Active Participation in a Day Care Center

An Honors Thesis (ID 499)

by

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All of the effort and planning of this thesis is dedicated to the memory of my grandmother. She taught elementary school children for over fifty years and never tired of it. She is my inspiration to become the best and most loving teacher I can possibly be.
INTRODUCTION

As a primary education major at Ball State University, I do not have a course that allows me to work in a day care center. I am in the EXEL program and have been able to teach in the public schools six times. I have worked with children as young as kindergarteners and as old as fourth graders. I have never, though, worked with three to five years olds for an extended period of time. I feel that I need to experience such a teaching situation before graduating in May 1986. This experience will help me have a wider variety of children that I have taught while in college. This is the reason I chose teaching at a day care center as the topic of my thesis.

I worked at the Ball State University Campus Day Care Center both in the summer and the fall. I worked the five weeks of the first summer session for four hours a day. The morning hours were 8 to 10 o'clock. This is when I would teach my lessons. I returned in the afternoon and worked from 12 to 2 o'clock. This was when nap time occurred. In the fall I spent the first five weeks of the quarter at the day care. I came in on Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday mornings from 8 to 11 o'clock.

My thesis advisor is Dr. Marjorie Quimby. She is also the faculty coordinator of the day care center. During my time at the day care I worked very closely with Ruth Ann Moore who keeps the center running smoothly on a daily basis. There are also graduate and undergraduate students who teach
at the day care. Many of the undergraduate students I talked with were early childhood education majors.

The children who attend the day care are three, four, and five years old. Most of them are children of Ball State students and employees. The day care center operates from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. The children experience many different kinds of activities while at the center. There are both large group and small group activities. A wonderful example of a large group activity is lunch time. The children have a chance to sit down together and interact. Small group activities may be doing a puzzle together or taking part in a lesson prepared by a Ball State student. Everyday there is something new and exciting taking place at the center.

There are also times that occur on a daily schedule that the children are aware of. An example would be nap time or walk time.

My goal for this thesis was to become more confident working with very young children. I wanted to learn what kinds of activities they would benefit from and enjoy. More importantly, though, I wanted to become an integral part of a day care center. I did not want to pop in and teach a quick lesson, but instead become someone the children know and trust.

I kept a running log to record my lessons, observations, and feelings as they occur. Some days were better than others, but there was always something to say about each day. A day did not go by that I did not learn something. The following pages are a recording of these experiences. They chronicalize what I taught and what I learned while working on this thesis.
Monday, 10 June 1985

Today proved to be an active and exciting day. When I first arrived I was given a mailbox to put my notebook in and a place in the closet for my purse. I was ready to meet the children. I immediately noticed that there were four teachers and only four students. I felt it would be a slow morning!

This feeling immediately subsided when more students arrived. Some of the students were new and needed some reassurance that they were in a friendly place. Many of the children had attended Campus Day Care previously. I could tell immediately by how they acted which group the children fell into. Ruth Ann greeted all of the children and their parents. Soon all of the children were busy playing.

One of the big attractions for the children was the cage that held two guinea pigs. The children could not understand why the guinea pigs ran into their box every time the children walked near the cage. I explained that they were probably scared when they heard or saw people around them. This prompted the children to quietly wait to see them. The minute one would stick his head out the children would laugh with excitement. Of course the guinea pigs headed right back into their box. It is so interesting to watch children around animals. They are fascinated by everything about them. Some of the children stand and watch the guinea pigs for a surprisingly long amount of time.
I went outside with the children and gave them chalk to write on the sidewalks. Most tended to scribble, but several of the older children tried to write out their names. This is an excellent activity to remember for future use.

I made friends today with a little girl named Alisia. She is one of our younger children and tends to be very quiet. She slowly started following me and very softly saying things. She does not seem secure with us yet, but I feel she will become more comfortable as the week goes along.

Tuesday, 11 July 1985

I paid attention today to how breakfast is served. The food is prepared and placed on a table cafeteria-style. The children walk by the table and choose what they want to eat. Some have more than others depending upon appetites and if they had breakfast before coming to Day Care. It seems to be a very efficient system.

Another interesting system at Day Care is handwashing. One of the teachers came up with the idea of filling the kitchen sink with soapy water. The children put their hands in it and then rinse them off. Steps are pulled over to the counter, and the children simply get in line. It is much more organized than having them playing with the bars of soap in the bathroom.

Kenyon is one of the older children at Day Care. He will be in the second grade this coming fall. He and his younger brother Miles are both bright children who are a joy to be around. Kenyon is very interesting to talk to and loves
an audience to listen. I intentionally tried not to treat Kenyon like a baby. I talked to him on his own level and not beneath it. I was very surprised when he told me that I was one of his favorite teachers because I talked with him. This is interesting considering that he has only known me for two days.

Today I worked with the children on large puzzles (100 pieces). This activity was directed more for the older children. A few of the younger ones tried to help, but the puzzle proved to be too difficult for them. I was pleased with how the children cooperated on putting the puzzles together.

Wednesday, 12 June 1985

Today proved to be a fun-filled day. Several boys and I made a castle out of big blocks. We used up about all of the blocks. I was impressed by their creativity and diligence.

When we completed our castle Kenyon decided it could be a home for one of the guinea pigs. Ruth Ann agreed and put one in the castle. The children were so excited but were very careful. I warned them about not leaning against the walls of our castle because we did not want to hurt the guinea pig. The children were delighted with the simple idea of giving the guinea pig a carrot. The children felt he would come out of his box that we had placed in the castle. Instead the guinea pig took the carrot back into the box with him.

Seeing the children so delighted with this pet, I feel that it is good for children to have animals in their
schools or day care centers. Caring for animals teaches children responsibility and gives them a great deal of enjoyment.

Thursday, 13 June 1985

I learned about a matching game called lotto. A child matches a picture card up to its match on a sheet of various pictures. The children seem to really like this game. It can be played with one child or with several. For several children the teacher simply mixes up their picture cards and draws one at a time. As each card is shown, the children look for it on their sheet. It may take the teacher a while to make up different lotto sheets and pieces, but it is worth it. The children played this game over and over.

One little girl who especially enjoyed this game is Erin. She is truly a delightful child. At times she is very independent, but one cannot help but enjoy her. When she gets involved with something she gives it close attention.

Another child that I observed today was Sammy. He came in and cried when his mother left. I quickly tried to get him involved in something until he stopped crying. He is very quiet but opens up and talks when given enough time.

As the end of my first week nears I know most of the children by name, and they know me. I am much more comfortable than I was on the first day. Teaching in a day care center is a great deal different than teaching in a second grade classroom, but I do enjoy it.

Friday, 14 June 1985

Today I learned an important lesson—do not wear new
white shoes to day care! I worked outdoors with the children at the water table. I proved to be too dressed up. We did, though, have a wonderful time. I put various containers in for the children to play with. One little boy, Triston, played at the water table the entire time we had it out. He got so wet! Triston is a very good natured child. He seems to enjoy so many things that we do. He is one of the younger children yet he has a pretty long attention span. This was delightfully demonstrated at the water table.

I also turned in my lesson plan for Monday. We are going to study the beach. I have been pleased with my first week and am looking forward to teaching next week. The children are all wonderful to be with. I also enjoy the other teachers. I learn so much by observing Ruth Ann with the children. Overall it has been a great week!

Monday, 17 June 1985

Today we began our study of the ocean. This entire week I am focusing on the beach. In particular we will study sand, shells and saltwater. I will be teaching from 9-9:50 to groups of 4 to 5 children.

Today's lesson dealt with sandcastles. I began the lesson by reading a short story entitled Barney's Sandcastle. The children then began working with wet sand in the sand table. We discussed the need for wet sand instead of dry. The children surprised me by picking up on this idea quickly. They also mastered packing down sand into containers to make "solid" sand towers.

The children worked well together. Even the younger
ones helped to create a group project. The children also
seemed to enjoy leveling off their sandcastles. I pointed
out that we would want the next group to create their own castle.
One little boy, Miles, really liked destroying it.

One of the older boys, Brandon, impressed me by helping
me clean up the sand table area. He is seven years old and
seems pretty responsible. He saw that I had a great deal to
do and offered to help. I have also noticed that he is
good with the younger children. He does not ignore them
but instead includes them in what he is doing.

Tuesday, 18 June 1985

The day started out quietly but ended rather actively.
After I arrived I sat down with four children, and we did
puzzles. This has become a favorite activity for many of
the children.

I immediately noticed today how talkative Alisia was.
She is usually very quiet, but today she was very outgoing.
Not only did she talk with me but also with the other
children. When the children went to play on the back
porch Alisia decided she wanted me to read to her. Before
I could finish the first page she was the one reading. I
could not understand what she was saying, but she seemed to
be enjoying herself. I was glad to see such a positive
change. I feel she is more comfortable now with the
day care people and atmosphere.

I also had a neat experience with Patrick. He wanted
to listen to a story about alligators. It proved to be a
funny story, and he decided that he could read it to me.
He did an excellent job remembering what was going on in the pictures. When he finished he was terribly proud of himself.

The activity I did with the children involved making pictures with glue and colored sand. The children thought up a design. They then took glue and made the design. By sprinkling colored sand on the paper their designs showed up. One child, Kenyon, wrote out his name. The children seemed to enjoy this lesson so we will continue it tomorrow. Wednesday, 19 June 1985

Today proved to be very interesting because I had nap room duty for the first time. Nap time is from 12:00 until 1:00. There are about eight children who take a nap. They each have their own cot, pillow, blanket and stuffed animal. I need to learn what goes with each child. I had pretty good luck today for many of the children fell asleep. I need to be rather strict yet also loving. It is a very delicate balance.

We have a new girl, Nischita. She is from Nepal and speaks no English. I rocked her to sleep today during nap time. She really is darling and very quiet. She seems to be trying to soak in her new environment. It must be hard to be someplace where nobody understands you and you do not understand anyone.

Today the children made more sand pictures. This time they added cotton balls. Two children came up with the idea of making Santa Claus! Several of the older children again wrote out their names. Most of the children, however, simply
made designs. They all seemed to have fun with this activity. This is a lesson that I will have to remember for future use.

Thursday, 20 June 1985

Today I finished up my lessons on the beach. In the morning I did a lesson that dealt with non-standard measurement. We used sand to distinguish the order that containers would be arranged in from largest to smallest. The children were surprised that those containers they felt were small were really rather large. I noticed that they seemed to judge size by the height of a container. I intentionally brought containers that might be a bit tricky or deceiving. This lesson was directed to the older children, and they seemed to like it.

In the afternoon after nap time the children and I played checkers with pebbles and shells. We first sorted them out. We also tried to find the names of the shells in a book. Many of the younger children did not know how to play checkers. Fortunately, a few of the older ones did. It was fun to watch the older children teach checkers to those who did not know how to play. They proved to be very patient and seemed to enjoy playing the part of a teacher.

Friday, 21 June 1985

I did not go in this morning since I have worked the last two afternoons. Ruth Ann felt I should take a break! Beginning next week I will be paid for sitting in the nap room from 12:00-1:00. They seem to need the extra help. I will also stay from 1:00-2:00, and I will do extra work on my honors thesis.

Today nap time went pretty well. Nischita did not
sleep but instead played outside. She has not yet adjusted
to the schedule at day care. I am finally starting to keep
all of the blankets, pillows, and toys straight. If I do
make a mistake the children quickly correct me.

Next week we are going to study sea animals. I am
trying to track down lots of information that the children
might find interesting. Even though they are young they seem
to remember interesting little facts well.

Monday, 24 June 1985

Today began with hopscotch. I taught Patrick and Erin
to play. Patrick was particularly enthusiastic about it.
He practiced and practiced until he was pretty good at it.

My lesson for today dealt with fish and other animals
that live in the ocean. We looked at many pictures and
discussed the level in the ocean were the animals would
be found. I had this discussion with six children. They
contributed a great deal.

The next part of my lesson dealt with making paper
bag fish. The children stuffed newspaper into the bags
and tied string on the end to make a tail. They then painted
them. These fish will go up on a bulletin board that Patrick
helped me make. It is an underwater scene with seaweed
drawn in.

Nap time went smoother today. Nischita went right to
sleep on her cot. Geoffrey is one little boy that is hard
to control. He seems to have an overabundance of energy!
I realize, though, that he is really trying to behave. It
did not help that a neighbor was outside mowing his lawn.
The sound of the lawn mower was very distracting to the children as they tried to fall asleep.

Tuesday, 25 June 1985

Today was an extension of yesterday. I worked with more children on paper bag fish. This lesson has really been a success. Four boys decided that they wanted to make large fish. We used grocery bags, and the boys loved painting them. They are too large for the bulletin board so we will probably hang them from the "tree" in the living room.

Nap time is going much better than I expected. The child I first had trouble with, Geoffrey, has really turned things around. He likes having his cot next to my chair. He even rests at times. I feel that the key is that he feels I like him. He knows that I hate to tell him to be quiet all of the time. He also likes being praised for good behavior. We have come a long way since last week.

I put an album on during nap time that has proven to be a big help. It is a relaxation record of quiet music. It seems to calm the children down and set the correct atmosphere for a resting time. One boy told me it makes him tired. I knew then that it really worked!

Wednesday, 26 June 1985

Today we worked with the concept of largest to smallest. We made a picture chart of the smallest sea animal in a picture to the largest one. The children enjoyed trying to draw the animals. They made comments along the way about the various animals. Some had seen them at the zoo or on television. I found their comments interesting, and they added a great
deal to the lesson.

I also worked with the children with the big hollow blocks. They were busy building dog houses to sleep in. Once again I was amazed at their creativity. They used every block available and barely had time left to play in their creation. It took quite a while to pick up all of the blocks. All of the children who played with them helped to pick them up. At first I was nervous about the children playing with the large blocks. I was afraid that someone might get hurt. The children, though, are surprisingly careful. Of course adult supervision is constantly needed, but it made me feel better to know that they were being cautious also.

Nap time went well. All but two of the children fell asleep. Even Geoffrey went to sleep which does not happen very often. Nischita has been talking to herself during nap time. I have no idea what she is saying, but she is talking the entire time that she is supposed to be resting. She has not slept for the last two days.

Today the wading pools were brought out. The children were so excited. I enjoyed watching them splash around and play. It was the perfect afternoon activity for a hot day!

Thursday, 27 June 1985

We started today out with a filmstrip. I ran the projector for Polly. The filmstrip was *If I Ran the Zoo* by Dr. Suess. It is a wonderful story, and the children loved it. The characters made the kids laugh and giggle. I even enjoyed watching it and laughed along with the kids.
Today we discussed mammals, and, in particular, seals. We then played a math game with a paper seal and construction paper balls. The balls were red, green and blue. We worked with sets and then whole groups. Tomorrow I am going to bring in numerals. The problems are simple addition problems. We ended the lesson by hiding a certain number of balls and having to find each of them. The children then counted up the number found to check to see if all were discovered.

Nap time was fine although I had to make up one rule: the time a child spends "goofing around" will be made up when the others get up. So far it has proven to be an effective rule. I haven't had to enforce it, but the children know that it is there.

The wading pools were again brought out. There is always an adult present and "horseplay" is not allowed. This makes the pools fun and safe.

Friday, 28 June 1985

Today was a rather interesting day. It started well with a board game that I played with Miles and Kenyon. We had a wonderful time and played for quite a while.

The problems arose when I began teaching my lesson. The first group I taught went very well. We reviewed material about mammals. We then got out the seal and balls. We worked with sets and whole groups again. This time we did use numbers, and it went very well. The second group was a different story. It started out well with three children. The problem arose when two more children wandered in halfway through my lesson. It was difficult to bring them in since they had missed part
of the lesson. I should have given them a book to read or a game to play instead of incorporating them into the lesson. I felt that I needed to include them. I simply should have finished my lesson with the three children who were already there. I then should have taught the lesson to the extra children. I should have followed my instincts.

Nap time went well today which was very nice. After nap time I played checkers with Kenyon. We used pebbles and shells to play with and made a checkerboard out of paper. It ended up being a very good day, but I definitely learned a great deal.

Monday, 1 July 1985

Today proved that a teacher cannot always stick to a lesson plan. I had planned for the children to go outside to the garden and dig in the soil. This was to be our first day learning about the woods. I wanted the children to observe the difference between sand and soil. Unfortunately, it rained! I had to go out in the rain to the garden and dig up some dirt. The children examined both soil and sand. They developed a list of similarities and differences. They also listed some of the characteristics and uses of soil. We then made a mural by having each of the children put his hand in the wet soil and then place it on a large piece of butcher paper. The lesson worked well once I made the necessary adjustments. It was interesting to note that some of the boys did not want to work with mud. Most of the girls did not seem to mind, but the boys did not want to get dirty.

Today we also put the climber in the sandbox. It took
a while to get it out there, but the children loved it. This type of activity requires constant supervision. The children tend to get excited about the climber and are sometimes not careful enough. It is safe as long as an adult is present to keep things from getting out of hand.

Nischita is talking louder and louder at nap time. When she gets too loud I pick her up and rock her. This always quiets her down. I cannot tell how much English she can understand. She does seem to feel more secure now.

Tuesday, 2 July 1985

Today proved to be a very good day. The children were attentive, and we all had a good time. The children started the morning out by watching the first half of Charlotte's Web. They all seemed to enjoy it a great deal.

I then taught a lesson on seeds and soil. I showed the children various seeds, and the children tried to guess what they would grow into. We then talked about why the seeds need soil. Finally, we decorated styrofoam cups with faces and planted grass seed in them. The grass will give the faces a little bit of hair!

Nap time again went extremely well. To my surprise everyone fell sound asleep. I did notice something interesting about Nischita. She understands more English than I thought. I overheard her counting to fifteen in English and also saying "Be quiet". One of the staff members explained that Nischita's parents are speaking more English at home. She also said that Nischita understands more English than we think. She was too loud again today, but I quieted her down.
As usual she fell right asleep. She is truly darling!

Wednesday, 3 July 1985

We watched the rest of Charlotte's Web. As expected there were tears when Charlotte died. A few of the younger children did not quite understand what had happened. They all seemed to love the rat narrated by Paul Lynde. They would laugh very hard during the scenes involving him.

Today my lesson dealt with roots and how they work in the soil. We looked closely at the roots of a weed from the garden. We discussed how the roots "fed" the plant. We also discussed how they were located under the ground. The children then took a piece of paper and drew a line across the middle of it. Above the line they drew a plant. Below the line they drew the plant's roots. I went over the roots that were drawn with a highlighter. They then spread glue on everywhere under the line except where I had highlighted. Finally they sprinkled soil on the glue. The children seemed to enjoy this activity and learned from it.

At nap time, much to my amazement, everyone fell asleep. I am happy with how this "job" has turned out. The children seem to understand that it is a time to rest. We will not be meeting tomorrow since it will be the 4th of July.

Friday, 5 July 1985

Today was indeed a big day for we went to Christy Woods and had a picnic. The day began with me supervising the hollow blocks. Kenyon, Miles and Patrick were intent on building a house with a sun porch. The wonderful thing about hollow blocks is that the children can use them so
creatively. I love to see what they plan to build.

I taught my final lesson on soil. We looked at a poster dealing with animals that use the soil. We talked about the animals that live in the soil, that find food in the soil, or seek protection in the soil. Next, the children made their own soil creatures out of egg cartons, pipe cleaners and scrap material. They really seem to have learned something about soil this week.

At 11:00 a.m. I met the children at Christy Woods. We played "Duck, Duck, Goose" until the hot dogs were ready. We then had lunch and walked back through Christy Woods to the day care center. I was very impressed at how organized everything was. Lunch was well planned out, and the children enjoyed themselves.

After we returned I again showed the filmstrip If I Ran the Zoo. We had some tired children by the time we returned so a filmstrip was very appropriate. It was a very successful day!

Monday, 8 July 1985

Today begins my last week here this summer. We are going to deal with wood animals. Today I taught about animals who live in trees. Then we made prints using leaves, twigs and bark. Several children experimented by painting with the objects. I was interested by Erin. It was her first day with us after being gone for a week. She took a while to adjust and did not participate in many activities including mine. Many times she will not participate because she does not want to get dirty. She is, however, fun to work with
and be around.

I began the day with a game, Candyland. Regardless of how often they play this game they still love it. It was again successful this week. They all seem to know the rules and how to play without my explaining them. This may be why they enjoy this game so much.

This afternoon when I came in for "nap duty" I was not sure how things would go. All the children seemed very excited. I was not sure they would rest at all. Surprisingly they all fell asleep with the exception of Geoffrey. He rested well though. It turned out much better than I had expected.

Tuesday, 9 July 1985

We began today by playing bean bag tic-tac-toe. We also read stories. I read so many stories that I was tired of talking. The children love to listen to them. Several children wanted to hear a few of the stories twice.

My lesson today dealt with simple addition. I had a squirrel made of construction paper and about thirty nuts cut out of different colors of paper. The children gave the squirrel several of each color of nuts. They then counted to see how many nuts there were total. The children did an excellent job. I also had them make up addition problems for each other.

Nap time went smoothly. Just about everyone slept. After nap time several children looked at their cups with grass seed. They were so excited to see grass growing in them. Some of the children sleep until they are awaken. Once they fall asleep most are sound asleep. We do not
usually let them sleep as long as they want because they would miss so many activities. Some could sleep all afternoon!

Wednesday, 10 July 1985

This morning several boys and I cleaned out the block corner. This is one of the many jobs that needs to be done before we end on Friday. We are definitely going to be busy!

My lesson today dealt with owls. We talked about them—what they look like, when they sleep, what they eat and more. The children then made owls out of paper bags. They first drew on them with crayons. They also glued on pieces of scrap material. Some children made an owl that resembled a real owl. Others stretched their imaginations and created wild looking owls. They next stuffed their owls with newspaper and tied string around the end. Both younger and older children enjoyed this. I taught the lesson both in the morning and in the afternoon.

It is sometimes hard to tell if the younger ones are learning what I am teaching. I believe, though, that they are absorbing more than I think. I feel that they learned a little something new today. Maybe some will remember that owls hunt at night or that they sleep in the day. If they remember anything the lesson will have been a success.

Thursday, 11 July 1985

Today I played board games with the children. They love to play games over and over again. Miles is so thrilled when he beats his older brother Kenyon. Kenyon at times tries to cheat a little so I have to keep an eye on him.

My activity dealt with butterflies. We first discussed
the stages animals go through when growing up. We talked about birds, frogs, and butterflies. We then made butterflies out of tissue paper and markers. The children were fascinated that the marks they made on one side showed through on the other side.

All of the children seemed to enjoy this activity, and many made more than one. After we had finished making the butterflies the children made them "fly" by releasing them above their heads.

Everyone in the day care center has been busy getting ready for the end of school. The day care will reopen fall quarter. Several children and I helped by washing off the shelves that hold the blocks. We took them all off and put them back again. It took some time, but the children worked until we were finished.

Nap time went well today. I am sure tomorrow will be an exciting day for both the children and the teachers. Today, though, was relatively calm.

Friday, 12 July 1985

Today was just as busy as I thought it would be. My lesson today tied together my unit on wood animals. I brought in many pictures of animals and the children made their favorites out of clay. This was a good activity for today because the children did not have to sit and listen to anything. They were so excited today--I do not know if they could have held still. Snakes seemed to be the most popular animal to make. The children seemed to like working with the clay.

We did not have a nap time today. Instead, a great deal of time was spent trying to get the right nap items with the right child. Pillows, stuffed animals, and blankets were
sorted through and given to the proper owner. I had a special helper. Nischita would stack up the items as I handed them to her. Those things that belonged to the day care we put back in the closet. I was surprised to see her willing to help me. It made me feel very good.

Ruth Ann told me today that I could plan my own unit for this coming fall quarter. She said to choose a unit topic and plan lessons that deal with it. She also said that I could begin teaching the very first day of the quarter. She felt that I did not need to go through the orientation that occurs the first week. It made me feel more confident about my teaching. I took what Ruth Ann said as a very big compliment. I plan to work hard to come up with good things for this fall.

Tuesday, 10 September 1985

Fall quarter started today, and there was an unusual amount of activity at the day care. I am working from 8:00-11:00 a.m. Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. I thought I would know many children from last summer. I quickly found out I was wrong. Kevin, Lindsey, Erin and Nischita were the only children I knew. I could not get over how much Nischita has grown. She seemed to remember me and tended to stay nearby. Erin has matured some also. She is easier to work with and is more patient. I have so many new children to meet and learn about.

I began the day by reading to several children. Through this I met two more children—Austin and Brook. Austin was nervous and felt a little sick. Listening to stories seemed to calm him down. Brook is very talkative and personable.
She has both hay fever and asthma, but they do not dampen her spirits. I read so many stories that I became tired of talking.

I also helped observe the children outdoors and in the hollow block room. Both were good activities for the children to get acquainted with each other. While I observed the hollow block area, Nischita sat on my lap and watched everyone. I was impressed at how much help I received in picking up the blocks. The swings and climber seem to be the most popular outdoor items. The tricycles are also pretty popular. It looks like it is going to be a busy week.

Thursday, 12 September 1985

Today I taught my first lesson of the quarter. Yesterday was too hectic for my lesson so it was postponed until today. I began a unit on pets with a lesson dealing with cats. My goal for this unit is for the children to learn more about popular pets. I would also like for them to learn the kind of special care pets need from their owners. For this lesson we first looked at pictures of different cats. I tried to bring up unique facts. The children were fascinated that a Manx cat has no tail. They all seemed to have seen a Siamese cat, but not many had seen a Persian cat. I slowly got them to call the cats by their individual breed. I was surprised at how well the younger children picked up on the names once they were acquainted with them. We next discussed what baby kittens are like when they are first born. I had several good books that had excellent pictures. The children poured over them. We also discussed what cats play with and how we care for them.
Our activity was making cat masks. We used paper plates, buttons, pipe cleaners, scrap material, string and crayons to make the masks. Some made a specific type of cat, and others made up an imaginative one. Several remembered that Siamese cats have blue eyes so they used blue buttons. We will continue this lesson on Thursday since everyone did not get a chance to participate. At 10:00 a.m. we walked to the Duck Pond and returned a turtle that the children had found the day before. Brook and Nischita walked with me.

Friday, 13 September 1985

Today more children made cat masks. Several that made masks yesterday wanted to repeat the lesson. I was surprised at how diligently some of the children worked. Brook did not stop until she was sure her mask was complete. She worked at least twenty minutes on it. An interesting thing about Brook is that she hardly ever has a snack. No matter what is prepared she will not eat it. She also has times when she is very tired. Usually, though, she remains very "perky".

We have two children who go to kindergarten in the afternoon. Alex and Kevin happen to be in the same class. The two boys act like best friends one minute and the next minute are fighting.

Alex seems to have a domineering personality and does not like to be challenged by Kevin. Kevin was at day care in the summer and is rather open and friendly with me.

I have noticed that this quarter seems more structured than in the summer. There are more children and teachers. Time seems to pass so quickly.

Tuesday, 17 September 1985
I moved on to a new lesson about pets. We started talking about birds. We looked at pictures of birds that people have as pets—canaries, parakeets, and parrots. We talked about how to care for them and what they eat. I showed the children how birds crack open bird seed. I overheard Erin explaining this to another teacher. We then painted with feathers. I got the feathers from several feather dusters. I had three different colors. I allowed the children to choose which they wanted to use. Some of them taped feathers onto their paintings. Bradley carefully made a cardinal while Erin worked hard at a parrot.

After snack time I usually go outside with the children. We have about fifteen minutes before we go on a walk. This is a good time to talk with the children and watch them interact with each other. Erin and Amanda do just about everything together. Problems erupt if one is swinging and the other is not. They both want to swing together and cry if the child on the swing does not get off. I learn a great deal about the children by observing them.

Thursday, 19 September 1985

Today I taught my bird lesson to those who did not get to participate yesterday. I also had several children from yesterday want to do the lesson again. These children wanted to see the pictures again. The children from yesterday had more fun telling today's children about my birds. I have two parakeets named George and Gertrude. The children showed what they looked like and explained that Gertrude ate a great deal of bird seed. I was impressed at how much they remembered.
During walk time we went over to the area in front of LaFollette Hall. We took hulahoops and balls. Nischita was darling with a hulahoop. She invented a game of rolling it to me and having me roll it back. She then started throwing it up in the air. As it came down she would try to get in the middle of it. All of the children seemed to have fun.

Friday, 20 September 1985

Today we had a wonderful time with a math activity and pictures of dogs. During the first part of my lesson we looked at many different books about dogs. There were several books dealing with newborn puppies. The children were astonished at how little puppies are when they are born. They were also interested to learn that newborn puppies cannot see for a few days. The books were excellent and the pictures were even better. The children also enjoyed looking at pictures of different types of dogs. Erin realized that her puppy Brandy was a golden retriever. She was so excited she told anyone who would listen. The second half of the lesson was a non-standard measurement activity. I had made the back and front ends of a dachshund out of construction paper. I had many sizes of "middles" for the dog. The children measured the dachshund with each middle. They used paper clips to do the measuring. Finally, they arranged the "middles" from largest to smallest.

We walked over to the Art Building and looked for leaves and nuts. One of the college students needed them for a lesson. She got more than she expected. The children filled several bags with nature items. It was a very enjoyable day.
Tuesday, 24 September 1985

Today I finished my math activity. The children each made a middle for the dachshund and then measured it. Alex decided that he wanted to be the teacher for this lesson since he had participated yesterday. He did a rather good job! He explained to the younger children how to use the paper clips to measure. They did this so many times that I lost count. Alex also had the children look at the pictures in the dog books again. The lesson closed in a very nice manner.

I also made a very popular snack today--cheese pizza. I had more helpers than I knew what to do with. I cut it into small pieces so each child could have two. Brook, though, did not have any. Recently, she has made a rather big deal out of not wanting anything to do with snack time. She makes sure that several adults hear her say that she does not want anything to eat. I feel some of this is for attention.

At walk time we went to Christy Woods. It is a rather long walk, and some of the children got tired. Luckily, when we arrived at Christy Woods we found an area for Brook and several others to sit down and rest. The children also discovered an old fashioned water pump. Several of them pumped it for a few minutes and were thrilled when a small amount of water dripped out. It is amazing how persistent young children can be.

Thursday, 26 September 1985

Today I did a rather different lesson. We have been talking about pets for the last three weeks. To end the unit we discussed various different pets--lizards, frogs, farm pets and others.
Next, each child chose a rock to care for as a pet. They washed the rocks with soapy water and old toothbrushes. We discussed what it takes to care for a live pet and how a rock can be like a pet. Some of the children even named their rock. Several washed more than one. Sam chose a huge rock and was so excited about getting it. Since Sam tends to be rather quiet, it was fun to see him so thrilled. Tomorrow we will paint the rocks.

Today we also had a wonderful walk. We went to the hill behind the Human Performance Laboratory. The children had more fun rolling down the hill. Nischita was rather nervous about trying it, but once she did she loved it. She must have done it twenty times. It was amazing to hear her say, "That was fun!" She is coming along beautifully. She is talking more and more each day. I hope maybe I have been able to make things easier for her. I enjoy being around her and watching her make friends.

Friday, 27 September 1985

We painted rocks today. Several children who did not get to choose a rock yesterday joined in today. The children seemed to have so much fun painting their rocks. Some spent a great deal of time working on them. Nobody seemed to mind that they were getting paint on their fingers. They were too busy experimenting with the colors they could get by mixing paint. Most of them ended up with muddy brown! I had one slight problem. Brook wanted nothing to do with painting her two rocks. She had been so excited yesterday. Today, though, she was not feeling well at all. Luckily, I came up with the idea of using markers instead of paint. It produced the same effect and caught her attention. She was just fine
after she began decorating her rocks.

Today we walked over to the pool to watch people swim and dive. Unfortunately, it was locked up, and we could not get in. I was with Andrew, and he was very disappointed that we could not go inside. We instead went over to the LaFollette complex and let them play outside. There is always a need for a back-up plan just in case a situation like this occurs.

Tuesday, 1 October 1985

The children went swimming for the first time this quarter. We went to the pool over at Ball Gym. The children were understandably excited. Ruth Ann and Carol had done a good job getting the swimsuits organized and writing the children's names on bags for their clothes. Several children arrived earlier than normal to go with us. Kischita was there and walked with me to the pool. Triston was also there. I had not seen him since the summer term ended. I could not believe how much he had grown. He was still just as cute as I had remembered.

The children did not seem to mind the long walk to Ball Gym today. They were ready to get there as quickly as possible. Once there we got some towels and helped the children change in the lockeroom. I did not go swimming since next week is my last time to go to the pool with them. They will be going every Tuesday, and we decided they should get used to having the same people with them in the water.

When we got to the pool area a lifeguard was already there. The other Ball State students were in the water waiting for the children. The children sat in a row along the edge of the pool until a teacher came to get them. All of the children got in
for most of the time. Brook sat and watched from the side. Nischita watched nervously but did not want much to do with the whole situation. She finally got in and seemed to relax. I sat by the towels and wrapped up the children as they came out of the water.

At about 10:00 a.m. we got the children dressed and dried their hair. Some of the girls had long hair, and it seemed like forever before it was dried. This whole experience today was positive for the children. It ran smoothly and everyone seemed to enjoy it.

Friday, 4 October 1985

Yesterday I was ill and could not come to the day care center. To make up for it, I was at the day care both morning and afternoon. I taught my lesson twice. My lesson today was making zoo puppets. The children looked at pictures of zoo animals and decided which one they wanted to make into a puppet. Tigers, elephants and giraffes were popular. Several made their "own" animals. This is a good activity because it allows them to be creative. There is no right or wrong way to make a puppet. Many children made more than one.

At walk time we went back to the hill behind the Human Performance Laboratory. Once again they enjoyed running and rolling down the hill. They also chased each other all over the place.

The afternoon session was very interesting to me. I had not met several of the children before. One little girl has a serious hearing impairment. She does communicate pretty well, though, through motions and attempting to say certain words. I
did some puzzles with her and had trouble understanding her at first. I concentrated on what she was trying to say, and it became easier.

Mischita completely surprised me. She talked more today than I have ever heard her. I was reading her a story about elephants. She stopped me, pointed to an elephant, and said, "E for elephant." I was shocked! She then continued to name animals and colors. Her mother came to pick her up and she just kept on talking. It was a wonderful way to end my week!

Tuesday, 8 October 1985

We went back to the pool today. It was interesting to see how much more relaxed the children were in the pool this week compared with last week. Just about everyone got in including Brook and Mischita. I was surprised at how long they stayed in the water.

I tried to help the lifeguard break the children into groups according to their swimming ability. She is going to begin lessons next week and needed a rough idea of how to organize the children. I was surprised to realize how well I know the children. I was able to visualize the groups that would work well together and the instructors that would help them the most. I felt like I had been with them a lot longer than five weeks. I was very pleased with the groups we came up with.

We got everyone ready quicker than last week. We all were familiar with what to do. I feel this is a wonderful program for the children to be involved in. It gives them something to look forward to and gives them more confidence about being
in the water. It is so nice to have a facility such as the pool in Ball Gym so close to the day care center. I am glad to see them taking advantage of it.

Thursday, 10 October 1985

I brought in my books on zoo animals again. We made clay models of different zoo animals and ended up with a clay zoo. Clay is always popular with the children. I found this out last summer when I closed the term with lessons involving clay. Because of this popularity I will have to continue the lesson tomorrow. It was impossible to let everyone work with the clay as much as they wanted to.

Nischita has been ill and was not here today. I am hoping she will be here tomorrow since it will be my last day. I brought my camera today and took pictures of the children. Erin was always trying to get into the picture. All of the children get so excited when they see a camera. I think the pictures will be darling. I plan to get doubles of them and give a set to Ruth Ann to display somewhere in the day care.

I am already planning visits back here next week. I have one more day left, but I am already starting to get a little sad. It is so easy to become attached to children. That is probably one big reason I am becoming a primary education teacher. I have gotten so much love from these children. Tomorrow is going to be a sad day.

Friday, 11 October 1985

This is my last day here. Nischita is sick again today. I was rather disappointed, but I will see her when I return to visit. I got the clay out again today. It was funny because
I had children waiting for me to start the lesson. Once again they were very excited and worked with the clay for quite some time.

It was so cold out today that Brook and I began looking for a pair of mittens for her to wear. We could not find a pair so I let her wear mine. They were huge on her! She was thrilled to be able to wear them. It really was cute. We walked over to University Gym to watch people playing basketball. It was strange to think that this was my last walk with them. Walk time has always been my favorite time. I can talk with the children one-on-one as we walk. I feel that this was one way that I got to know Mischita and Brook so well.

As I left the day care, it was hard to say good-bye. Most of them did not understand that this was my last day since they would still be coming. It will be strange not to show up next Tuesday with a lesson prepared. I will miss the children and Ruth Ann a great deal. I am so glad that I had such a wonderful experience.
CLOSING

Looking back on the time I spent at the day care, I feel I gained a great deal. I am much more confident about my ability to teach and work with young children. At first I was very nervous. In fact, I was nervous for the entire summer session. I feel the turning point was when Ruth Ann showed trust in me by allowing me to plan my own unit. I concluded that maybe I was doing something right after all. The fall quarter weeks were wonderful for me. I had five weeks experience behind me and felt comfortable in the day care. I relaxed and began to enjoy myself and the children. I worked hard at my lessons and was excited to share them with the children. This is one reason why it was so hard to leave. I feel that this self-confidence will help me not only when I am teaching very young children but also when I am working with elementary school children.

I also feel that I became a part of the day care center. I had responsibilities such as nap duty in the summer. I felt that I needed to be there everyday to help out with walk time or to read stories to Brook. I also felt that Nischita needed me there to just be a friend in a strange place. Toward the end of the time I was there Nischita no longer needed me to hide behind. Instead I was the one who followed her and watched her make friends with the children. It is a wonderful feeling to be needed or at least to think that you are.

Finally, I gained a great deal by watching Ruth Ann work with the children. I have never seen someone get along with children the way she does. It is obvious that she loves them.
and that they are crazy about her. Every child I observed
and worked with knew that Ruth Ann cared about him or her.
For example, when Erin realized that her dog was a golden
retriever who went running into Ruth Ann's office. I
was impressed to see Ruth Ann listening closely to Erin
and being excited over her discovery. This is just one
of many incidents I observed. I would like to thank her
for allowing me the pleasure of working with her. I would
also like to thank Dr. Quimby for her guidance and support
throughout this project. She was always ready to answer
a question or listen to an idea, and I am very appreciative.

The whole core of this thesis was teaching. To me it
is one of the most important jobs around. The children I
worked with are so impressionable right now. A good teacher
can enrich their lives. A good teacher can also get a great
deal of satisfaction from this job. As I try to become such
a teacher I hope that I will not forget my special moments
of satisfaction that I received while working with these
children. For me these memories are the greatest result of
this thesis. I am grateful for the opportunity to experience
them.