The Fancy Dress Project
The Butterfly Class
N.E. Miles Early Childhood Development Center
College of Charleston
Fall 2009
Why Fancy Dresses?
The simple answer is that Alyssa wanted a wedding dress. Kennedi volunteered to make one for her. For a week she worked in the atelier fitting together a dress made of paper, embellished with whip-stitching, beads, buttons and glitter, all in consultation with Alyssa.
Kennedi models the dress commissioned by Alyssa.
How important is a closet? As soon as Kennedi’s dress for Alyssa got larger than the drying rack a problem emerged. We needed to find a safe place to keep their work if we wanted to help the children maintain their focus on the fancy clothes they were making. A large piece of cardboard furniture packing was the solution. Converting it into a portable closet helped turn a one week activity into a two month project.
Mary Randall soon joined in, creating her own fancy dress. Both her dress and the one designed by Kennedi for Alyssa were free form - made without sketches or patterns.
Alyssa decided to make her own dress. Ms. Deanna introduced the idea that dress designers draw a sketch of their ideas before they make a dress. After sketching her idea, Alyssa very carefully followed it to make her dress.
Stella became interested in the project after seeing Alyssa's work. She designed her own dress, borrowing the idea for scallop detailing from Alyssa. Stella was also interested in creating accessories and made a fabulous hat.
Evy puts a new spin on the fancy dress making, creating her very own tutu.
Francis wanted to make a dress for his sister Mary Margaret. He was particularly concerned that it fit so he used a doll as a model to make a pattern. Our dolls were too small so he borrowed one from the Sunflower class. He traced a dress shape around the doll making it a little bigger because "Mary Margaret is a little bigger than this." He got the fit perfect.
As Francis worked on his dress, Alyssa realized that she could make something for Justin. She made a Thomas the Tank Engine costume because Thomas is his favorite. She and Mary Randall worked diligently on the costume which Justin is modeling above.

Sunflower Leila shows off Justin's new cape.
Bazel and Luke created fancy menswear. The fancy dress team helped Luke with the shape of the vest which he embellished. Bazel fashioned a shirt from a piece of paper without a sketch or pattern. He often held it up to his body to make sure it fit. When he started the pants he asked Miss Mary to trace around him so they would be the right size.
Introducing the new "little black dress" - the "Sarah Sweden." Sarah wanted to make a dress like the one she was wearing when she began the project. Ms. Deanna traced around the dress trying to get it as close to the original as possible. While the dress was being cut some mistakes were made and it became a pattern for a new one. It also became the favorite style for the other designers in the project. They changed some details around the hem, collar or sleeves but kept the same basic dress shape.
Sarah modeling her iconic dress.
Everyone's got to have a Sarah Sweden!

Above: Bryn

Right: Sophia

Left: Rebecca

Below: Mary Randall

It's all the rage!
Annika and Julia chose to work on separates. Kennedi helped them create the patterns for their pieces.
We were deeply involved in the project when Miss Mary's mother pointed out an advertisement for an exhibit at the Charleston Museum featuring 18th - 20th century wedding attire. The children involved in the project visited the museum to get ideas about how they might exhibit their own work.
Everyone enjoyed posing in the beautiful fancy dresses, hats, and veils.
Due to the delicate nature of the dresses, photography was not permitted. The children however, sketched their favorite pieces including many of the details that they found special or important.
The children were anxious to show their creations and began to realize, because their dresses were a little fragile, that an exhibit like the one at the Charleston Museum might work better than their original idea of wearing the clothing in a fashion show. An exhibit was decided on and the entire class joined in the planning.
Children who had not participated up to this point played important roles as hosts and guides. Lilly excitedly showed Seashell Lisse around the exhibit.
Mila and Elishah check out the closet before the opening of the exhibit.

Seashell Lela joins Mary Randall, Mikaela, Alyssa and Mila as they welcome visitors to the show.

The children were invited to wear fancy clothes in honor of the exhibit. Dressed and ready, they can hardly wait for the first group to arrive.

Butterfly class anxiously awaiting their visitors.
The children created a special area to try on fancy clothes - an idea they picked up at their visit to the Charleston Museum.

Left: Sarah helps Sunflower Jonathan

Below: Lilly helps dress Seashell Lisse

Kai shows Sunflower Anna Bess some pictures of work done on the project.

No Butterfly function is complete without treats. The Butterflies serve the visitors their famous oatmeal cookies and lemonade.
We had lots of visitors. The Sunflowers and Seashells, little brothers and little sisters, teachers and a dean from the college, teachers and the director from ECDC, and even grandmothers came to see what the Butterflies made.
Why Fancy Dresses? -- The teachers' perspective

We decided that the emerging fancy dress work represented a project that was worth pursuing for the following reasons:

- There was a high level of interest
- There were many opportunities for problem solving
- The work involved moving from a mental image to a plan (the sketches or patterns) to the actual garment
- It provided opportunities to use a variety of methods of measurement
- It provided the opportunity to use a wide variety of materials
- It encouraged collaboration
- It provided opportunities to introduce new vocabulary
- Social aspects of wearing fancy clothing could be explored
Standards Addressed in this Project

South Carolina Early Learning Standards (4K)

AL-4K-1.1 Show creativity and imagination using materials in representational play.
AL-4K-1.2 Demonstrate increasing ability to identify and take appropriate risks in order to learn and demonstrate new skills.
AL-4K-2.1 Show curiosity in increasing variety of activities, tasks and learning centers.
AL-4K-2.2 Demonstrate eagerness and interest as a learner by questioning and adding ideas.
AL-4K-2.3 Demonstrate delight or satisfaction when completing a task, solving a problem or making a discovery.
AL-4K-3.1 Demonstrate growing initiative in selecting and carrying out activities.
AL-4K-3.2 Show increasing ability to maintain interest in self-selected activities and play despite distractions and interruptions.
AL-4K-3.3 Show ability to focus attention for increasing variety of chosen tasks and activities for short periods of time (10-20 minutes).
AL-4K-4.1 Understand a task can be accomplished through several steps.
AL-4K-4.2 Demonstrate an increasing ability to organize actions and materials in the learning environment.
AL-4K-4.3 Demonstrate an increasing ability to follow through with tasks and activities.
AL-4K-4.4 Try to solve problems encountered in play.
AL-4K-5.1 Represent prior events and personal experiences in one or more ways.
AL-4K-5.2 Demonstrate increasing ability to use prior knowledge to understand new experiences.
AL-4K-5.3 Reason about events, relationships or problems.
AL-4K-5.4 Demonstrate growing ability to predict possible outcomes based on prior experiences and knowledge.
SE-4K-1.2 Demonstrate self direction by making choices among peers, activities and materials.
SE-4K-2.4 Recognize effect on others of own behavior most of the time.
SE-4K-4.1 Display emerging social skills of trying to take turns and talk with others during play.
SE-4K-4.2 Develop friendship with one or two preferred children.
SE-4K-4.3 Demonstrate strategies to join play group with adult support.
SE-4K-4.4 Participate in group life of class.
SE-4K-4.5 Interact easily with familiar adults by engaging in conversations, responding to questions and following directions.
ELA-4K-3.4 Begin understanding how print is used to bring meaning.
ELA-4K-3.7 Use word beginnings and endings as language play or comprehension clue.
ELA-4K-3.8 Begin identifying some letter sounds and matching them to letters.
ELA-4K-4.1 Describe events of personal significance.
ELA-4K-4.2 Use sentences of 3-5 words (when appropriate in conversation) while describing familiar events or actions.
ELA-4K-4.7 Make some upper case letters without regard to proportion or placement.
ELA-4K-6.3 Complete a thought or idea when communicating with others.
ELA-4K-6.5 Carry out simple directions and directives.
M-4K-1.1 Classify objects and information by observable attributes into predetermined categories.
M-4K-1.2 Generate conjectures based on personal experiences and simple reasoning.
South Carolina Early Learning Standards - 4K (continued)
M-4K-1.3 Investigate solutions to simple problems.
M-4K-1.4 Locate patterns in the environment.
M-4K-1.5 Classify objects in their environment by color, shape, size or function.
M-4K-3.2 Identify and copy a simple pattern.
M-4K-3.3 Recognize a simple pattern and extend.
M-4K-3.4 Sort and classify objects by one attribute (size, shape, color).
M-4K-4.1 Identify two-dimensional shapes: circle, square, triangle, and rectangle.
M-4K-4.2 Represent two-dimensional geometric shapes.
M-4K-4.3 Understand and use positional words to describe the location of objects (up, down, in, over, under, behind, on top of, in front of).
M-4K-5.2 Compare the lengths of two objects.
M-4K-5.3 Use nonstandard units of measure to compare everyday objects.
PD-4K-2.1 Use strength and control to perform more complex tasks.
PD-4K-2.2 Use eye-hand coordination to perform more complex tasks.
PD-4K-2.3 Shoe beginning control of drawing and writing tools.

South Carolina Standards - Kindergarten
AL-K-1.2 Demonstrate increasing ability to identify and take appropriate risks in order to learn new knowledge and skills.
AL-K-2.1 Choose to participate in an increasing variety of activities, tasks and learning centers.
AL-K-2.2 Demonstrate delight or satisfaction when completing a task, solving a problem or making a discovery.
AL-K-3.1 Demonstrate initiative in planning, creating and carrying out activities.
AL-K-3.2 Demonstrate ability to maintain interest in self-selected activities, tasks and play despite distractions and interruptions.
AL-K-4.1 Demonstrate an increased ability to accomplish a task through a series of steps.
AL-K-4.2 Demonstrate an increasing ability to organize actions and materials in all aspects of the learning environment.
AL-K-4.3 Demonstrate an ability to follow through with tasks and activities.
AL-K-4.4 Demonstrate increasing ability to find more than one solution to a question, task or problem.
AL-K-5.1 Communicate about prior events and personal experiences in a variety of ways.
AL-K-5.2 Use prior knowledge to understand new experiences.
SE-K-3.4 Demonstrate empathy by responding to the feelings and needs of others.
SE-K-4.1 Play cooperatively with one or more children.
SE-K-4.2 Exhibit social skills to sustain a friendship.
SE-K-4.3 Demonstrate ability to join a group activity or game.
SE-K-4.4 Assume some responsibility for contributing to the group life of the class.
ELA-K-4.2 Generate complete sentences orally.
ELA-K-4.8 Use appropriate letter formation when printing.
South Carolina Kindergarten Standards (continued)

ELA-K.5.1 Use drawing, letters, or words to create written communication such as notes, messages, and lists to inform a specific audience.
ELA-K.5.2 Use drawings, letters or words to create narratives such as stories and journal entries about people, places or things.
ELA-K.6.1 Generate "how" and "why" questions about a topic of interest.
ELA-K.6.2 Understand that information is found in a variety of print and media sources.
ELA-K.6.4 Use complete sentences when orally communicating with others.
ELA-K.6.5 Understand and follow one- and two-step oral directions.
M-K.1.2 Generate conjectures and exchange mathematical ideas.
M-K.1.4 Analyze patterns by reasoning systematically.
M-K.1.7 Generalize connections among mathematics, the environment and other subjects.
M-K.3.1 Identify simple growing patterns.
M-K.3.2 Analyze simple repeating and growing relationships to extend pattern.
M-K.3.4 Classify objects according to one or more attributes such as color, size, shape or thickness.
M-K.4.3 Use positional words near, far, below, above, beside, next to, across from and between to describe the location of an object.
PD-K.2.1 Use strength and control to accomplish a variety of skilled tasks.
PD-K.2.2 Use hand-eye coordination to perform a wide variety of tasks.
PD-K.2.3 Use drawing and writing tools with some control and purpose.
S-K.1.4 Compare objects by using non-standard units of measure.
S-K.5.2 Compare the properties of different types of materials (including wood, plastic, metal, cloth, and paper) from which objects are made.

Butterfly Class 2009-2010


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