

# The Dog Project

## A Project by 2-Year-Old Children

at Illinois State University Child Care Center, Normal, Illinois

*Length of Project: 15 weeks Teachers: Pam Morbitzer, Scott Brouette*

### Phase One

#### *Beginning the Project*

The Dog Project was brought to life by a visit from my puppy Ellie. Her visit initiated discussions that led children to draw pictures, share stories, and bring photos of the dogs in their lives. Several questions were generated from our classroom discussions. Some topics discussed included what dogs eat, how they play, why they bark and bite, and where they go to the bathroom. The idea web showed that the children already knew a great deal about dogs; therefore, my expectations of the project were to build on their current knowledge and to investigate any misconceptions they had regarding dogs.

### Phase Two

#### *Developing the Project*

Project investigations began by inviting three dogs and their owners to our classroom. The children prepared interview questions for the dog owners such as "what does your dog eat?" and "does he/she bite?" The visits triggered interest in different sizes and colors of dogs—topics later investigated by a small group of children who represented their findings with a comparison chart of the three dogs that they had met.

Another child was particularly interested in the height of Lily, a Saint Bernard that visited. We used his body to measure Lily and the other dogs to see which dog was the tallest and which was the shortest. The children surveyed parents and other friends at our school about why their dogs barked and if their dogs had ever bitten anyone.

Having my stories about Ellie's growth and development was a great tool for introducing new concepts. When she began losing her teeth, I brought in a few for the children to examine, prompting interest in why teeth fall out. The children discovered that they would lose teeth too.

Throughout the project, I took pictures and posted documentation to keep parents updated and for the children to revisit early phases of their work.

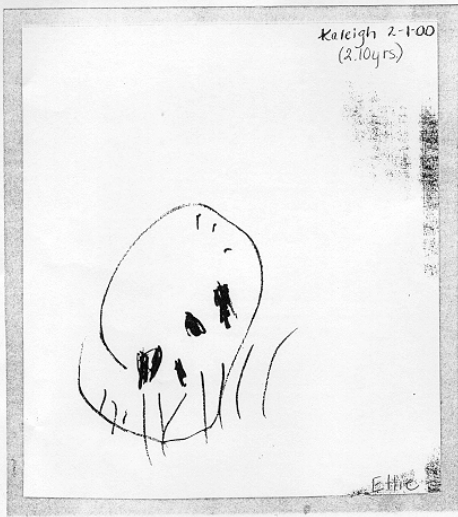
### Phase Three

#### *Concluding the Project*

As a culminating event, the children created a mural. They sketched and water-colored pictures of dogs we met or dogs in their lives. The children's paintings were more detailed than at the beginning of our project. Considerable attention was given to facial features as well as to size and color. The mural was displayed in the hallway, and the children took every opportunity to share their work with parents, student workers, and other friends in our building. This project expanded the children's ability to formulate, ask, and brainstorm inventive methods to answering questions and increased their knowledge of puppies and dogs.

# Comments

The Dog Project was the most successful project I have ever implemented with 2-year-olds. The children's interest level remained high throughout the entire project. Several parents commented on the amount of time the children spent talking about dogs outside of school. One girl conducted morning meetings when she got home from school each day. She revisited the events of our day, which was a wonderful example of how meaningful her work was to her. This project reaffirmed my belief in the power of project work and the important dispositions for learning that young children gain through projects.



**Kaleigh (2.10 yrs.)** drew a picture of Ellie. "I drew 2 eyes for her and put dots on her body by her eyes. I wrote your name (Pam) and Ellie's name on it."

