

## *Docia Shares a Story*



*Photograph by Jean Berlfein*

### “ENOUGH IS ENOUGH”

One day on my way to the bank, I passed a center with a large picture window and noticed a sign, “Young Children’s Early Learning Center.” Underneath were the words, “two hour enrichment program for children three to five years of age.” I was curious, so I stopped to watch a teacher and a small group of children seated around a large table busy with a variety of materials — puzzles, manipulatives, construction paper, and an assortment of art materials. It was an enchanting picture; but as I continued to watch, I wondered why there was no child/child or child/teacher interaction, no talking and laughing. Were they that intent on what they were doing?

When I stopped on my return from doing my banking and a few errands, the same children were at the same table, doing the same table activity with the same materials. It was evident they were no longer interested. They looked bored and were fidgety and restless.

I started to go, but when I saw the teacher get up and leave, I wanted to see what would happen. What would the children do? There was a moment of silence, a craning of necks to be sure she had gone, and then, as one, they were out of their chairs, jumping, jostling each other, giggling, and hiding under the table.

I was sorry I couldn’t stay to see how the teacher handled the situation when she returned. Did she recognize and act on the message the children gave her that there had been enough sitting, or did she scold them and tell them to immediately return to their seats?

Children will tell us what needs to happen — when to change activities where their interests lead. But they can tell us only if we are engaged with them in what they are doing — listening, talking, laughing, learning together.

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*Docia Zavitkovsky has furthered the cause of young children as a practitioner in the field for over 50 years and as past president of the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Known far and wide for her storytelling, she has traveled extensively as an early childhood consultant, lecturer, and adventurer.*

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