

KIDBIZ Resources

Making A Difference In The Life Of A Child

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EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITIES

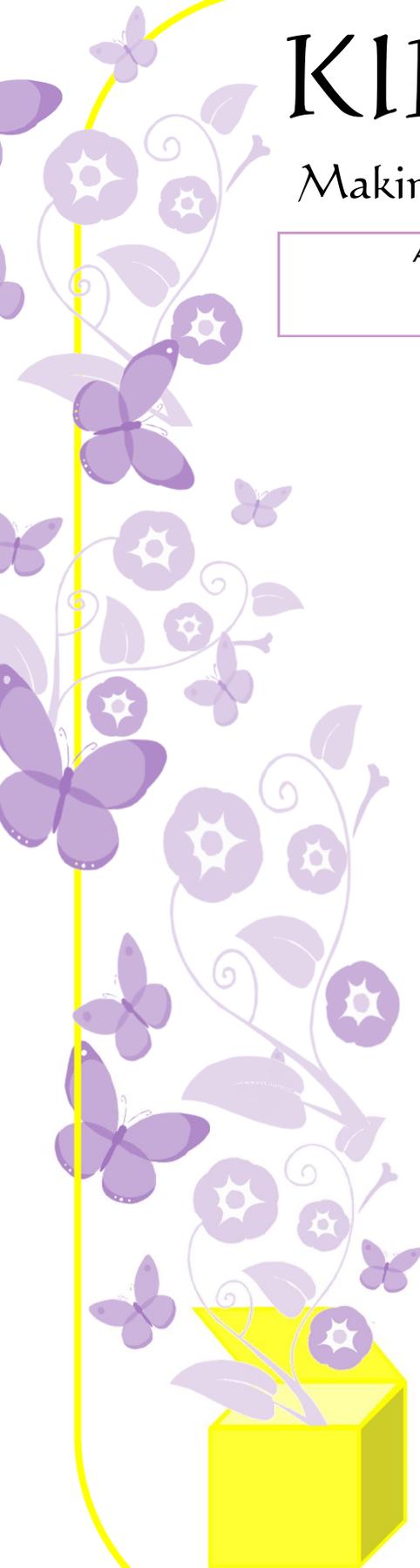
By Patricia Dischler

Curiosity is intrinsically linked to problem solving. A quest for answers, a desire to find them, these skills come naturally to children, but often get lost over time as curriculums become filled with specific outcomes and remove the element of possibilities. In order to preserve a child's capabilities for problem solving, teachers can foster an overall atmosphere for children that will encourage their questions and their sense for exploration. It begins by staying completely open to possibilities – in the children's abilities and their questions in order to keep the doors open for the children in their care.

Allowing ourselves, and our children, to be curious, is as simple as letting them work to finish the sentence: "I wonder ...". In The Art of the Possible (Conari Press, 1991) by Dawna Markova, Ph. D., the author tells us "Rather than merely accumulating new theories and more information that will be outmoded in a few years, our focus must shift to learning how to learn." She encourages us to "just allow your unconscious mind to kaleidoscope, your curiosity to pulse on: 'I wonder... I wonder how or when I ...'" She refers to this as being "old fashioned curious." And it does seem like an old fashioned idea to many. We've spent years accumulating information and working to teach this information to children. What we've forgotten is that this information was discovered in the first place because someone got curious.

Scientists take curiosity very seriously. It is the essence of what they do. They have a curiosity about a particular thing or idea, and they begin to explore. They wonder. They ask all those questions: "Why? What if...? I wonder..." One of the hallmarks of curiosity within science is that it is more than just wondering, scientists actually follow through. They test, they make multiple attempts to make something work, or to fail. They build upon their first question and continue to experiment. When the "I wonder if it could..." doesn't work out they immediately jump to "Why didn't it?" And when they find this answer it leads them to yet another question to explore, "So now what?" It's a never ending quest for information. Sound a lot like some of your three year olds?

Young children are born scientists. They want all the information they can get and they are willing to work to find it. And even when their questions are answered, they will come up with new questions. When they are told they have achieved the information and the quest has ended, the excitement for this exploration begins to fade. Children who are presented with facts to learn that do not lead to further learning stop chasing after the deeper meaning and simply accept that there is no more. This leads to a generation of children who do not question, who do not delve into a deep understanding of concepts, but instead simply learn what they are and accept they exist.



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This is why teaching curiosity, supporting that quest and desire to explore, is so important for our children's further learning and development. When children have curiosity, they look beyond the whole to notice the parts, they pay attention to details and the interaction of them. It is by observation that they learn how the interaction of different parts affects the outcome. When the interaction of the parts change, it changes the outcome. Children who grow understanding that by exploring the details they may discover not only the answer to the concept, but discover how this concept is conceived, how it's parts interact, how it interacts with the world and how all of these components can be manipulated and changed, are our future scientists. Without this quest we cannot cure cancer, create earth friendly fuel, save our rainforests or end hunger. All of these accomplishments will involve doing so much more than learning the facts.

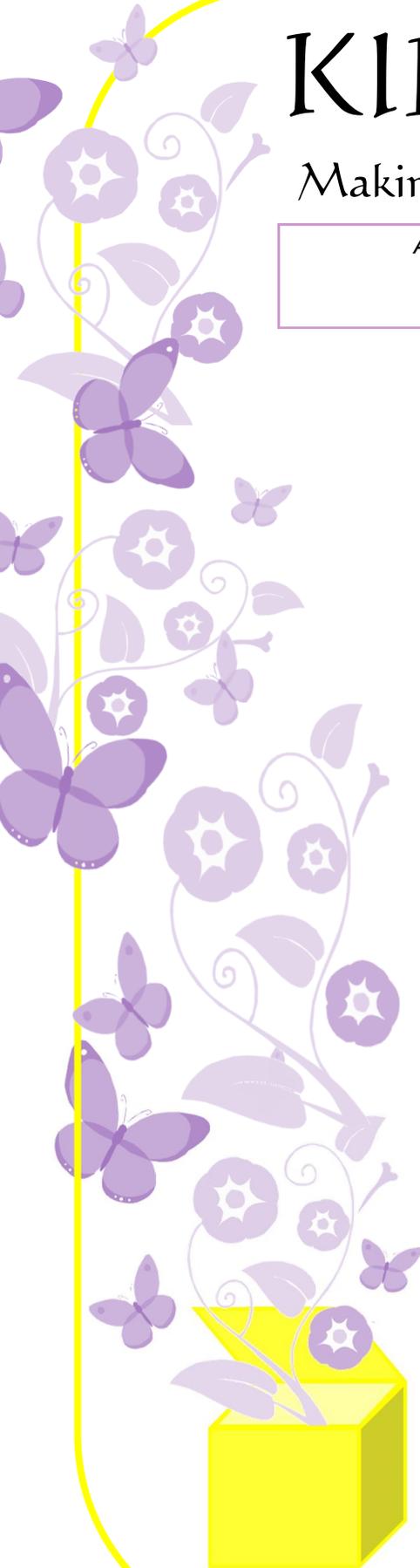
It's about trying the impossible. Scientists everyday face what most people think may be impossible – and they find a way to make it possible. They brainstorm the different ways they know of to try something, and when none of them work, they take what they learned through the process to come up with even more ways to try. Sometimes, they even find more than one way!

Support a child's scientist within by presenting them with situations where they can try the impossible, experiment, learn from the mistakes and celebrate the multiple answers! Celebrate the possibilities a child sees in every situation. Let their creativity merge with their curiosity to take them to new and exciting places.

Children are also natural dreamers. They can lay on their back in the grass, gazing up at the clear blue sky and dream of living in a castle made of icecream, riding on a dinosaur, growing 20 feet tall. This dreaming is the perfect merge of creativity and curiosity. They begin by wondering, then in their dreams they make it happen.

For this reason, stories are a wonderful way to support a child's curiosity. In a story, things are explored, created, imagined. In non-fiction, a child's curiosity is feed with information about the world that they need. In fiction, they explore the possibilities of the world around them.

Daniel Pink, ([A Whole New Mind](#), The Berkley Publishing Group, NY, NY, 2006) identifies six "senses" that he attributes to higher intelligence. One of these is STORY. By learning stories, rather than straight facts, we are better able to remember things. What this means for parents and teachers is that when teaching our children we should present facts we wish for them to learn by sharing the story behind the facts. The famous children's book author, Eric Carle, uses this technique to bring the insect and animal world alive for children. He shares with children an insect's or animal's story, and through the story the children learn many facts. In [The Very Hungry Caterpillar](#) (Philomel Books, New York, NY, 1969) the author shares the story of a caterpillar who eats and eats, peaking a child's curiosity about why a caterpillar would want to eat so much. Then, in the end, the child discovers that it is part of a process for the caterpillar to turn into a butterfly. Millions of children know this book by heart, and because of it, understand how a caterpillar turns into a butterfly. It's more than learning the facts, it's the story they remember.



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We can support a child's curiosity through story in many ways. By reading good books that give children stories that provide facts as well as stretch their view of the possibilities. By encouraging children to make up their own stories. Put their own sense of wonder and possibility down on paper. Allow children to share their personal stories of their lives as much as possible – and to listen to the stories of their friends.

Stories allow us to support all three C's in children. They use creativity to tell a good story, curiosity to drive the story and wonder "what will happen next," and by telling their own stories and listening to stories of their friends they learn successful communication with others and show respect for each other – courtesy.

Patricia Dischler is an author, professional speaker and consultant. This article is based on her book *Teaching The 3 Cs: Creativity, Curiosity & Courtesy*. For more information visit: www.patriciadischler.com.

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