

December 2003 PreK-12 Newsletter

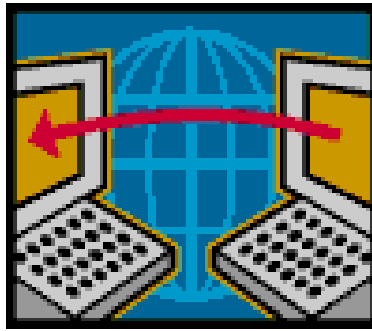
December is...



The fall leaves have mostly gone thanks to the blowing winds that herald in the coming winter. December is a month filled with the sights, sounds and wonders of holidays, family time and remembrances. The past year is recalled even as we look forward to the next. As the days whirl past, take time to rest, reflect and read with your children. Focus on the present. Allow yourself to enjoy the moment.

**December is Bingo's Birthday Month
National Stress Free Family Holidays Month
Read A New Book Month,
Safe Toys and Gifts Month,
Universal Human Rights Month**

**Pearl Harbor Day (12/7)
Poinsettia Day (12/12)
National Firefighters Day (12/15)
Hanukkah (12/20 - 12/27)
Winter Solstice (12/22)
Christmas (12/25)
Kwanzaa (12/26)**



Sites to See

Age appropriate safe toys and gifts

<http://www.healthierliving.org/newsletter/200112/safetoys.html>

The **Consumer Protection and Safety Commission** offers helpful toy safety information, including a database of recalls and warnings; toy safety publications, such as guides for age-appropriate toys, toy labeling, and proper helmet selection and fit; and a booklet called "**For Kids' Sake Think Toy Safety,**"

<http://www.cpsc.gov/> also available in Spanish

<http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/spanish/281s.pdf>

The Giving Tree Lesson

A Teachers First holiday lesson based on Shel Silverstein's book

The Giving Tree. <http://www.teachersfirst.com/lessons/givingtree.htm>

The Toy Safety Hotline from the Toy Industry Association offers links to toy warning lists, manufacturer contact information, and tips for safe toy use.

http://www.toy-tia.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Parents/4_Toy_Safety/4_Toy_Safety.htm

Here are wonderful winter books used by more than 90 teachers participating in a collaborative Internet project during January -February 2003

<http://www.mrsmcgowan.com/winter2003/booklinks.htm>

LET'S READ ABOUT



WINTER TALES

Preschool

Clifford's First Snow Day

Norman Bridwell

Not long ago, Clifford the Small Red Puppy experienced his first autumn. Now he leaps into his first winter with fluffy white snow, a sled ride, and exciting winter fun.

Dream Snow

Eric Carle

On Christmas Eve an old farmer wonders how Christmas can come without snow. He takes a nap and dreams of a snowstorm and when he awakes finds that his dream has come true. The old farmer puts on a red suit and all kinds of surprises happen.

Gingerbread Baby

by Jan Brett

What happens when you peek into the oven before the gingerbread is fully baked? You can't catch him, or can you? A fun retelling of the tale set in winter.

The Snowman

by Raymond Briggs

The snowman comes to life.

AGES 4-8

Annie and the Wild Animals

by Jan Brett

Annie's cat is missing, and she puts out corn cakes hoping for a new friend. But the wild animals are not good pets!

Curious George in the Snow

Margret Rey H. A. Rey

Curious George plus snow equals all kinds of mischief.

Do Like Kyla

by Angela Johnson

A little sister imitates an older sister in the snow.

Geraldine's Big Snow

by Holly Keller

Geraldine the pig can't wait for the snow to come.

The Hat

by Jan Brett

When Hedgie gets a stocking stuck on his head; he starts a new fashion trend.

The Mitten

by Alvin Tressault

How many animals can fit in a boy's lost mitten?

Owl Moon

by Jane Yolen illustrated by John Schoenherr

Join a young child and father in winter owling trek.

The Snow Lambs

by Debi Gliori

Sam loses his sheepdog, Bess, in a snowy storm. Mom and Dad say Bess can take care of herself, but Sam is not so sure.

Thomas' Snowsuit

by Robert Munsch

Thomas really doesn't want to put on his snowsuit.

Trouble With Trolls

by Jan Brett

Treva's dog gets stolen by the trolls, and she keeps trading warm clothing for her dog. How will she get them all back?

White Snow, Bright Snow

by Alvin Tressault

People in a neighborhood prepare for snow.



Featured Winter Story

The Mitten by Jan Brett

Age Preschool-Grade 1

Several animals sleep snugly in Nicki's lost mitten until the bear sneezes.

Lesson Topic/Subject: The Mitten Lesson: Where Do Bears Live?
Grade Level: Kindergarten

Objectives:

Given the story *The Mitten* by Jan Brett read aloud, students will practice making predictions about what will happen in the story by looking at the pictures and answering questions aloud.

Materials For the teacher:

- *The Mitten* by Jan Brett
- An picture of a bear in a den (that you have drawn)
- Child's mitten

Procedures:

Anticipatory Set:

1. Show the students a child's mitten.
2. Ask the students if a bear could fit into a mitten.

Exploring the Story:

1. Begin reading the story, *The Mitten* by Jan Brett, aloud. (This is a Ukrainian folk tale about a little boy who loses his mitten in the snow. Animals, including a bear, crawl into the lost mitten to get warm.)
2. Point out the mitten-shaped illustrations on the borders of the big illustrations of the book. (These are pictures that foreshadow what will happen on the next page of the story. They show pictures of animals in their homes before they find the mitten. One of the animals is a bear in a den.)
3. Ask the students to predict what will happen in the story by looking at the mitten-shaped pictures on the borders of the book.
4. Read the entire story, stopping to ask questions or to have the class predict what will happen.
5. Ask the students to recall where the bear lived before he found the mitten. Introduce the word "den" and the concept of hibernation.

Follow-up Ideas

Show the students pictures of various dens, including a den in a hollow tree, a snow den, and a cave. One book that has good pictures of dens is *Please Don't Feed the Bears!* By Allan Fowler.

- Show the students a picture of a bear in a den that you have drawn. Tell them about your picture. Then write a description under the picture. For example, you might write, "My black bear lives in a den in a hollow tree." Let the children draw their own picture of a bear in a den and dictate a sentence about their picture.
- Create "dens" and "bears" using clay or Playdoh.

Closure:

Allow students to share pictures/dens and tell about their work.

Evaluation of Student Learning:

1. Did the students make predictions about the story after looking at the pictures?
2. Did the students draw a picture of a bear in a den (hollow tree, a snow den, or a cave)? Make a den and bear with clay or Playdoh?
3. How did the students describe their pictures? Their dens? Did they use the name of the bear and the type of den that their bear lived in?

For More Winter Fun

Sagwa The Chinese Siamese Cat, Episode 118, Mini Documentary: Family Holiday—Explore some different holidays that people celebrate around the world. Parent tip: Have your child draw a picture of how your family celebrates a holiday.

Dragon Tales, Episode 210 A Snowman for All Seasons—A broken snow machine means disaster for Chilly the snowman and his snow puppy unless the gang can fix it. Parent tip: Read *Strange in the Woods* by Jean Stoick.

IN THE NEWS



Boohbah is an exciting new program for children, with a format that fosters both creative thinking and creative movement. Boohbah is entirely designed to encourage physical action on the part of its young viewers. It deliberately combines infectious magical movement, for children to imitate, with inset stories for them to predict outcomes.

The design of the show - visually and otherwise, draws upon early concepts in science, math and art and combines these with 'tele-visual magic' to create a uniquely funny television experience.

The Boohbahs, five magical atoms of power, light and fun travel in their Boohball around the world, from child to child. Fifteen countries are visited throughout the changing title sequence.

The Boohbahs represent the imaginative power and light which allows children to control the screen action by the use of the magic word "Boohbah", and send presents into an imaginary Storyworld for the Storypeople - Grandmamma, Grandpappa, Mrs. Lady, Mr. Man, Brother and Sister, Auntie and Little Dog Fido to play with and make a story in partnership with them. We hear the children intervening in the screen action by the sound of their blowing and their use of the word "Boohbah". This motivates the action and moves the story along. Only Little Dog Fido is not wholly in their control! Children are totally engaged and have a lot of fun guessing which Storyperson will appear and what will happen next.

PBS Programming related to education issues:

First Year

<http://www.pbs.org/firstyear/>

As our politicians and the press argue the merits of countless school reforms, it is our teachers who enter the classroom every day and fight the real fight: educating our children, one child at a time. *The First Year* shows the human side of this story: the determination and commitment of five novice teachers as they struggle to survive their first year in America's toughest schools. (Web site has forum postings, stories of five first year teachers, and information about how to get certified, etc.)

Frontline: Medicating Kids

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/medicating/>

In "Medicating Kids," FRONTLINE examines the dramatic increase in the prescription of behavior-modifying drugs for children. Are these medications really necessary--and safe--for young children, or merely a harried nation's quick fix for annoying, yet age-appropriate, behavior? FRONTLINE follows four Denver, Colo., families over the course of one year. From school complaints of disruptive behavior and parent-teacher conferences through multiple doctors, medications, and dosages, "Medicating Kids" offers an intimate portrait of how American families grapple with the decision to medicate their children and the stress such decisions place on the family. Viewers meet Nicolas DuPerret, barely three years old, whose doctor suspected he might have ADHD; Noelle Demo, 13, whose fidgeting and disruptive behavior resulted in poor grades and school suspensions; Alex McCarty, 12, whose ADHD was compounded by severe depression; and Robin Day, 16, who has endured multiple diagnoses, one hospitalization, and ultimately his parents' divorce.

(Web site has full program streamed; interviews with experts on various sides of the issue; info about how to diagnose and treat ADHD; and information about different ADHD medications.)

Frontline: The Battle Over School Choice

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/vouchers/>

"The Battle over School Choice" examines the passionate educational reform debate and its latest catchword--providing greater "choice" for parents and children. Drawing on interviews with politicians as well as interviews with national education experts, FRONTLINE looks at the pros and cons of the various reform initiatives in several states. In Ohio and Texas, vouchers and charter schools are sparking public debate. Most of Cleveland's 4,000 voucher students are in Catholic schools, and opponents argue that vouchers are siphoning off resources from inner city schools. Critics--and the courts--also say that taxpayer-funded vouchers for parochial schools violate the First Amendment's separation of church and state. But proponents counter that vouchers offer a "life raft" for low-income students seeking a better education. And Cleveland parents tell FRONTLINE vouchers are the only way for their children to escape a broken down public school system. While much of the education reform debate focuses on the "voucher wars," reforms are also occurring through alternative, charter schools, which have been created within the existing public school system. FRONTLINE profiles a secular one in Cleveland run by two nuns which offers an oasis of safety in a neighborhood of drugs and crime, and another alternative school in Austin, Texas which is nurturing the community's most neglected children.

(Web site includes interviews with experts; state-by-state information; readings; and discussion.)

Frontline: Secrets of the SAT

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/sats/>

Just days before hundreds of thousands of high school students take the SAT--a three-hour college entrance exam that tests verbal and math skills--FRONTLINE's "Secrets of the SAT" examines the national obsession over the SAT and the controversy over its fairness, reliability and impact on racial diversity on campus. This report draws on the work of [Nicholas Lemann](#) and his five-year study of the SAT--[The Big Test: The Secret History of the American Meritocracy](#). Lemann discusses the origins of the SAT, the idea of an American meritocracy (an idea that goes back to correspondence between Thomas Jefferson and John Adams), and how the SAT today has become a ticket into America's ruling class. To discover just how important SAT scores are to a student's future, FRONTLINE looks at the [booming test prep business](#) which offers test preparation courses for [students as young as 13 and 14](#). FRONTLINE's cameras also follow seven students who are applying to the University of California, Berkeley, the country's most selective public university, and [go inside the admissions process](#) at

Berkeley where those seven students are competing with 31,000 others for 3,500 spots.

(Web site includes interviews; an interactive activity where you rate five college applicants; "insider" video of the college admissions process; and information about the test-prep industry in the U.S.)

Frontline: Testing Our Schools

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/schools/>

The No Child Left Behind Act, as it is officially known, received broad bipartisan support in Washington. But around the country, as many states have already begun to put testing and "accountability" measures in place, educators and test experts are raising serious questions. Can standardized achievement tests really measure the quality of a school? How does the intense pressure to raise test scores affect the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom? What are the challenges of setting academic standards in the first place? In "Testing Our Schools," FRONTLINE and the PBS education series *The Merrow Report* take up these questions and others. In interviews with educators, policymakers, and testing experts, correspondent John Merrow reports on recent developments in Virginia, California, and Massachusetts, and explores the debate over whether our reliance on standardized tests -- and our faith in test scores -- could do more harm than good for the nation's students and schools.

(Web site includes state-by-state comparisons of testing procedures; interviews, discussion areas, and detailed information about NCLB, the history of the standards movement, and the uses/misuses of standardized testing.)

Frontline: Inside the Teenage Brain

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/teenbrain/>

In "Inside the Teenage Brain," FRONTLINE chronicles how scientists are exploring the recesses of the brain and finding some new explanations for why adolescents behave the way they do. These discoveries could change the way we parent, teach, or perhaps even understand our teenagers. New neuroscience research has shown that a crucial part of the brain undergoes extensive changes during puberty -- precisely the time when the raging hormones often blamed for teen behavior begin to wreak havoc. It's long been known that the architecture of the brain is largely set in place during the first few years of life. But with the aid of new technologies such as magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), scientists are mapping changes in pre-teen and teenage brains and finding evidence that remarkable growth and change continue for decades. Confronted by these new discoveries, academics, counselors, and scientists are divided on just what all this means for children.

The Merrow Report

<http://www.pbs.org/merrow/tv/index.html>

This continuing series (on NPR and on PBS) covers various education-related issues. Past episodes have included:

- School Sleuth (highlighting effective school reform movements)
- Teacher Shortage: False Alarm?
- ADD: A Dubious Diagnosis?
- Toughest Job in America (profile of school superintendents)
- Growing Up in the City (urban schools)
- Lost in Translation: Latinos, Schools, and Society
- The Promise of Preschool

Complete list of programs may be found at <http://www.pbs.org/merrow/tv/all.html>

Coming up in April: a special on Chris Whittle and the Edison Schools.

Misunderstood Minds

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/misunderstoodminds/>

Millions of American children struggle in school daily because of serious learning problems. The causes are often unknown, specific problems can be difficult to pinpoint, and the long-term effects hard to predict. Research in the field of learning problems took off in the 1960s, when the first federal funds were earmarked to support children with specific learning disabilities. Experts know more now than ever before, but the evolution of that knowledge also parallels the rise of standardized tests and the current era of high-stakes testing. The tension between the demand for academic success and the stubborn reality of a problem makes learning difficulties one of the most contentious topics in an increasingly competitive and educated society. It comes as no surprise that when a child can't read or write or pay attention -- and when the problem doesn't go away -- parents, educators, experts, and policymakers often collide in an earnest struggle to find answers.

The landscape of learning problems encompasses a range of expert opinions. Different approaches to terminology and treatment reflect that range. Some learning specialists use the phrase "learning differences" to describe cognitive strengths and weaknesses without labels that they believe may erode children's self-esteem and motivation to succeed. Neurologists and other learning specialists prefer the phrase "learning disabilities" to describe specific neurocognitive breakdowns in otherwise bright children and to underscore the existence of disabling conditions. In the middle of this landscape there is common ground. Everyone agrees that "disability" is a term with legal ramifications; virtually all of the funding to support children with specific problems is tied to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. And while learning differences and disabilities don't go away, the research and work of learning experts in the last 40 years translates into effective strategies that help children succeed.

(Web site includes information, video, and interviews organized into Attention, Reading, Writing, and Math. Also includes special interactive activities that help site visitors understand what it is like to try to do common tasks with particular disabilities (dyslexia, etc.) Try out the “Experience Firsthand” section!)

No Greater Calling

<http://www.pbs.org/unctv/nogreatercalling/>

No Greater Calling focused on why models of teaching should drive the education process. In the one-hour program, six outstanding teachers discuss their methods and principles that have earned them recognition for best practice in the teaching profession. These profiles show why professional development, high standards, and the use of “best practices” are important to teachers and our system of public education. Following No Greater Calling are three professional development programs focusing specifically on national standards for teachers and principals. These 30-minute programs define and exemplify classroom practice of established and widely accepted national standards. The first of these programs, Every Student’s Right, demonstrates for aspiring and new teachers how the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) standards provide guidance and support for them as new educators. The second program, Becoming the Best, follows the journey to developing into an accomplished teacher based on the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). Leading Together, the last program in the series, examines how the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ILLSC) standards cultivate and enrich leadership in our nation’s school leaders and principals. (This web site is really self-paced professional development for educators: they proceed through video segments, download a guide, and can work their way through a series of reflective exercises. Also includes a discussion area.)

NOW with Bill Moyers

<http://www.pbs.org/now/society/moses.html>

NOW is a weekly series that covers a variety of social issues. Several of the stories have had educational focus, including the following:

- Inequalities in math instruction (related to civil rights)
<http://www.pbs.org/now/society/moses.html>
- Commercialism in Schools
<http://www.pbs.org/now/society/schoolstats.html>
- Kids and Chemicals: Are We Making Our Children Sick?
http://www.pbs.org/now/transcript/transcript117_full.html

Only a Teacher

<http://www.pbs.org/onlyateacher/>

The documentary series "*Only A Teacher*" explores the diverse faces and many roles of the American teacher from the 1830s to the present. In three one-hour episodes, "*Only A Teacher*" presents historical background about the profession and how it developed, while giving voice to contemporary teachers and their concerns. The series plays out as a dialogue between past and present, as teachers from different eras describe their dreams and setbacks, challenges and achievements. Today, teachers confront a range of challenges. But teachers have always faced confounding expectations and formidable obstacles to their work. They are public servants with personal missions, who know their work will always be influenced by forces beyond the classroom. "*Only A Teacher*" illustrates how the teaching profession has been influenced by those forces and shaped by a long line of remarkable teachers.

(Web site includes a timeline of the teaching profession, interviews with teachers and education experts, a discussion area, and profiles of education reformers.)

School: The Story of American Public Education

<http://www.pbs.org/kcet/publicschool/>

Designed to place today's issues into historical context, *SCHOOL* takes viewers on a 200-year journey, from colonial times to the present, in four chronological episodes. Throughout the series are interviews with witnesses, both famous and relatively unknown, who play key roles in public education's dramatic story. Leading experts in education history also lend their insights to each episode of *SCHOOL*, illuminating the issues and their implications.

(Web site features historical articles that lead into an exploration of related contemporary educational issues. Also includes profiles of innovators and tools for educators, parents, and community members to engage in discussion about local education issues.)

The Whole Child

<http://www.pbs.org/wholechild/>

Caregivers and teachers play a vital role in a child's early years. Explore articles, in-service activity ideas, reading lists, and related Web sites for information designed to help you in your classroom or center. (Web site includes information on child development ages 0-5; special resources for early childhood educators about how to address developmental goals in an early childhood classroom; video; articles; recommended reading, and more.)

A Tale of Two Schools

<http://www.pbs.org/taleoftwoschools/>

A Tale of Two Schools is an intimate story about children at risk and the parents and teachers who care about them. [Morgan Freeman](#) narrates this compelling one-hour documentary about a dedicated superintendent, a novice

teacher, and a first grader overwhelmed by the challenge of learning to read — all captured during a tumultuous year in two struggling schools.

Wide Angle: Time for School

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/wideangle/shows/school/index.html>

More than 100 million children worldwide have never attended school. To improve this grim statistic, nations around the globe have taken steps to improve access to and provide basic education to all children.

FEATURED PROGRAM



Jay Jay The Jet Plane

With winter fast approaching, weather is an important topic to discover with your children. Jay Jay The Jet Plane is flying in to help out with five activity plans about weather.

Let's Think About... Weather

Weather is part of nature. It is everywhere. Weather is not the same all over the world.

Weather changes, but we can't make weather change. ...sometimes it is cold

...sometimes it is hot

...sometimes it is cloudy

...sometimes it is windy

...sometimes it is rainy

...sometimes it is snowy

...sometimes it is foggy

...sometimes it is sunny

...sometimes it is frosty

We have different weather in different seasons. Wind and rain; sunshine and snow are all a part of weather.

We need to know about weather. Scientists study the weather and give us information about it. They measure all kinds of weather (rainfall, snow, heat, wind). They report storms and changes in the weather.

Fisherman, pilots and astronauts all check the weather to see if it is safe to travel. Farmers check the weather to know when to plant their crops.

Sometimes we need protection from the weather. Our homes protect us from the weather and our clothes protect us from the weather. They keep us warm when it is cold, cool when it is hot, and dry when it is wet. We check the weather so we will know what to wear.

Wind is moving air. It can be gentle or strong; hot or cold. Snow is always cold. It can be lots of fun to play in. Rain is water falling from the clouds. It cleans the air and the earth. Sunshine warms the earth and the rain helps plants grow.

Lets Think About...Weather

Activities:

1. Weather Changes

Check the weather daily recording pictorially on a calendar. Older children can observe, compare and document weather changes daily, while two weeks is sufficient with younger children.

Create a bar graph demonstrating visually and mathematically the weather changes that occur over time.

2. The Wind is Moving Air

Dance like the wind. Make available to children ribbons of brightly colored crepe paper or silk scarves. Let them dance and move to music. Have them move when they hear the music, and stop when the music stops.

Make simple kites using paper plates on a windy day. Have children decorate the paper plates with watercolors or crayons. Attach a string and let them run in the wind. Attach tails of brightly colored crepe paper for greater interest.

3. Rain Can Be Measured

On rainy days, set out 2-3 clear plastic containers. Compare and measure the amount of rain collected. Later use collected rainwater on plants.

4. The Warmth From the Sun Dries the Rain

Take a walk into the schoolyard and locate several puddles. Using sidewalk chalk, mark around the puddle. In a couple of days, take the children out to recheck the puddles. If they are still there, mark the new outline using a different color of chalk.

Discussion:

Where did the puddle go? What happened to the water?

5. Rain Cleans the Air and the Earth

Take a rain walk during a light rain if possible or soon afterwards. Be sure children are protected from the weather. Have the children utilize all of their senses. Be sure they take time to smell and taste the differences in the air. Look for a rainbow in the sky. Notice the drops of rain on spider webs and leaves. Feel the dampness in the air and if everyone has boots on, test the puddles.



IN THE COMMUNITY

Durham County

“I experienced the opportunity to view literacy from more than one aspect. I will become more involved in building ties between parents and educators.”

Parent

“I did not realize how low the functional literacy rate in North Carolina is. My community is very rural and has many members who not only speak a language other than English, but are not literate in their native language.”

Educator

Brunswick County

“Wonderful ideas and a wealth of valuable information and materials.”

Educator

“I am excited about having access to additional information and activities to help the children in my class who need extra assistance and motivation.”

Educator



Alamance County

“The presentation was great! Emily was able to “pull” information out of those high school students. It was on their level and she gave great examples for the students to follow.”

Educator

Cummings High School Students, Alamance County Notes to Mrs. Pamela Hines

“Thanks for the training. I really enjoyed it a lot. In this workshop, I learned how to interact with small children, and how to keep them busy.”

“I appreciate your taking time out of your busy schedule to plan things for us. You have enlightened me as to how to take care of and teach young children.”

“After [the workshop], I went home and tried out some of the activities. The one my cousins liked best was the one with the paper bag. [demonstrating sound of thunder] That helped them understand a lot better.”

“First of all, I would like to say how much I enjoyed your wonderful workshop. All of the materials that you gave me will help me in the future to make learning a fun experience.”

“The staff was very kind and very enjoyable. I have been looking over the materials that you gave us and there is a lot of valuable information included.”

“I learned new ways to get children involved in math and science.”

Signing Sam



Signing Sam helps Ready To Learn trainers reach out to more of North Carolina's children.



**Trainers
practice
signing**



**Amy Williford instructs
Ready To Learn Trainers**



**Durham, North Carolina
Eastway Elementary Family Literacy
Night**

Every third Thursday at Eastway Elementary is Family Literacy Night. The November theme was “Native Americans and Math Night.” Parents and children together joined in the fun. Families learned first about Native American Heritage and the importance of the oral tradition. Children made puppets relevant to stories shared. Next parents and students moved through various math activity stations created by the teachers. At the conclusion of the hands-on activities, everyone moved to cafeteria for the family night dinner.

