

We do not consider creativity sacred; we do not consider it as extraordinary but rather as likely to emerge from daily experience...Creativity should not be considered a separate mental faculty but a characteristic of our way of thinking, knowing and making choices.

Loris Malaguzzi, The Hundred Languages of Children

Como Park

Metro 94

2003-2004

Community Kindergarten

Family Education

Saint Paul Public Schools



Introduction

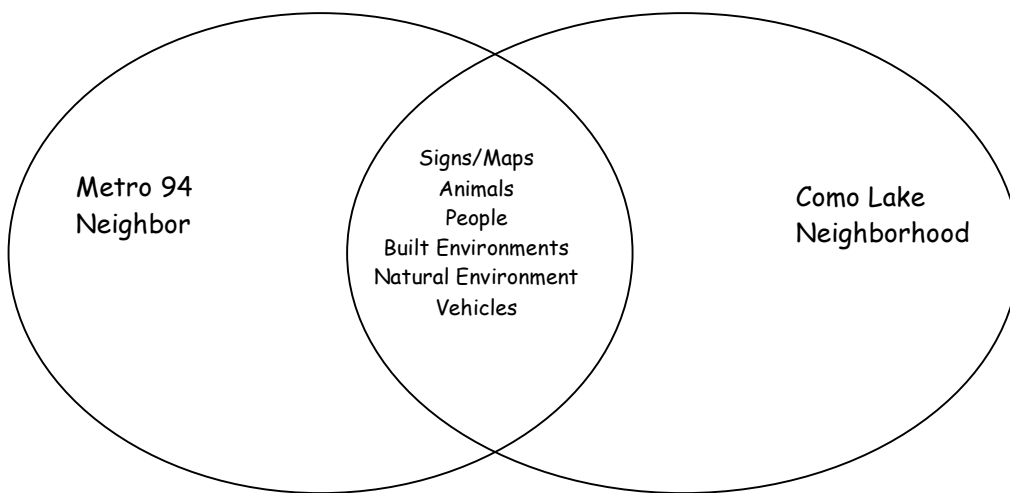
This "Our Community" project, supported by a Saint Paul Public Schools Arts 25 program, is part of a larger community project hosted by the Minnesota Children's Museum called "Creativity and the Young Child". This is a synthesis of the research and activities carried out by the children and their teachers in three Community Kindergarten classes during the school year 2003-2004 when the children ranged in age from 4 years, 5 months to 5 years, 5 months.

Our work has been inspired by encounters with the schools of Reggio Emilia. We began with the shared assumption that human beings are always engaged in the effort to make meaning, children and teachers alike. The children and their teachers have been encouraged to reflect on their experiences.

The area in which a school is located has its own particular characteristics. We wanted to engage our four-year-old children in thinking about and representing their ideas and feelings about the place they go to school.

- What ideas do children have about "neighborhood?"
- From the child's point of view, what constitutes a neighborhood?
- What details of the neighborhood do the children notice?
- How do they go about representing their ideas?
- How do they respond to each other's interests?

The teaching staff has used digital photos, extensive note-taking and frequent revisiting to support and extend the children's experiences. Despite the major difference between the two sites, a lake area and a business center, interestingly similar "Big Ideas" have emerged from the two venues:



The children have used their eyes and ears, hands and feet, thoughts and feelings, words and drawings, photos and buildings, to represent their experience.

The images and stories in the project documentation tell about the encounters of the children with the space in which their school is situated.

Como Community Kindergarten is located near a lake and public park. The children walked to the lake. They have drawn the lake and its environs through its change over the seasons. They have built the dock and pavilion they observed there in several media. They noticed the ducks, geese, squirrels and dogs and rendered their impressions through drawing, painting and clay. They were particularly excited by the reflections of the light on the water and the transformation of water to ice. A long investigation followed about the 'sparkles' they observed on the lake, as well as tracks they noticed left in the snow.

The Metro 94 Community Kindergarten is located within a business park. Their initial walks were supported by digital photos, which they then used to support their emerging English observations about their neighborhood. The children commented on water, trees, vehicles, people, the buildings and their surrounds, and signs. The children made drawings, sketches and constructions of the drains, cars and trucks, apartment houses and commercial buildings in their area. They re-created the nearby restaurant and cooked a meal. They have been completely absorbed by signs: signs they encounter in the world, and signs they make to communicate with one another.



Our School Neighborhood

**Community
Kindergarten**
Como Elementary



*"The sun is brighting
and makes the water sparkle!"*

Liz

Our Community

October 2003-March 2004

Community Kindergarten

Como Elementary

The Participants Children 4years,5 months - 5 years, 5 months

Como A	Como B
Samantha	Roxanne
Ramla	Joshua
Gederick	Rochelle
Janessa	Brittany
Diana	June
Mason	Elizabeth
Bennett	Gao
Max	Orku
Lorynne	Eleanor
Alex	William
Gold	Hue Chi
Yasmin	Paul
Youngyuan	Alanna
Giovanni	Arianna
	Eric
	Imani
	Pa Chia
Teachers	Teachers
Melissa Maschke	Melissa Maschke
Linda Vogel	Linda Vogel

Resource Teacher

Lani Shapiro

Minnesota Children's Museum

Jackie Lannin

Support Provided

Arts 25, Saint Paul Public Schools

Minnesota Children's Museum

From the children's walks, words and drawings emerged a "Big Idea", one that galvanized the group.

- THE SPARKLES



*"The sun is sparkly
Go down to the water
and make the water
Sparkly and cool!"*

Rochelle



Birdhouse on the tree

"I need to make sparkles."

Alanna said, *"I don't know how to make sparkles."*

William said, *"Just make dots like this."*



"Canadian goose in sparkly water."

Eleanor



Miss Melissa asked Rochelle if she could show her how
*"the sun is sparkly, go down to the water and make the
water sparkly and cool"?*

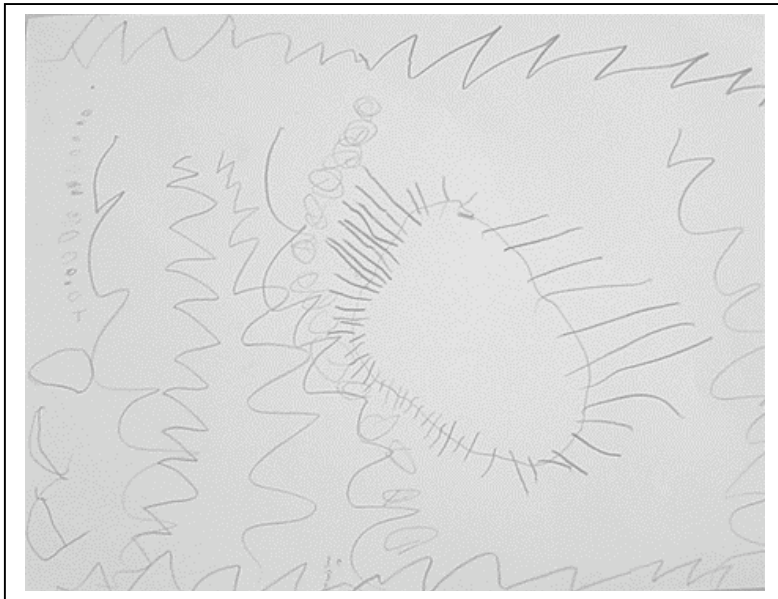


Mentoring

Alanna saw Rochelle making her sparkly picture. Alanna asked for a pencil to make her own picture. Alanna made then sun and compared it to Rochelle's sun. She added water. Alanna asked Rochelle to draw the sparkles for her.



Alanna said, 'Thanks, Rochelle you are really good.'



How sparkles get on the water

While sharing the lake picture with the children, Miss Melissa asked,
"How do you think the sparkles get on the water?"



"Sun is out." Gino

"The sun is on the water." Yasmin

"The sun is blocking it." Max

"Because the sun is out, when it's sunny it sparkles." Briana

"Freshco." Gao Sheng

"Sun, when it goes down." Alanna

"The sun." William

"The moon and the sun." Paul

Miss Melissa then said, "How does the sun make it sparkle?"

"The sun is brighting." Liz

"Sparkles come from the sky and go on the water." Janessa

"The sun have all the families of sparkles and give the sparkles to the ducks." Gold Nou

"Because the ducks have families." Briana

"The tree from the branches. The sparkles come down to the tree." Brittany

"Poop." Honey

"Fly." William

"The fish are flying fish and get the sparkles." Imani

"It's fairy dust. It falls from the sky." Eleanor

Grouping Children's Ideas to Revisit Their Thinking

Where do sparkles come from?



From the sun

Sparkles, lake, sun
The sun gets the sparkles in.
The sparkles are there because the sun is out.
The sun makes it sparkly because it comes up.
The sun goes down
Because the sun is out, when it's sunny it sparkles
Sparkles in the sun and go to the lake.
The sun is brighting and makes the water sparkle

Drops from the sky

It comes from the sky
It falls from the sky
It comes out of the sky and goes on the water
Sparkles come from the sky and go on the water
Sparkles drop down and come in the water
Sparkles come down from the sun, moon, stars.
Sun, moon, sky
Sparkles drop from god.



Sparkles are in the water

Shining on the water
It gets in the water.

Related to animals

The fish are flying fish and get the sparkles.

Because the ducks have families

The sun have all the families of sparkles and give the
sparkles to the ducks.



Related to trees

It comes down from the tree and bees bring the
sparkle to the water.

The tree from the branches. The sparkles come
down to the tree

Caused by the news

The sun makes the water sparkle because it shines
just like today because the news said it would

Sparkles are to make pleasure

The sparkles wanted to get out, because its too cold
and they get all this blanket for the sparkles and
caught it and the sun get out and all the people are
happy now.

The pink dots are fairy dust. The sun makes fairy dust.
It wants to make the water happy. The water feels good
to the sparkles
It's fairy dust.

From words to drawings:

Then children were invited to draw pictures of their ideas of how the sparkles get from the sun to the water.



After they drew their pictures, the children explained their ideas. Many creative explanations emerged.

The sparkles drop from the sky



"Sparkles drop down and come in the water."

Pachia



"Sparkles come down from the sun, moon, stars."

Paul



"The sun goes down."

Yasmin



"The sun gets the sparkles in. It gets in the water. They go down in the water."

Alanna

The sparkles drop from trees and bees:



*"It comes down from the tree, and bees
bring the sparkle to the water."*

Brittany

Or from heaven:



"Sparkles drop from God."

Max

Sparkles come from the sun:

*"The sun makes it
sparkly because it
comes up."*

Eric



*"The sparkles are there
because the sun is out."*

Briana



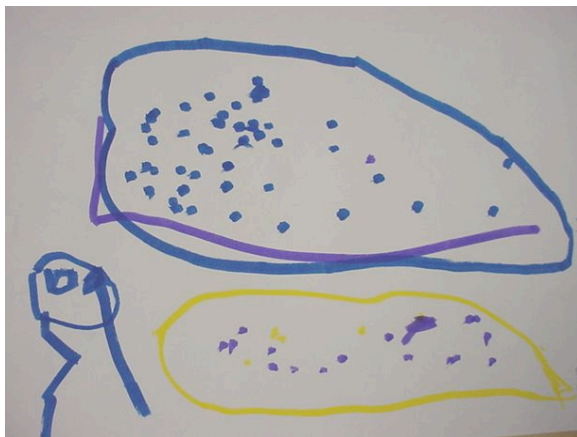
" They come from the sun; they are part of the sun."

Janessa



"The sun is brighting and makes the water sparkle. The sun makes the water sparkle because it shines just like today because the news said it would."

Liz



"Sparkles in the sun and go to the lake."

Lorynne

"Shining on the water."

June

Sparkles are there for our pleasure:

"The pink dots are fairy dust. It comes from the sky. The sun makes fairy dust. It dazzles down. It wants to make the water happy."

Eleanor



"The water feels good to the sparkles."

Ramla

"The sparkles wanted to get out, because its too cold and they get all this blanket for the sparkles and caught it and the sun get out and all the people are happy now."

Gold



Adding a new medium:

Aluminum foil helped the children convey the reflective quality of the ice.



"Us at the lake with the ice water and sparkles."

Yasmin

Experiments in Reflection

Experimenting: Where sparkles might come from?

Janessa said, "sparkles come from water."

William said, "it doesn't sparkled we need sun for water."

Miss M then said sun gives off light. Does anything else make light? Alanna said, "the lights and the flashlight."

Bennett tried the flashlight. He said, "the floor cannot sparkle because it is not clean."

William tried to make the pen sparkle without success.

Alanna looked at a clear ball and said, "it sparkles."



The children wanted to know why some things sparkled and some things didn't.

William decided to try and add snow to the water. He shined the flashlight on the water and snow and made it sparkle.



"Shiny things sparkle in the light." William

Ramla noticed colors when she put the flashlight on the CD.

Gino asked to turn off the lights to look for sparkles.

Alanna moved the water with her finger and then shone the flashlight on it to make sparkles.



Ramla said, *"Only beautiful things sparkle."*

It was essential, then, to base our model of Como Lake on its reflective quality.



"It's so beautiful sparkly" Bennett



"I can see my face in there."

"I can see mine, too!"

*"We live on St. Joe's.
The dot's my house.
Straight.
Another turn.
And another turn.
That dot that's right by my house is the school."*

Marquel

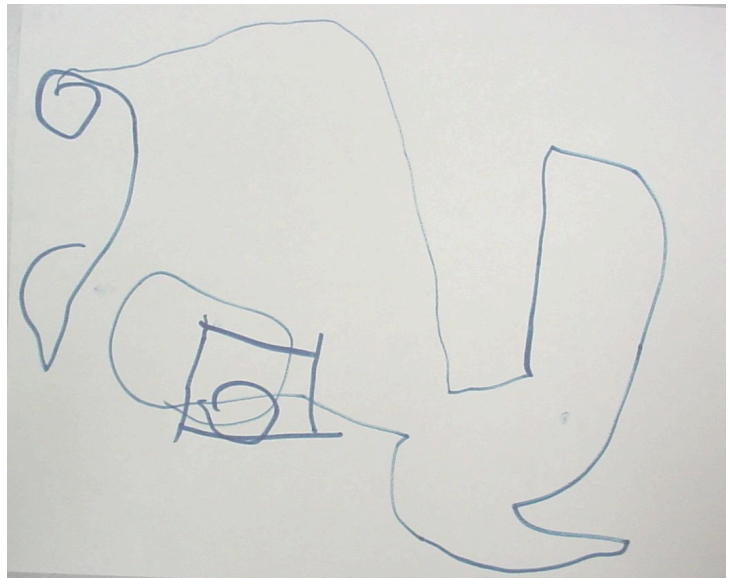


Signs and Maps

Our School Neighborhood

Community Kindergarten, Metro 94

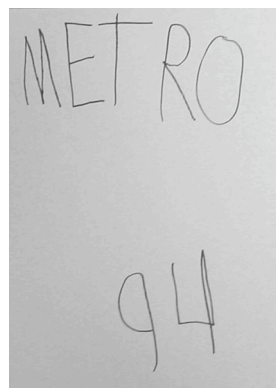
*"A very long, long time.
Straight this way.
Down...
and then turns again up.
Down...
then straight across to
school."*



Isaac

“We See Our School!”

KaLia



Our Community
October 2003 – March 2004

Community Kindergarten
Metro 94

The Participants **Children 4 years, 5 months – 5 years, 5 months**

Christian

Peter

Marquel

Ja-Moi

Isaac

Sophia

Nasiyah

Bayli

Kathleen

Saleena

Tina

Jason

Jessica

Ka Lia

Rose

Jenny

Maisee

Teachers

Julie Teske

Christine Vang/ Ying Khang/ Elizabeth Carlson

Resource Teacher

Lani Shapiro

Minnesota Children's Museum

Jackie Lannin

Support Provided

Arts 25, Saint Paul Public Schools

Minnesota Children's Museum

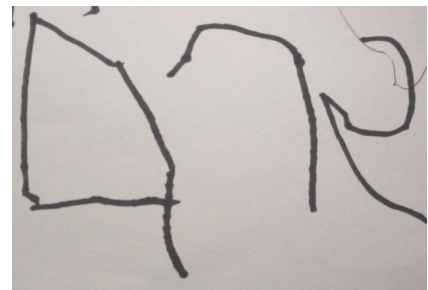
Walks in the neighborhood in the fall reveal that the area is full of environmental print which the children notice, both outdoors and indoors.

The children notice letters:

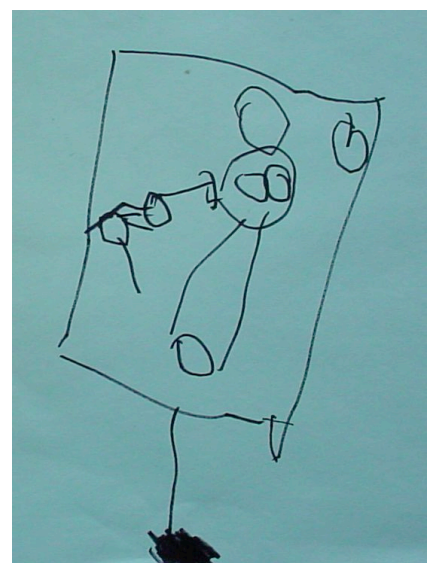


"ABC right there." Ka Lia

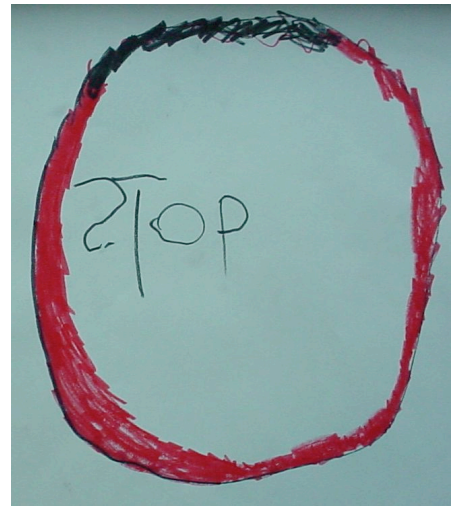
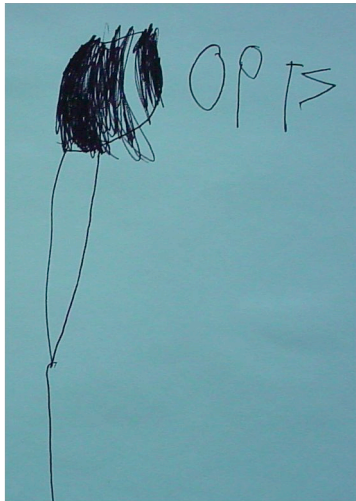
numbers:



and signs.



Making meaning of signs: color, shape, print and figures:



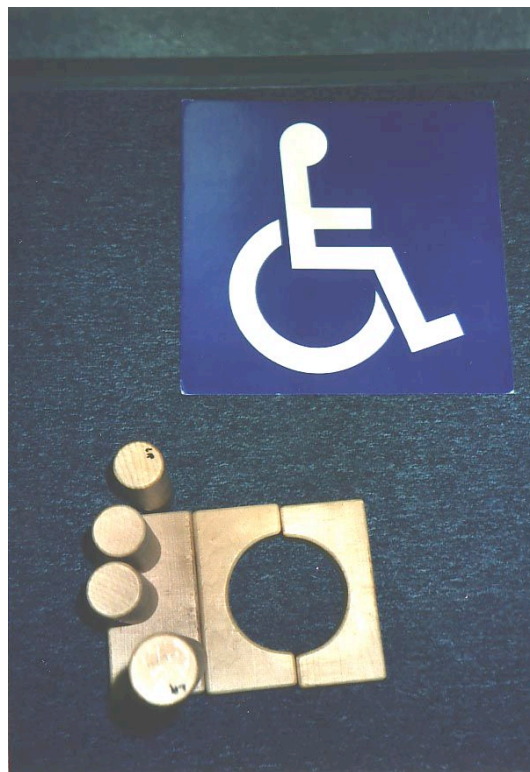
"Nobody going." Maisie



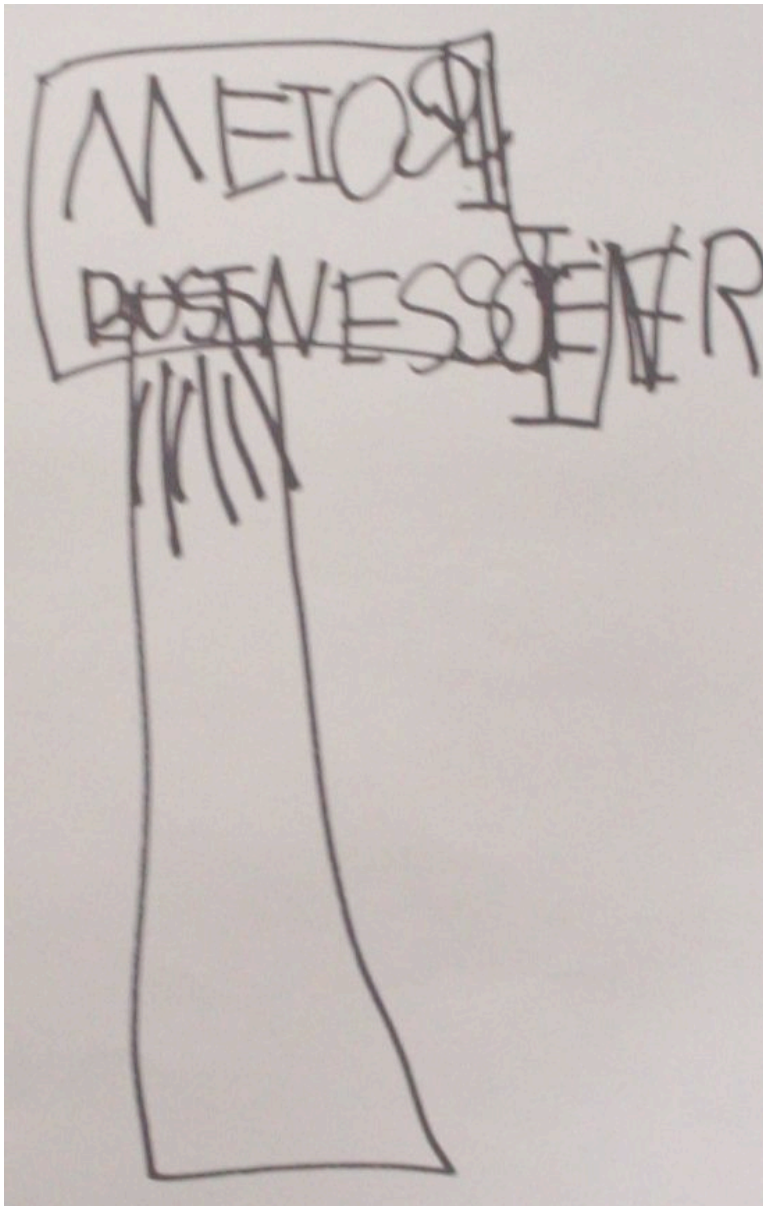
*"Sometimes they go;
these buttons go up and
down. One stop. One go.
One slow down." Isaac*



*"Stop, too. My mommy and me and I saw the yellow, red, green.
My mommy stop at yellow, wait 2 minutes, it's green light and we go."
Pachia*

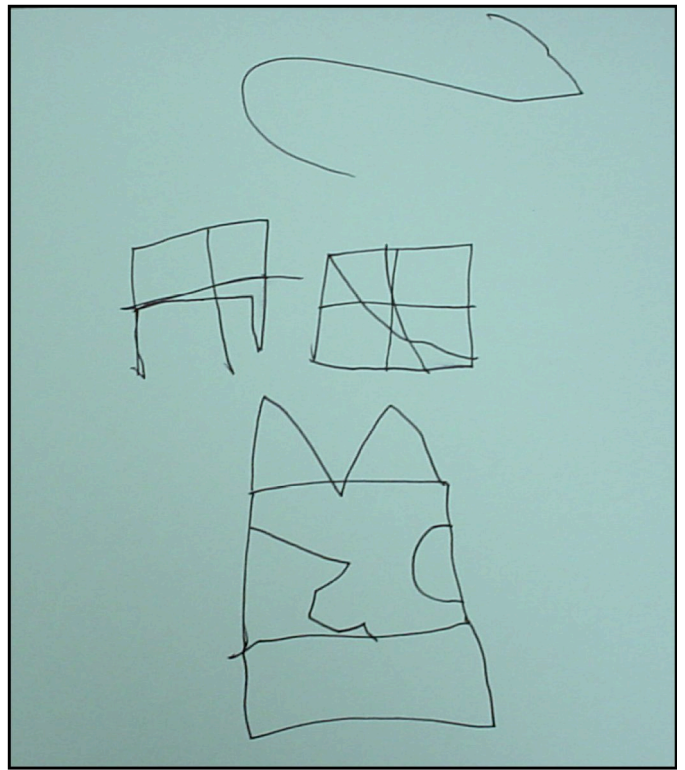


Community Signs and Landmarks



Signs provide place names.

"We see our school."
Ka Lia



"Target" Pachia

"I went there before." Christian

"It's behind my house." Pachia

"Circle and a button." Isaac

"A dot in the middle." Bayli

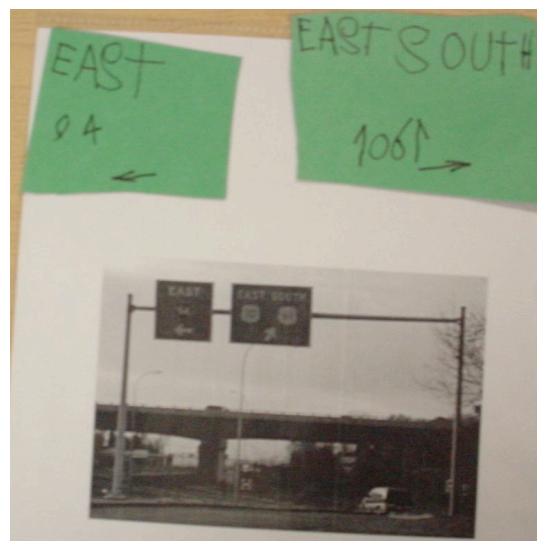


"McDonald's." Jason

"M" Bayli

*"My dad got a happy meal for me
and my brother, too."* Maisie





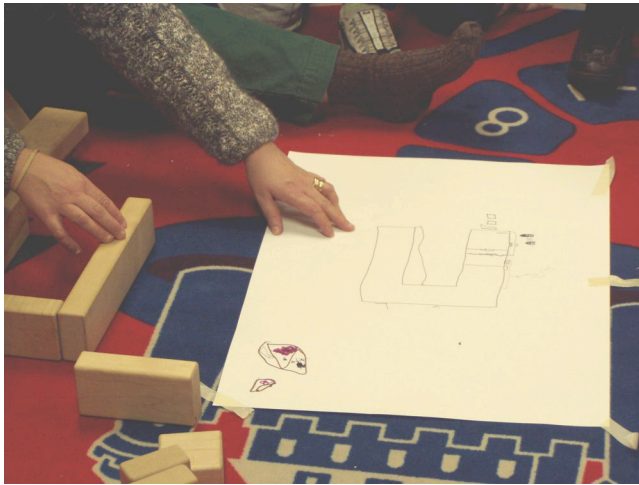
Ella's House



Highway 94

Our Neighborhood School





**Map
A Blueprint of
Metro 94 School**



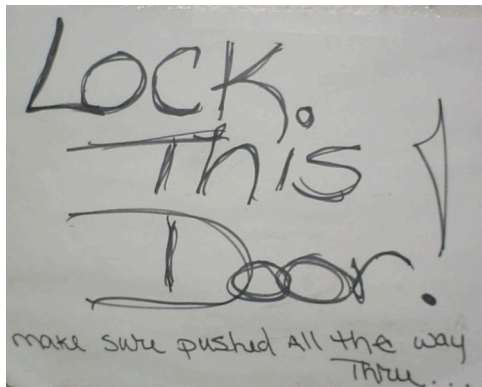
"I draw some door." KaLia



Signs for rules.

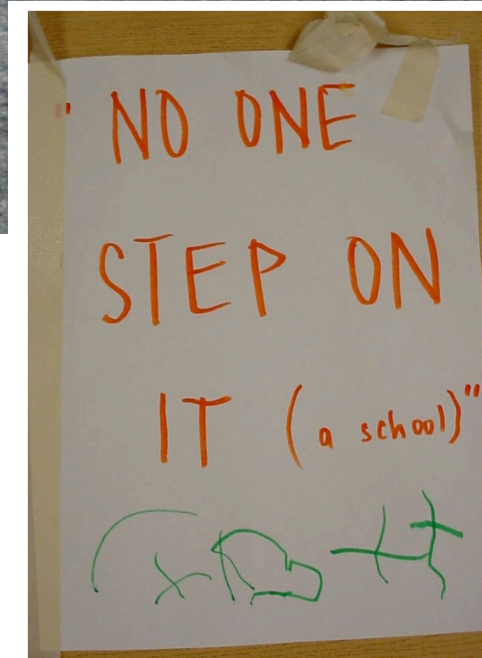
"You need to make a sign."

Christian

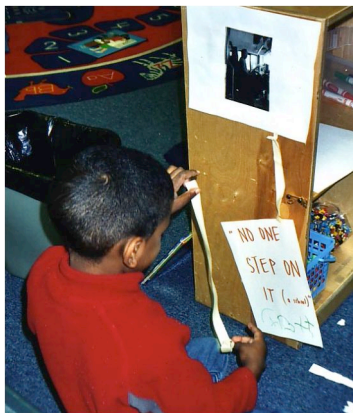




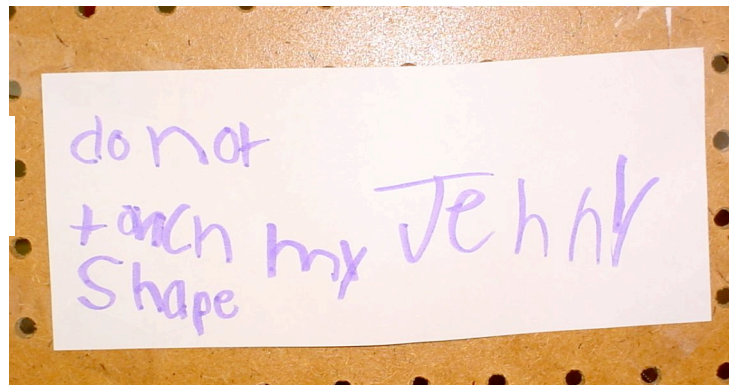
Signs to warn or request.



"No one step on it; a school"

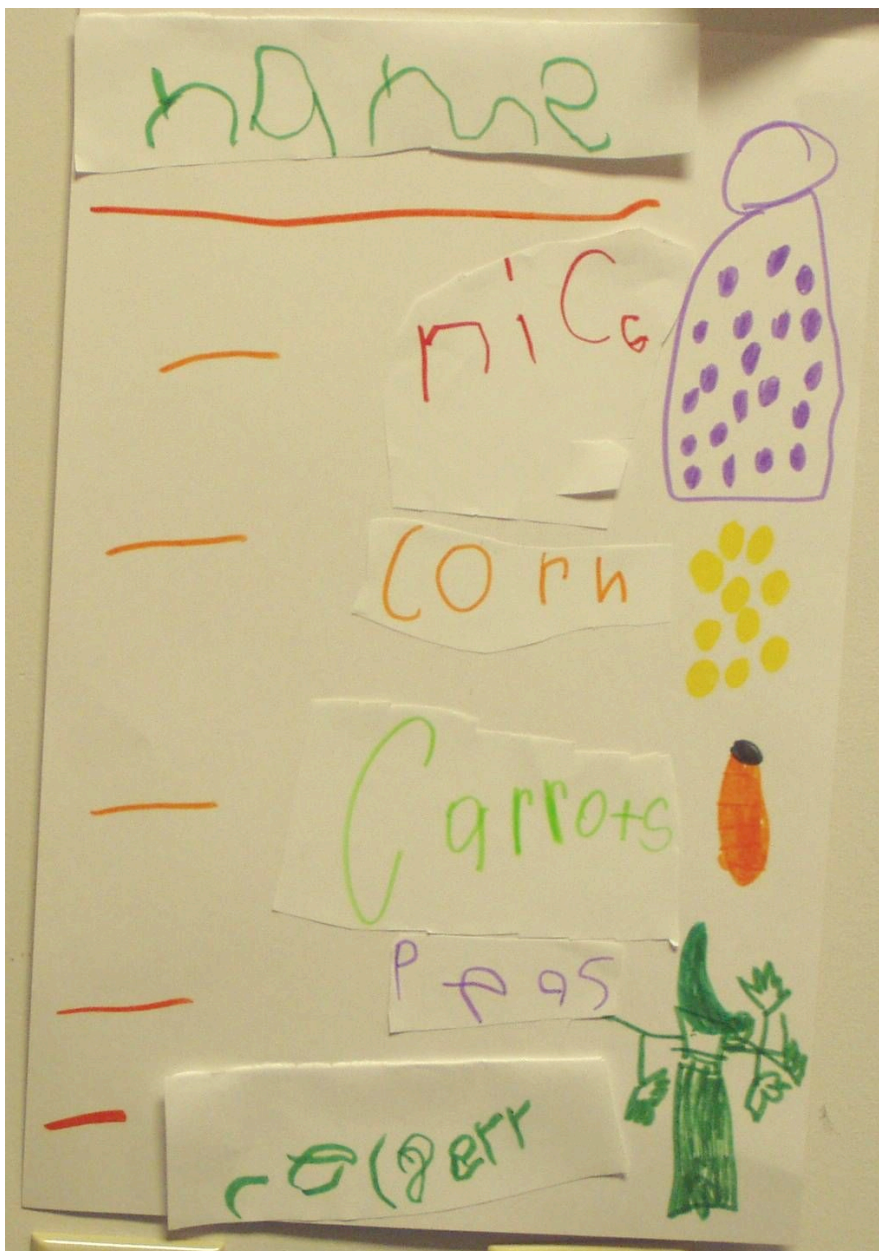


"I wanta leave it here. I need a sign."

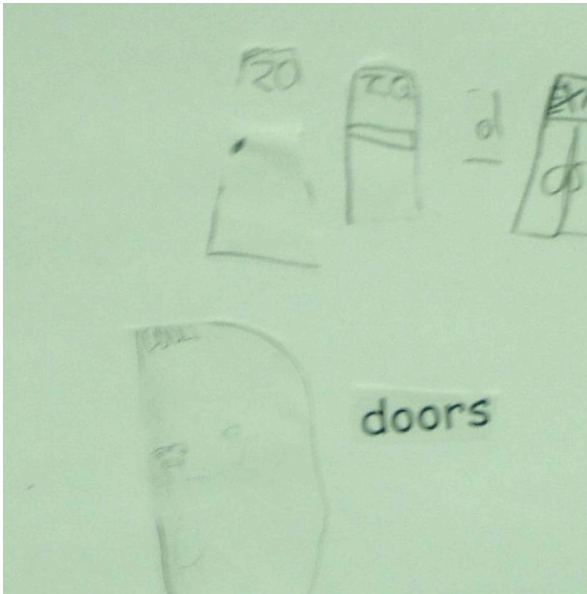




Signs to organize information

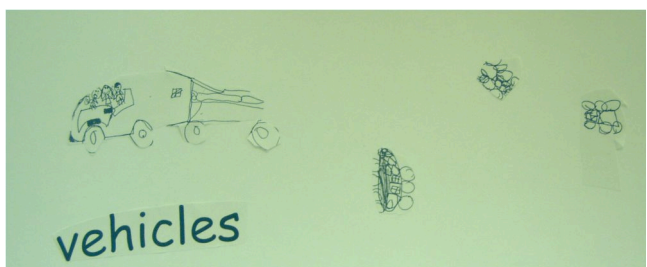
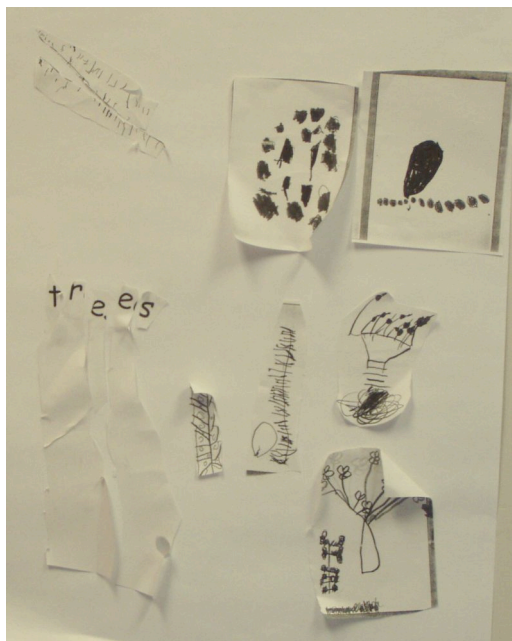


A menu for the class restaurant.

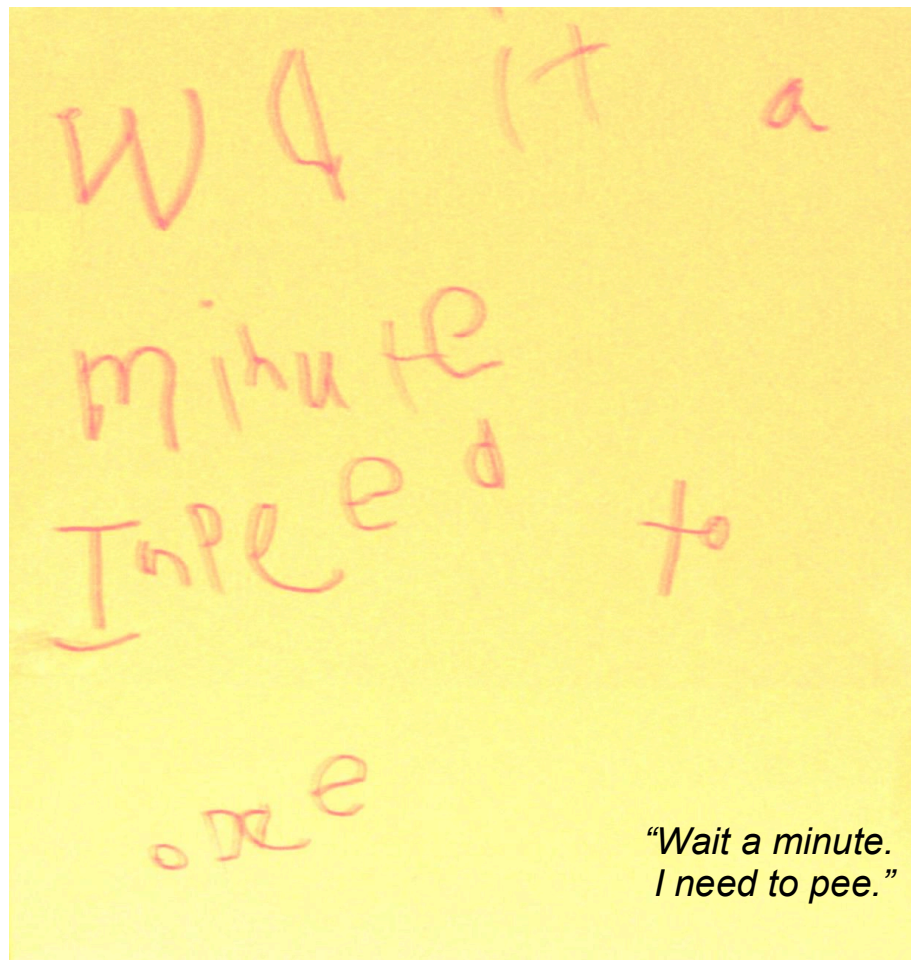


doors

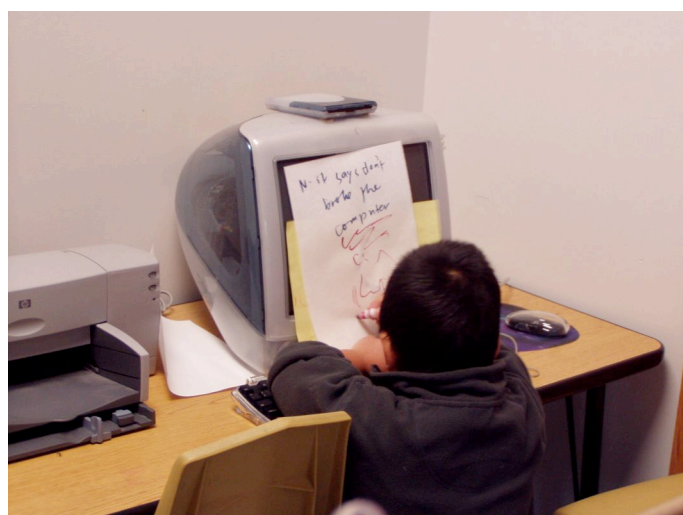
On the computer
"I do 'O O'." Pachia



Signs to make requests.



*"Wait a minute.
I need to pee."*



*"It says, 'Don't broke
the computer.'"*

Peter

Maps identify destinations

"To look and see and talk." Sophia

"Castle"

"California"

"Minnesota"

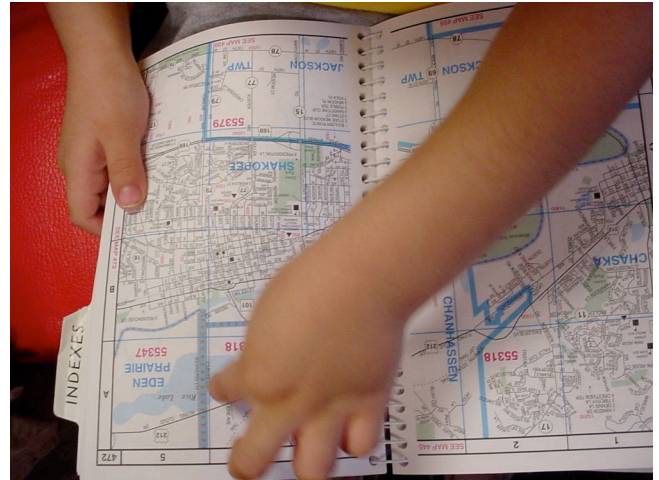
"Laos"

"Minnesota Zoo"

"St. Paul"

What's St. Paul?

"A place to live."



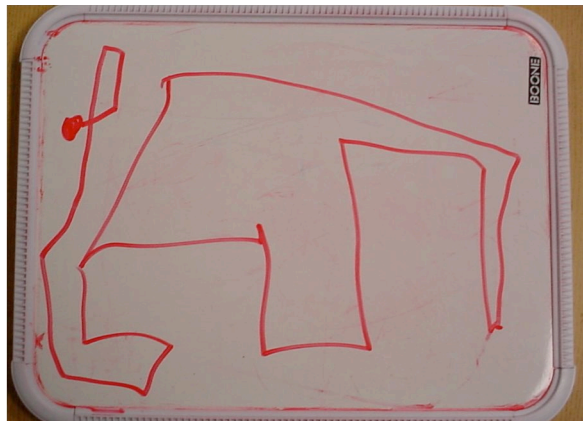
"To find your home and school." Jenny

"To go somewhere." Christian

"A letter." Ka Lia

"Where you go find some ice cream." Pachia

"Go find a treasure." Jenny



Directions and Maps to Find Your Way

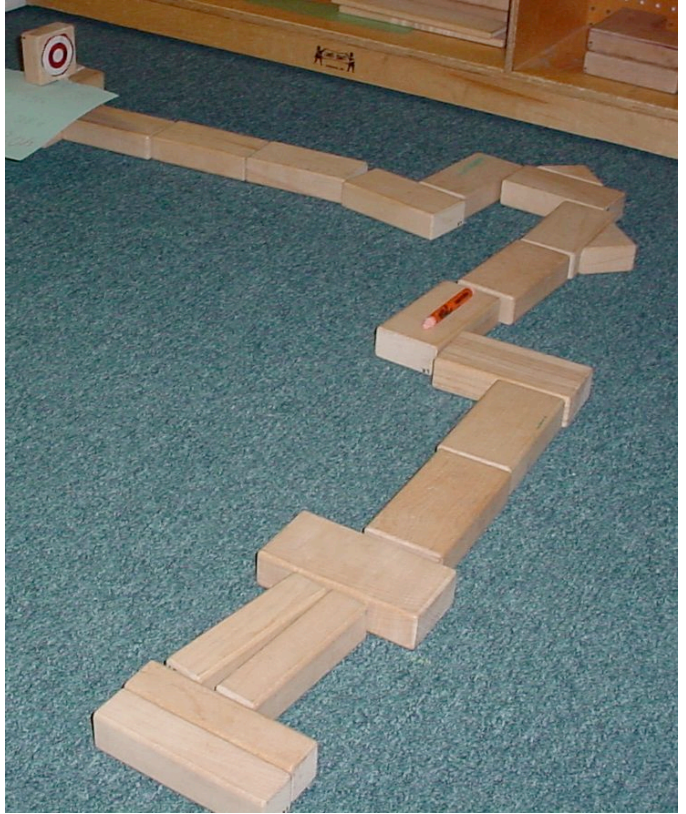
This is

...*“the way to go to Target.”*

Christian said, *“my house”* is *“right there.”* He put out a triangle block for *“a roof.”* He said he lived *“close to Target.”*

He put another triangle block next to his house to represent his *“friend’s house.”*

Christian also wanted to do our *“school.”* He thought it should have *“people.”* He chose a crayon to represent people.



Christian drew the way from his house to Target.



Mapping My Way

"My home is all the way the beginning." Sophia



Go to the door

The window

The bus

Standards of Experience

Lilian Katz, Ph.D.

Experiences that all children should have much of the time:

- **Experience confidence in their own intellectual powers;**
- **Experience of being intellectually engaged and challenged;**
- **Experience of what it feels like to understand some things in depth;**
- **Experience of applying their developing skills in purposeful and meaningful ways;**
- **Experience of overcoming set-backs and obstacles;**
- **Experience of feelings of belonging to a community in the class/school;**
- **Experience of helping others (peers) find out something, understand something better;**
- **Experience of making and giving suggestions and advice to peers;**
- **Experience of taking initiative, responsibility, making some choices, etc.**

Family/Community

Family participation was solicited from the beginning of the project. Families have participated in varying ways.

Some families have been able to volunteer in the classroom. Others come by for a visit.



With their children, families have collected and brought "Beautiful Stuff" to the class to be used as raw materials in our projects.

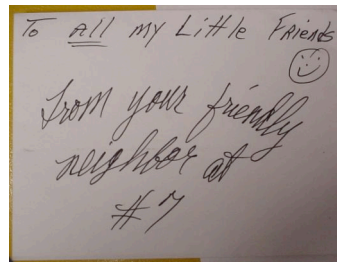


Many families joined the children and their teachers on a field trip to the Minnesota Children's Museum.



Photos, work samples and dialogue have been available to parents on a continuing basis to connect them with the progress of the class's investigation.

Particularly at Metro 94, community neighbors (merchants and service providers) have had a significant role in the actual work of the project. They have been drawn into a relationship with the class and the site in new ways.



On March 6, 2004, the Children's Museum hosted a "Family Night" which brought together families, teachers and community members to celebrate the work of their children and enjoy the resources of the museum. Each project included the construction of the children, a PowerPoint, a documentary notebook, and an interpretive panel.

Metro 94: 4 year old Community Kindergarten:



"Landscape of Relationships"

One hundred and thirty-three family members from Community Kindergarten participated in the Family Night.

Como: 4 year old Community Kindergarten



"Only Beautiful Things Sparkle!"

There were
parents,
grandparents,





brothers and sisters,



aunts and uncles,
cousins
and neighbors.



In addition, twenty-two Saint Paul Public School teaching and administrative staff, six staff members from the Minnesota Children's Museum and twenty-two community members attended this celebratory event.



In all, more than 185 people came to acknowledge the efforts of these young children and their teachers and to study their work.



Minnesota Children's Museum Mini-Gallery

The Children's Museum has designed and built a new mini-gallery in the "Our World" gallery, called "Our Community". The projects completed by these our three classes will rotate through this gallery until October, 2004.

