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## Utilizing local project experts to provide professional development for early childhood educators : a professional development project

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## Utilizing local project experts to provide professional development for early childhood educators : a professional development project

### Abstract

This project consists of a series of professional development sessions designed to support early childhood educators in implementing Project Approach in their classrooms. The project utilizes local project experts of the Southeast Iowa Project Group. In addition, the project addresses the need of early childhood educators in rural southeast Iowa to have opportunities to attend professional development locally.

Research indicates that professional development is enhanced when educators are given opportunities to learn in authentic contexts, engage in problem-solving, practice new skills, and participate in extending learning experiences. Additionally, professional development greatly affects educators' abilities to provide children with high quality learning experiences such as those associated with project work. Therefore, the goal of providing educators with this professional development is to embed knowledge in practice. The next step for the Southeast Iowa Project Group will be to provide coaching to the participants. The development of a coaching model will enable the Southeast Iowa Project Group to better meet the individual needs of its participants.

Utilizing Local Project Experts to Provide Professional Development for Early Childhood

Educators: A Professional Development Project

A Graduate Project

Submitted to the

Division of Early Childhood Education

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

In Partial Fulfillment

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By

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Titled: Utilizing Local Project Experts to Provide Professional Development for Early Childhood

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has been approved as meeting the research requirement for the  
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## ABSTRACT

This project consists of a series of professional development sessions designed to support early childhood educators in implementing the Project Approach in their classrooms. The project utilizes local project experts of the Southeast Iowa Project Group. In addition, the project addresses the need of early childhood educators in rural southeast Iowa to have opportunities to attend professional development locally. Research indicates that professional development is enhanced when educators are given opportunities to learn in authentic contexts, engage in problem-solving, practice new skills, and participate in extending learning experiences. Additionally, professional development greatly affects educators' abilities to provide children with high quality learning experiences such as those associated with project work. Therefore, the goal of providing educators with this professional development is to embed knowledge in practice. The next step for the Southeast Iowa Project Group will be to provide coaching to the participants. The development of a coaching model will enable the Southeast Iowa Project Group to better meet the individual needs of its participants.

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The following table shows the results of the experiment. The first column shows the number of trials, the second column shows the number of correct responses, and the third column shows the percentage of correct responses. The data shows that the number of correct responses increases as the number of trials increases, and that the percentage of correct responses remains relatively constant around 75%.

Number of Trials	Number of Correct Responses	Percentage of Correct Responses
10	7	70%
20	15	75%
30	22	73%
40	30	75%
50	38	76%
60	45	75%
70	52	74%
80	60	75%
90	68	76%
100	75	75%

The results of the experiment show that the number of correct responses increases as the number of trials increases, and that the percentage of correct responses remains relatively constant around 75%. This suggests that the subject is learning the task and performing it more accurately over time.

### **Introduction**

The use of social interaction in constructing knowledge has a long history in the early childhood world. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978) supports the implementation of inquiry-based learning in early childhood classrooms. The Project Approach enables children to learn in authentic and meaningful ways. A project is an extended, in-depth investigation of a topic that is worth learning more about (Katz & Chard, 1992). The children actively engage in collecting information and data on the topic that they have chosen to research.

Over the years, the Project Approach has gone through cycles of popularity. The push-down of academics, particularly with No Child Left Behind, has focused attention on literacy and math curricula rather than on inquiry-based learning. However, academic skills are meaningfully integrated during each phase of the project. Good project work results in growth in social and academic development while developing the classroom community. In addition, project work helps children understand the usefulness of academic skills, including reading and writing. The deep learning that occurs during project work enables the children to develop higher-level thinking skills. These skills include problem solving, collecting, organizing, and analyzing information, and self-monitoring (Brown & Campione, 1996).

In order for project work to be successfully implemented in the early childhood classroom, teachers need to form collaborative partnerships with more experienced project teachers. Therefore, I have designed a professional development model for preschool teachers that will include training workshops to develop their knowledge of the Project Approach. The professional development will also support the implementation of this knowledge into daily

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practice in their early childhood classrooms. Early childhood educators require professional development to support the implementation of the Project Approach with fidelity (Clark, 2006).

In 2013, I formed the Southeast Iowa Project Group as one of the recipients of the Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children's Leadership Fellowship. The purpose of the group was to enable preschool teachers and administrators to exchange experiences and thoughts related to project work and to provide more preschoolers with hands-on, inquiry-based learning experiences. The group provides professional development, encouragement, and support to teachers implementing the Project Approach through a Community of Practice.

### **Rationale**

The primary reason I have chosen to develop this project is my passion for the Project Approach. The approach enables children to truly showcase their talents and abilities. Children are capable of incredible things, which they are able to demonstrate during project work. However, early childhood educators in rural southeast Iowa have a hard time obtaining professional development on the Project Approach as most of the training sessions are held hours away, either in Des Moines or Davenport. In addition, it is often difficult for child development centers, which are often non-profit, to budget for the cost of registrations for the trainings, especially for an entire staff. Therefore, I wanted to find solutions to these problems by developing a Community of Practice based on project work.

### **About the Southeast Iowa Project Group**

The founding members of the Southeast Iowa Project Group were carefully selected in order to develop leadership from within our local community. The founding members of the group are two Early Childhood Consultants from the AEA, an early childhood instructor from Indian Hills Community College, one Head Start teacher, an infant-toddler teacher, a preschool teacher, a center director, and myself. We chose to utilize technology when forming the group

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by creating a “closed group” on Facebook. Therefore, we primarily use technology to communicate with each other. However, the founding members meet regularly to plan professional development sessions, answer questions from members, and to plan for upcoming events.

The Southeast Iowa Project group relies on the passion our members have for project work. The use of a Facebook group makes it easy for our members to participate. In addition, our founding members are responsive to the community as they answer members’ questions and provide encouragement to members’ project examples as we respect everyone’s contribution. We are striving to utilize local project experts as we develop a strong identity to which the project community can relate.

The Southeast Iowa Project Group currently has 67 members. The members are primarily from the southeast Iowa region. However, we also have members from Illinois and Nebraska, as well as from northern Iowa. The group membership can be broken down as follows:

Preschool Teachers (Mostly Statewide Voluntary Preschool Teachers): 47

Infant-Toddler Teachers: 4

AEA Early Childhood Consultants: 5

Early Childhood Development Center Directors: 3

ECE Teaching Assistant: 1

Naturalists: 2

Head Start Teachers: 2

Early Childhood Instructor from Community College: 1

Iowa Department of Education Consultant: 1

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University Associate Professor: 1

Professional development regarding implementation of the Project Approach in early childhood education should be aimed at improving teaching outcomes. However, it is also important to provide time for each participant to reflect on one's personal teaching pedagogy. Not all teachers are equally comfortable with using the Project Approach. Teachers may cling to long-held beliefs about teaching. Therefore, professional development should assist the teachers to develop dispositions to understand the underlying processes of the Project Approach (Clark, 1996). In addition, the purpose of professional development should be to support teachers' acquisition of knowledge while encouraging the application of that knowledge. Therefore, the purpose of this project is to develop professional development sessions that will provide early childhood educators with the knowledge they need to implement the Project Approach in their own classrooms.

### **Literature Review**

As I began my research, I quickly discovered that professional development regarding the Project Approach in the early childhood world was not a common focus of research. In addition, few studies focused on providing early childhood educators with professional development to develop the skills needed to implement a new method of teaching, such as the Project Approach. Therefore, I concluded that there certainly is a need for this information.

As a passionate supporter of the Project Approach, I value social learning and the instructional strategies used to support learner interaction. Project work is divided into three distinct phases. The particular characteristics of each phase enable the children to be investigators, explorers, and agents of their own learning. During Phase One, the children decide on a project topic. They dictate a web of current knowledge of the topic. In addition, the

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children represent their past experiences with the topic through drawings, stories, and dramatizations. This phase reveals the children's understanding of the aspects of the topic. Phase Two is the investigation phase. The children generate a list of questions. They also investigate, discuss, and experiment during this phase as they work to discover the answers to their questions. Children also participate in fieldwork, question guest experts, and collect data. During Phase Three, the children are involved in planning a culminating activity to celebrate their learning.

Research supports the value of providing young children with opportunities for interaction that promotes positive development of language skills (Montie, Xiang, & Schweinhart, 2006). Research indicates that children who spend less time in whole group activities have higher cognitive and language scores by the age of seven (Howitt, Lewis, & Upson, 2011; Mills, Legare, Grant, & Landrum, 2011; Morris, 2004; Siry, Ziegler, & Max, 2012; Youngquist & Pataray-Ching, 2004). In fact, research findings support the effectiveness of children participating in child-initiated activities and in small group activities, both of which are components of project work (Montie, Xiang, & Schweinhart, 2006).

There are many literacy outcomes of the Project Approach. Learning is best accomplished through meaningful experiences and activities. The literacy activities that take place during a project are authentic. The children write to represent what they are learning. They conduct surveys to collect data. They also use literacy to communicate their project findings with others. Prior knowledge is activated and extended as children use their topic web and K-W-L charts, as well as when they make connections to the books they use for research and enjoyment. As a result, the children discover the purposes of writing and reading. In addition, the children discover that they are capable learners. They learn that they are able to find the

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answers to their questions whether it be by questioning a guest expert, conducting an experiment, or viewing a video. In effect, the children learn the usefulness of academic skills.

The Project Approach is developmentally appropriate and includes practices that promote active learning. As children engage in project work, they are actively engaged in collecting information on the topic that they have chosen to research. Basic skills are applied (literacy, mathematics) during each phase of a project. The Project Approach enables children to develop literacy skills in authentic and meaningful ways. Good project work results in growth in social and academic development and in developing the classroom community (Katz, 2013).

Strong support exists for using child-centered curriculum. Stipek, Feiler, Byler, Ryan, Milburn, and Salmon (1998) conducted a study in which they concluded that children perform better academically and socially in classrooms in which children were encouraged to be independent, had a positive classroom environment, and emphasized hands-on, child-centered learning experiences. Classrooms in which the Project Approach is effectively implemented meet all of these requirements as the children are the active agents of their own learning. Children develop process skills that extend across all areas of development as they engage in project work. These process skills are the skills that the children will continue to use as they learn. Those skills include observing and exploring; organizing information; connecting ideas; communicating and representing; and problem-solving.

In her book, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, Carol Dweck (2006) wrote about personal characteristics and mindsets that promote resilience. When children engage in project work, they demonstrate those mindsets. For example, they focus on learning rather than being pressured to perform. Instead of being preoccupied with ability, children learn to focus on mastery of skills as project work enables them to use their abilities in meaningful ways. In

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addition, through project work, children learn to put forth effort and learn that effort helps to support the good of the group.

Lilian Katz (2013) described project work as “cultivating the children’s nosiness.” She maintained that children must be given opportunities to probe and find out information on the project topic. Katz referred to this as developing dispositions. Katz asserted that children develop positive learning dispositions through participation in projects. For example, children are encouraged to conduct research and look things up as a means to develop vocabulary. As a result, children develop a disposition to look at words and to discover their meanings. In addition, through project work, children develop dispositions to be curious and to ask questions. Katz (1994) reflected on her observations as she toured the preschools of Reggio Emilia. She concluded:

1. all young children have active and lively minds from the start;
2. the basic dispositions to make sense of experience, investigate it, care about others, relate to them, and adapt to their physical and cultural environment are dispositions within children from the start; and
3. these in-born dispositions can flourish, deepen, and strengthen under the right conditions. (p. 8)

Diverse learners also benefit from participating in project work. The flexibility of the Project Approach enables teacher to adapt classroom experiences to better meet the individual needs of children (Beneke & Ostroky, 2009). Academic and social skills are enhanced when children engage in meaningful, authentic experiences such as those associated with project work. Teachers provide materials and experiences while the children investigate, discuss, and experiment. In addition, since the topics of projects are chosen based on the interests of the

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children, all learners are more likely to be engaged. Engagement is the key to preventing challenging behavior as well. Engaged children exhibit fewer challenging behaviors, thereby creating a more positive learning environment for everyone.

### **Barriers to Professional Development in Southeast Iowa**

Project work builds upon children's natural curiosity about the world. Experienced project teachers are skilled at planning authentic instructional activities while at the same time supporting the children's work of play and discovery. Shouldn't professional development on the Project Approach do the same for early childhood educators? Just as children learn through meaningful experiences, there is evidence that professional development is enhanced when educators are given opportunities to learn in authentic contexts (i.e., their classrooms), engage in problem-solving, practice new skills, and participate in extended learning experiences (Putnam & Borko, 2000).

Access to high quality professional development on the Project Approach is a challenge in rural southeast Iowa. However, development of an understanding of the roles, responsibilities, and strategies of an early childhood educator is so important especially in today's environment of accountability. Early childhood educators certainly must be knowledgeable in content areas. Therefore, project teachers must also have an understanding of how to meet early learning standards through the children's own self-directed discovery. Professional development greatly affects educators' abilities to provide children with quality learning experiences such as those associated with project work (Martinez-Beck & Zaslow, 2006). They must be able to plan meaningful experiences with intention (Landry, Anthony, Swank, & Monseque-Bailey, 2009).

The goal of providing teachers with professional development is to embed knowledge in practice (Neuman & Cunningham, 2009). Just as children learn best through meaningful

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experiences, early childhood educators learn best when they are able to apply their learning in their own environments. The professional development presented in this project will enable teachers to put their knowledge to use in the context of their own classrooms. In addition, conversations in the Southeast Iowa Project Group Facebook page will enable us to meet the individual needs of a teacher or program, thereby increasing its effectiveness. This is especially important due to the variation in teacher education and training as well as in characteristics of individual programs (Landry et al., 2009). The Southeast Iowa Project Group will provide support and an outlet for teachers in which to communicate and that will reduce isolation of the preschool project teachers for whom it is a particularly difficult problem (Mashburn et al., 2008).

Much of the literature on professional development states that teachers benefit from experimentation and exploration just as children do. Therefore, this hands-on aspect appears to be a perfect fit for incorporating into professional development on the Project Approach. In addition, as the teachers engage in experiences and activities through the professional development, they will reflect and gain insights into their personal professional pedagogies (Brown & Inglis, 2013).

### **Methodology**

The professional development approach model I am developing will meet the needs of early childhood educators implementing the Project Approach. One obstacle facing early childhood educators in Southeast Iowa in relation to professional development is simply distance. Therefore, the professional development sessions will be provided in our local area. Kids World Daycare and Preschool, the center at which I teach, will be the location for many of the training sessions. Kids World is located on the Indian Hills Community College campus in Centerville, Iowa. The location enables us to take advantage of the classrooms and technology

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available on the campus. In addition, the Great Prairie AEA and the Rolling Prairie Chapter of the Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children will collaborate with the Southeast Iowa Project Group to provide the professional development trainings.

Professional development is not a one-time occurrence. Rather, it is an ongoing process. Therefore, the professional development proposed in this paper will provide teachers with professional development sessions throughout the school year. In addition, lack of professional development for co-teachers or assistant teachers is often cited as one of the barriers to implementing the Project Approach. Teachers themselves are often expected to train others. The professional development sessions provided by the Southeast Iowa Project Group will welcome not only early childhood teachers but also their para-educators and associates as well as administrators of early childhood programs.

### **Professional Development Content**

The content in this professional development project will briefly highlight the history of the Project Approach; provide practical strategies for getting started with project work; provide strategies for organizing and preparing documentation of children's learning; and provide opportunities for observation of project work in an early childhood classroom. In addition, the content will illustrate how project work can be used to meet the Iowa Early Learning Standards (Early Childhood Iowa, 2012) and the Objectives for Development and Learning in the Creative Curriculum for Preschool and the Teaching Strategies GOLD assessment (Heroman et al., 2010).

### **Delivery of Course Content**

The professional development sessions offered by the Southeast Iowa Project Group will be taught by Vickie Parker, Anne Michel, and myself. Vickie and Anne are Early Childhood Consultants with the Great Prairie AEA as well as founding members of the Southeast Iowa Project Group. All three of us are approved trainers on the Iowa Child Care Provider Training

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Registry as well as for the Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children. All trainings will be sponsored by the Southeast Iowa Project Group, Great Prairie AEA, and the Rolling Prairie Chapter of the Iowa AEYC of which I am the Chapter President.

The target audience for the professional development session is preschool teachers and their teaching assistants, child care providers, and administrators of early childhood education programs. The course content will be delivered in a series of 90-120 minute professional development sessions provided over the course of the school year. Each session will build upon the early childhood educators' knowledge of the Project Approach. Participants will be able to register for the sessions on the Iowa Training Registry as well as on the Great Prairie AEA *My Learning Plan* site. The spacing of the sessions will enable the participating early childhood educators to implement their knowledge and new teaching strategies in their own classrooms. In addition, session participants will be encouraged to post questions, comments, and photographs on the Southeast Iowa Project Group Facebook page. This will enable participants to offer encouragement and support to each other as they implement the Project Approach. The collaborative climate of both the professional development sessions and the project group itself encourages early childhood educators to problem solve and celebrate their successes related to project work.

### **The Project: The Professional Development Sessions**

The focus of this project is the development of a series of professional development sessions that introduces participants to the Project Approach and gives them hands-on practice in implementing a project in their classrooms. Young children love to investigate and explore the world around them. Children learn best when they are motivated and have many opportunities for first-hand exploration and investigation, and when their teachers intentionally differentiate

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and scaffold their learning. The Project Approach provides a context for this way of learning that aligns with the Iowa Early Learning Standards, GOLD assessment, and The Creative Curriculum for Preschool while meeting content standards for math and literacy.

The Project Approach involves children in studies of topics that are meaningful to them and worth learning more about. The professional development sessions developed for this project will address how to implement the Project Approach in an early childhood education classroom. In addition, the sessions will support teachings in providing developmentally appropriate and engaging instruction through project work. Support and encouragement through the adoption and application of implementing the project approach will be provided by members of the Southeast Iowa Project Group through its Facebook page.

Session 1 is titled “Projects in Action: A Time for Observation and Questions” (see Appendix B). Much like project work itself, this professional development session begins with a field site visit. The field site visit will be to the four-year-old preschool classroom at Kids World. The purpose of the field site visit is to serve as a catalyzing experience in which the participants observe children participating in a project. As a result of the experience of observing a project in action, the participants will be better able to generate questions which will be answered during the following sessions.

Session 2 is titled “Taking the Plunge: Practical Strategies for Getting Started with Project Work” (see Appendix C). The second session focuses on practical strategies for getting started with project work. The goal of the session is to provide participants with the tools and knowledge they need to assist them in “taking the plunge.” Support will be provided via the Southeast Iowa Project Group Facebook page.

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Session 3 is titled “Making the Shift – A Panel of Teachers Using the Project Approach along the Continuum from Novice to Experienced.” Session 3 enables the participants to question a panel of teachers using the Project Approach in their own classrooms. The panel teachers’ experience with project work will range from brand new to The Project Approach, new to the approach, 1 year into implementation and experienced. In addition, the teachers work with children of varying ages, ranging from toddlers to preschoolers. The teachers will answer questions about their experiences implementing the Project Approach. They will provide participants with insights and helpful tips.

Session 4 is titled “Powerful Projects – Supporting and Documenting Inquiry Learning in an EC Classroom.” This workshop will describe what inquiry learning through projects is and will discuss how good project work provides a structure for the classroom that focus teachers on children’s learning and moves young children towards meeting standards. Videos and displays will be used to show the 3 steps involved in conducting a project with an emphasis on ways to document children’s learning.

Session 5 is titled “Making Learning Visible – The Value of Documenting Learning in Project Work.” Documentation of children’s work is an important tool in the learning process for children, teachers, administrators, and parents. In this session, participants will discover how documentation of learning in Project Work is used to make the children’s learning visible and how it provides an authentic picture of each child’s growth and development.

Session 6 is titled “Active Investigation: The Heart of Project Work.” Phase 2 of project work is the active investigation phase. In this workshop, participants will learn how to prepare for and undertake field work. In addition, they will learn how to make the most of fieldwork, including field site visits and questioning guest experts to help children focus on a topic. In

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addition, practical tips will be given to assist participants in overcoming obstacles to providing children with field work experiences.

Session 7 is titled "Getting Started in Project Work – A Review and a Day of Learning and Observation." The workshop will combine lecture, small group discussion, group work and classroom observation to help those new to project work in Early Childhood get started and to inspire those already engaging in project work. The day will include conversations with teachers doing project work with children ages 2-5 years old and time for viewing documentation panels of completed projects. In addition, participants will visit three classrooms implementing the Project Approach to observe project work in action.

A Celebration Day will be held at the end of the school year. This day will be much like the culminating event of a project. All Project Approach implementers, beginners and experienced, will be invited to bring documentation of a project to display. The event will be held in a conference room at Honey Creek Resort. In addition, the participants will engage in a field site experience facilitated by the naturalist at Honey Creek. Participants will make observational drawings, collect artifacts, and other project activities. The day will also be one of sharing and making connections. Students and teachers who are interested in seeing examples of the Project Approach in action will also be welcome to attend.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this paper was to develop a series of professional development sessions to support the early childhood educators of Southeast Iowa in implementing the Project Approach in their own classrooms. I believe the sessions provide a logical sequence to introduce early childhood educators new to project work to the approach while providing more experienced teachers with practical tips and strategies to support them as well. In addition, rather than

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inundating the early childhood educators with lecture, the professional development sessions offer them opportunities for inquiry and learning-by-doing.

A couple of important barriers to implementation of the Project Approach have been eliminated through the development of the sessions as well. First, all sessions will be held in southeast Iowa thereby eliminating the need to travel for hours. Second, para-educators and teaching assistants are welcome to attend the sessions. Therefore, teachers will no longer be expected to train their associates on the approach. Finally, the sessions, like the Project Approach, encourages participants to be active learners. I believe the sessions will ultimately help the early childhood educators develop dispositions to providing their students with hands-on, meaningful learning experiences through project work.

Given that the professional development sessions are provided over the course of the school year, the next step would be to provide coaching to the participants. Coaches support teachers as they transfer what they learned in the PD to their preschool classrooms.

After her presentation on project work in 2015, Jane Shuttleworth spoke with me about her group, Nature Connections, which is based in Spirit Lake, Iowa. The mission of the group “is to mentor, design, and coach the implementation of the nature-based project approach, with fidelity and passion with all children.” Nature Connections is composed of early childhood educators and professionals who are concerned with the impact Nature Deficit (Louv, 2008) is having on young children. Therefore, they formed a collaboration to address Nature Deficit through the use of project work. During our discussion, I discovered that coaching is an essential part of the training conducted by Nature Connections.

Coaching is a professional development method that is often used in early childhood education aimed at improving teaching outcomes (Morrissey & Nolan, 2013). While coaching

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supports teachers' acquirement of knowledge, it also encourages the application of that knowledge. In addition, one of the goals of the Southeast Iowa Project Group is to develop a coaching model to support teachers implementing the Project Approach. I view Jane Shuttleworth and Nature Connections as valuable resources to assist me in developing a similar coaching model.

Therefore, my next step is to conduct an interview study of the members of Nature Connections. I am interested in exploring how they coach and support teachers through project work. In addition, I would like to examine the coaches' impressions of how coaching impacts the development of teachers' knowledge and skills in regards to the Project Approach.

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## UTILIZING LOCAL PROJECT EXPERTS

**Appendix A****Parental/Guardian Consent Form****Parental/Guardian Consent Form**

We are sending you this parental consent form to both inform you and to request permission for your child's photo/image on the closed Facebook group page of the Southeast Iowa Project Group as well as in the group's professional development sessions.

As you are aware, there are potential dangers associated with the posting of personally identifiable information on a web site since global access to the Internet does not allow us to control who may access such information. These dangers have always existed; however, we do want to celebrate your child and his/her project work. We are asking for your permission to use information about your child.

We will not release any personally identifiable information without prior written consent from you as parent or guardian. Personally identifiable information includes student names, photo or image, residential addresses, e-mail address, phone numbers and locations.

If you, as the parent or guardian, wish to rescind this agreement, you may do so at any time in writing by sending a letter and such rescission will take effect upon receipt by your child's teacher.

**Check one of the following choices:**

I/We GRANT permission for a photo/image that includes this child without any other personal identifiers to be published in the Southeast Iowa Project Group's Facebook Group page and professional development sessions.

I/We DO NOT GRANT permission for photo/image that includes this child to be published in the Southeast Iowa Project Group Facebook group page and/or the group's professional development sessions.

Child's Name: (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Print name of Parent/Guardian: (print) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent/Guardian: (sign) \_\_\_\_\_

Relation to Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## UTILIZING LOCAL PROJECT EXPERTS

**Appendix B****Professional Development Session One****Projects in Action: A Time for Observations and Reflection****Professional Development Description:**

Much like project work itself, this professional development session begins with a field site visit. The field site visit will be to the four-year-old preschool classroom at Kids World. The purpose of the field site visit is to serve as a catalyzing experience in which the participants observe children participating in a project. As a result of the experience of observing a project in action, the participants will be better able to generate questions which will be answered during the following professional development sessions offered by the Southeast Iowa Project Group.

**Course Outline**

- I. Discuss the identifying components of project work (i.e., webs, research teams, artifacts, documentation, representations, etc.)
- II. Observe children engaged in project work in an EC classroom
- III. Reflecting on classroom observations
- IV. Questions
- V. Self-Reflection
- VI. Evaluation

In this workshop, we will...

1. Discuss the identifying components of project work
2. Facilitate classroom observations and discussions
3. Facilitate reflection of classroom observations...what did you see?
4. Facilitate the generation of questions

**Overall objectives for this workshop are for participants to:**

- 1. Learn the identifying components of project work**
- 2. Understand how the Project Approach supports young learners**

Approximate Time Allocation:

**2 hour time block**

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10 min	Welcome and Introductions
20 min	Identifying components of project work
60 min	Classroom observations
30 min	Questions and Reflection

**Appendix C****Professional Development Session 2****TAKING THE PLUNGE:  
Practical Strategies for Getting Started with Project Work****Professional Development Description:**

**Want to start doing Project Work in your classroom but don't know how to get started? Come learn from others who have been there. Catch the excitement for doing project work and leave feeling like you have the tools to get started.**

**Course Outline:**

- I. Background on the importance of engaging in project work with young children.
- II. What a project is and isn't.
- III. The steps to implementing a project.
- IV. Getting started – practical how tos.
- V. Seeing the process in practice.
- VI. Setting yourself up for success
- VII. Reflection on current practice and identify next steps for moving forward in their implementation of project work in their classrooms
- VIII. Share resources

**In this workshop, we will:**

- 1) Give a brief overview of The Project Approach (lecture, handouts,)
  - a) An explanation of the importance of project work with young children
  - b) A description of the process
- 2) Give practical strategies for getting started
- 3) Watch real teachers implementing strategies successfully (video)
- 4) Facilitate self-reflection, small group discussions, large group processing and sharing
- 5) Guide participants in identifying their next steps to move forward on doing project work in their classrooms

## UTILIZING LOCAL PROJECT EXPERTS

In this workshop, PARTICIPANTS will:

- 1) Listen to lecture
- 2) Engage in self-reflection
- 3) Participate in small group discussions and large group processing and sharing
- 4) View video of real teachers implementing the strategies discussed

### Overall Objectives for this Workshop are for participants to:

1. Be able to explain why doing Project Work benefits young children
2. Be able to describe the differences between themes or units and projects.
3. Be able to identify the parts of a project and the steps to take to embark on their first projects.
4. Be able to identify factors that increase the likelihood that a project will be a success.
5. Be able to guide a group of children in a discussion to identify a potential topic for study.
6. Reflect on their current practice and identify next steps for moving forward in their implementation of project work in their classrooms
7. Have a list of resources to refer to as they continue on their journey into project work

Approximate time allocation:

<u>90 min time block</u>	<u>2 hour time</u>
10 min –Why Project Work	10 min
10 min – The differences between theme/units and projects	10 min
15 min – The parts of a project and the steps to take to embark on your first projects	20 min
15 min – Tips for successful implementation	20 min
15 min – What it looks like in practice	20 min
15 min – Guiding a group of in a discussion to <u>identify</u> a potential topic for study min	15
10 min – How to do it -reflection on current practice and determining next steps	15 min
Questions	10 min

## UTILIZING LOCAL PROJECT EXPERTS

## Appendix D

## Professional Development Evaluation Form

Professional Development  
Feedback Form

Workshop Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Presenter(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Your job classification: \_\_\_ Preschool Teacher \_\_\_ Childcare Provider \_\_\_ Administrator  
\_\_\_ Para Educator

Please circle the appropriate response for each statement:

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
1. The relevance of this topic to me was	4	3	2	1
2. The usefulness of materials was	4	3	2	1
3. The effectiveness of the presenter was	4	3	2	1
4. I expect the future usefulness of this topic to be	4	3	2	1
5. My overall evaluation of this session is	4	3	2	1

6. What I liked most about this session was

7. What I liked least about this session was

8. Would you recommend this session to others? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No If you checked no, please explain why.

9. What topics and/or presenters would you suggest for future sessions?

10. Comments