Chapter 12 Notes

I. Introduction
   a. Flannel (or felt) board activities are a rewarding experience for both the child and teacher
      i. Very popular and effective
      ii. Children are highly attentive during this type of activity
   b. Stories to be used with flannel board activities are selected by the same criteria used for storytelling
      i. Poetry, songs, and other listening and learning activities can also be presented with flannel boards

II. Flannel Board Construction
   a. Boards of different sizes, shapes, and designs are used, depending on the needs of the center
      i. May be freestanding or propped up in the chalkboard tray, on a chair, or on an easel
      ii. Can be covered on both sides in different colors
      iii. Many are made by covering a sheet of heavy cardboard, display board, prestretched artist's canvas, Styrofoam™, or wood with a piece of solid-colored flannel or felt yardage
         1. Material is pulled smooth and held by tacks, tape, glue, or wood staples, depending on the board material
         2. Sometimes an under padding is added
            a. Putting wire mesh or a sheet of metal between the under padding and the covering material makes pieces with magnets adhere
            b. Because all metal does not attract magnets, the mesh or metal needs testing before purchase
   b. Decisions on which materials to use in flannel board construction are often based on the intended use of the flannel board, material cost, and tools or skills needed in construction
      i. Styrofoam™ is a good choice if having a lightweight board is important
      ii. Wood-based boards are more durable
   c. Making a board that tilts backward at a slight angle is an important consideration for a freestanding flannel board because pieces applied to a slanted board stick more securely
      i. Stores and companies that sell school supplies have premade boards in various price ranges
   d. Although flannel and felt are popular coverings for boards, other materials also work well
      i. Almost all fuzzy textured material is usable
      ii. Nap can be raised on flannel or felt by brushing it with a stiff brush
iii. Good idea to press a small piece of felt or pellon (fabric interfacing) to a fabric to see how well it sticks before buying the fabric
e. Some boards have pockets in the back so that flannel pieces can be lined up and ready for use
   i. Some early childhood centers have parts of walls, dividers, and backs of pieces of furniture covered with flannel or felt
f. Tabletop flannel board can be made from a cardboard box
   i. One clever idea is using a secondhand attaché case
      1. Using a case that opens to a 90-degree angle, glue a large piece of flannel to the inside of the top lid
      2. When the lid is open, the flannel will be in view
   ii. Case is used for storing sets, and the handle makes it easy to carry
g. Display fabrics to which three-dimensional objects will adhere are also available
   i. Special adhesives and tapes are needed for this type of flannel board
h. Size of the flannel board’s front surface is important
   i. Consider making or purchasing a board no smaller than 24 x 30 inches
   ii. Attaché case could be used for individual child’s play or for small groups, but it may be too small for larger groups
   iii. Most centers obtain or construct both a child’s flannel board and a staff flannel board

III. Activity Sets
a. Pieces for flannel activity sets can be made in a number of ways and from a number of fabrics and papers
   i. Pellon and felt, because of their low cost and durability, are probably the most popular
   ii. Heavy-paper figures with flannel backing or felt tape also stick well
   iii. Commercial tape, sandpaper, fuzzy velour-flocked wallpaper, Velcro™, and used foamlike laundry softener sheets are other possibilities for backing pieces
   iv. Pre-made flannel or felt board sets are available at school-supply stores and at most teacher conferences
   v. Most communities have at least one teacher who is a small business entrepreneur specializing in making flannel sets for other teachers
b. Shapes and figures can be:
   i. Traced from books, magazines, or coloring books
   ii. Self-drawn and created
   iii. Borrowed from other sources
      1. Tracing paper is helpful for this purpose
2. Tracing pencils and pens are commercially available and come with directions for use; they can be found at craft stores

c. Color can be added to set pieces with felt markers, oil pastels, acrylic or poster paint, embroidery pens, crayons, paints, and colored pencils
   i. Sets take time to make but are well worth the effort
   ii. Pieces can be covered with clear contact paper or can be laminated (fronts only) for durability

d. Teachers can be creative with flannel board sets by decorating pieces with:
   i. Layered felt
   ii. Wiggly eyes (commercially available at variety stores)
   iii. Hand-stitched character clothing
   iv. Imitation fur fabric
   v. Liquid glitter
   vi. Commercial fluorescent paint or crayons

e. Most copy machines have the ability to enlarge figures or shrink them
   i. Set pieces that are too small are difficult to handle and see
   ii. Narrow parts on set pieces should be avoided because they tend to tear with use
   iii. Try to preserve the size relationship between characters, as well as the cultural and ethnic diversity of characters

f. Pattern transfer books are plentiful and available from craft and sewing stores
   i. Patterns can be ironed on cloth quickly, and it is possible to obtain multiple copies
   ii. Publishers of transfer books include:
      2. Craftways, Richmond, CA


g. Some schools buy inexpensive picture books and use the illustrations as flannel board set pieces

h. Proper storage and care will preserve pieces and prolong their usefulness
   i. Flat stocking box or large mailing envelope or manila folder is practical for storage
   ii. If pieces become bent, a warm iron can often be used to flatten them
   iii. Sets can be stored in plastic page protectors used in three-ring binders
   iv. Large re-sealable plastic household bags, as well as plastic envelopes available at teacher-supply stores, can also be used to protect pieces

i. Nonfiction sets
   i. Young children are just as interested in nonfiction topics as they are in narrative stories
1. Educators construct their own nonfiction set pieces or find ones commercially manufactured
2. A true representation of detailed subjects is best
3. Library or computer research can secure accurate images
4. Textbooks for elementary schools are another good resource
5. Distinguishing features should be depicted on set pieces
   ii. Nonfiction set pieces can also be easily woven into other designed activities, such as categorizing animals by color or number of legs
j. Child flannel board activity sets
   i. Many schools make or purchase flannel set pieces to accompany children’s favorite books
   ii. Before making set pieces, teachers can discuss children’s ideas concerning what pieces are central to the story
   iii. In retelling the story with a flannel board, children will:
      1. Decide how set pieces are to be placed on the board to increase audience understanding
      2. Select what visual pieces are essential in each scene
      3. Choose the words that coordinate with the visuals
      4. Likely try to manipulate two pieces in an action sequence, such as a monkey riding on a donkey’s back
   iv. As a child relates a tale, considerable visual literacy thinking is taking place

IV. Presentation
a. Semi-secluded, comfortable setting should be chosen for presentation
   i. Activity begins with the teacher starting to place pieces on the board in proper sequence as the story or activity unfolds, always focusing on the children’s reactions
      1. Teacher may be presenting but also watching for reaction
   ii. Because pieces are usually added one at a time, they should be kept in an open flat box or manila folder in the teacher’s lap, or behind the board, stacked in the order they will appear
      1. Hard to do if the story or activity is not well in mind
b. Teacher should periodically check to see whether the set has all its pieces, particularly in large centers where many staff members use the same sets
   i. If pieces are missing or damaged, the teacher or volunteers can make new pieces
   ii. New sets are always appreciated by the entire staff and can be developed to meet the needs and interests of a particular group of children
c. To present activities with ease, the beginner should:
   i. Read the story (or activity sequence) and check the pieces to be used
ii. Practice until there is a smooth coordination of words and placement of pieces on the board

iii. Set up the flannel board

iv. Check and prepare pieces in order of their appearance

v. Place pieces out of view, behind the board within easy reach, or in a lap folder

vi. Gather children

   1. Make seating adjustments if necessary
   2. Respond to children’s needs
   3. Group size should be considered carefully
      a. The smaller the group, the more intimate and conversational the experience
      b. Consider two presentations to reduce group size
   4. Introduce the activity with a statement that builds a desire to listen
   5. Tell the story (or present the activity), watching for reactions from the children
      a. Create drama and suspense with pauses, speaking in characters’ voices and moving pieces across the board’s surface, if the story calls for this
      b. Let your personality guide you
   6. Discuss language development or comprehension (optional)
      a. Teachers ask questions or discuss story particulars to elicit children’s ideas and comments
   7. Keep pieces flat and store them properly, returning sets to where other staff members expect them to be
   8. Allow children to do their retelling with a flannel board and their own activity sets

d. Most centers construct one set for teachers and another set for child exploration and activity

e. In addition to storytelling activities, sets may be used for songs, poetry, numbers, language development, and other activities

V. Suggested Stories and Activities

a. There are many resources for story ideas

   i. Stories created by teachers can be enjoyed as much as commercial sets and classic stories
   ii. Sets can improve listening skills and enhance vocabulary and concept development, often within one activity
   iii. Visual shapes or pieces are linked to words and ideas
   iv. Occasionally, a child’s picture book can be presented as a flannel board activity before the book becomes part of the school’s book collection

b. An available flannel board placed at children’s eye level with an adjacent open box of figures or shapes quickly encourages use and creativity
i. Remembered words, lines, and whole stories are relived in children’s play
   1. They often go beyond the familiar, devising their own events
ii. Even sturdy felt pieces will need to be ironed flat occasionally and replaced because of frequent and vigorous use by children
iii. Children’s play with the flannel board often follows a teacher presentation but can also be a free choice activity at other times of the day

c. Many centers include flannel boards and sets in their language centers along with alphabet letter cutouts
   i. Teachers can use alphabet letter cutouts in daily activities, and many centers routinely have set pieces, such as a flower shape, labeled with the cut out alphabet letters underneath the shape on the flannel board for viewing
   ii. Flannel board with the word “closed” on it may be used to block entrance to a play area or other section of the room

d. Suggested picture books that lend themselves to flannel board presentations include:

e. Many urban school districts allow private preschool teachers in their community to use their central office curriculum centers, which may also hold flannel board resources