

# ***Expanding Our Horizons: Investigating Music & Measurement***

## **Introduction**

Welcome to the University Primary School on-line curriculum entitled, *Expanding Our Horizons - Investigating Music and Measurement*. The curriculum is a report on two project investigations undertaken by our preschool and K/1 students: *Studying Music* and *Who Measures What in Our Neighborhood*. We invite you to peruse the website to see and hear the content that students “uncovered” in their investigations. We are excited to be including digital video clips and an extended “Video Gallery” for each project story. The video segments allow you to listen to visiting experts, see students on their field experiences, and observe class activities that demonstrate how teachers facilitate inquiry.

Highlights of *Studying Music* include field experiences that take 3 and 4 year olds to a piano store where they discover how the keys on the piano make sound. In the video clips, hear the pipe organ, and watch students conduct their own percussion ensembles. Throughout this project, preschoolers are introduced to a variety of instruments and music from around the world.

Students explored numerous fields of study to find out how and what people measure in *Who Measures What in Our Neighborhood*. Highlights include video segments of students’ field experiences and links to download students’ PowerPoint presentations where they reflected and communicated what they had learned about measurement. Students’ reflections demonstrated in-depth understandings of what is often complex and abstract for 5 and 6 year olds. Included in this project story are five student portfolios that reveal students’ growth over the five-month project.

A special feature of the curriculum is an alignment of the preschool project activities with the NAEYC accreditation curriculum component and the K/1 project activities with the Illinois Learning Standards. This allows readers to see that project-based learning is not an addition or an add-on to the basic skills curriculum, but it is the context through which basic skills are taught and mastered.

Through these project narratives, the readers will follow the process of inquiry, see examples of students’ work, gain insight into the students’ thinking, and examine how the teachers reflect upon the students’ newly gained knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Students had numerous opportunities to work at their own level, in their own interest areas, and in their preferred learning styles. They were also challenged to move beyond their comfort zones, gain new levels of awareness, develop richer vocabulary, support their opinions, and problem-solve to accomplish their individual and group goals.

We hope you enjoy the tour of the project investigations. We invite you to peruse the website or download a printable version of the whole document!

## University Primary School

University Primary School (UPS) is an early childhood gifted education program affiliated with the Department of Special Education at the University of Illinois. There are currently two multi-age classrooms, one preschool room with 3/4 year olds and one K/1 classroom with 5/6 year olds. The classrooms each have 25 students and are staffed with a head teacher and graduate assistants. The mission of UPS is to provide a site for the College of Education to demonstrate, observe, study, and teach best practices in early childhood and gifted education. In this way, UPS is a site for research and teacher education, while at the same time providing a service to the community, especially to families with young children. Each year the school hosts local, national, and international visitors.

Enrollment is open to all children in the community. The children at University Primary School are culturally and linguistically diverse. Two-thirds of the students' parents have some affiliation with the University of Illinois either as faculty, students, or staff. The student population includes students with special needs.

At University Primary School the teachers use the Project-Approach to design emergent curriculum (Katz & Chard, 2000). The distinguishing feature of the approach is that very young children are engaged in investigation. Each investigation is an opportunity for students to pursue their own questions. The National Academy of Sciences distinguishes between full and partial inquiry and defines full inquiry as opportunities for students to pursue their own questions (2000, p. 28). Inquiry promotes children's natural curiosities and develops environments where children are intrinsically motivated to learn. "An emphasis on inquiry asks that we think about what we know, why we know, and how we have come to know" (National Academy of Sciences, 2000, p. 6).

To facilitate project investigations, the daily schedule includes time for individual and small group investigations. This time period is called Project/Activity Time. This is an extended time period (approximately one hour) where students make choices about their own learning. Teachers facilitate small group work related to project investigations while other students work independently or in groups on self-selected activities. Project/Activity Time strives to foster "the love of learning" and provides an opportunity for teachers to engage in the learning process with their students. For more information about the school, please refer to the UPS Home Page.

## References

- Katz, L. & Chard, S. (2000). Engaging children's minds: The project approach (2nd ed.). Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corp.
- National Research Council (2000). Inquiry and the national science education standards. A guide for teaching and learning. Washington, D.C.: National Academy of Sciences.