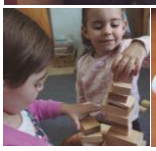
Picturing the Project Approach:
Seeing how it Works for Teachers and Children in Practice

Sylvia C. Chard, Yvonne Kogan, and Carmen Castillo



Early Childhood Investigations Webinars

Engaging Children's Minds: The Project Approach, 1989

Second Edition, 2000

Third Edition, 2014

www.projectapproach.org

sylvia.chard@ualberta.ca

The Project Approach

Lilian Katz and Sylvia Chard

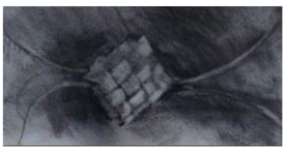
49 years of collaboration

Illinois Summer Institute
1992 - 2012

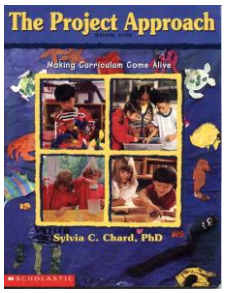
- Sort information acquired
- Discuss priorities
- Choose tasks
- Collaborate

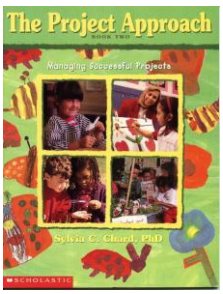
The Child Study Center University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada

Dr. Margaret Brooks
University of New England, NSW
Australia



Two practical guides for teachers





Project Approach Resources for Teachers

www.projectapproach.org

Project Approach Study Guide

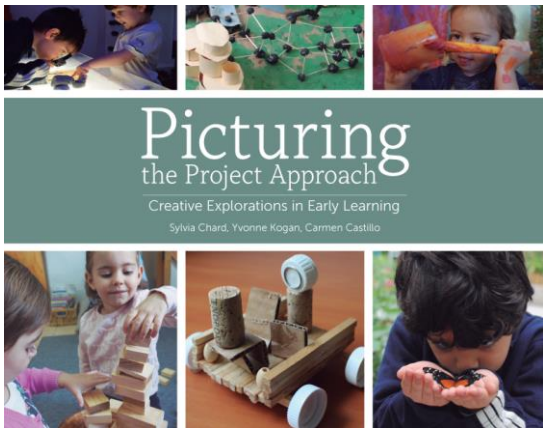
6 Practical Guides for Teachers

Evaluating Projects

CD-ROM - The Project Approach: Taking a Closer Look

Early Childhood Research and Practice Journal (ECRP)

Online Open Access at: http://ecrp.uiuc.edu

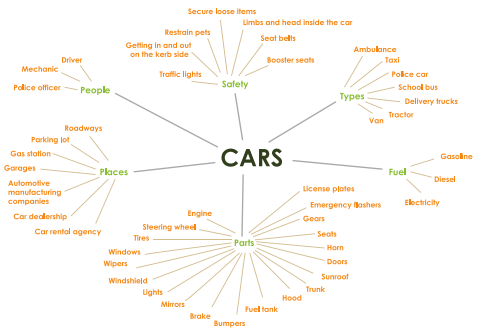


A project is an extended and in-depth investigation of a real world topic.

HOW DO I GET STARTED?

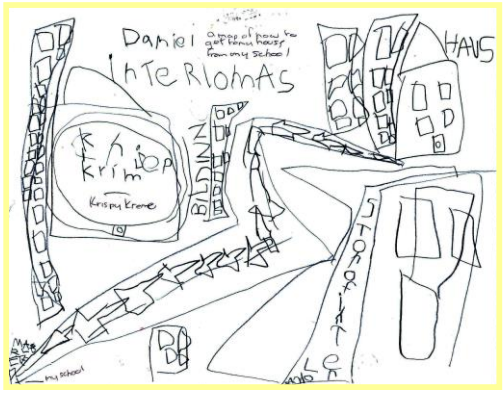
During Phase One:

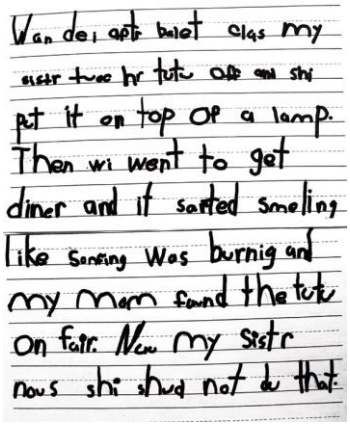
- The teacher selects the topic of study.



- The teacher makes a topic web and a curriculum web to envision the potential of the topic.

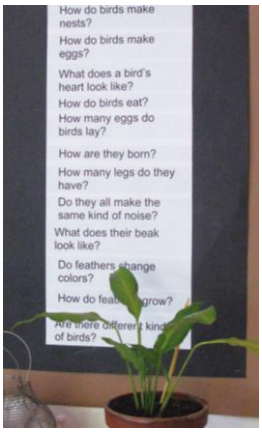
- The teacher helps children represent their previous experiences in different ways.





- Parents are informed about the topic of study so that they may contribute with their expertise, with objects and by sharing memories their child has in regards to the topic.

- The teacher identifies and helps the children formulate questions that will guide the investigation.



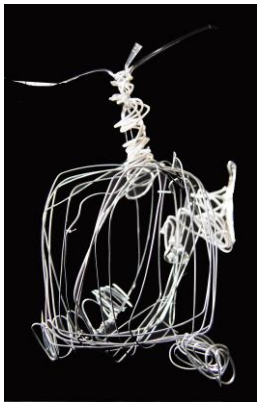
DEVELOPING THE PROJECT: PHASE TWO

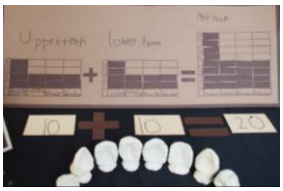
How do I help children find answers to their questions and represent their understanding?

- The teacher arranges opportunities to conduct field work and talk to experts.

- Children seek answers to the questions raised in phase one, and think of new questions.

- The teacher provides additional sources for research.

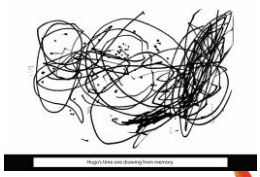




- Children use various materials and representational strategies to show their understanding.

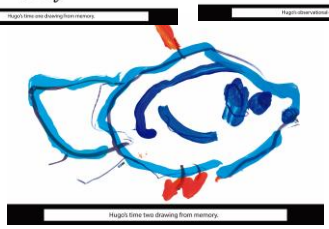
- The teacher displays experiences and work processes that show aspects of the investigation which children may discuss and revisit.

BRINGING THE PROJECT TO A CLOSE: PHASE THREE

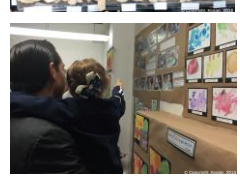


Hugo's time one drawing from memory.

Hugo's observational drawing of a fish.



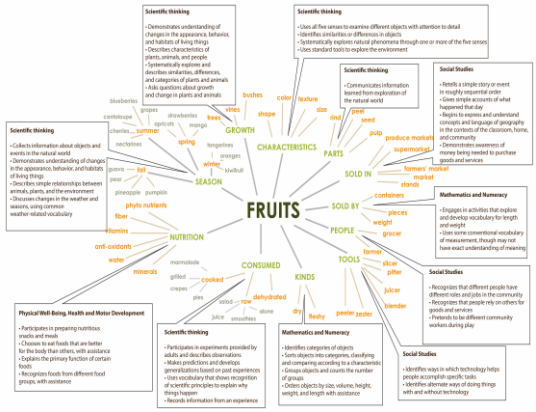
Hugo's time two drawing from memory.



- The teacher together with the children, plan a culminating event to share their work with members of their learning community.

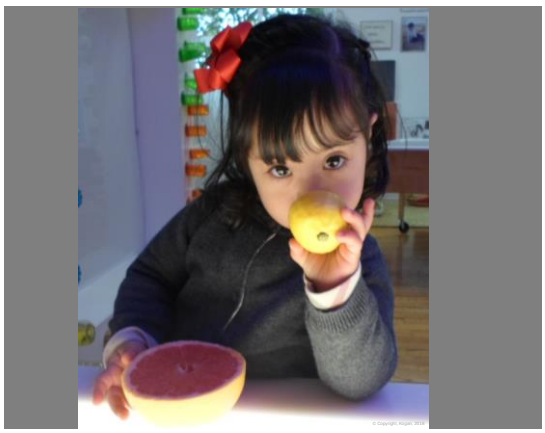
A Project on Fruit

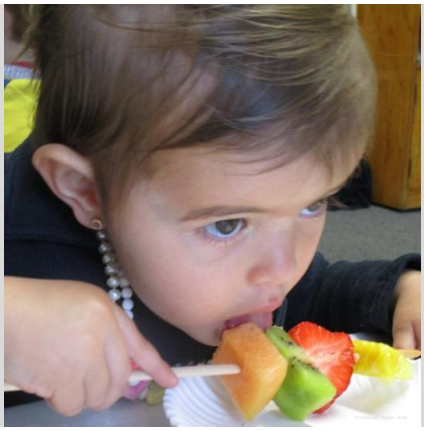
Projects with the younger children



Projects are a perfect instructional means for achieving the standards of a given school or school district.

Uses all five senses to examine different objects with attention to detail



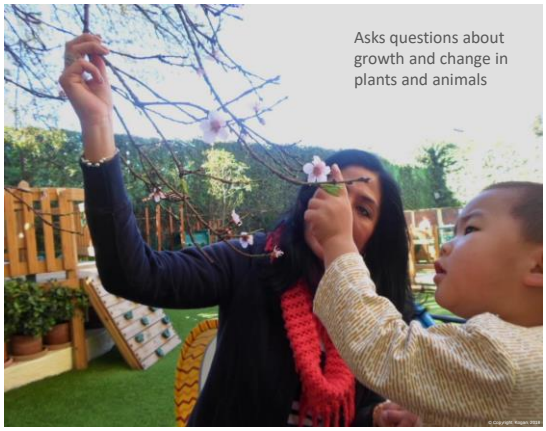


Makes predictions and develops generalizations based on past experiences .

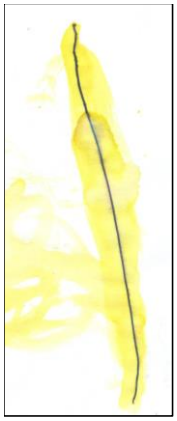
Groups objects and counts the number of groups .

Identifies similarities or differences in objects.

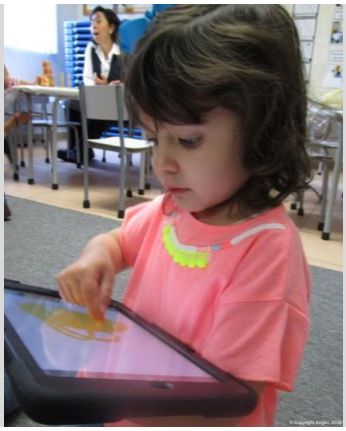
Begins to understand concepts of weight.

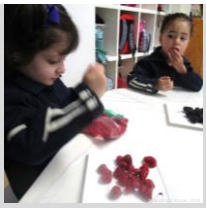


Asks questions about growth and change in plants and animals



Demonstrates understanding of changes in the appearance, behavior, and habitats of living things





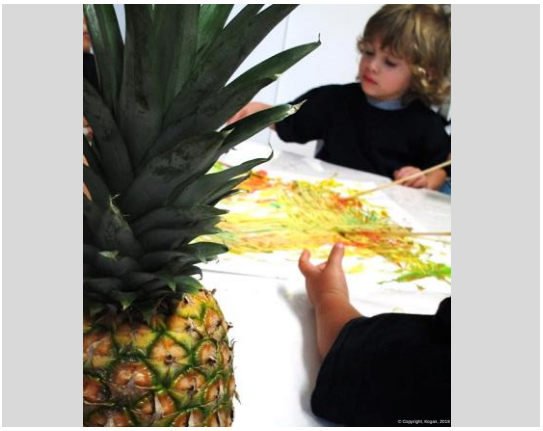
Participates in experiments provided by adults and describes observations

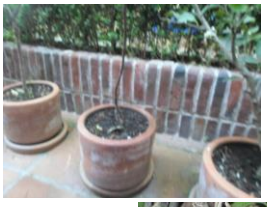
Uses vocabulary that shows recognition of scientific principles to explain why things happen.

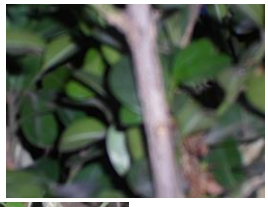
Demonstrates and explains the safe and proper use of tools and materials.

Records information from an experience

Begin to recognize that information comes in many forms and can be organized and displayed in different ways

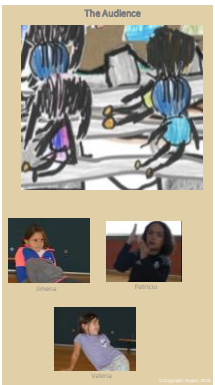


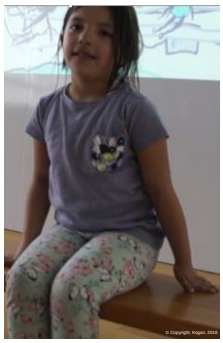


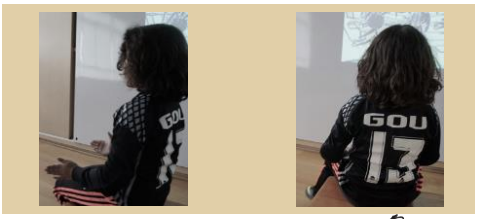


Communicates information learned from exploration of the natural world

Projects with the older children

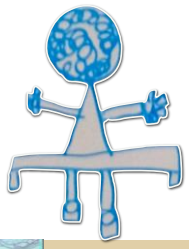






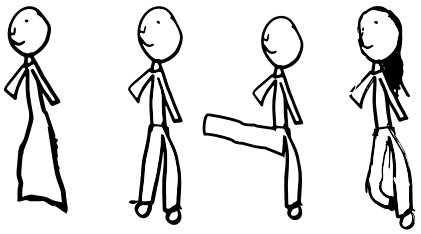
Wrong

right



AGREEMENTS

- We have to draw the people from the back, because they should be facing the stage.
- We have to draw the bench and hide a part of the legs of the person who is sitting, but we should be able to see their feet
- We need to draw the person's arms next to his body.
- We need to draw more than one person, because you need to draw more than one person to have an audience.



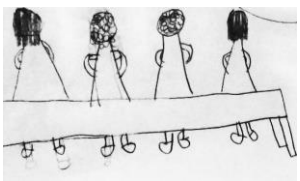
After several attempts, Isabella made a series of drawings to represent a step.

Ariela's first drawing shows A frontal view of a person's legs.

Ariela's second drawing is an attempt to show that there is a space between the floor and the foot when you take a step.

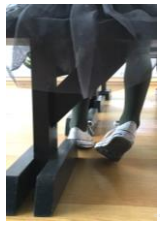
Finally, she makes a drawing crossing the legs and explains, that is needed to take a step.

Patricio



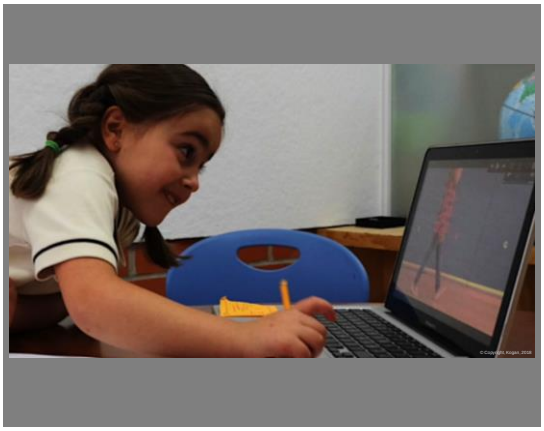
Jimena

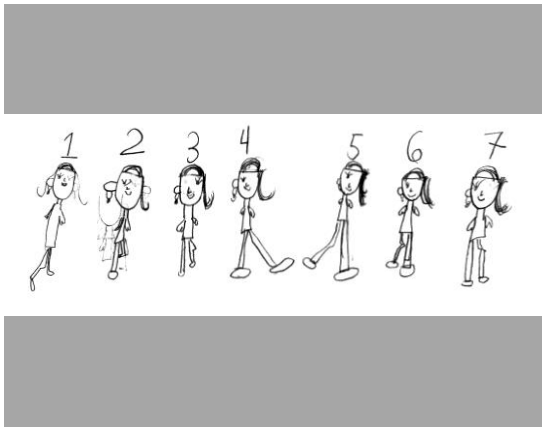
Valeria



Getting Organized

They decided to work collaboratively

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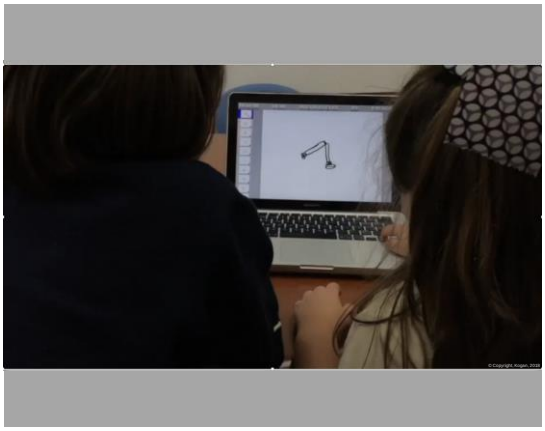

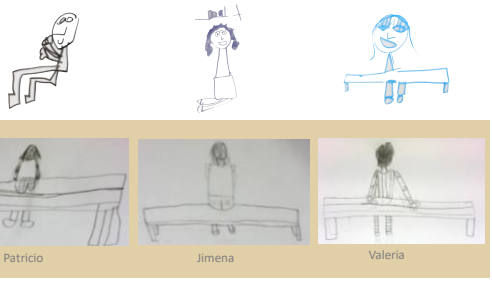

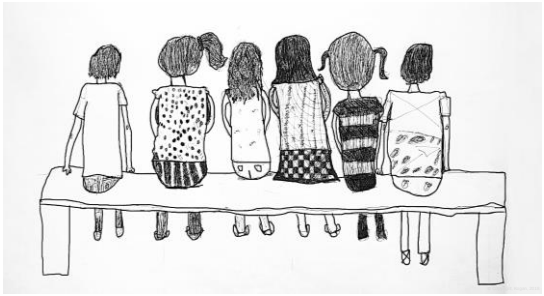

APPENDICES

- Project Planning and documentation Chart
- Examples of letters to send home
  - to inform parents about the topic of study
  - in preparation for a field trip
  - inviting parents to a culminating activity
- Questions, Predictions, and Findings Chart
- Meeting STEM objectives through project work

PROJECT PLANNING CHART

	DISCUSSION	FIELDWORK	REPRESENTATION	INVESTIGATION	DISPLAY
PHASE 1 BEGINNING THE PROJECT	• Sharing prior experience and current knowledge of a topic	• Children talking about their prior experience with their parents and caregivers	• Using drawing, writing construction, dramatic play to share prior experience and knowledge	• Raising questions on the basis of current knowledge	• Sharing representation
PHASE 2 DEVELOPING THE PROJECT	• Preparing for fieldwork and interviews. • Reviewing fieldwork. • Learning from secondary sources.	• Going out of the classroom to investigate a field site. • Interviewing experts in the field or in the classroom.	• Brief field sketches and notes. • Using drawing, painting, writing, math, diagrams, and maps, to represent new learning.	• Investigating initial questions. • Fieldwork and library research. • Raising further questions.	• Sharing representations of new experience and knowledge. • Keeping ongoing records of the project work.
PHASE 3 CONCLUDING THE PROJECT	• Preparing to share the story of the project. • Reviewing and evaluating the project.	• Evaluating the project through the eyes of an outside group.	• Considering and summarizing the story of the study to share the project with others	• Speculating about new questions	• Summary of the learning throughout the project

Dear Mrs._____,

I am excited about our upcoming visit, and I am grateful that you will be able to accompany us. I ask for your help with the following:

- Please be at school at 9:00 a.m. sharp, since the bus will be leaving at 9:15 a.m.
- You will be taking care of, and working with: _____, _____, and_____.
- Make sure to take: clipboards for the children in your group, small bags to collect samples, a pad where you can take notes of their conversations, and your camera.
- When we get to the botanical garden, the whole class will go together on a tour.
- After the tour, you and the children in your group will go the area called *fantastic forest*, to take a close look at the trees. Encourage the children to make field sketches and to take notes of things that draw their attention. Collect samples of leaves of different trees, if you find some on the ground.
- While the children are working, take notes of their conversations and comments. I know children posing and smiling at the camera can be irresistible, but I ask that you take photographs of children, while they are exploring and taking notes.
- We will meet at the exit at 12:00 p.m. sharp, to board the bus and return to school.

I thank you for your enthusiasm and support,

Ms._____

QUESTIONS, PREDICTIONS, FINDINGS CHART FOR THE PROJECT ON FRUIT

QUESTIONS	PREDICTIONS	FINDINGS	HOW WE FOUND THE INFORMATION
Does the color of fruit inform you about how it will taste?	Red fruits are spicy.	The color of fruit does not necessarily give you information on how it tastes.	Children tasted different kinds of red fruits and found that the color did not relate to the taste.
Is the size of fruit proportional to the amount of seeds it has?	Bigger fruits have more seeds.	The size of fruit does not necessarily relate to the number of seeds it has.	Children cut open different kinds of fruits, they counted the seeds and found out that size is not related to the number of seed inside a piece of fruit.
Are fruits the same color on the inside than on the outside?	Fruits are the same color on the inside than on the outside.	Not all fruits are the same color on the inside than on the outside	One of the moms in the class came in to make fruit salad. She showed the children each of the fruits to be used. They talked about the color of each of the fruits before she cut them. After that, she sliced them into cubes and talked about the differences in color on the outside than on the inside a cantaloupe, a watermelon, a pear and an apple.
Is the fruit peel edible?	The fruit peel is not edible.	Some fruits have edible peels.	An expert came to the classroom and brought in different kinds of fruit. He explained which were edible, and which were not.
How are fruits consumed?	Fruits are consumed raw.	Fruits can be consumed in diverse manners: raw, cooked, juiced, caramelized, dehydrated.	The teacher organized for parents to come in to the classroom to interact with the children and use fruit in different manners. Some made orange juice, others banana bread, others apple chips.
How do I know if a fruit is ripe?	I touch it and if it feels soft it means its ripe.	Depending on the fruit, there are different facters to consider, such as smell, size, weight, color, firmness,	The students went on a field visit to a farmer's market, and were able to take a look at a large variety of fruits. The expert explained how they can choose different fruits that are good to eat. He mentioned that there are some you can touch, others that you can smell and yet others that you can look at to determine whether they are ripe.

MEETING STEM OBJECTIVES THROUGH PROJECT WORK

	STEM EDUCATION	PROJECT APPROACH
	STEM goals look to extend children's prior learning.	Learning experiences build on what children already know and can do.
INQUIRY	Science is asking questions.	Children's questions are what drive the inquiry.
CURIOSITY	Science is wondering how things work. Children's sense of curiosity about he world around them is fostered to promote a lifelong interest in learning.	At the core of the Project Approach lies the belief that children are always striving to make better and fuller sense of their experiences and their environment.
PREDICTION	Science is predicting.	Children are encouraged to develop their own ideas about how things work.
INVESTIGATION	Science is observing and making discoveries. Children are led to answering their own questions.	Students are prompted to acquire first hand information through field-work and interviewing experts, as well as to recur to secondary sources of information.
EXPLORATION	Science is exploring. Children are encouraged to explore, process, and come to understand new information using their five senses.	Children are habituated to actively and interactively explore phenomena, objects, materials, processes and events around them.
DATA GATHERING	Science is data gathering.	When carrying out investigations, children are accustomed to anticipate the what will be needed to gather and record the data that they might encounter.
PERSPECTIVE	Teachers are encouraged to listen with interest to their students and have them listen to each other as well.	Children regularly engage in discussions after they have shared an experience as they often recall different things. They also learn a great deal from the work done by others because it shows them another approach to the topic being studied. In the course of the project, children are invited to revisit the information they have learned from unfamiliar angles, so that they may check their understanding in a different way.

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