



*Inclusive ECE Classrooms and the Project Approach\**  
Sallee Beneke & Michaelene M. Ostrosky  
Early Childhood Investigators Webinars  
February 20, 2019  
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Poll: Have You Ever Done Project Work?

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### Topics for Today

- Identify Phases and Key Features
- Project versus Theme
- Project Approach & Diverse Learners
- Analyze Teacher's Role
- Review Resources

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## WHAT IS THE PROJECT APPROACH?

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- An **approach** to teaching
- Facilitates in-depth study of high interest topic
  - Children investigate **first-hand**
  - Children are **researchers** and collect data
- Capitalizes on children's **natural curiosity**

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What is motivating these children?

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## Knowledge

- Strengthens children's interest in learning
- Children learn how their world works
- Children develop confidence in their own ability to figure things out



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## Skills

- Many opportunities for children to apply skills
- Opportunities to use strengths to benefit the group



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## Dispositions

- Children learn to work collaboratively with peers
- Children develop confidence in their abilities
- Strengthens disposition to persist
- Strengthens intellectual dispositions



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## Feelings

- Project work allows children to use their strengths
- There is something for everyone to do in project work
- Children feel pride in their accomplishments
- Children feel a sense of belonging

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Consider the potential impact of the Project Approach on a teacher's ability to teach children with disabilities?

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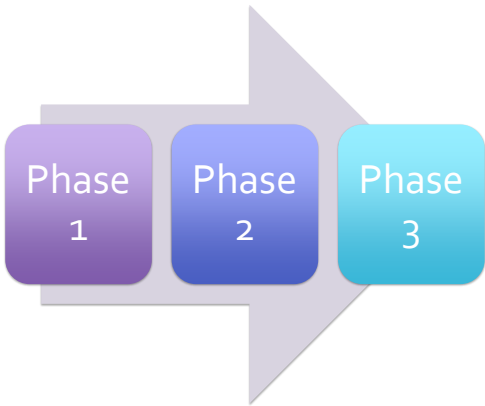
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### Fidelity of Implementation

- Fidelity of implementation is defined as “the implementation of a practice or program as intended by the researchers or developers” (The IRIS Center, 2014, p. 1).

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## How Can I Learn the Project Approach?

CHAPTER 1 APPENDIX

Project Approach Implementation Checklist

Phase I		
	Record Yes, No, or N/A	Record notes about the activities and dates that you implemented these items
1. Select a topic based on children's interests, district curriculum, or an unexpected event (e.g., topics of conversations among children, unexpected event such as a new baby, or a neighborhood construction project).		
2. Select a topic that meets the criteria for a topic.		
3. Generate a teacher topic web with co-teacher(s).		

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## What is the *Implementation Checklist*?

- 52-item list of **strategies** to assist with implementing the Project Approach
- Divided into **Phases I, II, and III**

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## How Do I Use the *Implementation Checklist*?

- In-depth explanation of each item is in *The Project Approach for All Learners: A Hands-On guide for Early Childhood Classrooms*
- Sequence of items on guide corresponds to content of chapters 3, 4, and 5

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### Who Can Use the Implementation Guide?

- If you are **new** to the Project Approach:
  - Read the book and follow along on with the Implementation Guide
- If you are a **veteran** project implementer:
  - Review select sections to refresh your memory

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### Use the Checklist for Your Own Professional Development

- Source of **ideas** for implementation
- Basis for discussion with **colleagues**
- Basis for discussion with a **mentor or coach**

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### How Closely Do I Have to Follow the Checklist?

- Every strategy on the checklist is **not** used in every project
- **Rule of thumb:**
  - The more Implementation Guide items that are implemented, the more successful the project

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### How Was the Checklist Developed?

- Collective **wisdom** of:
  - Authors
  - Veteran project implementers
  - Colleagues who have coached others on the Project Approach
- Feedback from numerous others was used to revise and refine the guide

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### Where Do I Find the Implementation Checklist?

- At the end of **Chapter 1**
- In the **Online Resources** linked to the book

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Selecting Topics for Projects

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Topics: Thematic vs. Project

Thematic Unit	Project
Abstract – a concept	Concrete- a thing or group of things
Not tangible	Tangible- can be touched, measured, drawn, acted out
Preplanned- Themes often develop sequentially	Emerges from child's experiences and interest

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Identifying a Good Topic

Thematic Unit	Project
Nutrition	Bread
Transportation	Boats
Friendship	Mail
Manners	Restaurants

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### How Do I Pull a Topic From a Theme?

- Look for aspects that can be:
  - Touched
  - Counted
  - Measured
  - Discussed
  - Researched
  - Represented in a variety of ways (e.g., dramatic play, drawing, and/or construction)

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### Consider Children’s Interests

- Children are **motivated** to learn about interesting topics
- Consider topics of casual teacher/child **conversation**
- **Actively** observe, listen to, and reflect on child/child conversation
- Talk with or survey **family members**

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### Twelve Criteria for Topic Selection

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Directly Observable



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Within Most Student's Experience



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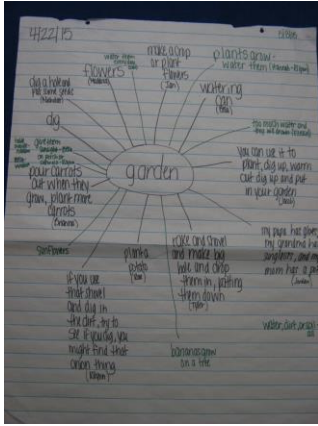
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Field Sites & Experts Are Available

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First-Hand Investigation is Feasible

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# It Is Interesting to the Teacher

What is compost? - 5/13/15

Ezekiel - "food", "mayonnaise", "I don't know", "it needs air", "stir it up so it gets lots of air", "radish", "leaves and dirt"

Hannah - "garbage", "paper", "toys", "metal", "plastic"

Tyler A - "rotten potatoes", "rotten tomatoes because they mold", "mold means they green", "it's hairy", "you don't want to eat it"

Ian - "rotten bananas"

Rilynn - "like grass"

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Do you want  
to come to  
our garden  
project  
on June 3  
web. June 3  
1:00 to 2:00  
Mrs. Utsumomi

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### Let's Apply the Criteria!

- Shopping
- Valentines Day
- Rules
- Dogs
- My Dog
- Shrek
- Bicycles
- Nutrition

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### The Younger the Child...

- Select topic **close** to child's immediate environment
- Topic that child can observe **again and again**
- Consider topics in classroom, on school grounds, within short walking distance

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### Topic Selection for Children with Limited Language Abilities

- **Observe** play behaviors
- Families of DLLs can help identify topics related to **home culture**
- Families can **program** topic-related vocabulary into Augmentative and Alternative Communication devices so child can participate in discussion
- **Scaffold** discussion

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### Do All the Children Have to Be Interested in the Topic?

- The more children who are interested, the better
  - Can support discussions
  - Children spark each other’s interest
- Every child does not have to be interested in the project at the same time

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### How Do I Sustain Interest in the Topic?

- Provide **new** experiences
- Plan experiences that **satisfy** children’s curiosity
- **Listen**-- One question leads to another!

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# Is there a difference between knowing and understanding?

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## Knowledge Versus Understanding

- Children who learn facts in isolation may:
  - Memorize and soon forget
  - Lack interest in further learning
  - Not connect facts with prior learning



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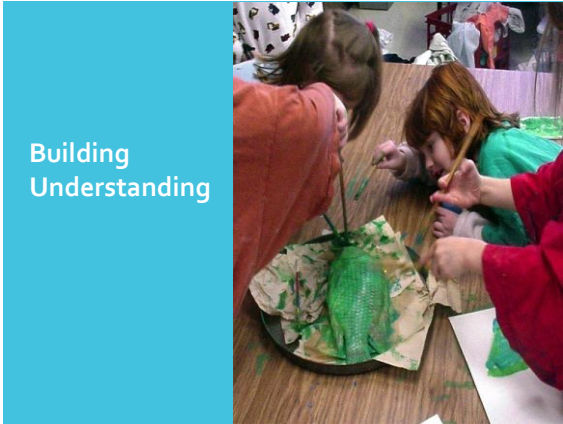
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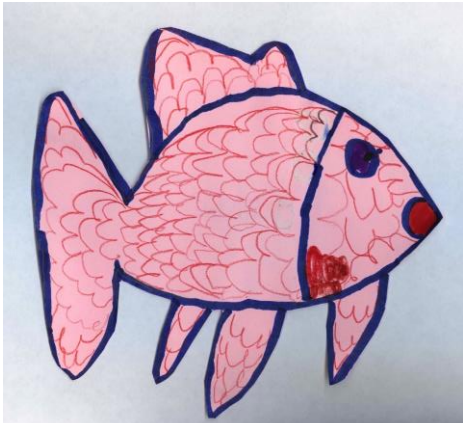
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### Project Work & Understanding

- Children who do project work
  - Understand how things work
  - Understand the implications of new information
  - Make connections with prior learning
  - Want to learn more
  - Know some strategies for learning more information
  - Know some strategies for analyzing new information

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## Creating a Web

# VIDEO CLIP

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### Project Teachers Believe Children...

- Can make good **decisions**
- Are able **researchers**
- Have an **innate** drive to learn
- Are more likely to learn when they are **motivated** and **engaged**



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### Writing Questions for Guest Expert



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## Guest Expert Visits



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## Group Constructions



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Implement **project-based learning** in **inclusive** early classrooms



Includes a complete package of training and implementation materials!

- Project Approach Implementation Checklist
- 38 video clips
- 22 PowerPoint presentations
- 6 sets of training materials

▶ Learn more and order: <http://bit.ly/Project-Approach>

BRØD&S

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## Summer Institute on The Project Approach

This active, in-depth, training supports the participant's ability to effectively implement the Project Approach in inclusive classrooms.

July 15 – 19. For more information:

<https://illinoisearlylearning.org/pa/institute/>

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## Thanks for Joining Us!

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