



## *Block Follow-up*

California Kindergarten Association

*You know how it is – you do a lesson and a week later you discover a really great resource you wish you could have included. We found lots of great resources for CKA's May 24, 2012 Curricular Focus on Block Play. As usual, if you have comments, please post to our [CKA website](#).*

Why would we not include blocks in classrooms for young children? Elisabeth Hirsch, former preschool teacher and college professor, has written the definitive book, [The Block Book](#). She writes that block building challenges the whole child: it builds self-confidence; enhances social skills; facilitates vocabulary development; stimulates eye-hand-body coordination (important for reading skills); and enriches mathematics, science and social studies. As they build with blocks, children discover, invent, imagine, and construct a fuller understanding of their world. Bet if you stood back and observed children's building with blocks, you'd see a world of learning going on!

### **Research**

- A New York *Times* article, reprinted by the National Kindergarten Alliance in its Spring 2012 newsletter, can be accessed at [http://www.nkateach.org/Research files/Blocks Paper.pdf](http://www.nkateach.org/Research_files/Blocks_Paper.pdf). NKA is a group of individuals and organizations that share a goal of ensuring the highest quality education for all young learners. Membership is only \$25 per year for an individual.
- Four-year-olds may request constructions stay up at the end of the day, but they seldom carry their interest beyond one day. Older children's constructions may be complicated and they will need more time to build and to use. Letting buildings stay up for several days increases the value of the activity to children. It may take a whole period to build a castle, but now they need time to play with it. This also gives the teacher time to see what additional resources could extend the learning. (Hirsch, [The Block Book](#), p73).

### **Resources**

- [13 Buildings Children Should Know](#) by Annette Roeder
- [Pyramid](#) by David Macaulay
- [Castle](#) by David Macaulay
- [Apartment Book](#) by Leo Hartas and Richard Platt
- [Houses of Adobe \(Native Dwellings\)](#) by Bonnie Shemie

- [\*Houses of Wood \(Native Dwellings\)\*](#) by Bonnie Shemie
- [\*Bridges: Amazing Structures to Design, Build & Test \(Kaleidoscope Kids\)\*](#) by Carol A. Johmann, Elizabeth Rieth and Michael P. Kline
- [\*Joe and the Skyscraper\*](#) by Dietrich Neumann and Anne Heritage
- [\*Skyscrapers: Uncovering Technology\*](#) by Chris Oxlade and Martha Thorne

## Teaching Ideas

- Preschool – Sacramento Preschool Teacher Chelsea Stuart Ross offers some [ideas for preschoolers](#) to learn about shapes using pattern blocks. While pattern blocks enable many of the same construction and learning issues as unit blocks, children younger than six shouldn't sit at tables anymore than is necessary (Hirsch, 1996). Notice the use of the pattern blocks on the floor. Tables are helpful for some children with special needs who may access the blocks more easily on the table. Thank you, Chelsea.
- Kindergarten – The teacher notices that boys predominantly choose the block center during Choice Time, while the girls go to the Housekeeping Dramatic Play area. During the Morning Meeting, the teacher tells the children that the Dramatic Play Area is moving next door to the Block Center. They brainstorm possible challenges and offer possible solutions. Once the two areas are placed next to each other, girls and boys tend to play/work together in both areas. For example, children build a bakery in the Block Center, stocked with plastic cookies and cakes, a cash register, and blank sales slips with pencils for participants to order their desserts.
- First Grade – An ongoing project for students in a rural community is to build a Real Farm out of blocks. Children discuss and plan as a group what structures they will build. They use books and online searches to help them learn details. For example, to learn to fashion a pulley in order to lift the hay bales to the top level of the barn they have constructed. Throughout the month-long unit they write about their experiences in books that will become part of the class library.




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