

Camden's own premiere Early Childhood Education publication!



# EARLY CHILDHOOD TIMES

[http://www.camden.k12.nj.us/departments/early\\_childhood.jsp](http://www.camden.k12.nj.us/departments/early_childhood.jsp)  
Volume 05 Number 01  
November 2011



**Dr. Bessie LeFra Young**, Superintendent of Schools  
**Ms. Linda A. Bailey**, Director of Early Childhood Education  
201 N. Front Street, Camden, New Jersey 08102

phone (856) 966-2345

fax (856) 966-2331

**Ryan Ratajski**, Editor in Chief

**Barbara Alley**, Editor

**Johari Sykes**, Editor

phone (856) 966-2318

submissions [rratajski@camden.k12.nj.us](mailto:rratajski@camden.k12.nj.us)

# EC TIMES CELEBRATES ITS FIVE YEAR ANNIVERSARY!

by Ryan Ratajski, Educational Program Specialist  
Editor in Chief

Wow! Five years has gone by very fast. This little newsletter began its life as a publication with the purpose to share all of the fantastic things that our classrooms are doing and the department as a whole. It was a way for the Early Childhood staff (Administration, Educational Program Specialists/Master Teachers, PIRT, CPIS, Social Workers, teachers, paraprofessionals, etc.) to speak on an informal basis with one another through a vehicle designed to share, commend, remind, thank, yell, shout, and praise in a school-friendly, open forum. This is something that hasn't been done before on such a large scale in Camden or most of the State of New Jersey. *The Early Childhood Times* quickly grew to include Camden's administration, other departments, Bank Street mentors, NJDOE liasons and mentors, Teaching Strategies/Creative Curriculum staff, and more. People from around the world are reading YOUR "voices!"

Thank you for a fantastic five years, everyone! I look forward to 25 more...or 30.

*A quick look back at a few past newsletters...*



# FAMILY INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES FOR 2011-2012

by Cheryl R. Chavis, Community and Parent Involvement Specialist (CPIS)

Welcome to the 2011-2012 school year! I would like to share a list of family activities that I encourage you to share with your families. Please encourage them to join in and receive great information in order to enhance their involvement with their child's education!

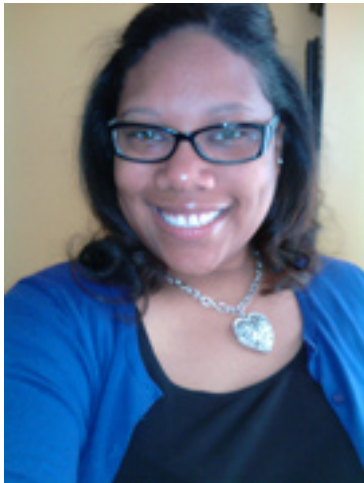
- **2nd Annual Family Conference – May 11, 2012 at 8:30am-2:30pm**  
*The First Nazerene Conference Center*  
*1500 S. 8th Street*  
*Camden, NJ 08104*
- **Annual Spring Round-Up – April 16-23, 2012**
- **Preschool Registration Day – Spring 2012**

We are looking forward to a fun-filled, educational, and exciting year to collaborate with our families, community members, and educational staff. Join us!

If you have any questions, please email me at [crwilliams@camden.k12.nj.us](mailto:crwilliams@camden.k12.nj.us).

## Biography: Johari Sykes

by Johari Sykes, Educational Program Specialist



Hi! My name is Johari A. Sykes, the newly appointed Educational Program Specialist. I taught Pre-Kindergarten at the magnificent F. X. McGraw Elementary School since graduating from Rowan University. It is my intent to work diligently with my assigned teachers to

better prepare our children for a productive future.

In my spare time, I like to spend time with family, friends, my dog Lahli, go to the movies, sew, read, and shop. My favorite quote is, "While we try to teach our children all about life, our children teach us what life is all about," by Angela Schwindt. Enjoy your school year and learn as much as you can from your children, as you want for them to learn from you.

## Biography: Virginia Flanigan

by Virginia Flanigan, PIRT

I am member of the Camden City Public School's Preschool Intervention Resource Team (PIRT). I attended Howard University in Washington D.C., where I received my Bachelor of Arts degree. I received my training in Early Childhood Education at Kean University in Union N.J. and my Special Education training at Bloomfield College in N.J.

After being selected by a Head Start agency, I completed the New Jersey Master Teacher program. I have served preschool children and families for more than a decade, working in the capacity of Preschool Teacher, Literacy Mentor-Coach, Education Specialist, and Supervisor of Early Head Start for infants, toddlers and pregnant women. Also to my credit are a number of teacher professional development trainings and workshops, the development and implementation of group socialization workshops for pregnant women, home visitor's curriculum training, mentoring novice teachers, the organization of agency wide pre-service and in-service professional development workshops and agency events, and many special initiatives. I have also served my community as Girl Scout Troop Leader, PTO President, and member of the Kiwanis Club. I am the mother of a 14 year old daughter who keeps me on the go.

# PROVIDING AN ENRICHING, QUIET COZY CORNER

by Barbara Alley, Educational Program Specialist

High-quality preschool classrooms provide cozy and private spaces for children to relax, read a book, or share an activity with a friend. These areas can be separate or combined to serve a dual purpose and possibly save floor space. Whether you have a combined area or separate areas, keep in mind it should be available for one or two children, away from traffic and activity, and should be easily supervised.

There are many reasons a child may need a quiet place, which can include one or more of the following reasons. The child may not be feeling well from illness or allergies. The child may be tired from staying up too late, getting up too early, or is just not a morning person. A growth spurt can make a child hungry or tired and can be unexplainably painful. There may have been some emotional conflict on the way to school or with a friend at school. Or, perhaps the child just wants to relax or have some peace and quiet or alone time.

You can provide a calm, cozy, and quiet space that allows a child to calm down and collect him/herself or focus on an alternative activity. It can be the perfect place for a one-on-one teacher-child activity, story, or chat. Children should be encouraged to visit the cozy corner; not forced to go or stay there.

A quiet space is more than a chair and a bin of books. The following materials and ideas can make the space an inviting and enriching area:

- Cushions and rug squares to make it cozy and warm
- Relaxing posters or pictures (i.e. ocean, beach, clouds)
- Items connected to Creative Curriculum Studies
  - o A large box can be a quiet area
  - o Allow the children to turn the area into a building of their choice
  - o Small paper bags can be stuffed, painted, and stacked into a rock wall
- A thematic focus can be incorporated to enhance dramatic play and imaginative thinking (Becker's catalog has kits that turn the area into a bear den, under water, or peaceful place)
  - A feelings face poster to help children identify how they feel
  - A sign that reads, "Shhh, quiet please"

The following materials and activities and activities will help a child relax and can also meet state standards for social-emotional, language and literacy, fine motor, science, and many more:

- An aquarium (real or fake)
- Water bottle games
- Stress ball or glitter ball
- Drawing bin
- Magna doodle boards
- Basket of books
- Finger puppets
- Seek and find discovery bottles ([http://www.drjean.org/html/monthly\\_act/act\\_2006/02\\_Feb/pg01.html](http://www.drjean.org/html/monthly_act/act_2006/02_Feb/pg01.html))
- Wave bottle (You can make your own or order viscosity tubes from Lakeshore)
- Kaleidoscope
- Tornado tube
- Play dough for one (make at home using baby oil to relax)
- Beads and pipe cleaners
- Relaxing music (lullabies or nature sounds) with headphones
- Texture or sensory bins
- Water – a small amount of water; add paper and a small paint brush; small cups and a medicine dropper
- Sand – a small amount of sand; add a comb; small rake or stick (i.e. Zen garden); cups & teaspoon, seashells
- Plastic grass with flowers and plastic insects to find
- Paper strips to cut (glue them later for an art collage)
- Cotton balls with tongs
- Confetti with hidden items to find
- Birdseed
- Instant snow (available at both Becker's and Lakeshore)



Additional quiet areas can be created at a small writing table, a beanbag chair in the library corner, or by using headphones at the computer or listening area. Like adults, children need a respite from time to time, as well as a place to unwind and get away from the hustle and bustle of the day. Providing appropriate places and enriching opportunities for children to take a break or refocus will result in positive outcomes for your children's social emotional development.

# WE LOVE BOOKS SURVEY RESULTS

by James Desimone, Educational Program Specialist

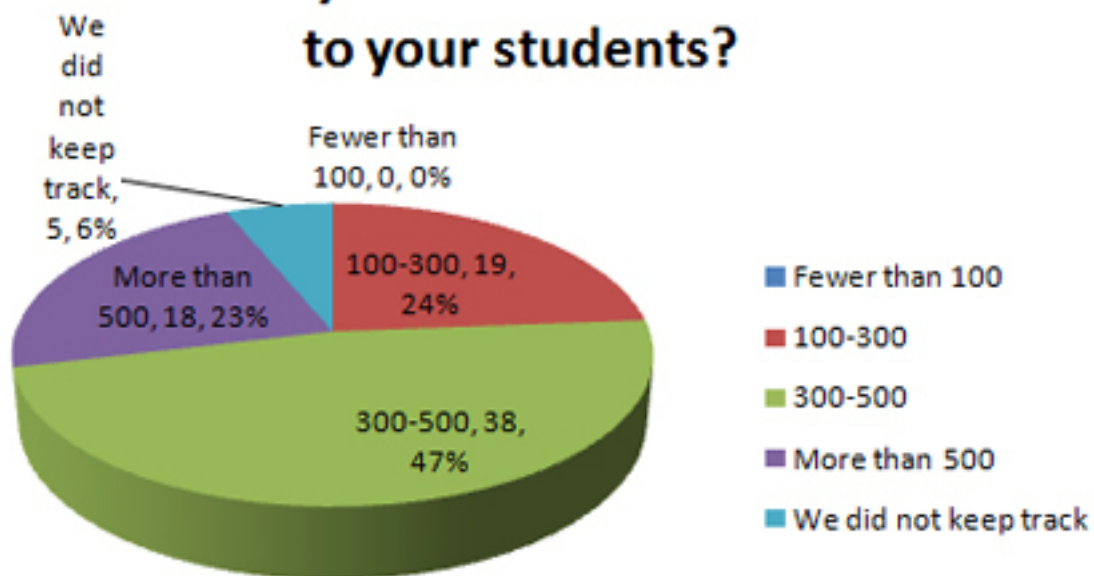
First, we would like to thank the 80 teachers who completed the We Love Books Survey on Survey Monkey at the end of the 2010-2011 school year! Hopefully, you found the survey to be straight-forward and user-friendly! We found the surveys to be very valuable because you provided us with information to improve the program for our students and our teachers.

As promised, we are sharing with you the information we collected from the surveys below:

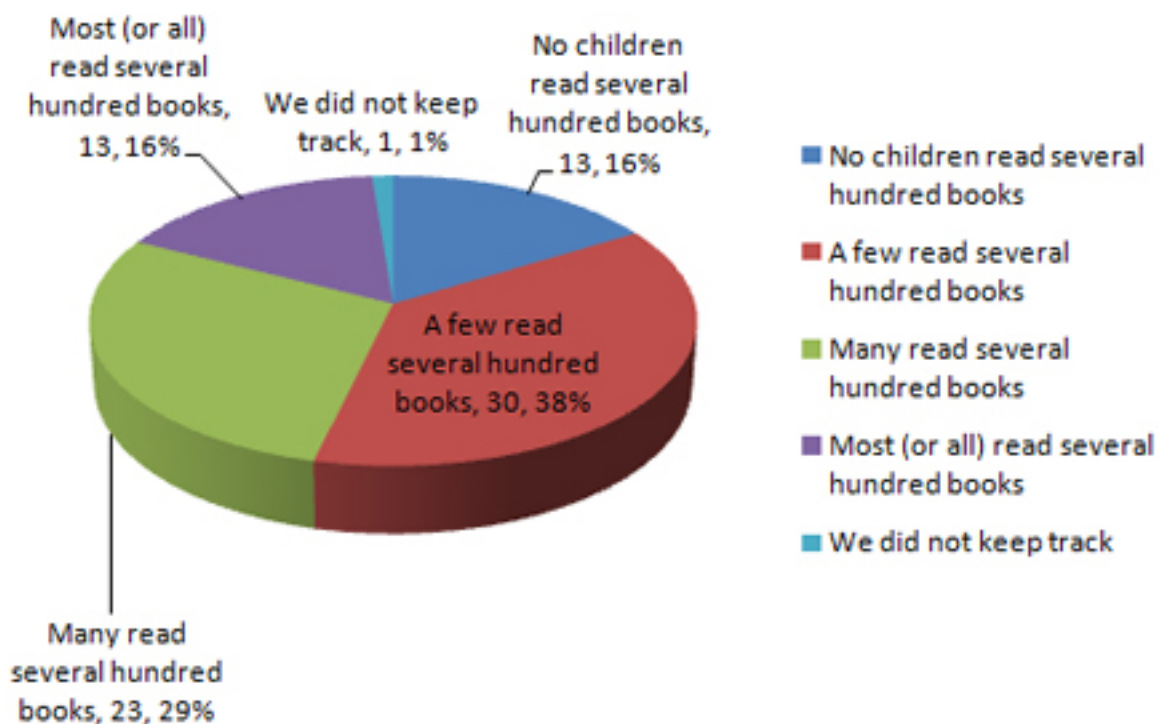
A survey was sent electronically to all Camden City Preschool classroom teachers, including teachers from Private Provider Centers and In-District Schools. Responses were collected anonymously from 80 teachers using the web survey service of SurveyMonkey.com. 51.9% (or 41) of the respondents were teachers at In-District Schools while 48.1% (or 38) of respondents were teachers at Private Providers (Centers). 73.8% of respondents stated that they have more than 6 years experience teaching preschool. 66.3% of the respondents have a Standard P-3 Teaching Certificate. When asked to rate the success of the program on a scale of 1-5, (with 5 being extremely well), 61.3% of respondents gave a rating of "4" or "5".

Following are graphs showing the results of three of the survey questions:

## How many books were read in-class to your students?



## At-Home Reading



As a part of the survey, you were asked for suggestions to improve the program. Overwhelmingly, you asked for more parent workshops and more books, including books in the home languages. The results of the survey were used in a planning meeting with American Reading Company and we are happy to share that these requests will be honored! Of course, you will receive continued support from your Educational Program Specialist to implement the program as needed. Stay tuned for more details to come from the We Love Books Committee and your Educational Program Specialist!

# TIPS FOR ARRANGING AN INCLUSIVE PRESCHOOL

## ENVIRONMENT FOR SUCCESS

by Markeeta Nesmith, Educational Program Specialist

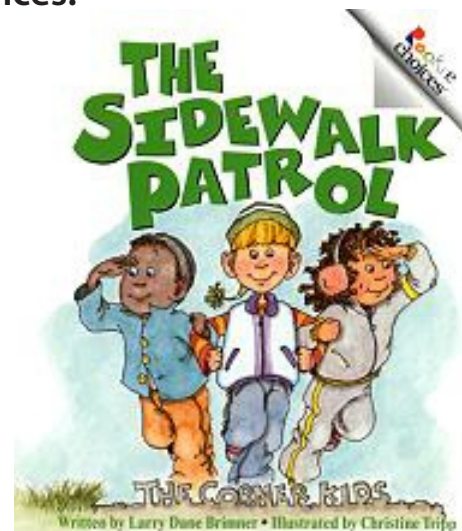
When arranging your inclusive preschool classroom, please consider the following:

1. The environment should be as well-defined as possible. This includes the physical set up of classroom areas, as well as materials within those areas. All children benefit from knowing that there is a place for everything in the room.
2. Picture schedules should be displayed and referred to often. Children's anxieties are reduced when they are able to see and understand what is supposed to occur. Some children may require an individualized schedule to remind them of what they are supposed to be doing.
3. There needs to be an area of the room where children can go to escape distractions and other sensory overloads (auditory and visual). Classroom "cozy areas" that offer comfort and alternative activities are ideal for all children.
4. Planned and predictable transitions should be used to decrease opportunities for children to misbehave. Some good choices might include:
  - a. Setting a timer. For individuals who are sensitive to noise, consider a personal hourglass.
  - b. Gently tap the child's shoulder to gain attention and signal a cue that an activity will be ending.
  - c. Ring a bell or use a soft wind chime.
  - d. Flashing lights on and off may be option, but please be reminded not to do this if you have a child who finds this type of stimulation overwhelming.
5. Intentionally build in opportunities throughout the day for children to socially interact with one another.

This short list of considerations supports the diverse needs of all learners, including students with special needs. Remember that every student is a member of the classroom and can participate in some way. Each child is unique. When the classroom foundation is based on structure, predictability, and developmentally-appropriate preschool practices this will give teachers the opportunity to focus on getting to know the children individually, where their strengths lie, and how they learn best.

Suggested books for understanding feelings and differences:

- *The Sidewalk Patrol* - Visual Impairments
- *Moses Goes to a Concert* - Hearing Impairments
- *Susan Laughs* - Physical Impairments
- *My Brother Charlie* - Autism
- *My Friend Isabelle* - Down Syndrome
- *Itsy Bitsy Spider* - Keep trying
- *Owl Babies* - Fear
- *The Three Little Pigs* - Working together
- *Amazing Grace* - Believing in yourself
- *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* - Everyone has a bad day
- *Rainbow Fish* - Learning to share



# DO YOU HAVE DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS (DLLS) IN YOUR CLASSROOM?

by Hoa Ly, Educational Program Specialist

Do you have any children who speak a language other than English? If so, what do you do to support Dual Language Learners (DLLs)? How do you communicate with these children? How do you support their learning?

On page 53 of your *2011-2012 Camden City Public Schools Teacher Handbook*, there are 10 easy steps outlining how to support DLLs.

After you gather the information from the Home Language Survey and Understanding the Cultures of Your Student, you can set up a communication system using pictures, basic survival English phrases, and a few key words in the child's home language.

Here is a quick DLL guide for you:

Home Language Survey and  
Understanding Cultures



Picture Support System. Learn a few key words in child's language

i.e. I'm tired! Tôi mệt! i Estoy cansado!



Classroom equipped with literacy materials in the child's home language.

i.e. – books, magazine, welcome sign, labels on shelves/containers for important items. Use consistent color codes for each language.



If you still feel like you are overwhelmed, confused, frustrated, or need more information, contact your Educational Program Specialist to set up a DLL training.

Stay tuned for more information in the next newsletter!

**Our goal is to support not some, not most, but ALL children!**

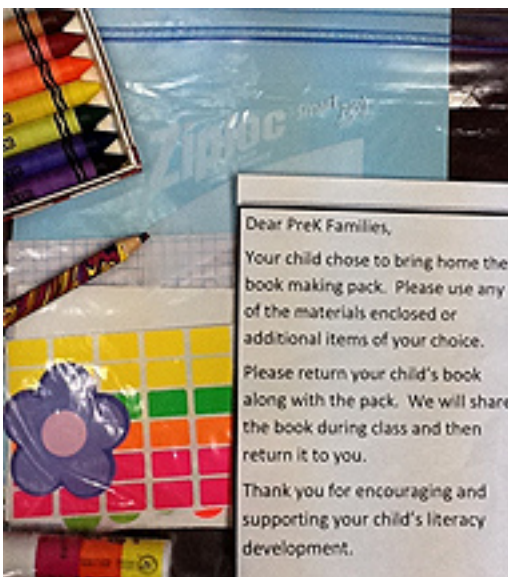
# ENHANCE YOUR HOME LENDING LIBRARY

by Barbara Alley, Educational Program Specialist

Home lending libraries provide the opportunity to extend learning to the home environment, strengthen the home-school connection, and encourage parent and child interactions and promote early reading. The We Love Books initiative supports the use of a home lending library to encourage reading at home between preschoolers and their families. Each quality early childhood classroom should have an area designated for the home lending library and a system in place for children to borrow books.

Enhancing your home lending library will increase the quantity of books that are read, consequently improving early literacy development. Try the following ideas or let them spark an idea of your own:

- Designate a stuffed animal or puppet as a Reading Buddy that the children can take home and read with.
- Designate a mascot for specific books. For example, if the Hungry Caterpillar is borrowed, there would be a stuffed caterpillar to go home with it. (Watch Kohl's for book and stuffed animal specials)
- Highlight a special book that goes along with the current study or upcoming field trip.
- Pair an audio CD that goes with the book.
- Send a journal with the book for children to indicate if they liked it or draw a picture of their favorite part.
- Pair the book's English version with home language version.
- Include props for retelling or acting out the story (puppets, plastic animals/people, etc).
- Include class books and photo albums from field trips, neighborhood walks, children's artwork or block structures, studies, projects, or favorite finger plays.
- Compile a future author kit with supplies for the child and family to make their own book. You may include suggested topics but allow them to use their own topics/idea as well.
- Pair informational (non-fiction) books with fantasy (fiction) books. For example, The Hungry Caterpillar can be paired with an age appropriate science book about the lifecycle of a butterfly.
- Invite family members to share their favorite story from the lending library to a small group.



• There are over 150 books to read online!! Share the following link with your families. <http://www.wegivebooks.org/books>

Enhancing your home lending library will benefit dual language learners and monolingual children, advanced learners, and special needs students. It will improve early reading and writing skills and comprehension. Social and emotional benefits will be seen as positive interactions increase between children, families, and staff. The materials can be placed in the We Love Books back pack, an alternate special pack, lunch bag, or Ziploc bag. Educational supply catalogs carry clear back packs that you can fill yourself to customize take home kits according to your children's needs.

Additional resources: Reading Rockets family literacy bags - <http://www.readingrockets.org/article/20037>