

LEADERS' *Cagniappe*



ISSUE:
APRIL
2019

JUST IN TIME FOR EARTH DAY, a group of four year olds is leading the charge to clean up a Bogalusa neighborhood. And Patricia Holmes, their proud director and teacher, attributes their leadership to high-quality curriculum.



Patricia Holmes
**DIRECTOR,
AGAPE LEARNING CENTER**

Strong educational leaders are lifelong learners, modeling curiosity for their teachers and children in their programs.

Patricia Holmes of Agape Learning Center, a veteran teacher and director of twenty-two years, continues to grow, and a high-quality curriculum is transforming her teaching practice. As a result, child engagement is reaching new heights.

Patricia has always enjoyed teaching, and has wanted her center to be a highly engaging place for children. To provide instruction, she used to rely on lessons and activities she had pieced together. She describes her previous teaching style as somewhat controlling. She would provide plenty of information, and would dominate interactions with children. She noticed that children would not open up about what they wanted to learn or explore. "Now they are using their imaginations, applying life skills and problem solving together to figure things out."

What changed? Implementing a high-quality curriculum transformed Patricia's program. By participating in the Bogalusa Community Network, she was able to access resources through the Curriculum Initiative, and she chose Creative Curriculum. Having a Tier I curriculum that fits Patricia's goals for children has increased the quality of learning, observation, assessment, and relationships in her center. "Quality curriculum has helped me to go deeper with our studies and we have covered more than I would have expected. It has changed my teaching and my children."

BE A LEARNER WITH YOUR CHILDREN, SO THEY CAN BE THE LEADERS WE NEED THEM TO BE.



The transformation is best illustrated by Patricia's 29 students' seven week exploration of recycling, just in time for Earth Day. Pushed by Patricia's model of deep exploration of concepts and higher order thinking, children are taking a lead on their learning. The robust unit has provided plentiful opportunity to instruct, observe, and assess many objectives in GOLD. Children are using terms like "reduce, reuse and recycle" with great ease, sorting and classifying items, and reading the codes on plastic items. They are using the scientific process (and the power of the five senses) to evaluate the quality of their composting, observing the growth of earthworms, and using their sense of smell to address problems. **Agape children are pushing their family members to change behaviors at home**, like using less bath water and paper. They are empowered by this new ownership of their learning.

Osric, a four-year-old student at Agape, observed with dismay the condition of the neighborhood on the way to school. He remarked to Patricia as he arrived at school that, "The earth is not happy." Through an engaging conversation together, they identified that he and his classmates could help address the issue. Together, Patricia and Osric planned a clean-up day, sparking further conversation about other students' neighborhoods with his classmates and how they can "make the earth happy."

Patricia says this kind of engagement and action never would have happened before she had clear guidance on quality instruction through high quality curriculum, and an understanding of the CLASS tool. **"We are now learning together. I grow a little bit more from everything we learn, and they learn as they discuss problems together. You have to be willing to change. Be a learner with your children, so they can be the leaders we need them to be."**