



## **Staff Development**

**Jennifer Woodruff, November 2007**

From the beginning of La Escuelita, we have maintained a focus on strong professional development for our teachers. “Professional development” is basically providing opportunities for teachers to learn and grow as teachers, and we do it in a variety of ways.

We provide each head teacher and assistant teacher with \$1000 per year of tuition reimbursement for classes that they choose to attend outside of La Escuelita. Some teachers have applied this toward degree bearing classes, and others have taken classes in art, music, special education, English, and a variety of other areas.

We provide a lot of opportunities at La Escuelita. This August, before school started, we held workshops on art, developmental disabilities, gender identity development, dramatic play, and CPR. During the course of the school year, we will have workshops on social problem solving and learning through block building.

As a follow-up to the workshops on social problem solving and dramatic play, the presenters will serve as consultants to the teams. They will meet with the teams throughout the year to help teachers implement ideas in the curriculum.

As many of you know, in November the school closes for two days as our entire staff travels together to the annual conference of the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Before leaving, teachers peruse a huge catalog of talks, workshops, and lectures and choose some to attend as a team and some to attend individually.

In March every year, our school is closed for Teacher Appreciation Day (it’s really closed because our landlords, the church, have a huge feast day, but we have repurposed it!) In the morning, teachers visit other schools and learn from observing other teachers’ classrooms, routines and activities.

We have started suggesting to many of our teachers that they are ready to be on the OTHER side of staff development, presenting their ideas and knowledge to colleagues. Our teachers have an unusual and deep knowledge of how to help children learn language in general and new languages in particular, and we think they are ready to share it!