

# The Association for Constructivist Teaching

June Newsletter, v. 5. , n. 1

## *From the President:*

*Greetings:*

*I am very pleased and excited to be writing you for this issue of our newsletter. There are several reasons for my excitement. First, and foremost, our editor Jane Broderick has done an outstanding job of creating a product, which will help us reach our goal of being the leader in Constructivist education. Jane has always worked diligently to create a newsletter which is informative, entertaining, and a tool for spreading the word about Constructivism. Additionally, Jane has enlisted Meir Muller to work with her as co-editor. Meir's experience as an educator, administrator, and Constructivist advocate will add greatly to this publication. Jane and Meir will put out this newsletter three times a year (January/February), May, and September.*

*Secondly, I want to thank all of you who attended our annual ACT Conference in Charleston. Everyone's enthusiasm rubbed off on everyone else, and the result was an energy-filled conference. I am sure that you, like myself, not only learned a great deal, but came away being energized. We plan to continue with our tradition of hosting informative and energy-filled conferences, with our next destination for our conference in the New Jersey area. We are aiming for an October date. More information will be forthcoming.*

*I hope you enjoy this issue of the newsletter, and I hope it increases your enthusiasm for our organization and for the Constructivist movement.*

*If you have any questions, please contact me at [jpelech@ben.edu](mailto:jpelech@ben.edu).*

*Regards,*

*James Pelech, Ed.D.*

*President, Association for Constructivist Teaching*

## **Board Members**

**Jim Pelech**

*President*

*2014 Program Chair*

Benedictine University  
Lisle, Illinois

[jpelech@ben.edu](mailto:jpelech@ben.edu)

**Jane Tingle Broderick**

*Past President*

*Newsletter & Blog Editor*

East Tennessee State University  
Johnson City, TN

[broderic@etsu.edu](mailto:broderic@etsu.edu)

**Seong Bock Hong**

*Treasurer*

The University of Michigan-Dearborn  
Dearborn, MI

[seong@umich.edu](mailto:seong@umich.edu)

**Carolyn Hildebrandt**

*Constructivist Journal Editor*

University of Northern Iowa  
Waterloo, IA

[carolyn.hildebrandt@uni.edu](mailto:carolyn.hildebrandt@uni.edu)

**Carolyn Black**

University of Houston

University of Houston Charter School

[cfblack@uh.edu](mailto:cfblack@uh.edu)

**Christine Chaille**

Portland State University  
Portland, OR

[chaillec@pdx.edu](mailto:chaillec@pdx.edu)

**Kathryn Castle**

Oklahoma State University  
Stillwater, OK

[Kathryn.castle@okstate.edu](mailto:Kathryn.castle@okstate.edu)

**Kate Chechak**

The School at Columbia  
New York, NY

[kate.chechak@gmail.com](mailto:kate.chechak@gmail.com)

**Sonja de Groot Kim**

Kean University  
Union, NJ

[sonjadegrootkim@yahoo.com](mailto:sonjadegrootkim@yahoo.com)

**Brenda Fyfe**

Webster University  
St. Louis, MO

[fyfebv@webster.edu](mailto:fyfebv@webster.edu)

If your colleagues have not received this newsletter, please encourage them to join ACT online at: [www.constructivistassociation.org](http://www.constructivistassociation.org)

# The Association for Constructivist Teaching

June Newsletter, v. 5. , n. 1

## Letter from the Editors

**Jane Tingle Broderick & Meir Muller**

[broderic@etsu.edu](mailto:broderic@etsu.edu)

[meirmuller@sc.rr.com](mailto:meirmuller@sc.rr.com)

*Dear ACT Friends & Colleagues,*

*We are excited to join you as a team of co-editors this year and look forward to a great collaboration as we seek out stories for our newsletter. We would like to thank the authors of the articles in this issue for their patience over the past year as we have regrouped.*

*We know you will enjoy reading about the history of Carolyn Hildebrandt's journey with constructivist theory. We welcome her in 2015 as the new editor of our association's journal, the Constructivist.*

*You will also enjoy the story of the unfolding emergent curriculum in a Kindergarten classroom focusing on circularity and the forest. It is a special story shared by a constructivist educator at the Sabot School at Stony Point in Richmond, VA.*

*We are always seeking new stories from the field and are often in need of stories from the middle and high school years. If you are willing to share a story with us please contact us to work out an arrangement. Stories related to research projects at all levels are always welcome!*

*We would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the two new board members who joined along with Meir Muller: Andrew Stremmel & Kelly Kent! It is wonderful to have representation from South Dakota with Andrew and Kelly brings us an elementary perspective.*

*Sincerely,  
Jane & Meir*



## Board Members

### Constance Kamii

University of Alabama  
Birmingham, AL  
[ckamii@uab.edu](mailto:ckamii@uab.edu)

### Kelly Kent

Instructional Elementary Supervisor,  
Newport News, VA;  
[kelly.kent@nn.k12.va.us](mailto:kelly.kent@nn.k12.va.us)

### Holly McCartney

Madison University  
Harrisonburg, VA  
[mccarthb@jmu.edu](mailto:mccarthb@jmu.edu)

### Meir Muller

University of South Carolina  
Columbia, SC  
[meirmuller@sc.rr.com](mailto:meirmuller@sc.rr.com)

### Calvert E. Schlick, Jr

Peekskill Museum  
Peekskill, NY  
[drschlick@aol.com](mailto:drschlick@aol.com)

### Jennifer Thompson

2nd Grade, Juneau School District  
Juneau, Alaska

### Andrew Stremmel

South Dakota State University  
Brookings, SD  
[andrew.stremmel@sdstate.edu](mailto:andrew.stremmel@sdstate.edu)

### Esperanza Uribe Ahumada, Lic. Psi.

Centro de Estudios de Educacion  
Constructivista en Mexico  
[espeurib@yahoo.com](mailto:espeurib@yahoo.com)

*Science Dance Workshop at 2014 ACT Conference*

*Presenter Carolyn Black inspired us to design choreography for dances in which we elaborate our understanding of concepts. Here three dancers represent an erupting volcano.*

# The Association for Constructivist Teaching

June Newsletter, v. 5. , n. 1

## JOURNAL UPDATE

Editor Amy Malkus is completing the editing of an issue of the Constructivist is to be published this Spring. Our new editor Carolyn Hildebrandt is in the process of developing plans for the future of the journal. We will publish her update in our next newsletter..

Any members who would like to serve as reviewers can please contact Carolyn so that their names can be added to our list of reviewers: [carolyn.hildebrandt@uni.edu](mailto:carolyn.hildebrandt@uni.edu)

- We ask our members to please submit articles and encourage colleagues to submit! Our goal is to publish bi-annually, and build from there.

Contact Carolyn with a proposal or submission advice: [carolyn.hildebrandt@uni.edu](mailto:carolyn.hildebrandt@uni.edu)

## MEMBER NEWS & PUBLICATIONS

Kroll, L. and Meir, D. R. (2015). Educational Change in International Early Childhood Contexts. Crossing Borders of Reflection. NY: Routledge.

A review by Martine Horvath states that the book is filled with a vast number of first-hand experiences associated with a wealth of ideas, such as active listening, and enquiry from an international perspective communicated with a local voice. The cases from Japan, Kenya, Finland, Italy, and the United States offer thoughtful comparison within a reflective inquiry paradigm. ISBN: 9780415732635

Kamii, Connie, (in press, to be published 2015). Selected Standards from the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics, Grades K-3: My Reasons for Not Supporting Them.

A 40-page paper by Connie Kamii will soon be published on the website of Defending the Early Years: <http://deyproject.org/about/>. In this paper Kamii essentially says that the Common Core State Standards for Kindergarten through 3rd grade are too high.

Defending the Early Years is a project of the Survival Education Fund, Inc., a 501(c) 3 tax-exempt educational organization. Defending the Early Years (DEY) seeks to rally educators to take action on policies that affect the education of young children. The principal goals of the project are: to mobilize the early childhood community to speak out with well-reasoned arguments against inappropriate standards, assessments, and classroom practices; to track the effects of new standards, especially those linked to the Common Core State Standards, on early childhood education policy and practice; to promote appropriate practices in early childhood classrooms and support educators in counteracting current reforms which undermine these appropriate practices. Several educators we rely on for their contributions to the field of Early Childhood Education serve on the advisory board of this organization.

Congratulations to long time ACT Member, Dr. Chun-Burbank, who has joined the faculty at Vanguard University as their Early Childhood Chair.

# The Association for Constructivist Teaching

June Newsletter, v. 5. , n. 1

**BOARD MEMBER INTERVIEW** *with Carolyn Hildebrandt*, Department Head and Professor of Psychology, University of Northern Iowa, Waterloo, IA; [carolyn.hildebrandt@uni.edu](mailto:carolyn.hildebrandt@uni.edu)

**By Joanne Falinski, Former Board Member**

**JF:** Can you share a bit about your background and what brought you into your profession?

**CH:** I started out as a musician. I did a B.A. in Music at UCLA and also studied German language and literature. During my junior year, I studied music history and analysis at Georg August Universität in Göttingen, Germany. When I graduated from UCLA, I started a small music studio where I taught piano to children and adults.

I enjoyed working with children, but didn't know much about developmental psychology at the time. I knew that there were sensitive periods for learning language and music (i.e., the younger you start, the more successful you will be). So you can imagine my surprise when some of my adult students learned more quickly than the children! It turned out that these adults were more self-motivated and had more metacognitive knowledge than the children. Because of this, their practice sessions tended to be more focused and efficient. As long as they weren't hampered by the idea that they should have started younger, the adults did very well. The children also learned quickly, but their practice strategies weren't as sophisticated as the adults'. This made me realize that there were probably a lot of other things that I didn't know about child and adult learning.

Hungry for more knowledge, I enrolled in a UCLA Extension course in Developmental Psychology. It was there that I learned about the work of Jean Piaget. This opened up a whole new way of thinking for me. I was hooked! I wanted to learn more!

I moved to Northern California and pursued an M.A. in Educational Psychology at U.C. Davis. In addition to my course work, I explored musical development from a Piagetian perspective. Although Piaget had not done any research on musical development himself, there were several other researchers in the constructivist tradition who had. Following their lead, I conducted a series of studies on seriation of pitch and conservation of rhythm and melody.

While I was at U.C. Davis, I heard about a videotape that was circulating around campus. I didn't get a chance to see it myself, but from its description, it sounded a lot like what I was trying to do. The videotape turned out to have been made by Jeanne Bamberger, an assistant professor at MIT. I wrote to her about my research interests and we struck up a correspondence. This eventually led to my being offered a scholarship to study with her at MIT.

While I was at MIT, I learned a tremendous amount about the development of musical intelligence, especially pitch and rhythm representation. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to work with many talented people including Mimi Sinclair, who had studied with Piaget. After a year and a half in Cambridge, I decided to move back to California to pursue a Ph.D. in Human Development and Education at U.C. Berkeley. I continued my work in musical development and started doing research on social and moral development with Elliot Turiel. I also taught a class in social and moral development for the Developmental Teacher Education Program at U.C. Berkeley.

# The Association for Constructivist Teaching

June Newsletter, v. 5., n. 1

After graduating, I worked at the Developmental Study Center on the Child Development Project with Marilyn Watson, Eric Schaps, and colleagues. The Child Development Project was a large-scale study of prosocial development in three program schools and three control schools. I was on the team that developed the curriculum for the program schools. Informed by a blend of constructivist theory, attachment theory, and attribution theory, we were able to use a variety of methods (e.g., cooperative learning, family homework, whole-school activities) to improve the social and moral atmosphere of the schools. Children who had the benefit of these experiences (both in the program and control schools) tended to be more helpful and caring, and were better able to collaborate with each other.

As a result of that experience, I became even more interested in social and moral development. I received a two-year Post-doctoral Fellowship in Developmental Psychology at U.C. Berkeley and eventually went back to teaching in the Developmental Teacher Education Program. During that time I co-authored an SRCD monograph with Elliot Turiel and Cecilia Wainryb on adolescent's reasoning about controversial social issues (abortion, homosexuality, incest, and pornography). As public discourse continues on these issues, I can see many of the same patterns of thought that we explored in that study.

I continued teaching and doing grant-related activity at U.C. Berkeley until my husband had a near-fatal heart attack. That was a wake-up call for me. What would happen if I suddenly found myself in the role of head of household? Would I be able to support the family on the part-time, soft-money positions I had at U.C. Berkeley? Not wanting to take any chances, I went into job market. At that time, Rheta DeVries was building a team of people to do research on constructivist approaches to early childhood education at University of Northern Iowa. She invited me to join her team. In 1994, I accepted a tenure-track position as Assistant Professor of Psychology and Research Fellow at the Regents' Center for Early Developmental Education at UNI.

During my first 10 years with the Regents' Center, we accomplished a lot. We built the Freeburg School, a model demonstration school for constructivist early education in a low-income predominately African-American neighborhood in Waterloo. We co-authored a book on constructivist early education (DeVries, Zan, Hildebrandt, Edmiaston, & Sales (2002). *Developing constructivist early childhood curriculum: Practical principles and activities*). We also created a series of training modules, the most well-known being the Ramps and Pathways module. I worked on all aspects of these modules, putting most of my efforts into constructivist approaches to teaching physics of sound, group games, and conflict resolution in the classroom.

Coming from the Developmental Studies Center, I was surprised to learn that Kamii & DeVries were advocating the use of competitive games with young children. The DSC had aligned itself with Alfie Kohn's view that competition was bad for kids and had focused exclusively on cooperative games. Not knowing what to think, I decided it was an empirical issue and asked Betsy Zan to do some research with me. We did a series of studies where we compared children's social and cognitive development in the context of competitive and cooperative games. From these studies we learned that competition and cooperation are both valuable for children, but for different reasons. We encouraged

# The Association for Constructivist Teaching

June Newsletter, v. 5. , n. 1

teachers to use both types of games while being aware of the strengths and weaknesses of each type.

After Rheta retired as Director of the Regents' Center, I moved to a full-time position in the Psychology Department and served as Department Head for the next five years. I discovered that administration can be very time consuming! I supervised an average of 18 professors, 2-3 adjunct instructors, 450 undergraduate majors, 80 undergraduate minors, and 20-30 graduate students. A lot of my work happened behind the scenes, including conflict management, course scheduling, policy development, and budgeting (especially difficult during our state budget crisis). I taught one course each semester and a course during the summer. I did research on cyberbullying with my graduate and undergraduate students. I also did a study on the use of group games for teaching statistical sampling and probability to college students.

The cyberbullying research was interesting. I was surprised that so many college students had been victims or perpetrators of cyberbullying. The rates they reported were comparable to those of middle and high school students. My assumption was that cyberbullying would taper off as students grew older.

We created hypothetical scenarios based on actual events that were reported in the news. Almost everyone said that cyberbullying was wrong when the perpetrator intended to hurt the victim. However, in situations where the perpetrator's intentions were less clear (e.g., a boy writes an angry song about a messy break-up with a girlfriend), about half of the sample said that it wasn't cyberbullying it was freedom of speech.

I believe that this type of research is important for anti-bullying programs in schools. Cyberbullying is very prevalent and very hurtful, even into the college years. People need to think before they forward potentially hurtful things they see on the Internet and need to know when and how to report cyberbullying. I see this project as addressing both the moral/ethical aspects of Internet communication as well as the more conventional aspects of cyber-etiquette.

I am now in my 20<sup>th</sup> year at UNI. Last summer I stepped down as Department Head and am back to being a full-time Professor of Psychology. Both of my daughters (ages 25 and 19) are artists and musicians. My older daughter, Bryn, is a cellist and is doing graduate work in the fine art of stone lithography at the Tamarind Institute in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Linnea (a proud alumna of the Freeburg School), is a violist and is doing a BFA in Musical Theatre at Pace University, New York City.

**JF: Can you share information about your teaching (what makes it unique to you, how it informs your research, and how it aligns with current trends in education and constructivist pedagogy/ principles)?**

CH: My college-level teaching has focused mainly on undergraduate courses in Lifespan Development, Psychology of Gender Differences, Psychology of Music, and Research Experience in Psychology. Occasionally I teach an undergraduate class in Special Topics in Developmental Psychology and a graduate course in Social and Cognitive Development. The more constructivist

# The Association for Constructivist Teaching

June Newsletter, v. 5., n. 1

classes are the latter four because they are more student-centered and the students are able to get involved in doing their own research. I try to be a constructivist teacher in all of my classes, but find that it's easier to do with smaller groups of students. With a class of 45-90 students, it's a challenge. The Special Topics in Developmental Psychology class (Social and Cognitive Development in the Context of Group Games) is very constructivist. After the students have learned about different theories of development (e.g., social learning theory, cognitive developmental theory), they play cooperative and competitive games with children, design their own cooperative and competitive games, and then conduct their own research on the children's social and cognitive development within the context of those games.

Teaching music at the Freeburg School was very constructivist and a whole lot of fun. I feel so fortunate to have been able to work with Beth Van Meeteren (lead teacher), Shari McGhee (assistant teacher) and Sonia Yoshizawa (graduate assistant) in the first and second grade classroom. We did a five-year action-research study where we combined language, literacy, and music in the classroom on a daily basis. While Beth worked on constructivist approaches to teaching language and literacy, I worked on constructivist approaches to teaching music, including encouraging children to invent their own songs, improvisations, instruments, and notations. We have five years of videotaped data that I want to turn into a publication someday.

Beth, Shari, Sonia, and I combined music, language, and literacy throughout the curriculum. We did some fabulous reader's theatre productions, which combined reading, art, music, and drama. One year the kids got excited after hearing Shari's son sing on the radio. We took them on field trips to two local radio stations. When they came back, they created their own radio station in the classroom. They recorded their own music and made "public service" announcements. Soon, the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> graders were reading the Freeburg News to the whole school each morning. Newsworthy events included birthdays, the daily lunch menu, and the daily weather (which determined whether there would be outdoor recess or not).

Freeburg was a beautiful laboratory school with private observation galleries where you could tune into different parts of the classroom and even make your own video recordings. Visitors came from different parts of the U.S. and the world to observe. We conducted in-service trainings and summer institutes for teachers there. Because of the push for STEM education, most of our funding was for early childhood science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education. Unfortunately, local funding for the school was hard to maintain. Freeburg was one of the first programs to suffer from a state-wide budget crisis and was eventually turned into a Head Start Program. A couple of years ago, UNI's K-12 laboratory school was closed and demolished. UNI pre-service teachers are still placed at the Freeburg School, but it isn't the same as when it was a model demonstration school for constructivist early childhood education.

**JF:** Can you share about your service?

**CH:** Aside from service to my department, college, university, and profession, I spend a lot of time

# The Association for Constructivist Teaching

June Newsletter, v. 5. , n. 1

supporting music teachers in our area. I have served for many years as an accompanist for the Waterloo Community Schools and the UNI Suzuki School. I was Music Director at the Cedar Valley Unitarian Universalists for ten years and the church pianist for several years after that. I have also done some “Lollypop Concerts” (outreach performances for children sponsored by the Waterloo Cedar Falls Symphony Orchestra) with my colleague, Sharon Anway.

I am currently serving on the ACT Board of Directors and the Editorial Board for ACT’s online journal, *The Constructivist*. The most exciting thing I have done for ACT was to serve as the Program Chair for our first international conference in Monterrey, Mexico. It was wonderful to work with our onsite coordinator, Esperanza Uribe, to create a fully bilingual conference that year. We had a wonderful time meeting with the Mexican teachers and teacher educators, visiting a constructivist school, and attending museums and cultural events such as Day of the Dead celebrations in the park that year.

## Selected publications:

Hildebrandt, C. & Zan, B. (2008; 2014 edition in press). Constructivist approaches to moral education in early childhood. In L. Nucci & D. Narvaez (Eds.), *Handbook of moral and character education*. New York: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Zan, B. & Hildebrandt, C. (2005). Cooperative and competitive games in constructivist classrooms. *The Constructivist*, 16(1), 1-13

Zan, B., Hildebrandt, C., & Stoeckel, T. (2003). First graders' interpersonal understanding in cooperative and competitive games. *Early Education and Development*, 14(4), 397-410.

DeVries, R., Zan, B., & Hildebrandt, C. (2002). Issues in constructivist early moral education. *Early Education and Development*, 13(3), 313-343.

DeVries, R., Edmiaston, R., Zan, B., & Hildebrandt, C. (2002). General principles for constructivist teaching. R. DeVries, B. Zan, C. Hildebrandt, R. Edmiaston, & C. Sales, (Eds.). *Developing constructivist early childhood curriculum: Practical principles and activities*. New York: Teachers College Press.

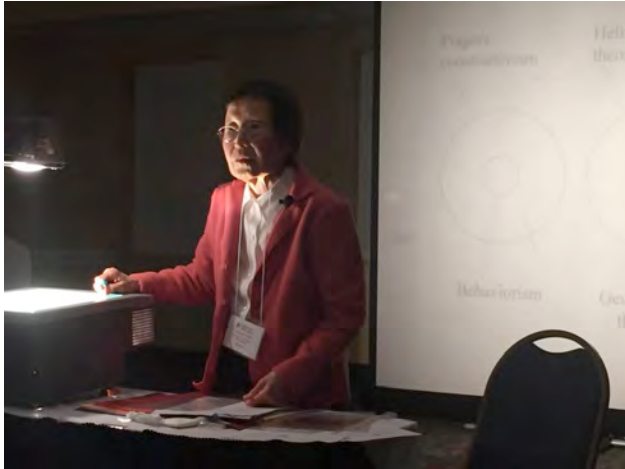
Hildebrandt, C. & Zan, B. (2002). Exploring the art and science of musical sound. In R. DeVries, B. Zan, C. Hildebrandt, R. Edmiaston, & C. Sales, (Eds.) *Developing constructivist early childhood curriculum: Practical principles and activities*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Hildebrandt, C. & Zan, B. (2002). Using games to teach mathematics. R. DeVries, B. Zan, C. Hildebrandt, R. Edmiaston, & C. Sales, (Eds.) *Developing constructivist early childhood curriculum: Practical principles and activities*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Sales, C. & Hildebrandt, C. (2002). Developing geometric reasoning using pattern blocks. In R. DeVries, B. Zan, C. Hildebrandt, R. Edmiaston, & C. Sales, (Eds.). *Developing constructivist early childhood curriculum: Practical principles and activities*. New York: Teachers College Press.

# The Association for Constructivist Teaching

June Newsletter, v. 5., n. 1



Celebrating Connie Kamii



Jerry Heverly's first ACT presentation








Find us on Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/groups/48559805714/>

Visit our Website: [www.constructivistassociation.org](http://www.constructivistassociation.org)

Follow our Blog: <http://constructivistblog.wordpress.com/>

- *Click on follow so that new posts will go to your email*
- *We want to encourage dialog among our members and others on the internet who may want to join after being involved on our blog*
- *IMPORTANT! – get colleagues you know to follow our blog!*

**Contributors**

-  [Kate Checkak](#)
-  [Michael Garrett](#)
-  [heverlyj](#)
-  [jenjuneau](#)
-  [jgbrooks](#)
-  [Jane Tingle Broderick](#)
-  [rgeiken](#)

**Member's Blogs & Sites**

- [Integrate Tech](#)
- [There are no circles](#)
- [innovativece](#)

**Follow Blog via Email**  
Enter your email address to follow this blog and receive notifications of new posts by email.

Join 39 other followers

Click follow here on the bottom of our blog site

# The Association for Constructivist Teaching

June Newsletter, v. 5. , n. 1

**FROM THE FIELD:** *Introducing ideas and activities from ACT Members in the field*

**Contributed by:** Mary Driebe, Kindergarten Teacher, Sabbott at Stony Point, Richmond, VA

## Circularity and the Forest: Kindergarteners Represent the Continuous Image



This is the story of a year. A year in which children developed a sense of place. A year in which they connected to each other, the nature that surrounds their school and further developed an understanding of themselves as individuals and learners in the midst of a community.

Edith Cobb was an educator with a profound perspective on the child. She was an early advocate of outside education. This sense of place...Cobb referred to as “topophilia, a rootedness”.

During this year of documenting their world, the Kindergarten children began to root their hearts. They deconstructed the space and the environment that their senses inhaled and exhaled a shared perspective...a place where they belong together.

The story spans a year and illustrates the process of a class co-constructing. This process was not linear. It did include an intention and an inquiry question and there was a framework but the middle was often messy, unpredictable, surprising, frustrating and yet profoundly satisfying.

In the life of any project there are the “first moments”. The moments that the documenter recognizes as rare and illusive. An idea is offered to the group that has depth and dimension. There is a potential to create disequilibrium, instigate questions and push boundaries.

Anna Golden, our Atelierista, placed an antiquity on a stool, an old turntable. We recognized the power of this provocation as we observed and recorded the reactions and thinking of the children.



# The Association for Constructivist Teaching

June Newsletter, v. 5., n. 1



Reese had watched the boys experiment with the turntable, placing objects on the table and then laughing as the centrifugal force sent the pieces flying. He sang a song that told the story of a car traveling around the neighborhood and passing a tire store, a porta-potty, gas pumps and toll booths. Later Reese and several



friends made a “story record”. The car was secured to the arm with a wire allowing free movement as the story spun on the turntable. The boys would stop the turn table to see where the car would land. It was fun, interactive and appealing.



One of the most exciting parts for me as an educator at Sabot, is the deep collaborative thought that is given to the work of the children by all of our faculty. Pippin Barnett, a musician, caretaker of our property and an artist in residence for the year offered his frame of reference to the work of the

children. He was reminded of a zoetrope as he watched Reese’s story spin. As the turntable moved in a circular fashion a story unfolded. A zoetrope offers a similar experience. A story is told through spinning images that build on each image that proceeds it. The children sketched their own stories, spun the zoetrope and watched as their stories came alive. They compared the zoetrope



The class provided feedback to Reese and his group. The children wondered if the story of the car could have some dimension. Is it possible for the car to drive and see the landmarks of the trip? As the children considered adding dimension to the car’s circular trip the faculty considered recreating this experience on a bigger scale? Would a life size zoetrope take their stories to a new level? We envisioned an inverted zoetrope with the children standing inside and the images of their story spinning around them.

But as we said earlier project work is never linear. We tucked the provocation in our pocket. We would look for a moment that the idea might resonate with the class and their work.

# The Association for Constructivist Teaching

June Newsletter, v. 5. , n. 1

## Our Forest Retreat: The Catalyst for Learning



We venture into the forest every Friday. It is our retreat at the end of the week.... A day that is filled with possibilities. Our time spent under the canopy of trees is recorded through the artifacts collected, sounds heard, the creatures observed, the structures built and the slushy boots that trudged the uphill path to school. Each time we walk the path, the Kindergarteners note the uprooted trees, the metal pipe buried, the bouncy log and the other significant landmarks that provide reassurance that we are on the correct path and would soon reach our destination---the creek.



### THE INQUIRY QUESTION

One day as we were discussing our walks into the forest we stumbled on a point of dissonance for the children. We had asked the question, “Is it possible to begin and end our travels into the forest at the line-up tree (the tree that begins our walk)?”

Oliver, said, “Yes, but only if you walked the path backwards as we return to school.”

In his mind, walking forward to the creek and returning backwards would allow for a circuit to be completed. We were surprised by Oliver’s answer. We anticipated that the children would agree that we could start and end our hike at the same point. However, Oliver’s answer was sophisticated and made sense.

We thought that this had the potential to be a profound inquiry question. The answer involved circularity. We could also imagine that the children might be able to represent their understanding using a life-size zoetrope. Of course, the best part of exploring this inquiry question was knowing that we would spend time outside in the Forest.

# The Association for Constructivist Teaching

June Newsletter, v. 5. , n. 1

## THE MAP IS THE WAY WE THINK



In the book The Geography of Childhood, the authors suggest that children and adults begin their descriptions of environments with landmarks. As we walked the path repeatedly in the early weeks of inquiry we asked the

children to name the images from the walk that were important to them. Did these images mark the path and could they be considered landmarks?

## RELYING ON THE HABITS OF MIND:

### GATHERING DATA THROUGH ALL SENSES

We wondered about the power of simply walking, running, touching and kinesthetically absorbing the Forest path. One of the Habits of Mind that we document in our classrooms is referred to as Gathering Data through all of our Senses.

Our brains gather information from all points of our bodies. All sensory pathways are fully engaged in the forest. The brain is processing information from the gustatory, olfactory, tactile, kinesthetic, auditory, and visual systems. We did not want to underestimate the mere act of hiking the trail. As muscle retains memory, we felt certain that our senses would record the ups and downs, textures and smells of the trail.

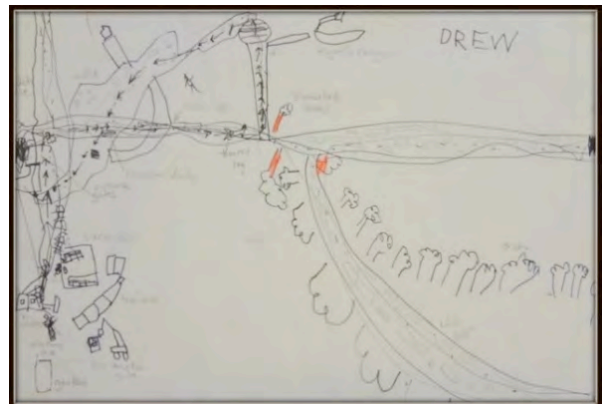
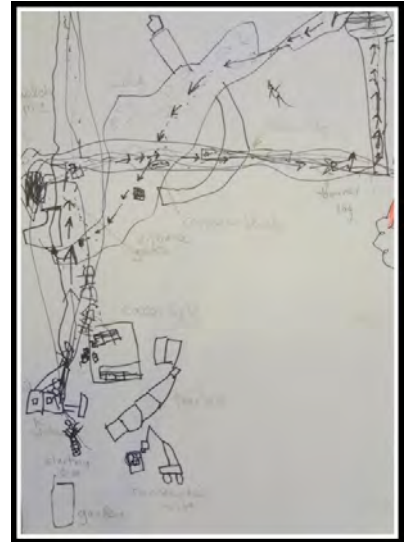
What would a child's body acquire from the process of hiking?

Several of the children created individual maps that were long and linear. They kept attaching one piece of paper to another. They were not representing a map that began and ended at the same point. What could we do to support their thinking?

Anna suggested that the group illustrate the path using a round piece of paper. She later documents, "I asked the girls if they all saw the forest walk in the same way in their "mind's eye".

The girls felt certain that it was not just a big circle but instead really squiggly. This reaffirmed that the children had their own point of view for the forest walk. They did recognize that the path was not a straight line. The idea of a squiggly line may have represented some early thinking about the changes in elevation on the hike.

Did this representation have some of the same limitations as the earlier story record? Did the girl's reflection indicate the desire to illustrate dimension and make the represented path feel more like the real path?



# The Association for Constructivist Teaching

June Newsletter, v. 5., n. 1

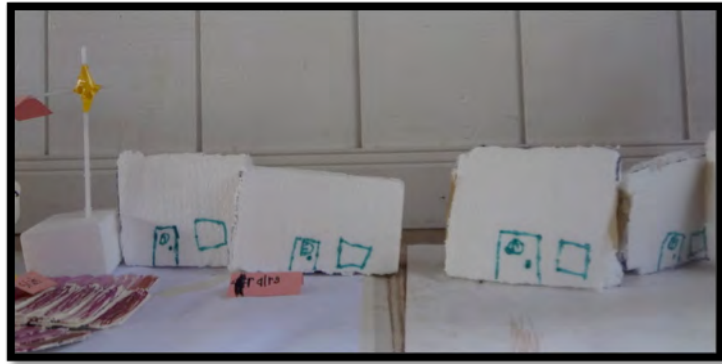
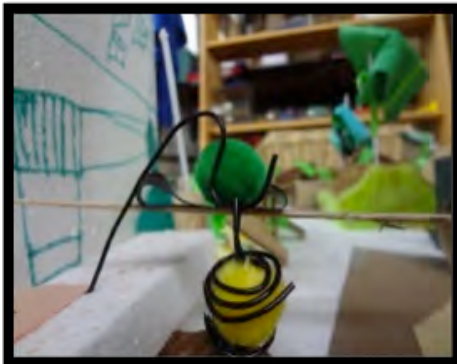
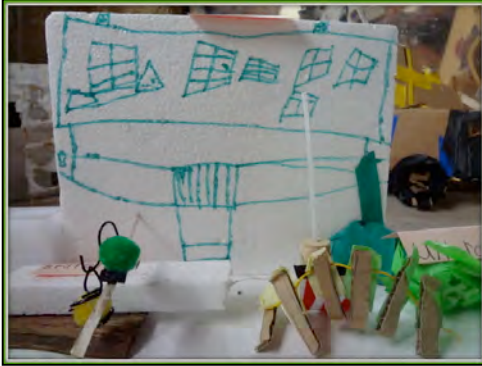


We were asking the children to document a multi-dimensional experience in a two dimensional medium. As always, it is the children that lead the way. Fiona, drew a map that was extraordinary but not satisfying to her. She began to create a map using recyclables. We watched as each child revealed the landmark that was most significant to them. The insight of the children, their attention to detail and what they noticed confirmed their powers of observation and ability to synthesize their understandings.

## LANDMARKS THAT HELD MEMORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

The main building often referred to as the house of Harry Potter was one of the first landmarks to be represented. The bird feeder, flag pole and fence were identified as landmarks. Founders Hall outside our door was under construction all year. We listened all year to the sounds of the digging, hammering and sawing. These sounds seemed to ignite a strong visual memory of the site.

The details that held an emotional component or social significance were the first to be completed. In preschool, the children studied the rich variety of birds on our campus. Naturally, the bird feeder became a significant landmark. As the children walked the path to the forest, they passed the classrooms of siblings and the gates to the school.



# The Association for Constructivist Teaching

June Newsletter, v. 5., n. 1



## MACRO-CENTRIC VIEW

What was the perspective of the mind's eye of each child? How did they see the bird's eye view of the map?

The Habits of Mind research refers to the macro-centric view, or the bird's eye, as the view that allows us to discern themes and patterns from assortments of information. This view taps our intuition and is often organic. The student must discover the gaps and analyze.

We traveled to the Architecture Museum in Richmond to observe and react to a variety of maps and to consider the bird's eye view of a place.

We wanted to consider languages other than the language of a cartographer. How might an artist's reflections and perspective inform the way we see the forest?

We visited the 1708 Gallery in Richmond to consider an exhibit by the artist Oscar Munoz. It is a fragmented aerial map of a city in Colombia. The children studied it as they might a large puzzle to find the repeating images, disjointed sides and look for the similarities and differences in each portion of the map. They were soon able to identify the landmarks including the roads, natural spaces, large construction, homes and water.

### How did the artist work to convey his sense of place in his home environment?

The field trips got us thinking. We were understanding that there were many ways to represent a place. The children considered their class three-dimensional map from an aerial view. Would this view close some of the gaps of understanding regarding our inquiry question?

More to consider :  
Developing a sense of place



# The Association for Constructivist Teaching

June Newsletter, v. 5., n. 1

Fiona: I do see a circle or maybe an oval.

Drew: This map proves that we definitely can start and finish our walk in the same place.

Nolan: When we are walking it does not feel like a circle because we are going up and down and over and under.

Bella: I don't feel dizzy when I am walking on the path and walking in a circle should make you feel dizzy. I still don't think it is a circle.



We had peeled back many layers as we mapped the forest walk. There was much buzz regarding our inquiry question. Were we ready for the next challenge?

Pippin created an expanded version of the turntable walls (the zootrope) in the form of a wooden circular canvas. He brought it into the classroom for inspection by the children. Our hope was that the children would transfer their Forest mapping experience to the walls of the zootrope as they had when mapping the car's experience driving through town.

## THE COLLECTIVE PERSPECTIVE

How would the process of representing the forest on a circular canvas unfold for seventeen children?

Would the painted representation of the walk be cohesive with varied perspectives from so many artists?

And even more challenging, how could we slow them down in small groups in order to allow them the full opportunity to view the circular format and their drawings as a cohesive part of the whole?

As we brought each child into the circle we realized that they were reconciling their own mind's eye with the perspective of the other children. We would need to maintain the commitment of the children while slowing the process.

We recognized the importance of accommodating the individual mind's eye to the collective mind's eye of the class.



# The Association for Constructivist Teaching

June Newsletter, v. 5., n. 1

## SLOWING DOWN

The best work, the most intense work and the most rewarding always demands slowing down. Children are capable of slowing down and standing still. They are struck by the mundane and will take time to wonder about the minutest details. I have learned from children that when we slow the pace, stay in the moment and consider the possibilities we quickly find solutions for our problems. Slowing down increases rigor. It means sticking with the hard moments, deliberating over the details and pursuing your best work.

Intersubjectivity, a shared perspective, requires small steps. We understood that in order to proceed in a responsive and democratic way we would need to break down the experience of establishing the collective mind's eye into a series of discreet questions and skills---constantly eliciting the children thinking and relying

We started the process in our Project Circle...talking with the children. They were eager to get started but recognized the need to develop a plan before approaching the white canvas.



Several children lightly sketched a thin line for the path. They started sketching at the line-up tree, circled around the canvas but then went past the line-up tree. These children brought the problem to our project circle. The class began to realize that we would need to consider the scale of the circle canvas in relation to the scale of our walk. This demanded much negotiation and conversation.

Sydney suggested that if we use the photographs of each landmark, place she warned that we would also need to consider the space between each landmark.

Tom agreed, "We are using too much space. We didn't have enough space left on our canvas. We needed to change our landmark pictures around". We initially thought it would take hours to draw the path but instead it took days.



Slowing down the process:  
elevation and scale.

# The Association for Constructivist Teaching

June Newsletter, v. 5. , n. 1



The next problem we encountered was the idea of elevation. As we drew the path again more problems were encountered.

When the children sketched the topography at the depth of Hyatt's canyon, Oliver realized that the line-up tree had to be placed much higher on the canvas in relation to the bottom of the canyon or the path would drop off the canvas.

Oliver said, "There was way more down than up. We didn't have enough room. The path fell off the canvas. We have to draw the line-up tree higher on the canvas."

The documentation showed we had focused as a class on mapping the landmarks but not the changes in elevation.

We again slowed the pace and made the decision that the children would benefit from several hikes considering the elevation of the path only. As we hiked Nolan noted that the elevation depends on which direction we are walking in as to whether you go up or down.

It became evident to the children that we would need to adopt a shared language for mapping the changes in elevation. They decided to use three words downhill, level and uphill.



# The Association for Constructivist Teaching

June Newsletter, v. 5., n. 1



As teachers, we documented the synthesis and application of the children's understanding of elevation and scale as they encountered yet another problem. Kaiya made the subdivision that sits off the path large in proportion to other landmarks. When other children painted the trees next to Kaiya's work they made their trees larger which balanced the proportion of that section. We observed that the learning regarding scale was transferred as the project progressed.

Observe Perpetually

Henry James



## Gathering Information in the Field

How does observing, gathering information in the field and representing help to slow the pace and therefore deepen the process and the rigor of the work?

Observation requires time and attention to detail. Are the bricks all reddish? Do the trees have texture? What happens to the tree colors as the sun's rays are reflected? These were all the details that were debated, considered, revisited and negotiated. The palette that was chosen represented a variety of shades that allowed the lights and shadows to come alive. It was the children who, in the process of mixing grew to understand the lightest lights and darkest darks.

# The Association for Constructivist Teaching

June Newsletter, v. 5., n. 1

Reese was a treeman. He touched the trees, felt the texture of the bark and became engaged. Kaiya studied the intricacies of leaf painting. Lorenzo painted trees everywhere. He was content to sketch and paint our forest.



Kaiya deliberated and observed the trees before mixing a variety of jewel colors to represent the tree canopy. She observed the trees outside at different times of the day and under a variety of light. Kaiya, whose brown skin is the subject of great pride in her portrait illustrations, wanted to be certain that the color she was mixing for her princess was a true representation of her actual skin color.



The children had a reverence and deep respect for their work. We were witnessing rigor that was self-imposed.

Fiona, had a sense of ownership to the illustration of the brick gateway. She spent time observing the flecks of stone and variety of colors in the bricks. Fiona would touch the brick and view it in different types of light. She meticulously mixing the colors and took swatches of the color outside to compare the match to the walls of the house and the gateway.

It was at this point that we began to see that the children were writing poetry; celebrating a place and memories. They seemed to sense that this work was a tribute to the forest and to a place that held them as they connected to others and began to grow deeper roots in the world.

# The Association for Constructivist Teaching

June Newsletter, v. 5. , n. 1

## A SENSE OF PLACE: A RELATIONSHIP WITH SPACE, LIGHT, SILENCES AND SOUNDS WITH THINGS OR PERSONS



We traveled to Portland Oregon last year for the NAREA conference and attended the Hundred Languages of Children exhibition. One panel of the exhibition resonated with me and seemed to illuminate the significance of the children's work that year. The panel espoused the significance of our relationship as humans with our space.

Artists listen to places. They enter into relationship with the space, light, silences and sounds, with things or persons that live there or that simply pass through. They enter into empathy, they interpret and they imagine. This empathy is a prelude to intense relations with the place, a studied reading of it and often completely new and divergent personal interpretations.

The children developed an empathy and an intense relation with place....the study of the forest initiated divergent personal interpretations but it was the representation of the forest that united the perspective of the class.

TO DEFINE A RELATIONSHIP TO PLACE

WE MUST RELINQUISH CONTROL OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND INSTEAD STEWARD IT.

As children begin to forge a relationship with place they no longer have a need to possess it. The relationship is similar to a friendship. They begin to have compassion for the environment and the place. As they let go of their defenses and feel confident, children feel empowered and capable. This empowerment inspires stewardship and responsibility to the space and the living creatures inhabiting the space.



# The Association for Constructivist Teaching

June Newsletter, v. 5., n. 1

*If you don't know where you are  
Then you don't know who you are.*

*Wendell Berry*

A sense of place is something that many are giving thought to these days. It involves the human experience in the midst of a landscape, a culture and a community. Children relate to the land, they notice the colors and textures, the smell of the path and the movement of the water. This way of being in the world is the culture of childhood.

Children do not need us to lead this work but rather they need us to relinquish their commitments and time constraints to do the work. When our world develops the sense of place that is bred in the culture of childhood our planet will no longer weep.



*Think past the eye*

*Think past the stars*

*Think past the possible*

*And think of the impossible*

poem written by Kate Driebe (a Sabot at Stony Point student)

# The Association for Constructivist Teaching

June Newsletter, v. 5. , n. 1

## COMMITTEE REPORT

### Conference Committee

Conference Chair Sonja DeGroot Kim – News on this in our next newsletter & in our Blog Updates: <http://constructivistblog.wordpress.com/>

### Conference Program Committee

- Andy Stremmel, [andrew.stremmel@sdstate.edu](mailto:andrew.stremmel@sdstate.edu)
- The 2015 conference will be in the NJ / NYC area.

### Communications Committee

- **Newsletter / Blog Editors:** Jane Broderick, [broderic@etsu.edu](mailto:broderic@etsu.edu) & Meir Muller, [meirmuller@sc.rr.com](mailto:meirmuller@sc.rr.com)
- **Website Design and Manager:** Christian Schmid; [ckschmid@gmail.com](mailto:ckschmid@gmail.com)
- *The Newsletter:*
  - Publishes in PDF format the ACT Board Member Interviews, From the Field articles, and updates on ACT committees and other business
  - Is sent to members, as well as being posted in an archive on our website's members' only page.
- *The Blog publishes the ACT Board Member Interviews, From the Field articles, President Updates; and blogs on technology in education, elementary science, and science.*
- *Only members can be blog authors; blog content will be reviewed by our blog editors.*

### Membership Committee

- **Chair:** Ryan Nivens; [nivens@etsu.edu](mailto:nivens@etsu.edu)
- New members continue to register! We have 67 current members whose memberships are not expired. This includes the 10 people with lifetime memberships. 20 people's memberships are due for renewal at the time of the conference or the month after
- Pay for membership online and encourage your friends to join our group: [www.constructivistassociation.org](http://www.constructivistassociation.org)

*Thank you all for your support in the work of ACT ~ the ACT Board*

Five people, at the 2014 Conference in Charleston, sharing how the Piaget Seminars taught by Connie impacted their professional lives. A LOT!

Kathryn Castle, Oklahoma State University  
Kay Lallier Grant, Northeastern State University  
Linda Rhoten, Oklahoma State University  
Sara Davis, University of Arkansas at Fort Smith  
Alice Wakefield, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA



# The Association for Constructivist Teaching

June Newsletter, v. 5. , n. 1

**Our Mission:** is to enhance the growth of all educators and students through identification and dissemination of effective constructivist practices in both the professional cultures of teachers and the learning environments of children. It is also to advance educators' understanding of Piaget's constructivism as a scientific theory that explains how human beings construct knowledge and moral values.

**Membership:** is open to anyone who is interested in the field of education. ACT Members are classroom teachers, administrators, supervisors, consultants, college and university personnel, students, parents and retired educators. They live all over the USA and in Mexico, Japan, Australia, Canada, Brazil, and China.

## Benefits of Membership...

THE ACT NEWSLETTER ... interviews, articles on practice, and book reviews Jan, May, Sept

THE CONSTRUCTIVIST...An educational e-journal and journal archive

ANNUAL CONFERENCE...discounted registration fee and early notice of call for presenters

AFFILIATION...with an association committed to supporting you. To join, please fill out the [membership form](#) on the membership page of our website: [www.constructivistassociation.org](http://www.constructivistassociation.org)

**Follow our Blog:** <http://constructivistblog.wordpress.com/>

**Find us on Facebook:** <http://www.facebook.com/groups/48559805714/>

**Visit our Website:** [www.constructivistassociation.org](http://www.constructivistassociation.org)

**2015 Annual Conference** will be hosted in the NJ / NYC area. Check our website for updates and call for proposals

## Our Journal: *The Constructivist*

As we continue our reviews for the next edition of *The Constructivist*, we encourage you to consider sharing your experiences and inquiries with us. Whether in the area of practice or research, we welcome your submissions.

- Contact our editor, Carolyn Hildebrandt, at [carolyn.hildebrandt@uni.edu](mailto:carolyn.hildebrandt@uni.edu) for more information.

ACT Newsletter editors:

Jane Tingle Broderick, [broderic@etsu.edu](mailto:broderic@etsu.edu)

Meir Muller, [meirmuller@sc.rr.com](mailto:meirmuller@sc.rr.com)

ACT Newsletter copy editor:

Cathy Landy, [clcl11@aol.com](mailto:clcl11@aol.com)



Alice Wakefield, 2014 Conference Chair  
with ACT President, Jim Pelech.