practice (Bodrova, Leong, Paynter, & Hensen, 2003).

Mature Play – This form of play provides maximum benefits for development (Bodrova & Leong, 1996/2007). Mature play has the following characteristics: Imaginary situations, multiple roles, clearly defined rules, flexible themes, language development, and an extended length of play (Bodrova & Leong, 2003).

Play – Representational play serves as a unique but broadly influential zone of proximal development within which children advance themselves to ever higher levels of psychological functioning (Berk & Winsler, 1995). Vygotsky (2002/1966) stated, “In play a child is always above his average age, above his daily behavior; in play it is as though he were a head taller than himself” (p. 21).

Self Regulation – The process of planning, guiding and monitoring one’s own behavior (Berk & Winsler, 1995; Bodrova & Leong, 1996/2007).

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) – Those behaviors that are on the edge of emergence. It is defined by two levels. The lowest level is what the child can do independently and the highest level is what the child can do with the maximum assistance (Bodrova & Leong, 1996/2007).

Chapter II

Methodology

I realized the importance of this project while observing the benefits my students achieved after they became exposed to graphic practice activities within my integrated preschool program. Young children, who would normally be repelled by or resistant to any activity that required them to challenge their fine motor dexterity, readily, and eagerly, took part in graphic practice time. The materials and scenarios, combined with a wide variety of music, masked the actual learning that was taking place. The children did not realize that the marks and shapes they were making on their white boards were components of letters that they would be writing in the future. Children who could rarely be motivated to trace their names or write a sentence on a journal page because it was *too hard* would combine elaborate marks during any of our weekly graphic practice experiences. This one activity developed fine motor, self-regulatory, and alphabet knowledge skills while still capturing the interest of virtually each of my students.

However, when I tried to describe this instructional process to my colleagues, I was unable to effectively explain the steps necessary for its implementation, let alone focus on the critical nuances, that made this strategy especially effective. I needed to organize a more uniform guide to present this information. I also needed to provide data that substantiated the need for continued development of fine motor skills at the early childhood level.

Procedures to Develop the Project

To organize this project, I began keeping a more detailed outline of each graphic practice lesson that I introduced in my classroom. Through this documentation, I was

able to incorporate accommodations and remediation strategies that were occasionally utilized with individual children within the daily graphic practice procedure. I also became more aware of the literacy and math connections that were emphasized throughout each session. Additionally, I was able to reflect on the vital components of each graphic practice session and organize a variety of enrichment experiences to be incorporated throughout my preschool's various learning centers.

Concurrently, I contacted Dr. Bodrova to see if any further information had been published or research had been conducted on the topic of graphic practice. I discovered that the strategy remained virtually unchanged since my introduction to it. I also learned that no formal research had been conducted at this time. I found this development concerning. Could this project still be credible if there was no research to validate the topic? Again, my original idea of conducting research on graphic practice came to the forefront. And, again, I returned to my concerns that too few early childhood teachers were familiar with the execution of graphic practice to make a substantiated comparison. I needed to find other sources that would assist me in proving that this fine motor practice can be relevant and necessary in a developmentally appropriate early childhood curriculum.

I began my research looking for information on graphic practice and was unable to find any related studies on this specific topic. I was, however, able to find reference to this component as part of a successful and developmentally appropriate preschool and kindergarten program (Bodrova, Leong, Norford, & Paynter, 2003; Diamond, Barnett, Thomas, & Munro, 2007).

When I widened my search to include other forms of fine motor skill development in the area of early childhood education, I found several studies that gave evidence to the importance of well-developed fine and visual motor skills as an indicator for future academic success (Luo, Jose, Huntsinger, & Piggott, 2007; Son & Meisels, 2006; Stewart, Rule, & Giordano, 2007). I was also pleased to discover research that supported the use of explicit instruction, a component of graphic practice, as an appropriate educational strategy for my students with developmental delays (Brambring, 2007; Goyen, Lui, & Wood, 1998; Yochman, Ornoy, & Parus, 2006).

Review of the Literature

The Vygotskian View of Self-Regulation. Self-regulation, a child's ability to regulate or master his or her own behavior, is a term that has been discussed in educational circles. Unfortunately, teachers are often not aware of Vygotsky's theory behind the locution and only perceive this concept in the realm of student behavior. In reality, Vygotsky characterized self-regulation as a crucial stage of human development as higher mental functions are being acquired. Leong and Bodrova (2006) interpreted the following:

While not using the word "self-regulation" to describe higher mental functions, Vygotsky described them though as deliberate, intentional, or volitional behaviors, as something that humans have control of. Acquiring higher mental functions allows children to make a critical transition from being "slaves to the environment" to becoming "masters of their own behavior". This process requires children to master specific cultural tools – including language and other symbolic

systems- which they can use to gain control over their physical, emotional, and cognitive functioning. (p. 34)

Recently, Fox and Riconscente (2009) construed a similar relationship between metacognition and self-regulation:

Metacognition appears in Vygotsky's work primarily in the sense of consciousness, which requires abstraction and controlled attention. . . . For Vygotsky, metacognition and self-regulation are completely intertwined; the intentionality implied by self-regulation requires consciousness and the control required for consciousness implies self-regulation. (p. 383)

Fox and Riconscente (2009) further stated, "Vygotsky's perspective centers attention on the internalization of language-based interactions as the medium by which behavior is controlled and consciousness and abstraction achieved, so that natural functions of perception, memory, attention, and will are transformed into higher, cultural functions" (p. 387).

An understanding of how self-regulatory skills are acquired in young children provides educators with an opportunity to organize their students' environment and curriculum to provide the most appropriate level of support at each stage of development. Within their book, *Tools of the Mind: The Vygotskian Approach to Early Childhood Education* (2006), Bodrova and Leong clarified:

Although they are parts of a whole, physical, cognitive, and emotional self-regulation do not develop at the same rate. Children first learn to regulate their physical behaviors, then their emotional ones. Cognitive self-regulation, involving

such advanced processes as metacognition and reflective thinking, does not appear full-blown until the end of elementary school. (p.128)

“Self-regulation is not something that emerges spontaneously as the child matures but is instead taught formally or informally within the social context” (Leong & Bodrova, 2006, p. 34). The validity of this statement was considered to have been a major influence on the authors of the following studies.

Studies Validating the Success of the Tools of the Mind Project. Diamond, Barnett, Thomas, and Munro (2007a; 2007b) compared the Tools of the Mind curriculum with a school district’s version of a Balanced Literacy curriculum. Each curriculum addressed the same educational components; however, the district curriculum did not address the development of cognitive control or executive functions (EFs).

This study included 147 children in their second year of preschool. All of the children came from the same low-income neighborhood. The students, teachers and teacher’s assistants were randomly assigned to a Tools of the Mind classroom or a balanced literacy classroom. All classrooms received the same resources and the same amount of teacher training and support. The Tools of the Mind teachers were introduced to components of Vygotskian theory, such as private speech, dramatic play, and external mediators. Tools of the Mind teachers spent approximately 80% of each day promoting executive function skills. The balanced literacy teachers became familiar with a district developed curriculum that was based on balanced literacy and included thematic units.

When analyzing the results of two independent outcome measures, a Dots task and a Flanker task, focusing on the three core EF skills (inhibitory control, working memory, and cognitive flexibility), it was found that students who were educated using

the Tools of the Mind curriculum significantly outperformed children who were taught using the Balanced Literacy curriculum. Diamond et al. (2007a) noted:

In Tools [of the Mind curriculum], techniques for supporting (“scaffolding”), training, and challenging EFs are interwoven in almost all classroom activities throughout the day. Thus, while children are learning language skills or math, for example, they also receive training in EFs. EFs are approached from a variety of different angles in a variety of different activities. (p. 5)

While this study primarily examined the effects of these curricula on the development of cognitive control, the authors stated that, “EFs [especially self-discipline (inhibition)] predict and account for unique variance in academic outcomes independent of and more robustly than does IQ” (Diamond et al., 2007b, p. 1388). Other similar studies corroborated this idea by maintaining that executive functioning skills, such as self-discipline and attentional control, were more indicative of school readiness than were IQ or content knowledge (McClelland, Morrison, & Holmes, 2000; Rimm-Kauffman, Pianta, & Cox, 2000).

Barnett et al. (2008) conducted another trial as to the effectiveness of the Tools of the Mind curriculum, specifically in the areas of self-regulation and emergent literacy. This study took place in an urban school district. Over 80% of the students qualified for free or reduced lunch, and 70% came from homes where English was not the primary language. Seven classrooms implemented the Tools of the Mind curriculum; 11 classrooms utilized a district curriculum. The students (274 three- and four- year-olds), teachers and teachers’ assistants were randomly assigned to the classrooms. Initially, the

classrooms received exactly the same amount and type of furniture, toys, art supplies, and books. The two groups of teachers received similar amounts of professional development.

The students were assessed in the fall and the spring using six different instruments. Despite the similarities in the groups in the areas of classroom structure and resources, as well as professional development opportunities, the Tools of the Mind classrooms achieved higher results than their control group counterparts. Barnett et al. (2008) commented that:

The strongest difference between the Tools [of the Mind] curriculum and others is the extent to which it directly addresses the idea that learning traditional academic content can be inefficient or difficult if children lack the underlying cognitive skills such as self-regulation, but at the same time, it also can provide a context in which self-regulation can be practiced if it is organized with specific structural features. . . . All activities within the curriculum are designed to promote the development of such underlying skills along with more academic subject matter. . . . Even though play is viewed as the leading activity for developing underlying foundational skills, and the curriculum, Tools [of the Mind] makes more use of direct instruction than many other constructivist curricula. (p. 11)

While Barnett et al. (2008) focused on the development of self-regulatory skills and Diamond et al. (2007a; 2007b) analyzed executive functioning competencies, researchers of both studies observed similarities in their results, especially in the area of inhibitory control, or the ability to resist temptations or distractions. Regardless of their differing initial focuses, both studies found that the Tools of the Mind curriculum

improved classroom quality and children's metacognitive processes as indicated by lower scores on a problem behavior scale (Barnett et al., 2008).

Correlational Studies Linking Fine Motor Skills with Academic Success. Luo, Jose, Huntsinger, and Pigott (2007) and Son and Meisels (2006) utilized data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten class of 1998-99. Both analyzed the data for correlations between motor skills and math achievement by the end of first grade. Luo et al. also focused on the subsamples of European American outcomes in comparison to those of East Asian American students in this area, while Son and Meisels looked at reading scores in addition to the math. These authors concluded that the "... construct of fine motor skills significantly predicted mathematics achievement over time" (Luo et al., 2007, p. 595) and "... information from visual motor skills is useful in identifying children at risk for academic underachievement" (Son & Meisels, 2006, p. 755).

Research by Stewart, Rule, and Giordano (2007), Rule and Stewart (2002) and Hatta and Kawakami (1999) followed children through various assessments and while they performed specific tasks as a precursor to their future success. Stewart et al. (2007) studied 68 kindergarteners to examine the effect fine motor skill development had on their attention span. They found that "... female, but not male, attention was increased through the use of the [fine motor] materials" (p. 108), and that further research was necessary to find out which types of activities would be more effective for boys. When Rule and Stewart (2002) analyzed the fine motor development of 101 kindergarten children, they found that the type of fine motor activity was connected to the level of student progress. Hatta and Kawakami (1999) conducted four tasks using chopsticks on

90 college-age adults. They found that adults who had similar fine motor experiences as a child found the tasks easier to accomplish.

Successful Intervention Strategies for Children with Special Needs. Brambring (2007), Goyen, Lui, and Woods (1998), and Yochman, Ornoy, and Parush (2006) worked from the hypothesis that children, aged four to six, with special needs, such as those with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), blindness and very-low-birthweight (VLBW) or extremely-low-birthweight (ELBW), would have a greater chance of having motor deficits than their typically developing peers. Relying on a battery of developmental screening tools, student assessments, and questionnaires completed by parents, teachers, and physicians, each research study concluded that, yes, children with ADHD, blindness and VLBW or ELBW did, typically, have less developed motor skills than their same-age peers. However, in children with mild to moderate disabilities, early intervention played a key role as to the degree of delay in this area of development.

Downs, Conley Downs, Johansen, and Fossum (2007) and Karnes, Johnson, and Beauchamp (2005) studied how children with special needs responded to direct teaching strategies in comparison with more *experiential* types of programming. Downs et al. (2007) worked with 12 special needs preschoolers. Six of the participants received daily intervention using Discrete Trial Teaching; the other six received their regular preschool programming. Assessments given at the beginning and end of the project evaluated the participants' cognitive, language, behavioral, and social-emotional functioning. Karnes et al. (2005) observed ten children from four early childhood special education classrooms. The children were taught to use and verbalize problem-solving strategies while completing fine motor tasks. Both groups of researchers recommended teaching sessions

in which children with developmental delays are provided opportunities to receive explicit instruction from a teacher thoroughly trained in the procedure. It was suggested that each session would typically last from ten to twenty minutes and focus on one developmental area.

It came as very little surprise that children with special needs had motor skills that were not developed to the same level as their typical age peers, with evidence showing that the more severe the delays, the lower the motor functioning. However, all of the studies stated that direct, explicit instruction was shown to most effectively accelerate development in children with less severe delays (Downs et al., 2007).

Suggestions for Professional Development. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (n.d.) defined professional development [in early childhood education] as “. . . initial preparation (preservice) and learning experiences (inservice) designed to improve knowledge, skills/behaviors, and attitudes/values of the early childhood workforce” (p. 1). These types of *learning experiences* included a variety of strategies, such as workshops, mentoring and coaching, and modeling.

While the often utilized workshop program has been shown to be effective in providing specific information to educators, it has not been proven to encourage change in teaching practice in the long term (Bodrova, Leong, Norford, & Paynter, 2003; Lieber, et al., 2009). However, Lieber et al. discovered that, “. . . the personal supportive relationship coaches assumed with teachers appeared to contribute substantially to teachers’ willingness to attempt change. In many ways this teacher-coach relationship seems reflective of the very role we asked teachers to assume with children” (p. 477). However, they also cautioned that the successfulness of the experience also relies on the

personal relationship which is established between the teacher and his or her coach (Lieber et al., 2009). Teacher-led instruction, such as the modeling of specific teaching strategies, has also been effective for encouraging teachers to implement new practices within their classrooms.

Bodrova et al. (2003) and Landry (2009) both contended, however, that it was not a single strategy, but a combination of methods that had the strongest influence on teacher professional development. Bodrova et al. suggested a “. . . combination of daylong sessions, observations in model classrooms, and ongoing coaching and support from a professional development provider to help teachers change their practices” (p. 49). Landry noted the following:

The most essential elements [of professional development] were the core activities of yearlong coursework, hands-on practice in classrooms, [and] communication and accountability among peer teachers and mentors. . . . These components yield the most significant gains in the quality of instruction and the amount of children’s learning. (p. 32)

Regardless of which type of professional development strategies were implemented, the uttermost goal of quality professional development was to provide opportunities to strengthen the skills of educators so that they could best meet the educational needs of their students. As the Early Childhood Iowa Professional Development Component Group stated, “Providing outcome-based training assists professionals in meeting quality program standards and will assist in providing activities [and information] that help children achieve the Iowa Early Learning Standards” (Iowa Early Childhood Professional Development, n.d.).

Summary

These studies supported a continued focus for making the development of fine motor and self-regulatory skills a vital component of a successful early childhood curriculum. Unfortunately, at a time when more educational demands have been imposed on even our youngest students, basic skills such as these are often given less emphasis. Graphic practice provides a venue that addresses both fundamental competencies and academic early childhood goals. Recent information on professional development strategies will provide a framework that I can follow as I present this information to my colleagues.

Chapter III

The Project

The main focus of this project is to provide educators with detailed lessons from which they can effectively implement the strategy of graphic practice within an early childhood classroom. The second objective is to disseminate this graphic practice information to my colleagues. To complete this segment of my project, I will organize a series of professional development opportunities for teachers who are part of our local early childhood initiative, the Muscatine Preschool Alliance.

The Muscatine Preschool Alliance is a collaborative relationship between the private and public preschools within the city of Muscatine, Iowa. A valuable element within this partnership is the organization and presentation of inservice opportunities for teachers, para-educators, and associates working with preschool-age children in our community. It is for this audience that I will coordinate two formal professional development workshops and provide follow-up coaching, mentoring, and modeling, on a group or individual level, as is deemed necessary by my colleagues (see Appendix A).

An Introduction to Graphic Practice

The first workshop on graphic practice will take place on an afternoon during our district's inservice days prior to the start of the school year (see Figure 1). At this point I plan to introduce graphic practice by acquainting the group with basic theory and research. I will also familiarize the group with the materials needed and give them hands-on experience with a graphic practice lesson. Next I will share how we use graphic practice in our classroom. I will also familiarize them with the Graphic Practice Assessment Form and explain how we use this information to develop activities for

individuals and small groups. Lastly, I will encourage the cohort to implement graphic practice lessons in their own classrooms by presenting them with the first eight weeks of lessons which I have developed for this project. While I feel it is necessary to enlighten my colleagues with the relevance of the strategy, ultimately I just want them to attempt graphic practice with their students because it provides another opportunity to further develop vital early childhood skills.

| | |
|---|---|
| Day 1: Introduction to Graphic Practice | |
| 1:00 | Introductions Discussion of current fine motor, self-regulation, and alphabet knowledge practices |
| 1:15 | Relevant research General graphic practice information |
| 1:30 | Hands-on experience with a graphic practice lesson Break |
| 2:00 | Video clips of children engaged in graphic practice activities First-hand information on graphic practice in presenter's classroom Use of the <i>Graphic Practice Assessment Form</i> |
| 2:30 | Overview of the eight, introductory lessons |
| 2:55 | Closing questions, comments, or concerns Completion of Evaluation |

Figure 1. Agenda for first graphic practice workshop.

The Basics. While the exercise of graphic practice itself rarely requires monetary output, there are basic elements needed for implementation. A writing surface and utensil is necessary for each child. This could be a piece of paper and a pencil, but a white board and dry-erase marker (with an old sock as an eraser) is the suggested choice of materials (Bodrova, Leong, Paynter, & Hensen, 2003). Also, a CD or Mp3 player with a selection

of instrumental music should be available (E. Bodrova, personal communication, September, 2004).

Within this chapter, the first eight lessons are emphasized. These introductory lessons place a strong emphasis on the basic procedures used in a graphic practice experience. The lessons are arranged so that one mark or combination of marks is introduced and practiced each week. Therefore, it is helpful to schedule a minimum of two graphic practice sessions into the weekly routine. Typically a graphic practice activity will last approximately fifteen minutes. However, at the beginning, when the process is most valuable at helping to develop self-regulatory skills, the children may need a longer time to become familiarized with the strategy.

Graphic practice exercises may be conducted in large group, small group, or one-on-one settings. Sitting on a carpet, at a table, or in a learning center are all viable locations for students to practice their graphic practice tasks.

The graphic practice lessons are introduced in a specific order (see Appendix B). Bodrova, Leong, Paynter, and Henson (2003) state:

The order in which children are introduced to these activities is important as it mimics what children do naturally when learning to use a writing instrument. For example, typically children can deliberately make a circle before they have enough control of the writing instrument to deliberately make a square. For each activity, children also are asked to vary the closeness and size of the shapes that they are making, thus making the task simpler or more complex. (pp. 43-44)

A Graphic Practice Session in the Author's Preschool Class. In our classroom, a graphic practice session began with the children and me sitting around our group-time carpet with a white board lying in front of each of us. The children retrieved the boards from a nearby shelf as they transitioned to the carpet from their previous activity. We passed around the basket of dry-erase markers and sock *erasers* so that we each had the necessary materials. The markers and erasers were arranged at the top of our boards to indicate that we were ready to begin.

Prior to this time, I had selected the music for our experience (see Appendix C). Usually I chose an instrumental arrangement with a pacing that coincided with the complexity of the lesson. For example, when a new mark or combination of marks is being introduced, I choose a slower tempo; if the marks are more familiar, I may choose a livelier beat.

To pique the interest of the students, I initiated a scenario from which the graphic practice lesson would be developed. I may tie this scenario to a classroom theme, a piece of literature that has been shared with the class, or simply an imaginary event that is of interest to the children. I then modeled the mark or marks that will be created as part of the scenario. My para-educator controlled the CD player as I modeled the shapes on my white board. When she stopped the music, I stopped marking; when the music began again, I resumed my activity. After this brief introduction of the procedure, the children and I used the musical cues to make the shapes on our white boards. When the song was over, we showed our *products* to our friends, remarked on the similarities and differences in shapes, then cleaned up our materials and moved on to the next portion of our day.

I am often surprised, and always encouraged, when I see my students develop their own graphic practice scenarios as they independently work in our learning centers. This self-sufficient display showcases the popularity of graphic practice experiences within our classroom. It also epitomizes the idea of mature play as the children are organizing an imaginary situation, working with clearly defined rules and roles, developing their language skills, and extending their length of play (Bodrova & Leong, 2003).

Assessment of Graphic Practice Lessons. My role during a graphic practice lesson is to provide support to my students by modeling the steps necessary for developing the marks that the play scenario prescribes. However, because of my participation within the activity, I have to rely on my para-educators to observe my students and make note of any concerns. I developed a format they use to document any difficulties particular children may encounter during the process (see Appendix D).

I use the observation information to organize remediation activities for my students. For example, if we notice that holding the marker correctly may be an obstacle for a child or children, tasks that require refinement of the pincer grasp will be integrated into our learning centers, large group games, and small group collaborations. Each member of our staff will be made aware of the goals for these activities and which children would most benefit from these interventions. However, very little redirection is given to the children during the graphic practice lesson itself, because we want the experience to be enjoyable regardless of the skill levels of individual students.

The Lessons

These weekly lessons are organized to provide activities for a minimum of two graphic practice experiences each week. Each lesson conforms to a similar format.

This format consists of the following elements:

Review – The children are encouraged to recall aspects of previous graphic practice activities. They may also be asked to remember specific stories or discussions which have recently been featured in the classroom. These components will be built upon within the new play scenarios for the lessons.

Introduction – The children will build upon prior experiences as they are familiarized with a new play scenario.

Modeling – The teacher will model the new scenario for the students. She will *talk through* the different elements as she completes the entire scenario. The amount of modeling depends on the novelty of the marks or shapes and the difficulty of the combination of marks.

Practice – The children and the teacher complete the entire scenario as another adult stops and starts the musical selections. The teacher continues to *talk through* the different elements as she observes students who may have difficulties during the session. The *Graphic Practice Assessment Form* is used to document student performance (see Appendix D).

Examples in Writing – As the children become familiar with the strategy of graphic practice, the teacher models combining marks and shapes into letter formations. This element may then be expanded into other learning situations (i.e. centers, small groups, etc.).

Week 1- Introduction to Graphic Practice: Dots

Goals: The children will become familiar with the steps of graphic practice.

The children will make dots that are not touching.

The children will have an opportunity to develop their self-regulation skills.

Procedure:

Day 1

1. Show the students a white board, dry-erase marker, and *eraser* (old sock).
Discuss how these items could be used.
2. Explain that we will be using the white boards and dry-erase markers a few times each week, throughout the school year for an activity called graphic practice. Inform the children that graphic practice will help them strengthen and use the muscles in their hands and fingers that they will be using when they write.
3. Model making dots all over the white board. Tell the children, “Sometimes the weather is sunny, but other times the weather is rainy. I am making a picture of rain falling from the sky. When the raindrops fall on my board, they do not touch each other.” Be sure to point out that your marker does not make a sound as it marks on the board.
4. Pass out a white board, dry-erase marker and eraser to each child. Model where materials are to be placed while they are waiting for graphic practice to begin.
5. Ask children to get their markers ready by taking off the cap and snapping it into the end of the marker. Model and assist individuals as needed. Ask the

- children to grasp the marker as if they were ready to write and hold it in the air to show everyone they are ready. Clarify that this is where the marker will be at the beginning and the end of every graphic practice time.
6. As a group, make raindrops that are not touching on the boards. Emphasize the importance of not hearing the marker as it marks on the board.
 7. End the graphic practice session with the phrase, “Markers up,” and model how and where materials are to be put away.

Day 2

Review:

Display graphic practice materials (white boards, dry-erase markers, and erasers) and ask the children if they remember how the items had been used earlier in the week. Discuss the steps they remember in their previous graphic practice experience, asking questions and giving reminders for clarification.

Introduction:

Explain that often we will be using music to let us know when to stop and start making marks on the white boards, how fast or slow we should be making marks, and with different music we will make different marks.

“Today we will be making raindrops again. However, today we will be using music to let us know when to stop and start making raindrops on the board.”

Modeling:

1. “Watch me. When the music begins, I make raindrops, but when the music stops, I put my marker up.” Demonstrate these steps several times. Remind

the children that the raindrops did not touch and that the marker didn't make a sound when it hit the board.

2. Pass out graphic practice materials to each child. Again, model where materials are to be placed while they are waiting for graphic practice to begin.
3. Ask the children to get their markers ready by taking off the cap and snapping it into the end of the marker. Model the *markers up* signal.

Practice:

1. Reiterate that when the music begins we will be making raindrops that are not touching, but when the music stops we will lift our markers up.
2. Start and stop the music several times so the children will become familiar with the procedure.
3. End the graphic practice session when the song is completed and with the phrase, "Markers up." Show how and where materials are to be put away.

Day 3

Review:

Let the children know, "We are going to do graphic practice. What materials are we going to need?" Organize your white board, dry-erase marker, and eraser. Ask the children to recall their most recent graphic practice activity. Fill in major portions of the procedure, if omitted. "That's right! Last time we made raindrops falling on our boards. We used music to let us know when to start and stop making marks. Also, the raindrops did not touch."

Introduction:

“Today we are also going to make raindrops. We will use music again to let us know when to begin and end making marks. But, today we are going to make puddles. Instead of the raindrops falling all over our boards, the drops will fall in just one place. The drops will be touching.”

Modeling:

1. Using music with a slower tempo, demonstrate making puddles. Each time the music begins again, start making a new puddle. Continue modeling through several stops and starts.
2. Pass out graphic practice materials to each child. Again, model where materials are to be placed while they are waiting for graphic practice to begin.
3. Ask the children to get their markers ready by taking off the cap and snapping it into the end of the marker. Model the *markers up* signal.

Practice:

1. Reiterate that when the music begins we will be making puddles, or raindrops that are touching, and when the music stops we will lift our markers up. When the music begins again, we will start making a new puddle.
2. Start and stop the music several times so the children will become familiar with the procedure.
3. End the graphic practice session when the song is completed and with the phrase, “Markers up.” Show how and where materials are to be put away.

Week 2 – Spirals

Goals: The children will become familiar with the steps of graphic practice.

The children will make circular spirals.

The children will have an opportunity to develop their self-regulation skills.

Procedure:

Day 1

Review:

Introduce graphic practice time. Review previous week's graphic practice experiences, focusing on the steps involved.

Introduction:

1. Show the students a top. Ask them what they would do with a top.

Demonstrate how to spin the top and watch the way it moves in a circular, or spiral, motion.

2. Explain, "Today we are not going to make dots like we did when we made raindrops or puddles. We are going to draw spirals."

Modeling:

1. Present teacher materials. Say, "When the music begins, I am going to make a spiral mark on the board. What should I do when the music stops? That's correct; I should pick my marker up. When the music starts again I will make another spiral."
2. Using music with a slower tempo, demonstrate making spirals (see Figure 2). Each time the music begins again, start making a new spiral. Continue modeling through several stops and starts.

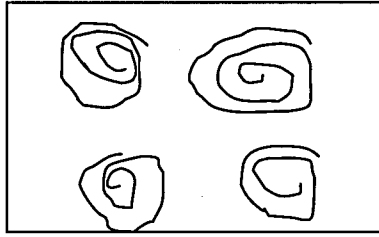


Figure 2. Examples of spirals.

Practice:

1. Pass out graphic practice materials to each child. Remind the children of where materials are to be placed while they are waiting for graphic practice to begin.
2. Ask the children to get their markers ready by taking off the cap and snapping it into the end of the marker. Model the *markers up* signal.
3. Start and stop the music several times so the children will become familiar with the procedure.
4. End the graphic practice session when the song is completed and with the phrase, "Markers up." Show how and where materials are to be put away.

Day 2

Review:

1. Introduce graphic practice time.
2. Reintroduce the top. Ask the students what type of mark was made in the previous lesson which was similar to the movement of a top (Spirals).

Introduction:

Present teacher materials. Say, "Today we are going to make more spirals.

When the music begins, I am going to make a spiral mark on the board. What should I do when the music stops? That's correct; I should pick my marker up.

However, when the music starts again I will make another spiral, but this time I will use a different color.”

Modeling:

Using music with a slower tempo, demonstrate making spirals. Each time the music begins again, start making a new spiral with a different color of dry-erase marker. Continue modeling through several stops and starts.

Practice:

1. Pass out graphic practice materials to each child. Remind the children of where materials are to be placed while they are waiting for graphic practice to begin.
2. Ask the children to get their markers ready by taking off the cap and snapping it into the end of the marker. Model the *markers up* signal.
3. Reiterate that when the music begins we will be making spirals, and when the music stops we will lift our markers up. Then, without *capping* our markers, we will exchange markers with a friend who has a different color. When the music begins again, we will start making a new spiral in a different color.
4. Start and stop the music several times so the children will become familiar with the procedure.
5. End the graphic practice session when the song is completed and with the phrase, “Markers up.” Show how and where materials are to be put away.

Week 3 – Lines: Not touching

Goals: The children will become familiar with the steps of graphic practice.

The children will make lines that are not touching.

The children will have an opportunity to develop their self-regulation skills.

Procedure:

Day 1

Review:

1. Introduce graphic practice time. As a group, recount previous graphic practice scenarios. Explain that today we will not be making dots or spirals.
2. Pass out graphic practice materials. Remind the children how they need to be organized to show they are ready to proceed.

Introduction:

1. Introduce the play scenario. “Let’s pretend we are passing out straws to a lot of people at a birthday party.” Draw a “straw” on your white board. Ask, “How does your straw look? That’s right; it is a line. We will need to give one straw to each person at the party. We are going to need many straws.”
2. Recap the expectation, “Today we will be making lines and the lines will not be touching.”

Modeling:

Using a musical selection with a slow, steady beat, model drawing lines, or straws, placed next to each other, but not touching each other. Begin at the left side of the board. Sweep back when you reach the right edge of the white

board (see Figure 3). Continue making lines stopping and starting when the music is turned off and on.

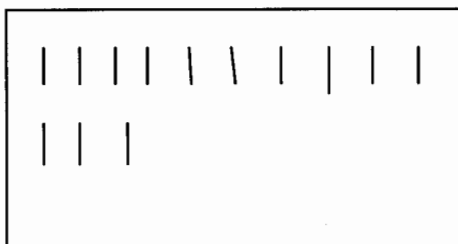


Figure 3. Example of lines that are not touching.

Practice:

1. Ask the children to get their markers ready by taking off the cap and snapping it into the end of the marker. Model the *markers up* signal.
2. Review scenario.
3. Start and stop the music several times so the children will become familiar with the procedure.
4. End the graphic practice session when the song is completed and with the phrase, "Markers up." Show how and where materials are to be put away.

Day 2

Review:

1. Pass out the graphic practice materials and ask the children to recall what type of activity we will be having at this time (Graphic practice).
2. Discuss the play scenario and key components of the most current graphic practice experience (Straws for party guests; lines, not touching).

Introduction:

Develop the new scenario for the children – candles on a birthday cake.

Explain, “Today we are going to use two of the marks we have made during past graphic practice times. First, we are going to make candles for a person who is very old. We are going to need many candles. We will make them just like we made straws the last time.”

Modeling:

1. Using the music, demonstrate drawing lines that are not touching. Begin at the left side of the board. Sweep back when reaching the right edge of the board.
2. Ask the children, “What do you do with the candles on a birthday cake? Does a grown-up light them so you can blow them out? Next, we are going to make dots at the top of the lines and pretend they are the flames on the birthday candles.” Using another, obviously different piece of music make a dot at the top of each line.

Practice:

1. Ask the children to get their markers ready by taking off the cap and snapping it into the end of the marker. Model the *markers up* signal.
2. Review scenario.
3. Start and stop the music several times so the children will become familiar with the procedure.
4. End the graphic practice session when the song is completed and with the phrase, “Markers up.” Show how and where materials are to be put away.

Week 4 – Small Spirals: Not Touching

Goals: The children will review the procedures of graphic practice.

The children will make rows of small spirals that are not touching.

The children will have an opportunity to develop their self-regulation skills.

The children will be introduced to a correlation between the marks they are making and letters in their names.

Procedure:

Day 1

Review:

1. Pass out the graphic practice materials and ask the children to recall what type of activity we will be having at this time (Graphic practice). As a group, recall some of the graphic practice scenarios we had previously completed (Spirals, candles with flames, raindrops, etc.).
2. Reintroduce the top; encourage the children to discuss the mark they had made that was like the pattern of a top (Spirals).

Introduction:

Develop the new scenario for the children – flowers in a garden. Explain, “Today we are going to pretend that the spirals are flowers. In a garden, some people plant their flowers in rows. In this scenario, we are going to make small spiral flowers in rows on our white boards. Remember, when we get to the edge of the board we sweep back before we start making another row of flowers.”

Modeling:

Using the music, demonstrate making small spirals, in a row, that are not touching. Begin at the left side of the board. Sweep back when reaching the right edge of the board (see Figure 4).

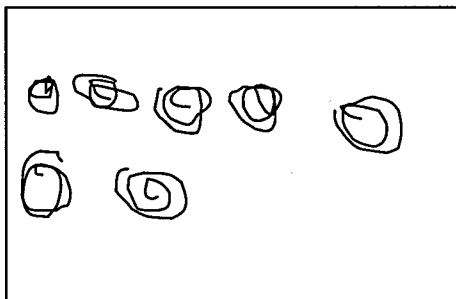


Figure 4. Example of small spirals in rows, sweeping back

Practice:

1. Ask the children to get their markers ready by taking off the cap and snapping it into the end of the marker. Model the *markers up* signal.
2. Review scenario.
3. Start and stop the music several times so the children will become familiar with the procedure.
4. End the graphic practice session when the song is completed and with the phrase, "Markers up." Ask the children to put the materials away.

Day 2

Review:

Pass out the graphic practice materials and ask the children to recall what type of activity we will be having at this time (Graphic practice). Discuss the play

scenario and key components of the most current graphic practice experience (Flowers in a garden; small spirals, not touching).

Introduction:

Develop the new scenario for the children – flowers with stems. Explain, “Today we are going to use two of the marks we have made during past graphic practice times. First, we are going to make flowers in a garden. We will make them just like we did last time.”

Modeling:

1. Using the music, demonstrate drawing small spirals that are not touching.
Begin at the left side of the board. Sweep back when reaching the right edge of the board.
2. Explain to the children, “We are going to want to pick these flowers so they need to have a stem” Using another, obviously different piece of music, make a short line underneath each flower (see Figure 5).

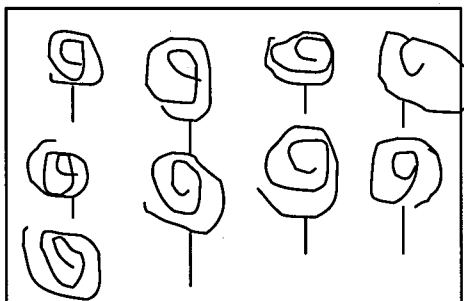


Figure 5. Example of small spirals in rows with lines

Practice:

1. Ask the children to get their markers ready by taking off the cap and snapping it into the end of the marker. Model the *markers up* signal.
2. Review scenario.
3. Start and stop the music several times so the children will become familiar with the procedure.
4. End the graphic practice session when the song is completed and with the phrase, "Markers up."

Examples in Writing:

1. Explain to the children, "When I was making the flowers with stems, it reminded me of how I make a letter in Zach's name. Watch." Demonstrate how the spiral can turn in to the circle of a lower-case letter A and where the line should go. "I can make the flower and the stem into a lower-case A!" Talk through the procedure as you model the combination several times.
2. Encourage the children to follow the same steps, "Let's all try it." Continue for a few minutes. As a group, share each other's work.
3. Put materials away.

Week 5 – Long and Short Lines: Touching

Goals: The children will become familiar with the steps of graphic practice.

The children will combine long and shorts lines.

The children will have an opportunity to develop their self-regulation skills.

The children will be introduced to a correlation between the marks they are making and letters in their names.

Procedure:

Day 1

Review:

1. Pass out the graphic practice materials and discuss the play scenario and key components of the most current graphic practice experience (flowers with stems; small spirals with lines)
2. Ask the children to recall a recent fall story about the types of things animals do to prepare for winter, such as *When Autumn Comes* (Maass, 1990). Discuss how some birds fly to warmer places to spend winter.

Introduction:

Develop the new scenario for the children – birds flying to a warmer place for winter. Explain, “Today we are going to pretend we are birds. It is fall and the weather is getting colder. We don’t like the cold. We need to migrate, or fly, to a warmer place. We will be flying a long time. One bird starts right here [on the left edge of the white board] and he doesn’t stop flying until he gets to Mexico over here. When he gets to Mexico he gets to rest his tired wings.

Then we go back to Muscatine and get another bird ready to make the long trip to Mexico. Watch me.”

Modeling:

Using music with an appropriate tempo, demonstrate drawing a long line from one side of the white board to the other. Begin at the left side of the board.

Sweep back when reaching the right edge of the board (see Figure 6). Remind the children, “Many birds migrate at this time of year so we need to try and make our lines close together. Let’s see how many birds we can get from Muscatine to Mexico Continue to make long lines across the board.”

Emphasize the words *long*, *across*, and *sweep back*.

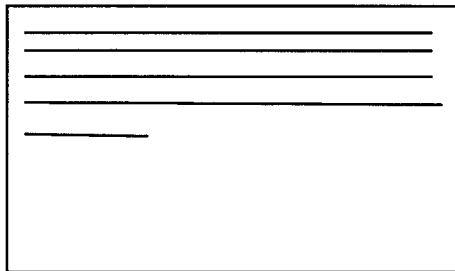


Figure 6. Example of long lines, sweeping back

Practice:

1. Ask the children to get their markers ready by taking off the cap and snapping it into the end of the marker. Model the *markers up* signal.
2. Review scenario.
3. The children should draw long lines across their boards until the song is over. Encourage the children to count the number of birds that migrated across their boards.
4. Put materials away.

Day 2

Review:

1. Pass out the graphic practice materials and discuss the play scenario and key components of the most current graphic practice experience (Birds flying to Mexico; long lines across the board).
2. Ask the children to recall a recent fall story about the types of things animals do to prepare for winter, such as *We Love Fall!* (Muldrow, 1997). Discuss what the squirrels did to be certain they had enough food for winter (Collected and stored nuts).

Introduction:

Develop the new scenario for the children – squirrels finding nuts for winter. Explain, “Today we are going to help squirrels find food for the winter. First we are going to make long lines for trees. We are going to make a whole forest so we will need many trees. We will make long lines and they will not be touching. When we get to the edge of the board, what should we do? (Sweep Back).”

Modeling:

1. Using the music, demonstrate drawing long lines that are not touching. Begin at the left side of the board. Sweep back when reaching the right edge of the board (see Figure 7).
2. “Now we are going to use short lines for the path the squirrel takes as it runs from tree to tree looking for nuts.” Using another, obviously different piece of music make a short line between the long lines (see Figure 8).

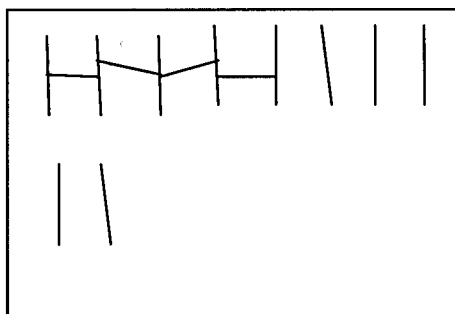
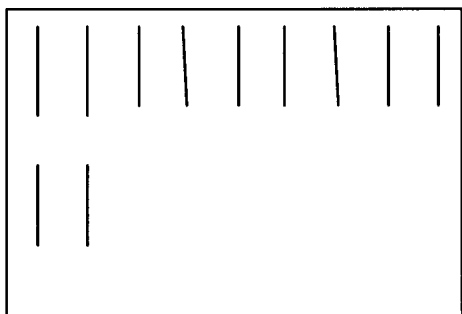


Figure 7. Example of long lines, not touching Figure 8. Short lines between long lines

Practice:

1. Ask the children to get their markers ready by taking off the cap and snapping it into the end of the marker. Model the *markers up* signal.
2. Review scenario.
3. Start and stop the music several times so the children will become familiar with the procedure.
4. End the graphic practice session when the song is completed.

Examples in Writing:

1. Help the children recall making a lower-case A last week.
2. Explain, “This time when we were making trees and squirrels it reminded me of letters in Hailey and Isaiah’s names. Look.” Demonstrate how two long lines with a short line between them make an upper-case H and one long line with a short line at the top and at the bottom make an upper-case I. Talk through the procedure as you model the combinations several times.
3. Encourage the children to follow the same steps, “Let’s all try it.” Continue for a few minutes. As a group, share each other’s work.
4. Put materials away.

Week 6 – Dots and Lines in Combinations

Goals: The children will become familiar with the steps of graphic practice.

The children will combine dots and lines to make basic shapes.

The children will have an opportunity to develop their self-regulation skills.

The children will be introduced to a correlation between the marks they are making and letters in their names.

Procedure:

Day 1

Review:

1. Pass out the graphic practice materials and discuss the play scenario and key components of the most current graphic practice experiences (long and short lines; migrating birds; squirrels looking for nuts in trees).
2. Demonstrate how to make shapes using gumdrops and toothpicks. (Note: It is more meaningful for the children if they have had the opportunity to use these materials prior to this lesson.)

Introduction:

Develop the new scenario for the children – gumdrops and toothpicks.

Explain, “Today we are going to use two of the marks we have made during past graphic practice times. First, we are going to make dots in rows across our white boards. We are going to pretend these dots are gumdrops. When we get to the right edge of the board we need to sweep back and make more *gumdrops* on the next row. Watch.”

Modeling:

1. Using the music, demonstrate drawing rows of dots that are not touching.

Begin at the left side of the board. Sweep back when reaching the right edge of the board (see Figure 9).

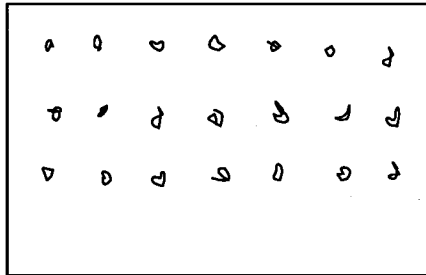


Figure 9. Example of dots in rows, not touching

2. “Next we are going to make lines between the dots. We will pretend these are the toothpicks. We will make long, connected rows with our pretend gumdrops and toothpicks, just like we did with the real ones a few minutes ago.” Using another, obviously different piece of music make a short line between the dots to make long, connected rows (see Figure 10).

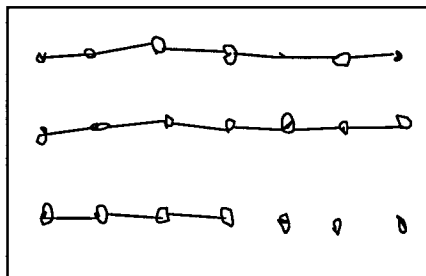


Figure 10. Example of dots and lines in long, connected rows.

3. “Now we can connect our rows with toothpicks, too.” Using a third piece of music make short, vertical lines between the dots to form a gumdrop and toothpick grid (see Figure 11).

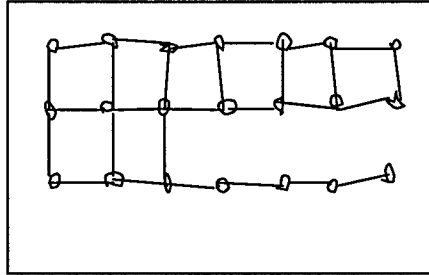


Figure 11. Example of a grid made with dots and lines.

Practice:

1. Ask the children to get their markers ready by taking off the cap and snapping it into the end of the marker. Model the *markers up* signal.
2. Review scenario.
3. Start and stop the music several times during each step so the children will become familiar with the procedure.
4. End the graphic practice session when the song is completed and with the phrase, “Markers up.” Put materials away.

Day 2

Review:

1. Pass out the graphic practice materials and discuss the play scenario and key components of the most current graphic practice experience (Building with gumdrops and toothpicks; connecting dots with lines).
2. Again, display shapes made with gumdrops and toothpicks.

Introduction:

1. Reintroduce the earlier scenario – building with gumdrops and toothpicks. Explain, “Today we are going to begin by making dots in rows and sweeping back when we get to the right edge of the board, just like we did last time.”

However, instead of making lines across or down to connect the dots, we are going to make diagonal lines. Diagonal lines look like this.” Make a few diagonal lines on the white board. While erasing the diagonal lines explain, “But first we will make the dots in rows.”

Modeling:

1. Using the music, demonstrate making dots in rows. Begin at the left side of the board. Sweep back when reaching the right edge of the board.
2. Using another, obviously different piece of music connect the dots with diagonal lines (see Figure 12).

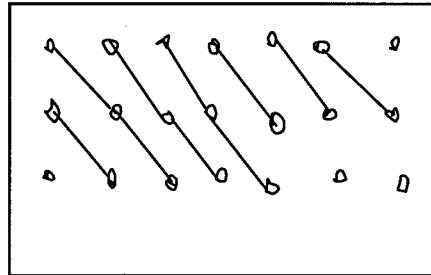


Figure 12. Example of dots connected by diagonal lines.

Practice:

1. Ask the children to get their markers ready by taking off the cap and snapping it into the end of the marker. Model the *markers up* signal.
2. Review scenario.
3. Start and stop the music several times during each step so the children will become familiar with the procedure.
4. End the graphic practice session when the song is completed and with the phrase, “Markers up.”

Examples in Writing:

1. Help the children recall the letters that have been made in the past (a, H, I).
2. Explain, “These diagonal lines remind me of letters in many of our friend’s names, Abby, Meadow, Nadia, Will, Xander, and Zach. Look.” Demonstrate how each of these letters is made using straight and diagonal lines. Talk through the procedure as you model the combinations several times.
3. Encourage the children to follow the same steps, “Let’s all try it.” Continue for a few minutes. As a group, share each other’s work.
4. Put materials away.

Week 7 – Circles and Lines

Goals: The children will become familiar with the steps of graphic practice.

The children will combine circles and lines to be used as props for a familiar rhyme.

The children will have an opportunity to develop their self-regulation skills.

The children will be introduced to a correlation between the marks they are making and letters in their names.

The children will have the opportunity to transfer the experience of making marks on a white board to making marks on paper.

Procedure:

Day 1

Review:

1. Pass out the graphic practice materials and discuss the play scenario and key components of the most current graphic practice experience (Building with gumdrops and toothpicks; connecting dots with straight and diagonal lines).
2. Recall the rhyme *Five Little Pumpkins*. Ask the children, “Where do the pumpkins sit? That’s right, on a wall.”

Introduction:

Develop the new scenario for the children – pumpkins on walls. Explain, “Today we are going to make pumpkins sitting on walls. First we are going to draw horizontal lines and pretend they are walls. Next we are going to draw one pumpkin to sit on each wall. What shape would look most like a pumpkin? A circle!”

Modeling:

1. Using the music, demonstrate drawing horizontal lines with small spaces between each line. Begin at the left side of the board. Sweep back when reaching the right edge of the board (see Figure 13).

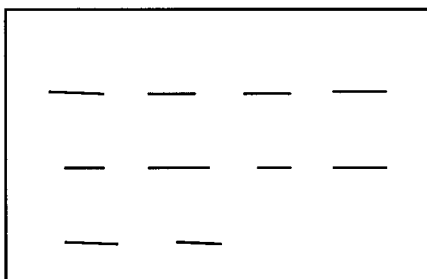


Figure 13. Examples of horizontal lines.

- Using another, obviously different piece of music place a circle on each line (see Figure 14).

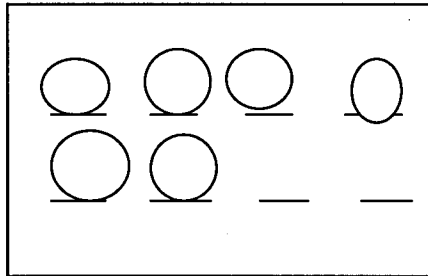


Figure 14. Example of circles on lines.

Practice:

- Ask the children to get their markers ready by taking off the cap and snapping it into the end of the marker. Model the *markers up* signal.
- Review scenario.
- Start and stop the music several times during each step so the children will become familiar with the procedure.
- End the graphic practice session when the song is completed and with the phrase, “Markers up.”

Examples in Writing:

- Help the children recall the letters that have been made in the past (a, H, I, A, N, M, W, X, Z).
- Explain, “Today’s circles with lines reminded me of a lot of letters we see in our friends’ names and on the alphabet chart. Let’s look at the alphabet chart and see if we can find any letters that are made by combining a circle with a line.” Expect children to name b, d, p, P, etc. Please provide suggestions if the

children seem to be having difficulty finding some letters with the circle and line attributes. Demonstrate how each of these letters is made using combinations of circles and lines. Talk through the procedure as you model the combinations several times.

3. Encourage the children to follow the same steps, "Let's all try it." Continue for a few minutes. As a group, share each other's work.
4. Put materials away.

Day 2

Review:

1. Pass out the graphic practice materials and discuss the play scenario and key components of the most current graphic practice experience (Pumpkins on walls; circles on horizontal lines).
2. Once again, recall the *Five Little Pumpkins* rhyme.

Introduction:

Develop the new scenario for the children – five pumpkins sitting on a wall.

Explain, "Today we are going to make pumpkins again. This time, instead of making one pumpkin for each line, we are going to make five pumpkins.

These pumpkins will need to be very close together, so they can all sit on the same fence."

Modeling:

1. Rather than using music, demonstrate counting to five as you make a group of small circles. When you have a group of five, move to another spot on the

board and count to five as you make another group of pumpkins (see Figure 15).

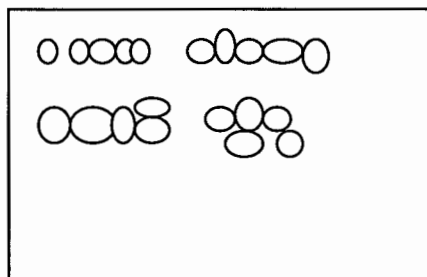


Figure 15. Example of groups of five circles.

2. Explain, “Now I need to draw lines under each group of pumpkins so they have a wall to sit on.” Demonstrate, again without music, making one line under each group of five circles.

Practice:

1. Ask the children to get their markers ready by taking off the cap and snapping it into the end of the marker. Model the *markers up* signal.
2. Review scenario.
3. Together make sets of five pumpkins.
4. When the board is full of groups of pumpkins, make a horizontal line under each group.
5. When you are finished making groups of pumpkins sitting on fences on the white board, put the dry-erase markers and erasers away.
6. Pass out a piece of paper and traditional markers. Have enough orange markers available so each child may have one. However, allow the children to select the marker they prefer.

7. Explain, “We are going to use this paper to make a fall picture. The picture will be of five little pumpkins and we will make the picture just as we had on the white boards. Only this time, we will make just one group of five large pumpkins. Watch.” Demonstrate counting and drawing a group of five large pumpkins.
8. After retrieving another blank piece of paper suggest, “Let’s all make our pumpkins together.” Count and draw five pumpkins. Provide support to individual children as is necessary.
9. Ask, “What do we need to give the pumpkins so they have a place to sit? Yes, a wall.” Demonstrate making a line under the group of pumpkins. Instruct the children to complete the same action.
10. As a group share the drawings of five little pumpkins sitting on a wall.
11. If possible, invite the children to embellish their pumpkins using collage materials to transform them into jack-o-lanterns. (Note: I use the first portion of the this lesson as a traditional graphic practice experience. The students and I complete the second, drawing on paper part, after a shortened graphic practice, during small group activities later in the week.)

Week 8 – Circles and Lines: Touching

Goals: The children will become familiar with the steps of graphic practice.

The children will make combine lines and circles.

The children will have an opportunity to develop their self-regulation skills.

The children will be introduced to a correlation between the marks they are making and letters in their names.

The children will review letters inspired by previous graphic practice activities and practice making these letters.

Procedure:

Day 1

Review:

1. Pass out the graphic practice materials and discuss the play scenarios and key components of recent graphic practice experience (Pumpkins sitting on walls; connecting dots with straight and diagonal lines).
2. Reintroduce the gumdrop and toothpick sculptures. Build a few structures making note of how the toothpicks are kind of like bridges. Ask, “Why do we need bridges? So that we can get from one place to another more easily.”

Introduction:

Develop the new scenario for the children – bridges to islands. Explain, “Today we are going to use three different marks, circles, dots, and lines, to make rocky islands with bridges connecting them.”

Modeling:

1. Using music, demonstrate making different size circles all over the white board to represent islands. The islands should not touch because there is always water between islands.
2. Using another, obviously different piece of music make a dots for rocks on the islands.
3. Using a third selection of music, draw *straight* lines to represent bridges connecting the rocky islands. Every island should have at least one bridge connecting it to the other islands (see Figure 16).

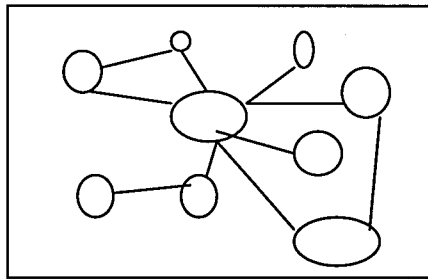


Figure 16. Example of circles with dots connected by straight lines.

Practice:

1. Ask the children to get their markers ready by taking off the cap and snapping it into the end of the marker. Model the *markers up* signal.
2. Review scenario.
3. Start and stop the music several times during each step so the children will become familiar with the procedure.
4. End the graphic practice session when the song is completed and with the phrase, "Markers up." Show how and where materials are to be put away.

Day 2

Review:

1. Pass out the graphic practice materials.
2. Help the children recall the letters that have been made in the past (a, H, I, A, N, M, W, X, Z, b, d, p, P).

Introduction:

Explain, "Today we are not going to make marks and shapes to make pictures. We are going to combine marks and shapes into letters. We are going to make all of the letters we have practiced in the past. We are also going to make any new letters you would like to try."

Modeling:

Demonstrate how various letters are made by combining familiar marks and shapes. Talk through the procedure as you model the combinations several times.

Practice:

1. Direct the children to follow the same steps, including talking through the procedure, by stating, "Let's all try it." Provide support to individual children as is necessary.
2. Encourage the children to call out new letters to write. Ask them to identify components of each new letter that we have drawn in previous graphic practice experiences. Continue the process through several letters.
3. Put materials away.

Implementing Subsequent Graphic Practice Lessons

The second professional development workshop will be included in a teacher quality inservice day approximately ten weeks into the school year (see Figure 17). During that time I will be able to discuss the successes, concerns, questions, and comments my colleagues have developed after having implemented graphic practice in their classrooms. I will also address how graphic practice exercises align with the Iowa Early Learning Standards (2006), primarily in the areas of *Fine Motor Development* and *Early Writing*. Together I would like to compile information that could be utilized as we organize programming for our students with special needs. Finally, I will refer to the first eight lessons as a means to explain the steps for integrating new scenarios and combinations of marks and shapes into future graphic practice activities.

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Day 2: Extending Graphic Practice | |
| 1:00 | Review of previous workshop Discussion of graphic practice successes, questions, concerns, and mishaps Video clips of recent graphic practice activities |
| 1:45 | How does graphic practice fit in with the Iowa Early Learning Standards? Can graphic practice be a viable part of a student's IEP? Break |
| 2:10 | Small group goal writing Group sharing |
| 2:30 | Overview of extension lessons for weeks 9 – 30 |
| 2:50 | Closing questions, comments, or concerns Evaluation Set-up additional teacher support activities |

Figure 17. Agenda for second graphic practice workshop.

These lessons should provide a better awareness of the vital components contained in each graphic practice lesson. Not only are the children developing their fine

motor skills, but also they are expected to incorporate the procedures in a manner which will promote their self-regulation abilities and alphabet knowledge.

The lessons should also serve as a catalyst for future graphic experiences (see Appendix E). By understanding the procedures and being cognizant of the levels of difficulty, a teacher can use this information to successfully develop play scenarios for a variety of graphic practice activities.

Continued Professional Development

Implementation of graphic practice will be completely voluntary; individuals will be able to decide whether they are willing to undertake this new strategy. For those teachers who are inclined to initiate this novel approach with their students, I will provide the amount of support they require as a coach, mentor, or model.

While I realize that very few teachers would *enjoy* attending another meeting, I would suggest a short, monthly confabulation, if my colleagues would be so inclined. Each month we could focus on four to six future graphic practice lessons. This occasion would provide the teachers with a chance to practice the lessons, as a student or as the teacher, prior to introducing them in their classrooms. This venue should provide the participants with an opportunity to ask questions and express comments or concerns and, hopefully, establish a higher level of comfort while implementing this strategy. I will encourage videotaping, so that the teachers and I can observe and critique various lessons. I can coordinate an online discussion group for graphic *practitioners* to share information and ask questions. Ultimately, I plan to assist my colleagues at the level they feel most comfortable as they venture to incorporate graphic practice into their daily curriculum.

Chapter IV

Conclusions and Recommendations

Personal Insights

This project has been extremely enlightening for me. While I have been using graphic practice within my classroom for the past five years, and have witnessed my students develop better fine motor, self-regulation, and alphabet knowledge skills, the practice has begun to take on a rather commonplace existence. However, the research I have found reaffirms the importance of enhancing the proficiency in these areas of early childhood programming. Also, developing the lessons renewed the excitement I felt when I first implemented graphic practice experiences. I loved being able to assist my students as they made these foundational connections and to challenge them to take this understanding to a higher level.

Research Opportunities

As it has been mentioned in previous chapters, there have been no formal research studies as to the effects of graphic practice on the development of fine motor and self-regulatory skills in young children. While there are now several teachers successfully implementing the strategy of graphic practice in classrooms around the country, this could be a viable area for future doctoral studies. Also, a comparative study between graphic practice and a formal fine motor curriculum could also be advantageous.

Value to Colleagues

I truly hope that, through the professional development opportunity I have organized, I can influence my colleagues to try graphic practice in their classrooms. I feel

that the information I am sharing with them will provide relevant background knowledge and ease the transition to this new practice.

I have been encouraged by the comments I have received from teachers who already use graphic practice. Eileen Heck, a valued friend and fellow early childhood educator, made these remarks after reviewing a rough draft of this project:

I only wish we could have had something like this four years ago when Elena [Bodrova] was teaching us the strategy. This is so nice and specific! I think Elena would be very impressed and proud of your work! . . . This is going to be a great tool for all early childhood teachers (personal communication, April 30, 2009).

Beth Nau, another preschool teacher commented, “Finally! I have been wanting you to do this for years” (personal communication, June 16, 2009). She began introducing graphic practice after observing the strategy in my classroom, but always wanted a more concrete format to follow.

Graphic practice provides a multitude of educational experiences for young children. It is my sincere wish that, through this relevant information and my own enthusiasm for the practice, I can encourage other early childhood educators to make this strategy an invaluable addition to their programs.

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Appendix A

Professional Development Agendas and Evaluations

Day 1: Introduction to Graphic Practice

- 1:00 Introductions
Discussion of current fine motor, self-regulation, and alphabet knowledge practices
- 1:15 Relevant research
General graphic practice information
- 1:30 Hands-on experience with a graphic practice lesson (Week 1 lessons)
Break
- 2:00 Video clips of children engaged in graphic practice activities
First-hand information on graphic practice in presenter's classroom
Use of the *Graphic Practice Assessment Form*
- 2:30 Overview of the eight, introductory lessons
- 2:55 Closing questions, comments, or concerns
Completion of Evaluation

Name _____ Email Address _____
(Optional, but helpful for providing follow-up information)

About Graphic Practice (please select just one). . .

- I would like to give graphic practice a try in my classroom.
- I find graphic practicing intriguing, but I would like more information.
- Graphic practice looks interesting, but I already have too much to do.
- Why are you wasting my time?

About the presentation (please choose as many as necessary). . .

- Information was clear and concise.
- Presenter was knowledgeable about the topic.
- Presenter responded thoughtfully and respectfully to the group's questions, comments and concerns.
- I would have liked more information about _____

- Comments and suggestions _____

Day 2: Extending Graphic Practice

- 1:00 Review of previous workshop
 Discussion of graphic practice successes, questions, concerns, and mishaps
 Video clips of recent graphic practice activities
- 1:45 How does graphic practice fit in with the Iowa Early Learning Standards?
 Can graphic practice be a viable part of a student's IEP?
 Break
- 2:10 Small group goal writing
 Group sharing
- 2:30 Overview of extension lessons for weeks 9 – 30
- 2:50 Closing questions, comments, or concerns
 Evaluation
 Set-up additional teacher support activities

Name _____ Email Address _____
 (Optional, but helpful for providing follow-up information)

About Graphic Practice (please select just one). . .

- I have tried graphic practice and plan to implement this strategy in my classroom.
- I've tried graphic practice, but do not plan to make it part of my weekly schedule.
- I have not tried graphic practice, but may try it in the future.
- I am not interested in using this strategy with my students.

About the presentation (please choose as many as necessary). . .

- Information was clear and concise.
- Presenter was knowledgeable about the topic.
- Presenter responded thoughtfully and respectfully to the group's questions, comments and concerns.
- Comments and suggestions _____
- _____
- _____

Appendix B

Graphic Practice: Levels of Difficulty

Graphic Practice Activities: Levels of Difficulty

| Relationships of Marks or Types of Marks | Mark | | | | |
|---|------|-------|---------|---------|-----------|
| | Dots | Lines | Circles | Squares | Triangles |
| Don't touch | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Touch | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Big | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Little | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Big and little | 2 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 4 |
| Other combinations (e.g., some dots or lines touch and some don't) | | | | | |

Note: 1 = easy, 5 = difficult (Activities that ask students to make various marks and combinations might be rated 3-5 depending on the marks.)

Note. From *Scaffolding Literacy Development in the Preschool Classroom* (p. 44), by E. Bodrova, D. Leong, D. Paynter, and R. Hensen, 2003, Aurora, CO: Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning. Reprinted by permission of McREL.

Appendix C

Suggestions for Music Selection

While reviewing this project, my good friend, Eileen Heck, a fellow graduate student and colleague who regularly uses graphic practice in her integrated preschool program, reminded me of how uncertain she had been about using music with graphic practice. She understood how music enhanced the sessions for her students; however, finding the correct types of music had been a challenge. Eileen suggested that I share some of my personal insights as to how I began to incorporate music into my weekly graphic practice lessons. This section is designed to share some suggestions on selecting music to strengthen graphic practice activities.

Instrumental Music

When I initially implemented graphic practice lessons within my preschool class, I also had difficulty incorporating music. I began by choosing traditional children's songs that complimented our current theme. While my students enjoyed this type of music, and melodious voices could often be heard, I found that, in their exuberance, it became difficult for several of them to concentrate on the task at hand. However, since music was such a celebrated component of our program, I could not bring myself to discourage my little friends from singing along. It was necessary to find a better accompaniment for our graphic practice experiences.

A few years before, I had chosen a CD of piano pieces to use during quiet times in our day. Since familiar lyrics had distracted the children, I had hoped that instrumental music would eliminate that interference. And, it did. The children used the musical cues to stop and start their marks. They focused more carefully on the shapes they were creating. They began to modulate their style according to the pace of the music. Unfortunately, the piano melodies did not offer much variation and it soon felt as if we

were working with the same song each time we started our graphic practice. I needed to introduce musical selections with more diversified timing.

Varying Tempos

I spent a lot of time perusing the music kiosks at Wal-Mart and Target stores. There I was able to preview an extensive variety of musical CD's containing an assortment of cadences. I selected a compilation of African drum music for when I wanted a slow and steady beat; a CD of pan pipe music was effective when I needed a fast, lilting rhythm. By utilizing a multitude of music selections, I could emphasize my graphic practice goals while still intriguing my young audience.

Introducing New Styles

A rather surprising outcome from our graphic practice experiences was the level at which several of the students became aware of the music. Each time a new musical selection was introduced, we would discuss the tempo and rhythm. We might talk about how the music made us feel or what it reminded us of. It gave us exposure to a variety of cultures. It acquainted us with famous composers. The music from graphic practice offered a weekly opportunity for learning that I had only *touched on* previously.

Summary

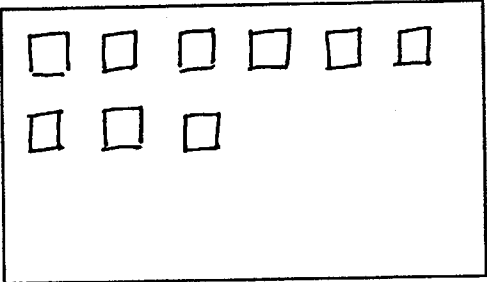
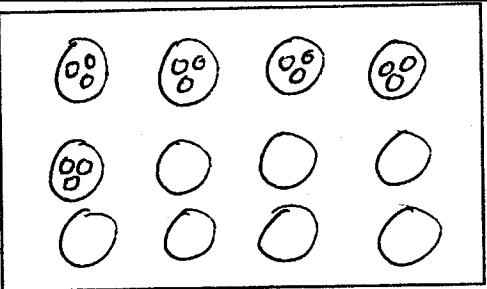
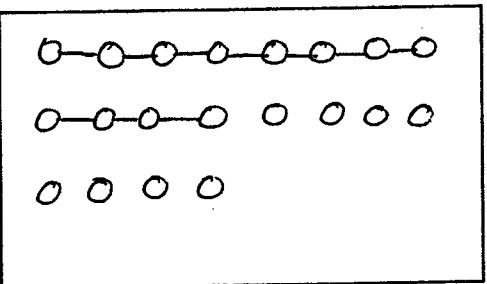
Music is an integral part of a graphic practice experience. It assists in developing a framework for self-regulation. It provides a rhythm for learning new marks and practicing familiar ones. It contributes to the novelty of the lessons. However, I feel the opportunity to expose my students to a variety of music is nearly the greatest benefit of all.

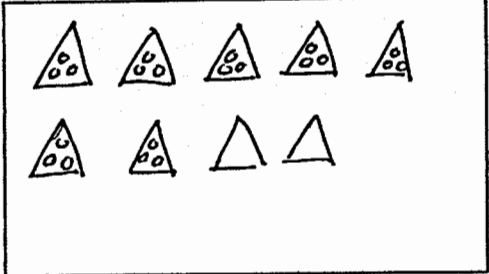
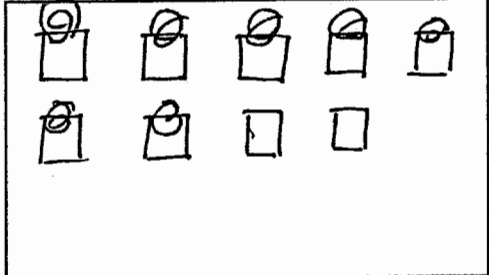
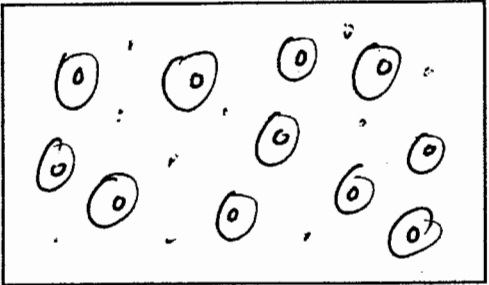
Appendix D

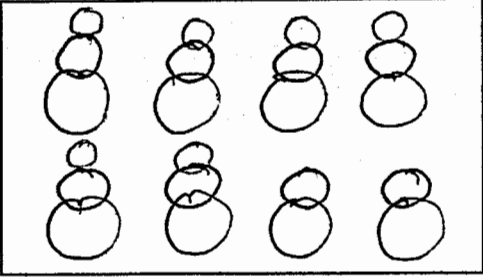
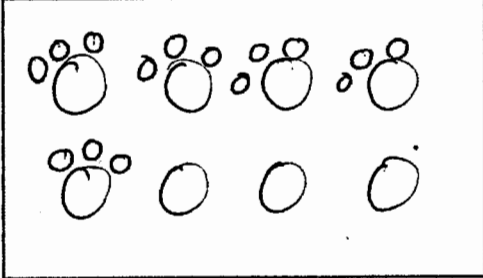
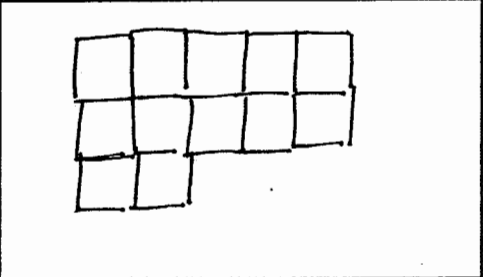
Graphic Practice Assessment Form

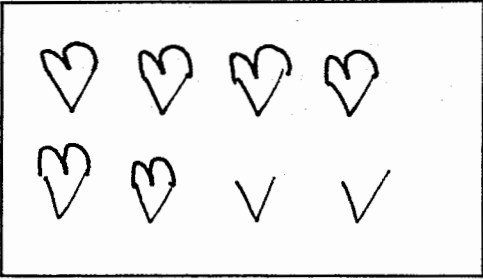
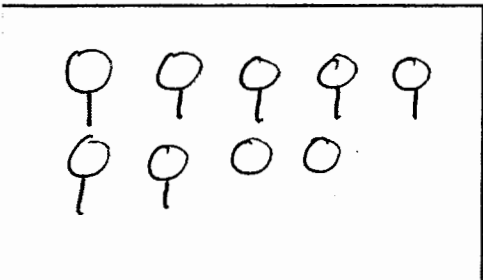
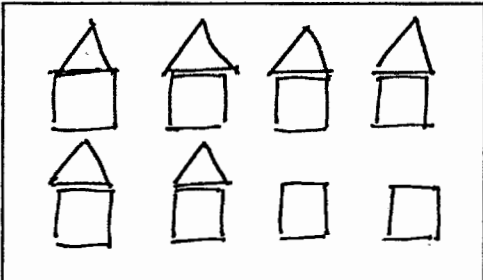
Appendix E

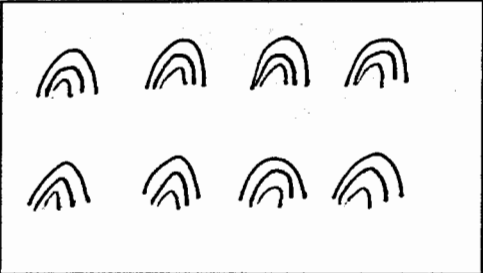
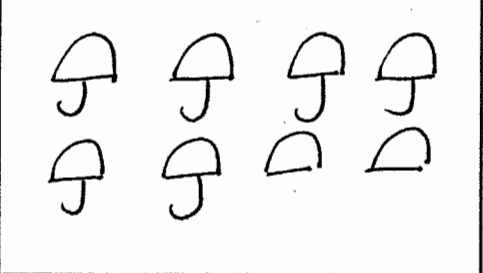

Outline of Lessons for Weeks 9 – 30

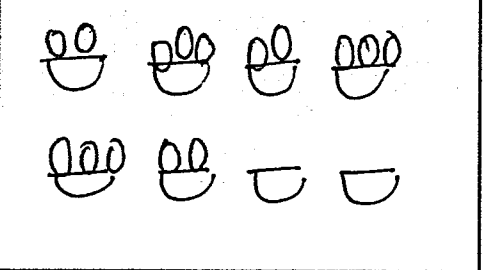
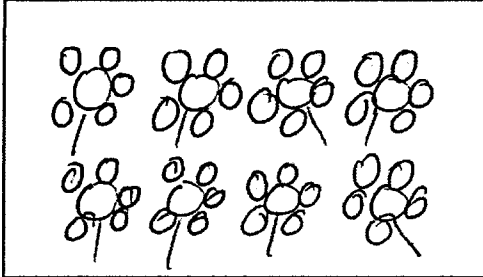
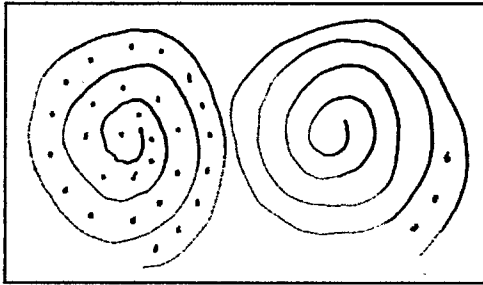
| | Graphic Practice Focus | Possible Scenarios | Examples Black – 1 st series of marks or shapes Red – 2 nd series of marks or shapes Blue – 3 rd series of marks or shapes |
|---------|---|--|---|
| Week 9 | Squares: Not Touching | Placemats for Friends at the Table |  |
| Week 10 | Circles: Big w/little | Pepperoni Pizza or Chocolate Chip Cookies |  |
| Week 11 | Gingerbread Man Draw-a-long (See Appendix F) | -- | -- |
| Week 12 | Circles Connected by Lines | Christmas Lights |  |

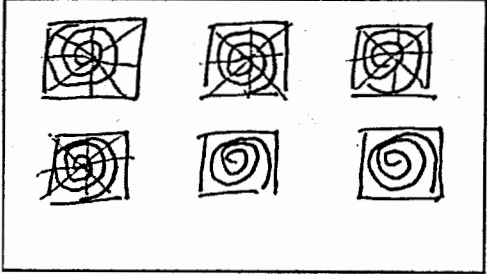
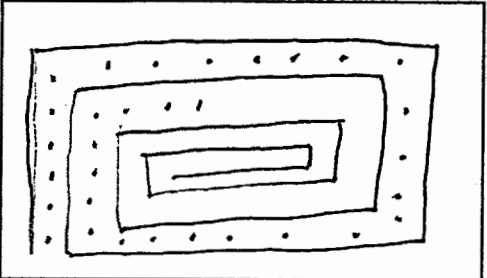
| | | | |
|----------------|--|--------------------------|---|
| <p>Week 13</p> | <p>Triangles: Not Touching & Small Circles: Not Touching</p> | <p>Christmas Trees</p> |  |
| <p>Week 14</p> | <p>Squares: Not Touching w/small spirals</p> | <p>Presents</p> |  |
| <p>Week 15</p> | <p>Circles: Small in Large & Dots: Not Touching</p> | <p>Planets and Stars</p> |  |
| <p>Week 16</p> | <p>Snowman Draw-a-long (See Appendix F)</p> | <p>--</p> | <p>--</p> |

| | | | |
|----------------|--|--------------------------------|---|
| <p>Week 17</p> | <p>Three Varying Circles: Touching</p> | <p>Snowmen</p> |  |
| <p>Week 18</p> | <p>Circles: Large & Small</p> | <p>Foot Prints in the Snow</p> |  |
| <p>Week 19</p> | <p>Squares: Touching</p> | <p>Quilt</p> |  |

| | | | |
|----------------|--|------------------|--|
| <p>Week 20</p> | <p>V's & 3's: Touching</p> | <p>Hearts</p> |  |
| <p>Week 21</p> | <p>Circles & Lines: Touching</p> | <p>Lollipops</p> |  |
| <p>Week 22</p> | <p>Squares & Triangles: Touching</p> | <p>Houses</p> |  |
| <p>Week 23</p> | <p>Cat in the Hat Draw-a-long (See Appendix F)</p> | <p>--</p> | <p>--</p> |

| | | | |
|----------------|---|-----------------------------|---|
| <p>Week 24</p> | <p>Arcs: Not Touching</p> | <p>Rainbows</p> |  |
| <p>Week 25</p> | <p>Semi-circles & Hooks: Touching</p> | <p>Umbrellas</p> |  |
| <p>Week 26</p> | <p>Spirals & Dots: Not Touching</p> | <p>Flowers in the Grass</p> |  |

| | | | |
|----------------|---|---|---|
| <p>Week 27</p> | <p>Semi-circles & Ovals: Touching</p> | <p>Eggs in a Basket</p> |  |
| <p>Week 28</p> | <p>Circles: Large & Small & Lines: Touching</p> | <p>Flowers with Petals and Stems</p> |  |
| <p>Week 29</p> | <p>Large Spiral w/Dots: Not Touching</p> | <p>Circle Maze; <i>Rosie's Walk</i></p> |  |

| | | | |
|---------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Week 30 | Squares w/Spiral & Lines | Spider Webs |  |
| Extra | Lines: Touching & Dot: Not Touching | Square Maze; <i>Peter Rabbit</i> |  |

Appendix F

Draw-a-Long Stories

I found these *Draw-a-long Stories*, quite by chance, while I was searching for Christmas gifts for my classroom para-educators. As part of a website known for its educator-themed embroidered items, these stories were included in a section containing resources for teachers (Sew What 4U Corp., 2006). The author describes the *Draw-a-long Stories* as:

Short theme related stories [used] as a basis for drawing very simple pictures with . . . students. They [her students] seem to really enjoy watching the picture emerge with the story. This process will also strengthen listening skills, and fine motor skills (Sew What 4U Corp., 2006).

The author also suggested “that you practice the drawing once before you present it in front of the students to make sure the story and your drawing correlate correctly” (Sew What 4U Corp., 2006).

I have incorporated these stories into my weekly graphic practice lessons. I feel that they give the children an opportunity to practice marks and shapes with which they have become familiar in previous lessons, as well as encouraging them to use these skills in an artistically representational manner. For example, these stories inspire the children to complete a picture; graphic practice exercises ultimately support letter formation. The occasional use of *Draw-a-long Stories* can provide an outlet for enhancing the students’ creativity while utilizing a venue where they have been comfortable and successful.

Using Draw-a-long Stories

I have introduced these stories to my students in the same format we have used with most graphic practice activities. However, to be certain the children are able to

concentrate on the story and the corresponding directions, we do not incorporate music during a Draw-a-long Story experience.

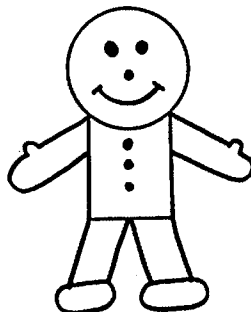
On the first day, I tell the story and complete the picture as it has been prescribed while the children watch my progress and predict the outcome. Next the students, using white boards and dry erase markers, draw the picture as I retell the story. Upon completion, we share our pictures as a group. Often we clean our boards and repeat the activity again.

During subsequent graphic practice sessions throughout the week, we again retell and draw the story. However, after an initial practice, we often use paper and markers or colored pencils to complete the picture. This variation in routine provides the children with a permanent example of their drawing, one that they can share with their families or display within the classroom.

My students have enjoyed these novel tasks. I, too, have appreciated the opportunity to extend traditional graphic practice strategies and encourage the children to take their learning to a new level. While I have incorporated most of the Draw-a-long Stories within my curriculum, I have adapted the Gingerbread Man Draw-a-long Story, Snowman Draw-a-long Story, and Cat in the Hat Draw-a-long Story to be used as graphic practice lessons.

Gingerbread Man Draw-a-long Story

- Grandma wanted to make some cookies. She got out her round bowl and her big cookie sheet. She put them next to each other on the table. **(Draw a large circle with rectangle attached underneath. This is the head and the body below.)**
- She measured two big cups of flour and put them in the bowl. **(Draw two circles for eyes.)** She measured a smaller cup of sugar and put it in the bowl, too. **(Draw a smaller circle for the nose.)**
- She went to the drawer to get her mixing spoon then walked back to the table. **(To make the arm and hand, draw a line on the right and add a small bump for the thumb, curve back to make the mitten part of the hand.)**
- Oh, no! Grandma dropped the spoon and had to get another one from the drawer. **(Repeat the above steps for the other arm and hand.)**
- Grandma went to the cupboard to get the ginger, cinnamon, and nutmeg and brought them back to the table. She went to the refrigerator to get the milk and butter and carried them back to the table. **(To make the legs, each time she walks to and from the cupboard or refrigerator make a line. You will have four lines for the legs.)**
- She still needed 2 eggs from the basket to make her cookies. **(Draw two ovals to be the feet of the GBM.)**
- Grandma put in all the ingredients into the bowl. She stirred around and around and around. **(Each time you say around draw a circle as a button in the vest.)**
- Then she rolled out the dough, cut out the cookies, and put them on the cookie sheet to bake. She smiled when she smelt them baking in the oven. **(Add the smile!)** She knew everyone would love eating them!



Snowman Draw-a-long Story

- Mary, Elaine and their dog, Denise, wanted to play outside in the snow. (Use a couple of students' names, if desired.) Mary got her hat. (Draw a large circle for the bottom of the snowman.) Elaine got her hat. (Draw a second smaller circle for the middle of the snowman.) Then they found a tiny hat for their dog, Denise. (Draw a small circle on top for the snowman's head.)
- Mary got her gloves and put them on. (Draw one stick arm and add three fingers.) Elaine got her gloves and put them on, too. (Draw the other stick arm and three fingers.)
- Mary got her scarf and wrapped it around her neck. (Draw a circle for an eye as you say, "Wrapped it around her neck.") Elaine got her scarf and wrapped it around her neck. (Draw another circle for an eye as you say, "Wrapped it around her neck.")
- They opened the door just a crack to peek outside. (Draw a nose as the crack.)
Brrrr! It was very cold!
- They played with their sled. (Draw a line on top of the small circle for the base of the hat.)
- They built a snow fort. (Draw a square on the line for the top of the hat.)
- They made lots of snowballs. (Draw five circles on the small circle for the mouth.)
- When they got too cold, they went inside. Their mom made them each a cup of cocoa and they shared a plate of cookies. (Draw three circles for buttons on the middle circle.)
- It was a wonderful winter day! (Add snowflakes, if you want, by making an X and drawing a line through it.)



Cat in the Hat Draw-a-long Story

- Once upon a time, the Cat in the Hat went for a walk. He walked around the school looking for some friends to play with. **(Upside down c for the bottom of his face.)**
- He didn't find anyone, so he walked up one side of the street. He didn't find anyone. He walked up the other side of the street and still didn't find anyone to play with. **(Two lines up from the edges of the c to make the sides of his face.)**
- The Cat in the Hat walked to the playground. He wanted to play on the teeter totter, but it wouldn't go up or down because he was all alone and there was no one to play with him. **(Line across the top of his head for the base of the hat.)**
- He saw two small merry-go-rounds. He thought they would be fun so he sat down on one and went around. It was too fast. He sat on the other and went around. It was too slow. **(Draw and fill in two circles for the eyes.)** But the Cat in the Hat was still lonely. He still had no one to play with!
- He found a ball to play with, but it isn't any fun to play ball all by himself. **(Draw and fill in smaller circle for the nose.)**
- He climbed to the top of the slide **(One side of the hat.)** but he didn't see anyone. He climbed up another slide **(Other side of the hat.)**, but he still didn't see anyone.
- He even walked across the park four times looking for friends, but he couldn't find anyone. **(The stripes in the hat.)** He decided to go home.
- Just then, boys and girls ran out the door. It was time to play! He got a HUGE smile on his face. He was so happy to have his friends to play with. **(Add the smile here and show them how to do dimples.)**
- Add his whiskers and tell two or three things you could do with the Cat in the Hat if he came to your house!

