

creativity

A ONE DAY CONFERENCE ON INSPIRING
CREATIVITY IN CHILDREN 0-12 YEARS



FRIDAY 7 NOVEMBER 2008
NAN TIEN TEMPLE, BERKELEY, WOLLONGONG

ANTARCTICA - THE ICY LAND OF SECRETS

Presented by Jan Deans at the inaugural Illawarra
Children's Services Creativity Conference

The Antarctica -The Icy Land of Secrets DVD presents an insight into a unique teaching and learning process that was inspired by the Year of Polar Research 2007-2008 and in response to the theme "Polar Regions: From Imagination to Research" Association Let'a Verde, Macroproblems 2008.

Over a period of eight months the children and teachers of the University of Melbourne's Early Learning Centre undertook a learning process about Antarctica that included question and answer, internet searches, pictorial referencing, concrete and active experimentation and artistic, poetic and philosophical explorations.

Early in the project Jan Deans, Director of The Early Learning Centre, made contact with Bob Jones, Veterinary Biologist/ Pathologist and Station Leader of Casey Station, Antarctica, who agreed to support the children's learning via an email question and answer process. Throughout the year Bob provided answers to a range of questions, such as:

- What is an Iceberg?
- How deep is the ocean around Antarctica?
- How many penguins are there in a group?
- What is diamond dust?
- Why is it dark in Antarctica?
- How can you tell how old the ice is?
- Does an iceberg have a heart?

Bob also emailed a wide variety of photos that provided direct insight into life in the frozen south. Images of icebergs, scientists trekking through blizzards, pregnant seals, newborn pups with umbilical cords still attached, the return of the snow petrels and diamond dust are just a few examples of images that stimulated learning and deep reflection.

A unique relationship developed between Bob, the teachers and the children, one that excited a deep level of inquiry that stimulated high levels of creative thinking. Teachers supported the inquiry by providing varied multi-sensory active, experiential and arts-based learning experiences that helped the children to expand their knowledge and understandings about life in Antarctica.

Individually and in small groups the children engaged in guided discovery learning with emphasis placed on observation, reflective drawing and painting, exploration of photographic materials from various perspectives, manipulation and creation of models, scientific experimentation and question and answer discussion.

This multi-layered creative processing stimulated art-making that captured the essence of the Antarctic spirit and inspired poetic language that at times reflected sophisticated philosophical thinking. We can all ponder on the children's question "Does an Iceberg have a heart?" and if so, does it have a soul?

The 'Antarctica - The Icy Land of Secrets' project gave all participants an opportunity to make a tangible connection with the natural world and to develop a strong sense of responsibility and empathy for caring for the 'earth community' and for principles of sustainable living. The statement by four year-old Rory - "It's good to let some secrets just to stay as secrets" - epitomises the deeply felt ethical and moral position adopted by all of those involved in this unique environmental arts-based teaching and learning project.

**For more information or to order a copy of the DVD,
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