

**University of Saskatchewan
College of Education**

**Education 498
Issues and Trends in Early Childhood Education
Winter, 2007
Wednesday 2:30 – 5:30 pm
Room ED 2009**

ITEP Program

Instructor

Debbie Pushor, PhD
Office hours: Tuesday - Friday,
by appointment or by chance

Office: ED 3038

Course Description and Objectives

In this course, students will explore current issues in early childhood education from a variety of theoretical perspectives: curricular, psychological, administrative and philosophical. This course is intended to complement the knowledge gained in other elementary stream courses by highlighting issues of particular significance to early childhood education. We will challenge the prevailing “school readiness” model, asking instead what might be done to prepare schools and teachers to welcome and respond to the needs of the children and families they are meant to serve. Themes to be addressed include the emergent curriculum; creating a positive learning environment for young children; children’s, parents’ and teachers’ place in the curriculum; teacher identity in an interagency framework; the physical, emotional and moral development of young children; and administrative concerns for educators in pre-K to grade three. Students will draw on their internship experiences to frame questions for an extended reflective inquiry, and the other assignments (commonplace book and oral final exam) will support the overall learning goals of the course by fostering a sense of the classroom as a collaborative community of inquiry.

Course Requirements

Required Readings

1. Paley, V. (2004). A child’s work. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
Available from the bookstore.
2. Curtis, D. & Carter, M. (2003). Designs for living and learning: Transforming early childhood environments. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.
Available from the instructor.

Assignments

A. Commonplace Book – 30%

Due: Midpoint – February 21, 2007
Final – At essential conversation

Your commonplace book is a “common place” for you to collect thoughts, excerpts from readings, and artifacts about issues and trends in early childhood education. Excerpts from readings may be from this course or from other courses you are taking or have taken. Artifacts may include photographs, newspaper clippings, brochures, quotes, poems, stories, children’s work, and so on. Your commonplace book is a combination scrap book and reflective journal, including both items and your thoughts and wonders about those items. It is a place where you can lay ideas and items alongside one another, examining and reflecting upon how they complement or challenge one another; how one affirms another or creates dissonance around it. Your commonplace book is a place for you to make sense of what you are thinking about in relation to early childhood education and to record your questions and wonders. I will expect the equivalence of a weekly entry.

B. Extended Personal Inquiry – 40%

In order to help you give shape to your term-long inquiry, I have broken the assignment down into four incremental steps:

1. Springboard question: Due Jan. 24th (approx. ½ to 1 p.) For this assignment, I would like you to identify an issue or question that is personally meaningful or pressing for you and that has relevance for early childhood education. It might be an issue that has arisen in your internship or your workplace, or it might be something that is of concern to you in your personal/community life. Either way, the important thing is that you pose a question that is genuinely of interest to you and one that you will commit to investigating and engaging with over the course of the term. This first part of the inquiry is intended primarily as a vehicle for you to feel your way into the issue you’d like to pursue in the weeks ahead. In class on January 31st, I will give you written feedback to help you shape your proposal.

2. Proposal: Due Feb.7th (approx. 2 pp.) By now, you will have done some more thinking and had preliminary conversations with your classmates about your inquiry. For this part of the assignment, I would like you to lay out in as much detail as possible the investigation or project you intend to undertake in the coming weeks. The projects may take a number of different forms. You might want to explore the relationship between Aboriginal Headstart and pre-K and kindergarten... or you might choose to have conversations with parents of young children about their hopes and concerns about their children’s education, and keep a reflective journal about those conversations... Perhaps you’re interested in developing an annotated bibliography of children’s books you would like to use in your future teaching practice... or you might want to explore how children and childhood are viewed in different cultures. There are countless possibilities! In any case, please make sure to include a brief section on the educational implications of the project you are proposing. Please note: The proposal can be in point form. What I am mainly looking for is evidence that you have a reasonably clear plan in mind, even though it will undoubtedly shift and change as your work proceeds.

3. Interim report (oral): Due Mar. 7th. Now that you are one month into your project, you will likely be encountering some challenges, barriers, and obstacles. Don't despair! This is an inevitable part of this kind of inquiry. At this point, I want you to identify and reflect on the challenges you have encountered. Please bring some written notes to class with you, describing the challenges in as much detail as possible, identifying their possible source(s) – blindspots you were not aware of before, institutional constraints, etc. – as well as strategies you have tried so far for dealing with them. We will take the first part of the class on March 7th to debrief, share experiences, and draw on each other's imagination, expertise, and experience in order to move toward new ways of seeing and meeting the various challenges.

4. Final report (written): Due Mar. 28th. While this part of the assignment is intended to be a more formal “wrapping up,” please don't see it as the end of your inquiry. At this point, you will probably have more questions than answers – and that's a good thing. The assignment is meant primarily as a way of bringing closure to this particular leg of your journey. Your essay should be both reflective and analytical in the sense that I am looking for a) evidence of your personal engagement with the issue you have been investigating; b) an increased awareness of the subtleties of that issue; c) an ability to make connections to the ideas and insights of the various theorists we have been studying, guest speakers, etc.; and d) implications for your future teaching practice. You might also want to include a section on how the project has changed your way of “reading the world” and how that new way of seeing has impacted your way of being-in-the-world. On March 28th, you will also have an opportunity to share the results of your inquiry with the rest of the class – your new learnings and insights, as well as on-going and emergent questions. We will talk more about what the presentation part might look like in the weeks ahead.

C. An Essential Conversation – 30%

To be scheduled during the week of April 2nd

I have borrowed the term “essential conversation” from the work of Sarah Lawrence-Lightfoot (2003) to give a name to the oral final exam. While Lawrence-Lightfoot uses the term to describe the kind of conversation which occurs between parents and teachers in conferences about children, I am using the term here to capture a kind of important conversation that occurs between colleagues about our identity as teachers, about what we do in classrooms with young learners, and about why we do it.

Toward the end of term, you will schedule a half hour essential conversation with me that will take place within the week of April 2nd. In this conversation, you will be asked to talk about your developing identity as a teacher of young children, to ‘say more’ about entries in your commonplace book, to talk about what you learned through your extended personal inquiry, to make connections between topics discussed in the course, to synthesize what you have learned and what significance it will have for your practice.

You will be invited to bring materials such as your commonplace book and your final inquiry report to the essential conversation. The conversation will be recorded and a mark will be assigned to the oral final exam, based on criteria developed and shared with the class earlier in the term.

EDUC 498
Issue and Trends in Early Childhood Education
Winter 2007
Instructor: Debbie Pushor

Commonplace Book
Evaluation Criteria

____/10 **Commonplace Book Entries**

- Equivalent of one entry per week (12 entries)
- Entries emerge from a variety of sources and experiences
- Entries are linked to a diverse range of issues and trends in ECE
- Entries are creatively presented

____/10 **Reflections**

- Analytical, representing a depth of knowledge and thinking
- Demonstrate an interconnectedness in the understanding of current issues and trends in ECE
- Linked to personal experience(s)
- Make explicit your beliefs
- Show how you will translate your beliefs into practice

____/10 **Teacher Identity**

- You take an informed and thoughtful stance in relation to readings/experiences/context
- You provide a sense of who you are i.e. as teacher, as learner, as parent/grandparent
- You provide a sense of who you are working to become
- You provide a sense of yourself in relation to others i.e. children, their parents, your colleagues, other professionals

EDUC 498
Issue and Trends in Early Childhood Education
Winter 2007
Instructor: Debbie Pushor

Personal Inquiry
Evaluation Criteria

Your personal inquiry paper/presentation/product is both reflective and analytical.
You have demonstrated an increased awareness of the subtleties of that issue.

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10
Does not meet requirements Minimal Satisfactory Good Excellent Exceptional

There is evidence of your personal engagement with the issue you have been investigating.

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10
Does not meet requirements Minimal Satisfactory Good Excellent Exceptional

You have highlighted the implications for teaching practice.

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10
Does not meet requirements Minimal Satisfactory Good Excellent Exceptional

You have reflected on how the personal inquiry has changed your way of “reading the world”
and how that new way of seeing has impacted your way of being-in-the-world.

0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10
Does not meet requirements Minimal Satisfactory Good Excellent Exceptional

EDUC 498
Issue and Trends in Early Childhood Education
Winter 2007
Instructor: Debbie Pushor

Essential Conversation Questions

1. What do you see as the current and significant trends and issues in early childhood education in the province of Saskatchewan, and why? Pick one issue or trend to speak to in detail.

2. Where do you position yourself in relation to Vivian Paley's philosophy that play is the work of children, and why? How do you balance this belief with the current trend toward an enhanced emphasis on formal literacy instruction in ECE classrooms? What will play look like in practice in your classroom? What will literacy instruction look like in practice in your classroom?

3. Share a personal learning about ECE that has been significant to you this term. Detail this learning with a personal story of this experience. Say why this learning has been significant to you and how it has affected your identity as an early childhood educator.

EDUC 498
Issue and Trends in Early Childhood Education
Winter 2007
Instructor: Debbie Pushor

Essential Conversation
Evaluation Criteria

____/10 **Professional Identity**

- Who am I as an early childhood educator?
- What will I do?
- Why will I do what I do?

____/10 **Understanding of Issues and Trends**

- Knowledgeable of the current context in the early childhood field
- Able to articulate a position in relation to current issues and trends
- Using sound theory and experience in taking a position

____/10 **Demonstration of Growth**

- Able to articulate new knowledge, skills, and attitudes in relation to young learners
- Able to personalize the learning
- Able to consider the learning as an teacher of young children

Proposed Class Schedule

- January 3 Introduction to course
- January 10
1. Please review the Saskatchewan Learning's *Children First: A Curriculum Guide for Kindergarten*.
<http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/docs/kindergarten/index.html>
 2. Please search the term “school readiness” and form a sense of what that term means and how it is being used in the field. (Google Scholar is a good possibility.)
 3. Also, please search the term “ready schools” to get a sense of what that term means and how it represents something philosophically different than “school readiness.” (This term will be harder to find and get information on, although I did find a good document using Google Scholar.)
- Come to class on Wednesday prepared to engage in discussions on each of these items. Thanks so much!
- January 17
- Philosophical Premises and Foundations of ECE
Children First: A Curriculum Guide for Kindergarten
Kindergarten Reference Committee
Deconstructing “school readiness”
- Please review all of *Designs for Living and Learning* for next class. Specifically read pp. 11 – 26.
- January 24
- Building Classroom Community/Classroom Environment
- Discussion of readings/class activities
 - Visit to Campus Daycare on main floor (to be confirmed)
- Springboard question due today.**
- January 31 No class
- Friday, February 2 Field trip to Beardy's Okemasis Reserve to visit Willow Cree Education Complex - Elementary
- Aboriginal Head Start
 - Cree Program
 - Elder Program

The elementary school has children enrolled from Aboriginal Head Start (age 4) through Grade 5. They have 1 Kindergarten, 2 Grade 1 classes, 1 each of Grade 2, 3, & 4, a Grade 4/5 class, and a Grade 5 class.

Itinerary:

8:30 Leave College of Education Building (travel by van or bus)
9:45 Arrive at Beardy's
10:00 Session with Jackie Gamble, Principal
10:35 – 10:45 Recess – coffee with staff and elders
10:45 – 11:55 School tour, visits in classrooms
11:55 – 12:35 Potluck lunch with staff and elders
*Please bring a lunch item for the potluck. (Dishes, cutlery will be provided.)
12:35 – 2:10 Session with Cree teacher
Classroom visits continue.
2:10 Afternoon recess. We leave for our return to Saskatoon.

February 7 The Position of Children in Aboriginal Culture
Elder Visit – Maria and Walter Linklater

Proposal for personal inquiry due today.

Please read text, *A Child's Work*, for our first class after break.

February 21 Play/Emergent Curriculum/Early Literacy

- Readiness
- Language and literacy
- Imagination
- Social skills
- Problem-solving
- Social justice

Commonplace Book – midpoint submission due

February 28 Early Numeracy
Facilitated by Shaun Murphy, Department of Curriculum Studies, and
Trish Reeve, Program Coordinator, Prairie Spirit School Division

March 7 FASD – speaker TBA

Personal inquiry: Interim oral reports.

March 14 Early Learning Child Care (ELCC)
Facilitated by Sue Delaney, Executive Director, Communities for Children

- national landscape
- provincial landscape

- local landscape

March 21	No class
Friday, March 23	Early Learning Site Visits (locations to be confirmed) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Full time Kindergarten• Pre-Kindergarten• Preschool• Aboriginal Head Start?
March 28	Working Alongside Aboriginal Parents
April 4	Sharing of Extended Personal Inquiries Culminating Class
Week of April 16 th - April 20 th	Essential Conversations – Individual appointments Commonplace Book is due at the time of your essential conversation.