

# NEXT

An NAEYC  
Professional  
Development  
Resource

## young children

Derry Koralek, Editor in Chief • Amy Shillady, Senior Editor

### Using *NEXT* for Young Children

*NEXT for Young Children* suggests ways to build on the content of selected articles from *Young Children*, the award-winning, peer-reviewed professional journal published bimonthly by NAEYC. The training outlines for these articles can be used in a variety of ways: teacher educators can use them in their classes; staff development specialists can use them to design trainings; and center directors and school principals can use them to plan staff meetings or training sessions. Early childhood education students and practitioners may also wish to use them alone or with colleagues or peers.

Each training outline includes the following features:

1. **Key Messages**—important content points.
2. **Glossary**—definitions of key terms.
3. **Self-study**—questions to build on the content of the article and reflect on current practices.
4. **Discuss with one or more colleagues/peers**—discussion prompts related to personal experiences, current practices, and connections between research and practice.
5. **Action steps**—opportunities to apply and document application of new knowledge and skills.
6. **Continue learning**—suggested resources for increasing knowledge and skills.

In addition, each outline indicates the NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs and NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards that are most closely related to the content (see the box on the right at the top of each outline).



*Young Children* • November 2011  
Vol. 66 • No. 6

### A few notes

- All page numbers refer to *Young Children*, Volume 66, Number 6, unless otherwise noted.
- No permission is needed to make copies of NAEYC-copyrighted *Young Children* articles and *NEXT for Young Children* as long as they bear a credit line and are distributed at no cost.
- In group sessions, facilitators can ask participants to do activities in pairs, small groups, or as classroom teams, depending on the setting. Volunteers can record and disseminate the ideas generated in the sessions.
- Visit NAEYC's website for additional professional development materials at [www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org).

### *NEXT* for Young Children contents

**Making and Taking Virtual Field Trips in Pre-K and the Primary Grades** ([click to view](#))

Article and study guide by Dennis J. Kirchen

**Fiction vs. Informational Texts: Which Will Kindergartners Choose?** ([click to view](#))

Article and study guide by Marlene Ponte Correia

This article explores how teachers can plan virtual field trips to provide learning experiences that are not bound by time, location, or accessibility. Teachers can use these tools to enhance children’s learning and build on their specific interests and skills, as well as adapt experiences for children with special needs who might not be able to participate in regular field trips.

### Key Messages

- ➔ Virtual field trips (VFTs) are technology-based experiences that enhance children’s learning by exposing them to people, places, and things with which they typically do not interact. They can range from a single PowerPoint or video presentation to a multifaceted virtual experience integrating photos, videos, text, audio, video conferencing, and Internet resources.
- ➔ Teachers can use predeveloped VFTs available online, if appropriate, or create their own in order to meet the needs, interests, and developmental and technological abilities of the young children in their setting.
- ➔ VFTs are not meant to replace traditional field trips or developmentally appropriate, hands-on learning, but serve as a complementary and integrative experience. Planning and implementing post-VFT activities are critical to children’s learning.

### Self-study

Respond to the following questions in the space provided.

#### In your view

1. Write down three new things that you learned about virtual field trips and their use in early childhood settings from reading this article. If possible, compare your choices with those of others who have read it.

---

---

---

---

---

2. What research findings cited by the author(s) did you find most interesting? Why were they of particular interest to you?

---

---

---

---

---

*The content of this article is most closely related to NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs 1 and 5, and NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards 2 and 3.*

**This study guide is primarily for educators who work with children ages 4 through 8.**

### Glossary

**Predeveloped VFTs**—existing technology-based experiences that can be accessed online but cannot be modified.

**Teacher-created VFTs**—technology-based experiences constructed by teachers that build on children’s specific interests, skills, and needs.

**Multimedia**—the integration of various forms of media, such as text, graphics, audio, and video materials.

**Web-authoring software**—tools for creating Web pages, such as Adobe Dreamweaver and Microsoft FrontPage.

**Video conferencing technology**—tools that allow two or more people from different locations to communicate via their computers, video cameras, microphones, speakers, and computer networks. Examples include Skype Video and Google Mail Video Chat.

3. How does the content of this article relate to the curriculum, Common Core State Standards, state and local early learning standards, content standards, or other requirements applicable to your setting?

---

---

---

---

---

**Reflect and revisit your practice**

1. Which ideas in this article affirm your work with or on behalf of young children and families?

---

---

---

---

---

2. What ideas and research findings in this article raise questions about your practice? What new approaches might you try?

---

---

---

---

---

3. What kinds of supports do you and your colleagues need to try out these new ideas (such as assistance from a colleague and/or additional resources for your setting)?

---

---

---

---

---

**Discuss with one or more colleagues/peers**

Discuss the following questions with at least one colleague/peer. Record the key points of your discussion in the space provided.

**Consider current practice**

1. Reflect on your experiences with field trips as a child. What aspects were the most appealing? The least? How do you think those experiences influence your approach to planning and conducting field trips now?

---

---

---

---

---

2. Have you or your colleagues participated in or created a VFT? If so, how did children benefit from the experience? If not, what features of VFTs interest you most? Which features do you think would most interest the children?

---

---

---

---

---

3. Refer to “Planning Outline for a Virtual Field Trip to a Farm” on page 25 of the article. If you were to create this VFT, how could you incorporate it into your existing curriculum? What resources or training would you need to create and implement this VFT?

---

---

---

---

---

**Connect research and practice**

1. What does the research cited in this article say about the potential limitations of predeveloped VFTs? What does it say about the potential benefits of teacher-created VFTs?

---

---

---

---

---

2. What does research indicate about elements of effective and developmentally appropriate VFTs?

---

---

---

---

---

3. What does the research indicate about the role that technological skills of children and adults play in the success of VFTs?

---

---

---

---

---

### Action steps

Try out these ideas over the next 2 to 4 weeks. Document and discuss your experiences with others.

#### Implement and document

- 1. Discuss and record.** Talk to the children to identify their areas of interest. Hold individual, small group, and/or large group discussions. Record children’s responses in a journal. Meet with a colleague or a parent volunteer to review their interests and identify which may be suitable for VFTs. Determine how you could integrate these VFTs into your curriculum.
- 2. Investigate, plan, and implement.** Ask a colleague to help you search the Internet, particularly the sites listed in “Selected Predeveloped Virtual Field Trip Sites” on page 23 of the article, to find VFTs that address the children’s interests. Carefully review any VFTs that you find to ensure they are suitable for use with all the children. If none are available or deemed appropriate, outline a plan for creating a simple VFT. Whether you find a predeveloped VFT or create one, plan pre- and post-VFT activities related to the VFT.
- 3. Involve families.** Prepare information to give families that explains the purpose of VFTs and how you will use them in your setting. Share the information via e-mail or in a weekly newsletter, post it on your program’s website or on a highly visible bulletin board. Or, share the information in person at family and school gatherings like an open house, an orientation, or in workshops. Survey the families to identify their access to and skills using technology, and determine who would be willing to help create VFTs (families can help by locating multimedia materials or chaperoning a VFT experience). Discuss the survey results with your colleagues and determine how you will share VFTs with families who do not have access to technology, have limited technology skills, or cannot directly participate in the VFT experience.

**Discuss experiences and outcomes**

Summarize your experiences and outcomes in the space provided, and then discuss them with at least one colleague/peer.

1. What did you do that was successful?

---

---

---

---

---

2. What challenges did you face? How did you address the challenges?

---

---

---

---

---

3. Have you noticed changes in children’s interests or learning as a result of the new strategies? Did anything surprise you?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

4. How can you build on your progress?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Continue learning**

Consult these resources to further build knowledge and skills related to the content of this article.

Boss, S., & J. Krauss. 2007. *Reinventing Project-Based Learning: Your Field Guide to Real-World Projects in the Digital Age*. Washington, DC: International Society for Technology in Education.

Carroll, K. 2007. *A Guide to Great Field Trips*. Chicago, IL: Zephyr Press.

Cooper, G., & G. Cooper. 2001. *New Virtual Field Trips*. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited.

NAEYC & Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children’s Media. 2011. “Technology in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children Birth through Age 8.” Draft, joint position statement. Washington, DC: NAEYC. [www.naeyc.org/positionstatements/technology](http://www.naeyc.org/positionstatements/technology).

Sadao, K., & N.B. Robinson. 2010. *Assistive Technology for Young Children: Creating Inclusive Learning Environments*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing.

This article explores young children’s interest in and benefits from reading nonfiction text. The author also shares current literature and observations of her kindergarten class, which reveal that many children prefer reading nonfiction rather than fiction books.

*The content of this article is most closely related to NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs 1 and 3, and NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards 2 and 3.*

**This study guide is primarily for educators who work with children ages 5 and 6.**

### Key Messages

- ➔ Teachers can use informational texts intentionally to help children learn about topics that interest them, including finding answers to their own questions.
- ➔ Using informational texts with young children promotes their overall literacy development by expanding their vocabulary, background knowledge, and comprehension—all of which prepare them for success in reading and other content areas in later grades.
- ➔ Through observation, teachers can select reading materials that reflect children’s interests and provide them throughout the classroom, which further motivates children to read.

### Glossary

**Informational texts**—reading material that contains facts and information and helps readers learn. Examples include nonfiction books, magazines, newspapers, and digital material, such as online articles.

**Information readers**—those who prefer to read informational texts rather than fiction. These readers may be particularly drawn to material focused on specific topics that interest them.

### Self-study

Respond to the following questions in the space provided.

#### In your view

1. Write down three new things that you learned about the benefits of providing informational text from reading this article. If possible, compare your choices with those of others who have read it.

---

---

---

---

---

2. What research findings cited by the author(s) did you find most interesting? Why were they of particular interest to you?

---

---

---

---

---

3. How does the content of this article relate to the curriculum, Common Core State Standards, state and local early learning standards, content standards, or other requirements applicable to your setting?

---

---

---

---

---

**Reflect and revisit your practice**

1. Which ideas in this article affirm your work with or on behalf of young children and families?

---

---

---

---

---

2. What ideas and research findings in this article raise questions about your practice? What new approaches might you try?

---

---

---

---

---

3. What kinds of supports do you and your colleagues need to try out these new ideas (such as assistance from a colleague and/or additional resources for your setting)?

---

---

---

---

---

**Discuss with one or more colleagues/peers**

Discuss the following questions with at least one colleague/peer. Record the key points of your discussion in the space provided.

**Consider current practice**

1. Think about your personal reading preferences. On average, which do you read more, informational text or fiction? Why do you prefer one type of text over the other? How do you think this preference impacts what you do to promote young children’s literacy?

---

---

---

---

---

2. Consider the current selection of reading materials in your setting. How much is informational text? How much is fiction? How do children respond to each type?

---

---

---

---

---

3. Reflect on the children in your setting. Which children are more likely to prefer informational text? Which children are more likely to prefer fiction? Consider the author’s point about how nonfiction reading materials can motivate information readers. How do you think the children in your setting would respond to the inclusion of more informational texts?

---

---

---

---

---

**Connect research and practice**

1. What does the research cited in this article suggest are the benefits of using informational texts with young children?

---

---

---

---

---

2. Why do you think Duke (2010, p. 70) emphasizes the importance of “reading real-world informational texts for real-world reasons” (as noted on page 101 of the article)?

---

---

---

---

---

3. How did the author’s observations support current research on this topic?

---

---

---

---

---

**Action steps**

Try out these ideas over the next 2 to 4 weeks. Document and discuss your experiences with others.

**Implement and document**

- 1. Observe and record.** Observe the book choices children make when visiting the library or reading area. Document children’s choices by keeping a chart with a tally of the number of fiction versus informational texts each child chooses over several weeks. Also, record the title and topics of reading materials children select.
- 2. Reflect and implement.** Review children’s choices and note whether there is a theme. For example, if several children check out the magazine about trees and the story about pumpkins, they may be curious about nature—particularly during the fall. Consider whether they are more interested in informational or fiction materials. Respond to their interests and preferences by incorporating more of what they like in the reading area. Also, read related material out loud. For example, if more children selected informational texts, read a nonfiction book about growing gourds during circle time.
- 3. Involve families.** Summarize the article and the research findings about the importance of young children reading informational text, and send the information to families. Encourage families to read informational text with children at home. Also, send home a list of suggested books for each child based on his or her interests, preferences for type of text, and skills. Ask families to contribute informational text to the classroom library, particularly materials that reflect their culture and home language(s).

**Discuss experiences and outcomes**

Summarize your experiences and outcomes in the space provided, and then discuss them with at least one colleague/peer.

1. What did you do that was successful?

---

---

---

---

---

2. What challenges did you face? How did you address the challenges?

---

---

---

---

---

3. Have you noticed changes in your program as a result of the new strategies? Did anything surprise you?

---

---

---

---

---

4. How can you build on your progress?

---

---

---

---

---

**Continue learning**

Consult these resources to further build knowledge and skills related to the content of this article.

Donovan, C.A., E.J. Milewicz, & L.B. Smolkin. 2003. "Beyond the Single Text: Nurturing Young Children's Interest in Reading and Writing for Multiple Purposes." *Young Children* 58 (2): 30–36.

Duke, N.K. 2003. "Reading to Learn from the Very Beginning: Information Books in Early Childhood." *Young Children* 58 (2): 14–20.

Duke, N. 2007. "Let's Look in a Book: Using Nonfiction Reference Materials with Young Children." *Young Children* 62 (3): 12–16.

Duke, N. 2010. "The Real-World Reading and Writing U.S. Children Need." *Phi Delta Kappan* 91 (5): 68–71.

Kletzien, S., & M. Dreher. 2004. *Informational Text in K–3 Classrooms: Helping Children Read and Write*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Stephens, K. 2008. "A Quick Guide to Selecting Great Informational Books for Young Children." *The Reading Teacher* 61 (6): 488–90.

**NEXT for Young Children • Vol. 66 • No. 6 • November 2011**

*Young Children* and *NEXT for Young Children* are published by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), 1313 L Street, NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20005-4101.

Through its publications program, NAEYC provides a forum for discussion of major ideas in our field. We hope to provoke thought and promote professional growth. The views expressed or implied are not necessarily those of the Association. Acceptance of advertising does not represent NAEYC's endorsement of any product or service, nor is NAEYC responsible for representations made by advertisers.

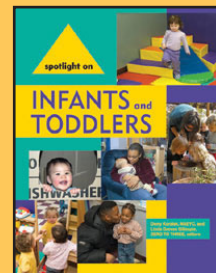
Copyright © 2011 by NAEYC. All rights reserved.

# naeyc<sup>®</sup>



**Become a Member**  
of the World's Largest Organization  
of Early Childhood Educators

**Connect.  
Educate.  
Inspire.**



[www.naeyc.org/membership](http://www.naeyc.org/membership)