

Early Learning Kindergarten student Grace Beange, five, works in her science journal in the woods behind Princess Anne Public School.



# A bucket of ice: Influencing children's thinking



**Norm Blaseg**  
FIRST PERSON

One day, Grace came to school with a bucket of ice and shared her discovery with her classmates. When the teacher told the class to leave their winter clothes on because they were going for a walk on the first day of snow, Grace excitedly exclaimed: "We are going outside!"

When another student asked why, Grace responded: "To find ice!"

And so began a journey of inquiry for the four- and five-year-olds in Tara Thall's Early Learning Kindergarten classroom at Princess Anne Public School.

But this was no ordinary walk in the woods. The children had magnifying glasses to take a closer look around them. And they were given science journals to record what they were seeing.

"At first, the children were so excited about their observations, their preferred method of sharing was through conversation," says Tara Thall. "Then a few sat down in the forest and began drawing what they were seeing."

The teacher took photos to document their discoveries.

They saw footprints in the snow and needles on evergreen trees. They noticed the changes (in season) since the last time they had visited the forest. This led to conversations and questions about freezing and melting.

Back in the classroom, the children relived their walk in the woods through the photos

uploaded to the teacher's computer. The children pointed out the photos that were meaningful to them.

Using the photos as reference, some drew the snow, the tracks and the pine needles. They looked at some of the books in their classroom to assist them in their work. They printed labels such as needle, ice and pine for their drawings.

Since that day, the children have continued to draw and write about their discoveries in their science journals. And they take their science journals outside at recess to further their investigations.



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Norm Blaseg,  
Director of Education,  
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"Children are naturally curious about the world around them," says Superintendent Sharon Speir, who is leading the implementation of the new Early Learning Kindergarten program in Rainbow Schools. "Children want to know how things work and why things happen."

Curiosity on its own, however, is not enough. In Rainbow Schools, the Early Learning Kindergarten teacher and Early Childhood Educator work as a team to guide children. They use inquiry-based learning to build on children's natural curiosity. The children engage, explore, investigate and communicate.

"As children move naturally from noticing and wondering

about the objects and events around them to exploring and questioning in a more focused way, the Early Learning Kindergarten team helps them develop and extend their learning and demonstrate their knowledge," says Superintendent Speir.

Educators give children opportunities to plan, observe, and gather information, and then to compare, sort, classify, and interpret their observations.

They provide a rich variety of materials and resources, and interact with children to clarify, to expand, or to help articulate their thinking. They then encourage children to share their findings with one another through oral and/or visual representations.

In the next column, we will explore the concept of 100 languages and how children express themselves, not only by speaking and writing, but also through the arts.

Norm Blaseg is Director of Education for Rainbow District School Board.

## Information Nights

Rainbow Schools will host information nights for Full Day Every Day Junior and Senior Kindergarten on Tuesday, Jan. 24, for English Program schools and Thursday, Jan. 26, for French Immersion schools. Schools offering English and French Immersion programs will host one information night on Jan. 26. Visit [rainbowschools.ca](http://rainbowschools.ca) for details.

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