

A Head Start on Picturing America

(link for viewing at end of transcript)

[Music] [Child giggling]

Narrator 1: Young children can learn many things more than we've typically offered them. Narrator 2: Looking at these paintings, they find the things they're interested in and they get involved in them. That child, then, has this area of interest that they want to follow up. And then, you would be amazed at how their vocabulary will grow in that area because they're gonna want to hear things, they're gonna wanna have things read to them...

Narrator 1: We want our children in Head Start to have similar kinds of quality experiences that other children may have in their families, in other community preschools. Family Service Worker 1: We need a little piece from here to here, and then a piece above door. Family Service Worker 2: We need three chairs at each station...

Family Service Worker 3: That's a good spot for this. Family Service Worker 2: If we can get it right here so we put... Family Service Worker 4: They're gonna love this... Family Service Worker 2: Is this centered?... Family Service Worker 5: Welcome everyone to Family Night at the Museum...

Family Service Worker 5: This is where you want to be? [Children's voices] Amanda Bryans: The National Endowment for the Humanities and the Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start have joined together to bring 40 art quality images representative of American History to all of the 20,000 Head Start Centers. They'll be accompanied by a guide that will help teachers use the materials. Instructor: [Singing] Museum! Museum! Tonight we're at a museum!

Suzanne Thouvenelle: We're hoping that Head Start programs look at this like a slab of clay that they can take and mold, and imprint with their own special knowledge of their own community. Maxine Maloney: When we got the pictures, I started to thinking how we could adapt them to our community...

Grace Quashigah: You're trying to make a basket, Lina? Instructor: We're going to use these to make our own baskets. Grace Quashigah: Baskets! This really reminds me of where I have come from, Africa. These are the kinds of things we do. Maxine Maloney: We then went to thinking about ages three to five. Instructor: What are those? What looks like?

Lateffa King: It's kind of abstract, it's not the kinds of thing you would think that you would take a 4-year-old to see so it's unusual, and I think it's a good experience. Amanda Bryans: The more work we did with these materials, the more ideas we had about experiences that children could have across the child outcomes framework that would really support their development in each of those areas.

Willa Choper Siegel: When children see something that interests them they talk about it, they ask questions. So if you find that hook, you find a wonderful way for children to increase many, many of their skill areas. Usually they play with trains and they're on the flat floor, but here was their own river that shined and reflected. Instructor: The reflection you see in the water...

Willa Choper Siegel: What would happen if we put a train on water? Would the tracks be able to just be on the water? Well no, they needed to raise it with a bridge--that's problem-solving. That's really looking at what would happen "if," which is critical thinking.

Teacher: What animals do you think would live here? Child: Cows. Teacher: Cows, okay, what do cows eat? Child: Wood. Teacher: Wood. Okay, maybe sometimes wood, and sometimes grass?

Willa Choper Siegel: You hear it in terms of dialogic reading. But it is really conversation between two people. Just like you have a child who is looking at Yosemite, and someone asks him what color he sees. And here this little boy says, "I see green."

Willa Chopper Siegel: And the adults around him say, "I don't see green. Show me where the green is." And he shows them, and they said, "Oh yes, that's in the shade." Well, they then introduced the word "shade" at a time when he's ready to hear it because that's a concept that he's brought up. So he's now learned that word "shade."

Amanda Bryans: Vocabulary has been one of the big gaps between children who come from low-income backgrounds and children who come from not so low-income backgrounds. Michele Plutro: What this is going to help do is extend their vocabularies, to give children, to give adults, parents and staff alike, interesting things to talk about and, and visual ways of bringing in new words into the conversation. Speaker 9: When I go to see a piece of art you know what I do? I stop, look, and think!

Kiersten Beigel: Family night at the Museum became the idea for an opportunity to bring families in. Programs across the country can organize their Picturing America Initiative however they like. So it could be used as a kickoff, or it could be something they do later. Speaker 10: All the way at the top!

Kiersten Beigel: Some of the things that parents can do at a Family Night at the Museum that can really help support their children's learning is to look at the artworks together and ask their children questions.

Parent: What do you see? Child: Um, I don't know. Parent: What do you think it is? Willa Choper Siegel: We need to give a child the time to compose his answer... Child: A tower?

Willa Choper Siegel:... and we need to really, sometimes, count to five because that child needs to pull together the noun and the verb that they want to use, and to see if they know any descriptive words. Family Service Worker: You're trying to make the statue of Benjamin Franklin, but you just tried to make the base of it. Parent: I, I started with the easy part![Laughing]

Kiersten Beigel: Family Night at the Museum is a really great opportunity for any staff in a Head Start program to really collaborate with teachers and family service workers, literacy specialists, parent involvement specialists because there's really a role for everybody in a Family Night at the Museum.

Teacher: Where do you think that train's going? Child: To the zoo. Teacher: To the zoo. Wow! Suzanne Thouvenelle: We took each of the artworks and tried to discuss it in terms of how the teaching team in the classroom might address some of their educational goals.

Teacher: What do you think about this one? Child: It has a lot on it. Maxine Maloney: Children can have an art experience, that's also a math experience. Teacher: How many steps you gonna use? Child: Two, three, four. Four!

Teacher: You have four steps already on your ladder! Child: Now I got five. Teacher: Now you have five. Miss Judy: Sometime when artists and different people look at a picture, they see different things. Maxine Maloney: It is teaching diversity. Miss Judy: That's why sometime when Miss Judy asks ya'll to do a picture of something, ya'll all make it your own way.

Maxine Maloney: It's teaching, also, having self-esteem, to be able to feel free to express that, "I saw this," and it's okay that you saw it. And then, they're working with a friend who may see it a different way, and it's okay, and to appreciate that. Suzanne Thouvenelle: We're trying to reach out to the families and support parents as primary teachers of their children.

Grace Quashigah: Yeah! Remember we got something like this for the baskets? We weaved baskets. You remember we did the basket Angelina? Angelina: Yeah.

Anne Taggart: One parent even called back three times to tell the family services worker this was a lot of fun.

Instructor: You know why I like museums? Because sometimes when I see a piece of art, it inspires me to read books I've never even thought of reading before!

Willa Choper Siegel: What excites me the most is having their outcomes in the Child Outcomes Framework domains...

Child: Look mommy... Willa Choper Siegel: ...increase through things that they want to do. Child: A train A train!

Kiersten Beigel: I think there is a lot of exposure to different artworks--to different aspects of American history--that, perhaps, people may not have had a chance to, kind of, interact with in quite that way. Grace Quashigah: Activities like this, it brings us all together.

Child: It was fun! Maxine Maloney: I think it's a great tool for parents to begin to have meaningful conversations with their children. [Applause][Music]

-- End of Video --

-- Permalink for viewing (requires Flash and JavaScript)

<http://videos.sorensonmedia.com/HEAD+START/000001-A+Head+Start+on+Picturing+America-2008/7d68096f15182V4b13j9a7fm991aa915547a>