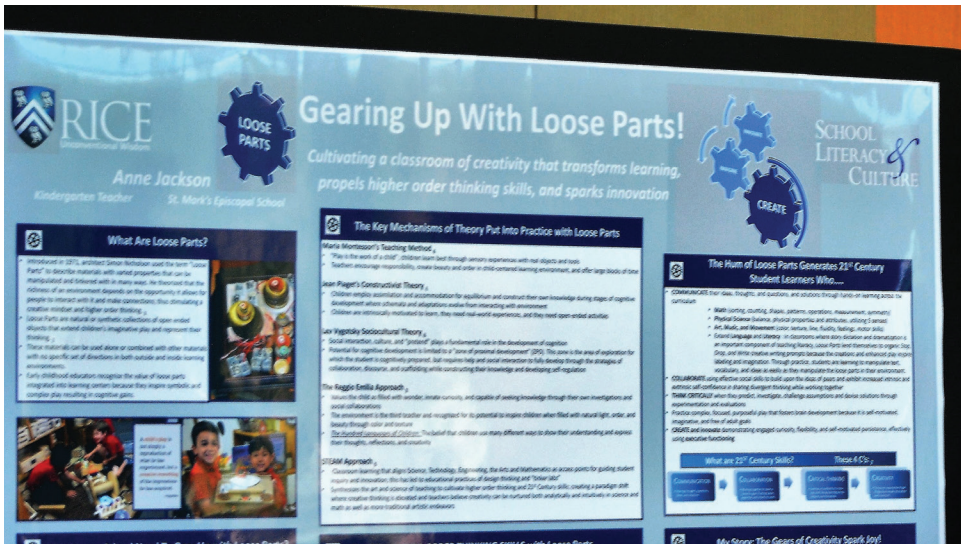


Faculty News

SPOTLIGHT ON KINDERGARTEN TEACHER, ANNE JACKSON



Anne Jackson poses with her poster project, the culmination of over 120 hours of research and design

In April of 2015, Kindergarten teacher, Anne Jackson, began a transformative educational journey. The Early Literacy Leadership Academy is a program specifically designed for early childhood teachers as a part of Rice University's School Literacy and Culture. In 2013, Phillips 66 approached Rice University with the hope of making a difference in literacy in the greater Houston area with young children. The experts at School Literacy and Culture developed a three year program for teachers of toddlers through 2nd grade that emphasizes early literacy, child development, and leadership. After several lengthy interviews and observations, Anne received notice that she had been awarded a seat in the ELLA cohort. "And, so," Anne shares, "the journey began for me and my cohort of 15 other teachers representing both public and private schools."

Anne trekked through two and a half years of professional development experiences, highlighting the importance of storytelling in the early childhood classroom. Additionally, Head of Lower School, Bobbye Hicks, was invited to join a professional learning community of administrators who read, discussed, and gained understanding of the philosophies and practices their teachers were learning. Bobbye shares, "This work equipped us to support the growth of our teachers. I increased my knowledge of current literacy practices and made some new collegial relationships."

Anne shares, "Even after more than 25 years in the classroom, I did not fully appreciate what can be accomplished in an early childhood classroom by

nurturing creativity in our young students. Specifically, the avenue of play and imaginative thinking through developmentally appropriate practices achieves remarkable, measurable, and long-term gains for each child."

"Amidst the hallmark practices for storytelling and dramatizations, ELLA introduced teaching ideas that promote design thinking. One endorsed idea is defined as Loose Parts play. "Loose Parts" has become a personal metaphor for the deeper understandings I have gleaned from internalizing the SLC philosophy of education through the ELLA experience. Many interlocking gears of theory and facets of SLC endorsed practices have transformed my classroom. I have learned not only to embrace an inquiry based approach in all aspects of teaching but to trust my young students as they experience the process of creativity. My personal quest to promote literacy has expanded beyond word knowledge to a literacy of innovative thinking that stretches beyond any published curriculum guide."

"In my classroom, I am now able to effectively collaborate with the children to create dynamic learning potential when I listen closely to their ideas and value their input. We are tinkering together daily to make new discoveries, and the surprises never cease to amaze. I am privileged to enjoy the hum of engaged learning and inspiration from the smallest parts of our shared stories and connections. These are truly magical moments of validation, and even more often...joy!"

We are proud of the work of Anne and her quest to bring new ideas and

techniques to some of our younger students at St. Mark's. Her work in the ELLA program displays her own intellectual curiosity and passion for discovery.

ANNE JACKSON'S ELLA JOURNEY INCLUDED:

- 100 seminar hours
- A four day summer institute
- Leadership training and opportunity to become a presenter at the winter Early Literacy Summit
- Six hours per month of personal one-on-one mentoring and conferences in her classroom
- Multiple visits to other schools for classroom observations
- Numerous publications, readings and reflective assignments, including a case study in year one and a poster project in her second year year, which involved over 120 hours of research and design