

SPRING 2014

milestones

A Publication of the North Carolina Association
for the Education of Young Children



NCaeyc

**Promoting and inspiring excellence in
early care and education for over 60 years!**

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suggestion for an article, it may be sent to
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We welcome comments and suggestions:
generalinfo@ncaeyc.org. Through *Milestones*,
NCAeYC provides a forum for discussion of
issues and ideas in our field. We hope to
provoke thought and promote professional
growth. *Milestones* articles represent the
views of the authors and do not necessarily
reflect the positions of NCAeYC.

On the cover: Karen Ferguson with
granddaughter Ava, photo by Scott Anderson

From the Executive Director



Lorie Barnes

After a rather unusual “Polar Vortex” winter, we are particularly excited to launch this Spring Issue of *Milestones* in hopes of coaxing beautiful blue skies and sunny days to North Carolina! And in the spirit of springtime, the theme for this issue is “Growth.” Throughout, you will find articles with an array of interesting perspectives that help bring this theme to life. We continue to receive incredibly positive feedback about this digital format which allows for rich content to be extended beyond these pages through links to other resources, websites and videos.

Speaking of videos, NCAeYC is excited to present our brand new “Join Us” membership video! We invite you to share this with current and potential members, as well as students, families and community members so they can better understand who we are and what we do. [Check out the video now](#). It is our hope that AEYC membership inspires a sense of professionalism that reflects our collective commitment to excellence.

Additionally, we are excited to launch a brand new [Gift Membership](#) promotion which makes the perfect “Early Educator Appreciation” recognition! We invite you to post the [flyer](#) which invites families to recognize their child’s teacher’s commitment to excellence by giving the gift of professionalism through a one-year AEYC membership. Remember, when you join one, you join them all! As an AEYC member, you receive benefits, tools and resources from the national, state and local levels designed to promote and inspire excellence in the early care and education of young children, birth through age eight. We are excited

to invite families and community members to join us in supporting opportunities for professional recognition, growth and development.



Through careful observation, we can see signs of growth are all around. We can observe and encourage growth in children, in ourselves and we hope that you can see and will help promote growth in YOUR professional association. NCAeYC is dedicated to increasing our capacity to support you in your work. We are continuously seeking ways to improve our services, our offerings and our advocacy. We

can only do this through your support, engagement and guidance. We thank you for being members and we encourage you to invite others to join us as well. We are always eager for your feedback, suggestions and questions. You can reach NCAeYC staff and Board members at generalinfo@ncaeyc.org.

Here’s to sunny days, blue skies and the joys of springtime!

From the President



Dan Tetreault

As spring approaches and the weather teases us with a warm day here and there, many of us will head to one of the local hardware or home improvement stores to purchase seeds and make plans to begin our gardens. We will clean out the beds and turn the soil to prepare for the excitement and color of the growing season, when we will work with care and intentionality to cultivate the flowers and vegetables in our gardens until they bloom and produce. Many of us will plant private gardens from which we will cut flowers and harvest vegetables for our own use and likely share with a neighbor or two. However, some of us will participate in community gardens where many people from different walks of life join together to plant and work with care and intentionality to cultivate the garden and share in its bounty. The collaborative effort of a community garden typically produces more food than a traditional backyard garden, so much that the surplus is often donated to charitable organizations who provide food to those in need. The prosperity of a community garden results from its members sharing best gardening practices and sharing in the responsibility and decisions made that positively impact the program's success.

As time moves us into this new season of growth, we have already been working for many months with care and intentionality to cultivate the growth and development of the children that we serve each and every day. Like our gardens, some of us work within the solitary borders of our classrooms to support children in learning and development through the use of developmentally appropriate practices. Successes are shared within our classroom community including families and perhaps a few colleagues in neighboring classrooms or programs. However, much like the community

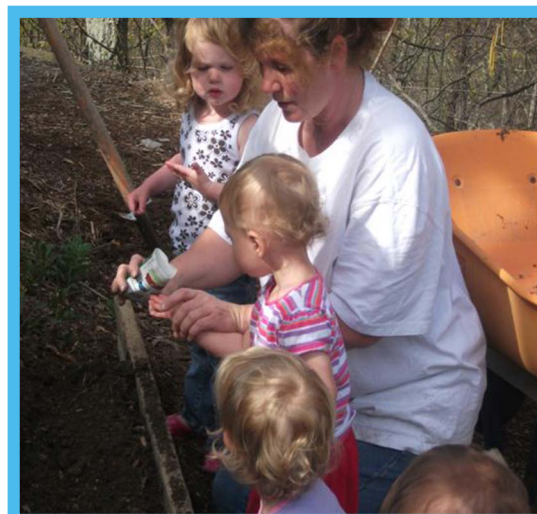
garden, some of us join together and share our knowledge

about developmentally appropriate practices. We collaborate with one another in making decisions about our programs and practices and share in the responsibility for ensuring that we provide the best possible environments for the growth and learning of the children we serve. As a result, we collectively grow as early childhood professionals and our programs are cultivated through an increase in the breath and depth of effective practices we use every day.

As this season of child growth and development continues to bloom, I encourage all of us to cultivate our

local community of early childhood practitioners by seeking out others to join us in NCAEYC. If you have never attended a local affiliate or chapter meeting, contact your local affiliate or chapter leaders and get involved ([View the NCAEYC Local Affiliate and Chapter map](#)). Plant some seeds in your local early education community by inviting your colleagues to attend a local affiliate or chapter meeting with you and encourage them to join your Association. Generate some excitement and start gathering a team to attend this year's annual NCAEYC Conference to learn and grow together. Together we can prosper and have a greater positive impact on the quality and efficacy of the care and education that we provide the children of North Carolina.

As time moves us into this new season of growth, we have already been working for many months with care and intentionality to cultivate the growth and development of the children that we serve each and every day.



NCaeyc's Local Affiliate Council: Growing Leaders at Every Level

Written by
Resha K. Washington,
LAC Chair

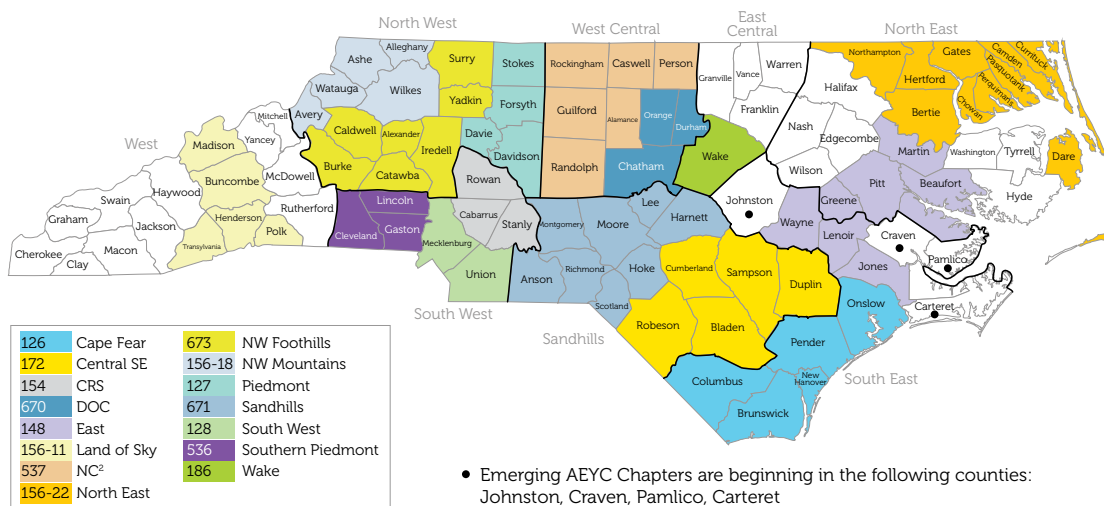
As the profession of early childhood education continues to expand, so does the need for active and informed leaders. Too often administrators and teachers feel as though their insight and firsthand knowledge is not needed. They depend on politicians, company owners and other community leaders with an interest in education to speak on behalf of young children and their best interest. Although it is nice to have the support of these entities it is imperative that those people working daily in classrooms and centers feel empowered enough to voice their opinions and thoughts firsthand. In recognition of this need NAEYC has organized its members into local and state networking Affiliate groups that promote the ideology of growing local leaders within its organization through the Local Affiliate Council.

Did you know that as a registered member of NAEYC you are automatically a part of your state level affiliate and in most cases a local affiliate or chapter? NCaeyc, North Carolina's state level affiliate, is comprised of 16 local affiliates and chapters that work together to ensure members are provided with the most up to date information on policies and procedures of NAEYC, as well as events and professional development opportunities within your state. These affiliate groups share NAEYC's vision of working on behalf of young children and their families to promote high quality childcare through leadership, activism and engagement with other professionals in the field. Each affiliate's structure varies by state but the purpose remains the same. As an active participant in your local affiliate you have the opportunity to lead where you are and provide feedback about pertinent issues in the field of early childhood to your state level Board while encouraging others to become active and engaged. It is the goal of the NCaeyc to have a representative from each affiliate group serving on the Local Affiliate Council (L.A.C) to act as a liaison between the state and its region. There are an unlimited amount of opportunities for professional growth and leadership ranging from roles such as President, Vice President and Treasurer to serving on committees for Public Policy, Professional Development and NAEYC accreditation.

LOCAL AFFILIATES GET ENGAGED IN MANY WAYS

Week of the Young Child Celebrations
Early Childhood Conferences
Participation in forums on Early Childhood Education
Advocacy Days
Early Childhood Professionals Awards and Recognitions
Reggio Emilia Groups
Early Childhood Educator Luncheons

View NCaeyc Local Affiliate Map



If you are interested in more information about your local affiliate or chapter please contact Lorie Barnes of NCaeyc at 919-510-5034 or lbarnes@ncaeyc.org.

Week of the Young Child and Conference



THE EARLY YEARS ARE LEARNING YEARS!

Week of the Young Child: April 6 - 12

Honor early childhood teachers who are at the heart of quality early learning during NAEYC's Week of the Young Child.™

Each year, thousands of individuals across our state and nation help raise awareness about the importance of the early years by holding "Week of the Young Child™" events. This annual NAEYC event provides opportunities for professionals, families and communities to come together to celebrate and promote excellence in the early care and education of young children, birth through age 8.

This year, NCAeyc's featured event is Saturday, April 12, 9:00 am – 2:30 pm at Halifax Community College in northeastern North Carolina.

REGISTER: <http://ncaeyc.org/2014-week-young-child-featured-event/>

Thanks to all who are planning WOYC events across North Carolina, across the US and beyond! [Add your celebration to NAEYC's interactive map!](#)

NCAeyc
NC Association for the Education of Young Children

2014 Week of the Young Child
Saturday, April 12 • 9 am - 2:30 pm (lunch provided)
Room 401 of the 400 Building, Halifax Community College
100 College Drive, Weirton, NC 27980

Receive 5 DDCE Contact Hour Credits

Who should attend?
ANYONE involved in the care, education and well-being of young children, both through age eight

- Child Care Teachers and Directors
- NC Pre-K Teachers
- Family Home Child Care Providers
- K-12 Teachers, Principals and Administrators
- Community College Faculty and Students
- Librarians
- Faith Leaders
- Social Workers
- Health and Emergency Professionals who work with young children
- Parents and Grandparents (Remember, this is a day for grown-ups! Children may not attend)

Details:
• Cost: \$20 for NCAeyc Members, \$30 for non-members. Fee includes lunch.
• Register for this event at: <http://www.ncaeyc.org/2014-week-of-the-young-child-featured-event/>
• Learn more about NCAeyc at: <http://www.ncaeyc.org/> or on Facebook: www.facebook.com/ncaeyc
• Follow us on Twitter: [@ncaeyc](https://twitter.com/ncaeyc) or on Pinterest: www.pinterest.com/ncaeyc/

Thanks for support from:
Halifax Community College and Halifax Community College

Questions? Call NCAeyc: 819-510-5001

REGISTER TODAY! LIMITED SEATS AVAILABLE.

NCAeyc 2014 Annual Conference

PROMOTING PLAY

Powerful Learning Across Years

as a classroom teacher, instructor of adults, author, and consultant. She is a member of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the National Kindergarten Alliance, and the International Reading Association. Dr. Feldman's list of degrees include a B.A. from the University of Georgia, a D.A.S.T. from Emory University, and both M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from Georgia State University. Dr. Feldman inspires teachers across the country with her engaging songs and creative activities that help make teaching and learning FUN!

NCAeyc 2014 Annual Conference September 11 - 13, 2014 Raleigh Convention Center

www.ncaeyc.org/conference (registration opens in April!)

Keynote: Dr. Jean

Dr. Jean Feldman's noteworthy educational career has spanned more than 40 years. She has served



Preconference Sessions (your choice of two .5 CEU options)

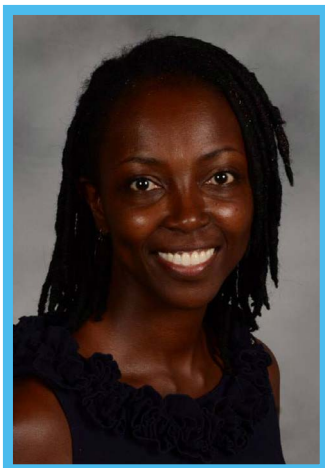
Natural Playwork: Children's Play and Playwork in Natural Environments presented by Linda Kinney of the NC Zoo

Guiding Infant Toddler Early Learning Using the NC Foundations in collaboration with the NC Infant Toddler Quality Enhance Project of Child Care Services Association.

AND... a Special Leadership Event for Administrators sponsored by Lakeshore. Watch for details on how to register!

Lakeshore®

Meet Our Newest Board Members



Ashley Reid, Public Policy & Awareness (South West)

Ashley Reid is a Child Development Specialist with Child Care Resources Incorporated. She has been an advocate for children and families for 13 years.

What has inspired you to work with children and families?

My passion has always been for children and families. As a family childcare home provider, I understood how my role as an educator went beyond my classroom. I learned that interactions I had with families impacted the growth and development of children and established lifelong relationships. As I became aware about how high-quality learning environments impact learning and development, it made me understand the importance of advocacy. My first step was to become knowledgeable about early childhood education and how my role impacts children, families, and the community. It was through my enrollment in coursework that I met other early childhood professionals that shared my enthusiasm. I understand that my role, when connected with others who are also advocates, can enable the voices of families to be heard. This is what inspires me to want to make a difference.

When did you first learn about NCAEYC?

I heard about NAEYC while I was in college and decided to join. The resources and trainings that were made available to me as a result of membership made me think about how I could give back. Prior to my membership, I was involved in local childcare organizations, but my membership in NAEYC provided exposure to how early childhood education is a global issue. I decided to run for a position with my local affiliate and was elected to an At-Large position in 2009. Through my service with the South West Association for the Education of Young Children (SWAeyc). I gained a better understanding about why advocacy is so important to early care and education. My work with local affiliate members showed me that grassroots advocacy is how each voice is heard.

How has your experience on the NCAEYC Board been so far?

I received information about an At-Large position for the Southwest region within NCAeyc. The prospect of serving on the state-level was both exciting and intimidating. My limited experience made the responsibilities seem formidable. The support and guidance that I received prior to running for the position and after being elected has made me grateful for the opportunity. It is amazing to see how early childhood professionals across the state come together and bring a wealth of experience that I can learn from. It is such a privilege to engage on the state-level about issues that affect us locally.



Sarah Prezioso, Membership/LA Support (North East)

Sarah Prezioso is an Early Childhood Education Faculty member at Nash Community College. She has worked for and on behalf of children and families for more than 10 years.

What is your experience in the field of early childhood education?

I have worked as an early childhood education faculty member for seven years. Prior to teaching, I worked directly with families. I have attended every conference since 2007 and love being engaged at the state level. Conference attendance has allowed me to create and develop professional relationships as well as build my knowledge. Because of this, I was excited to support a group of students to attend the 2012 conference. Since then, the Early Childhood Club at Nash Community College has been working to continue to send students to each conference. This experience has allowed me to model professional affiliations for students.

What inspired you to apply to serve on the Board?

I submitted my nomination to the Board at the request of another Board member. The yearly conference gave me an opportunity to engage with other professionals in the field. I have always encouraged my students to become involved at the local, state, and national level.

How do you feel now that you have been elected to serve on the Board?

The idea of serving on a state level Board was scary! I have a demanding job, and I am a single parent. I thought there was no way I could add another "thing" to my busy life. This experience has been life changing! I love being a part of such a committed group of people. It is so refreshing to meet with professionals from such different backgrounds committed to working for and on behalf of children and families in North Carolina.

Consider Leadership Service: NCAeyc Board of Directors Elections Information

Do you care about the young children of North Carolina? Are you knowledgeable about the issues surrounding Early Childhood Education in North Carolina? Are you an advocate for professionals who work with or on behalf of children birth- age 8? If you answered yes to any of these questions then NCAeyc has a wonderful leadership opportunity for you!

NCAeyc is seeking nominees for our 2014 elections for the NCAeyc Board of Directors. Promoting strong leadership is one of the primary ways NCAeyc works to achieve our mission “to be the voice of professionals working with or on behalf of young children birth through age eight.” NCAeyc strives to be a “high performing, inclusive organization” and therefore we value representation on our Board that reflects our diverse membership.

NCAeyc needs vibrant leaders to guide the work of YOUR association. This year, the following seats are open for nomination:

Executive Committee: Three-Year term through September 2017:

- **Treasurer:** Provide oversight of NCAeyc’s fiscal status and condition, and leadership for developing the annual budget, funding plans, and financial goals. Minimum of 1 term experience serving on any previous or current NCAeyc Board of Directors.
- **VP of Public Policy & Awareness:** Develops advocacy and public policy initiatives for NCAeyc. Minimum of 1 term experience serving on the current NCAeyc Board of Directors.

Members at Large: Three-Year term through September 2017:

- **West:** Eligible candidates must live or work in one of the following counties: Avery, Mitchell, Yancey, McDowell, Rutherford, Madison, Buncombe, Polk, Henderson, Haywood, Transylvania, Swain, Jackson, Graham, Macon, Cherokee, or Clay.
- **West Central:** Eligible candidates must live or work in one of the following counties: Rockingham, Caswell, Person, Guilford, Alamance, Orange, Durham, Randolph, or Chatham.
- **East Central:** Eligible candidates must live or work in one of the following counties: Granville, Vance, Franklin, Wake or Johnston.
- **Sandhills:** Eligible candidates must live or work in one of the following counties: Montgomery, Moore, Lee, Harnett, Cumberland, Bladen, Columbus, Robeson, Hoke, Scotland or Richmond.
- **North West:** Eligible candidates must live or work in one of the following counties: Ashe, Alleghany, Surry, Stokes, Watauga, Wilkes, Yadkin, Forsyth, Caldwell, Alexander, Iredell, Davie, Davidson, Burke or Catawba

NCAeyc’s Nominations Committee will review applications, interview candidates by phone and present a slate of nominees to the NCAeyc Board of Directors for approval. During the election in late spring, NCAeyc members will cast their votes. Newly-elected Board members will take office in September at the 2014 NCAeyc Annual Conference in Raleigh. Find details and application [here](#) or on the [NCAeyc blog](#):



Each year The National Association for the Education of Young Children holds a Public Policy Forum for members to have an opportunity to advocate, educate and motivate on the National level.

This year proved to accomplish just that. We had a full day of presentations regarding the President's budget with the proposals for early childhood, funding issues with the implications for our field, messaging, review of materials to give to our legislators, and sessions regarding important issues for our profession.

The forum was well attended and educators from across the country were present and ready to advocate for our youngest citizens. The excitement grew as the presenters informed the group that the President's agenda and budget included a new initiative called Strong Start. The budget offered unprecedented attention to early childhood with a strong focus on health, safety and accessibility. View an outline of [the President's 2015 proposed budget](#).



Early Head Start (EHS) was a hot topic during the forum. Early Head Start focuses on the current best practices essential to quality programs: child development, family development, community building, and staff development, all of which are embedded in the Head Start Performance Standards. The services provided by EHS programs are designed to reinforce and respond to the unique strengths and needs of each child and family. These services include:

- Quality early education both in and out of the home;
- Home visits, especially for families with newborns and other infants;
- Parent education, including parent-child activities;
- Comprehensive health and mental health services, including services to women before, during, and after pregnancy;
- Nutrition; and
- Ongoing support for parents through case management and peer support groups.

As part of the President's Early Education Plan, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children & Families (ACF) has will support states and communities in expanding high quality early learning to infants and toddlers through the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships. Through this initiative, Early Head Start (EHS) grantees will partner with center-based and family child care providers who agree to meet Early Head Start Program Performance Standards and provide comprehensive, full-day, full year high-quality services to infants and toddlers from low-income families.

ACF recently launched a [webpage](#) with information and resources about this initiative, including:

- How partnership funds will be awarded
- Who is eligible to participate
- Resources to develop successful Early Head Start-Child Care partnerships
- A toolkit on blending and braiding early childhood program funding streams

During some of the other presentations during the forum, participants learned about messaging and how to effectively communicate, collaborate and clearly articulate the mission and positions NAEYC holds. The participants were able to choose from several sessions relative to early childhood and benefitted greatly from the wealth of knowledge and experience offered from the facilitators.

The visits on Capitol Hill occurred the next day. NAEYC staff had scheduled all of the attendees to the forum appointments with Senators and Congressmen. Maps were provided and the group headed to "The Hill." NAEYC members met with many receptive staff members from both sides of the aisle. North Carolina had productive meetings with several US Congressmen and then met with Senator Kay Hagan's office and Senator Richard Burr's office. The group was met with good questions and opportunities to speak about the specific issues in North Carolina.

With so much happening on the Federal level, it is important for us to stay informed and take action. We need to continue to talk with our local legislators and connect with the legislators we have sent to Washington. Together we can effect change and help the children of our State. Influencing public policy starts with forming relationships with our leaders. We can make phone calls and email but more importantly we can stop by offices and share stories of how our work with young children and families has made a difference!

Contact your legislators today! [Find your local leaders](#).

Growth In Pre-K Spending

Written by Dr. Steve Jackson,
Co-Chair, Public Policy &
Awareness, NCAeyc

Despite budget challenges all over the country, state legislatures are growing the money made available for pre-kindergarten. Since 2012–13, 30 states and Washington DC have increased funding. This has resulted in a 6.9% boost in expenditures in the last year and follows a 3.6% increase in 2012–13 over the previous year. Most states have now increased funding to at least pre-recession levels (2008–09).

The funding growth has come from legislative chambers and gubernatorial mansions controlled by both major parties. This reflects the growth of a bi-partisan shared understanding of the benefits of pre-k. Mississippi made its first investment in pre-k in 2013, while Massachusetts nearly doubled its investment for 2013–14. South Carolina and Minnesota increased funding by over two-thirds. The largest dollar increases in 2013–14 funding were in Michigan (\$65 million) and Texas (\$47 million).

The growing investment reflects the research on the importance of pre-k. We know that the brain develops fastest before the age of five and substantial vital growth continues until early adolescence. These years are critical for cognitive, social and behavioral development. Learning in these years builds pathways in the brain, laying down neurological architecture critical for later learning and life success.

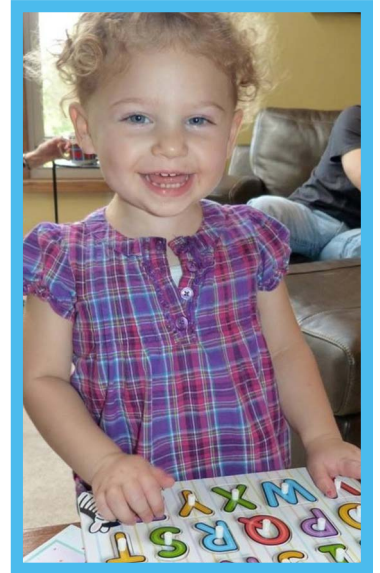


Photo courtesy of Mike McGlynn Photography

Pre-k is therefore important for every child, but particularly for children from families, most likely low-income ones, whose children have not had the brain-building stimulation of more advantaged peers. This leads to language gaps at school entry, and a lag in development for many that is never recovered.

Recovering this gap at age four does not happen magically. Researchers have discovered the importance of pre-k quality. The landmark studies that show 700% returns on investment in pre-k rest on high quality. It is not any pre-k that boosts the achievement of low-income children compared to their peers who do not go to pre-k. Rather, it is high quality pre-k.

What is quality in pre-k? It means a language-rich curriculum. It means trained educators who understand the social context of learning, who are not content to baby-sit and who integrate play into that language-rich curriculum. It means instructors who understand how to address the varied learning needs of children, from those with significant developmental delays to the gifted. It means smaller class sizes, so that professional levels of classroom management are possible such that child interaction with teachers is frequent and personalized and opportunities to learn from teachers are numerous during the day, every day. It means an adequately equipped classroom and outdoor space.

While funding developments around the country are encouraging, the support for pre-k in North Carolina has been more tenuous in the last few years. Much of that is due to tight fiscal times. But there remains some doubt in some quarters over the outsized developmental growth caused by good quality pre-k. Doubters need to remember that pre-k is but one year of growth, albeit a vital one. High quality pre-k must be followed by developmentally appropriate care and education. Pre-kindergarten is a fundamental piece of a sound education, and has been recognized as such by the courts. But it is one year of growth. Ultimately, all educators working with children aged zero to eight are important to their growth and later success.



Infant Development Through Play/ Desarrollo Del Infante A Traves Del Juego

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, play is “the spontaneous activity of children”.

Wortham and Wortham (1989) explain that “play is a natural part of living, growing and learning for infants and toddlers”. In spite of their widespread use, these definitions fall short on the importance of play in infant cognitive and emotional development as well as social interactions. The importance of play extends beyond common definitions. It is through play that infants learn about themselves, both physically and emotionally. In the process of play infants discover the environment, and most importantly, learn to connect with their caregivers.

The function of the caregiver in play interactions is critical and involves multiple roles including active participant, facilitator of play, and intentional observer. A caregiver who is an active participant is the one that performs the play activity with the infant while a facilitator of play is one that designs the play space and materials for free infant exploration. An intentional observer is one that during infant play is actively “looking” and identifying infant interests, capabilities, and challenges. By taking on these different roles caregivers can create, based on the information gathered, an optimal play environment to foster infant development. The ultimate purpose of these roles is to appropriately identify infant developmental wants and needs in order to stimulate, nurture, and respond to the infant accordingly (Bailey & Burton, 1982).

In the first year of life, infant development is stimulated by unstructured play. An 8-month-old infant finds a rolling toy on the floor crawls and tries to grab it, roll it, and shake it. In other words, the infant freely experiments with the object without adult guidance. This promotes learning opportunities for both infants and caregivers. An unstructured play environment is the space for caregivers to function as a facilitator and intentional observer. When serving in these two roles during unstructured play, caregivers gather information that can then be applied towards structured play experiences where they become an active participant. The information gathered in an unstructured play environment feeds into the more structured play experiences; the caregiver participates with the infant in a guided game with the rolling toy. The caregiver observed the infant trying to grab the toy and roll it, in a structured play activity the infant is challenged to grab the toy on the ground from a standing position.

Considering the developmental stages of the infant during the first year of life can maximize the caregiver-infant play experience. This allows caregivers to individualize play activities with the specific needs of each infant. In the unstructured play environment and whenever possible it is important to let infants lead and caregivers follow their signs of interest to identify opportunities for stimulating experiences in structured play activities (Acredolo & Goodwyn, 2000).

Caregivers in tune with the rapid physical and emotional developmental changes occurring early in life are more likely to provide the appropriate space and objects to stimulate individual infant development. These caregivers understand the need to engage in “conversation” with a 3-month-old infant or bring closer an object of interest to a 9-month-old pre-crawling infant so she can get it by herself. This ability to scaffold during play activities not only maximizes appropriate infant stimulation, but also fosters a deep and meaningful connection between the infant and the caregiver. Being knowledgeable in infant development provides caregivers the necessary tools to create appropriate stimulating experiences.

Infant play develops in a series of experiences that transform from exploration to more complex activities (Wortham and Wortham, 1989). Infant exploration and manipulation of objects provides an understanding of the objects they manipulate both at the object function level, as well as the physical relation to the body. This understanding lays the ground to then over time comprehend object functionality after repeated opportunities of object manipulations, while “practicing” their problem solving skills. For instance, around 2 months of age infants kick their feet and might kick objects (i.e. a ball) near their bodies by accident. As they develop additional body coordination, between 4 to 5 months of age, infants begin to touch these objects more purposefully and begin to understand the consequences of their movements. They now understand that if they move their feet they can kick the ball. Following this stage, infants can then grab the ball between their feet and later on transfer it from feet to hands, as they continue to develop their hand-foot coordination. By intentionally observing and having an awareness of infant developmental stages, caregivers can incorporate simple play activities (a ball) to stimulate infant development. The following table includes developmental information, play activities, and reflections that can be used by caregivers during the first year of life.

Summary

Play has a significant influence in both infant development and the caregiver-infant bond. By being intentional observers, facilitators, and active participants of play, caregivers can maximize the infant play experience and stimulate the development of each individual infant. Caregivers familiar with the characteristics of each developmental stage within each individual infant, provide relevant opportunities for play that are stimulating and rich. Caregivers who are perceptive, flexible, and intentional in their interactions with infants recognize that in every moment there is a potential for learning about themselves and the infants in their care. This learning process supports infant healthy development.

De acuerdo al diccionario Merriam-Webster, jugar es “la actividad espontánea de los niños”.

Wortham y Wortham (1989) explica que “el juego es una parte natural de la vida, crecimiento y aprendizaje en bebés y niños de 1 a 2 años”. A pesar de su uso generalizado, estas definiciones se quedan cortas en cuanto a la importancia del juego en el desarrollo cognitivo y emocional del infante así como en la interacción social. La importancia del juego se extiende más allá de las definiciones comunes. Es a través del juego que los infantes aprenden sobre ellos mismos, tanto física como emocionalmente. En el proceso del juego los infantes descubren su entorno, pero más importante aún, aprenden a conectarse con los adultos a su cargo.

La función de los adultos con infantes a su cargo en la interacción del juego es crítica e involucra múltiples roles, incluyendo la de ser participante activo, facilitador del juego y espectador intencional. La persona con infantes a su cargo que es un participante activo es aquella que realiza la actividad del juego con el infante, mientras que el facilitador del juego es el que diseña el espacio de juego y los materiales para la libre exploración por parte del niño. Un espectador intencional es aquel que durante el juego del niño está “observando” activamente e identificando los intereses, capacidades y retos del niño. Al asumir estos roles diferentes, las personas con niños a su cargo pueden crear, basado en la información recogida, un medio ambiente óptimo de juego para promover el desarrollo del niño. El fin último de estos roles es el de identificar de manera apropiada los deseos y necesidades de desarrollo del infante de manera de estimular, nutrir y responder de manera adecuada al niño (Bailey & Burton, 1982).

En el primer año de vida, el desarrollo del infante se estimula mediante el juego no estructurado. El infante de 8 meses de edad juega con un juguete en el piso mientras gatea, trata de agarrarlo, rodarlo, y sacudirlo. En otras palabras, el infante explora de manera libre el objeto sin ser guiado por el adulto. Esto promueve oportunidades de aprendizaje tanto para los infantes como para los adultos a su cargo. Un ambiente no estructurado de juego proporciona una oportunidad excelente a los adultos con infantes a su cargo para funcionar tanto como facilitador como espectador intencional. Al actuar en estos dos roles durante el juego no estructurado, los adultos con infantes a su cargo recogen información que puede luego ser aplicada a experiencias de juego estructurado en el cual ellos se convierten en participantes activos. La información recogida en un ambiente de juego no estructurado alimenta las experiencias de juego más estructurado. El adulto con infantes a su cargo participa con el infante en un juego guiado con el juguete que rueda. El adulto con infantes a su cargo ha observado al infante intentando agarrar el juguete y rodarlo, en una actividad estructurada de juego el infante es presentado con la oportunidad de coger el juguete del suelo cuando se encuentra de pie.

Considerar las etapas de desarrollo del infante durante el primer año de vida puede maximizar la experiencia del juego entre el infante y la persona a su cargo, permitiendo a los adultos con infantes a su cargo individualizar actividades de juego con necesidades específicas para cada infante. En el ambiente de juego no estructurado y siempre que sea posible, es importante permitir a los infantes dirigir y los adultos a su cargo seguir sus señales de interés para identificar oportunidades de experiencias estimulantes (Acredolo & Goodwyn, 2000).

Los adultos con infantes a su cargo que están atentos a los cambios rápidos de desarrollo físico y emocional que ocurren temprano en la vida, tienen más chance de proporcionar un espacio y objetos adecuados para estimular el desarrollo individual del infante. Estos adultos con infantes a su cargo entienden la necesidad de entablar una “conversación” con un bebé de 3 meses o acercarle un objeto de interés a un bebé de 9 meses que aún no gatea para que lo pueda tomar por sí mismo. Esta habilidad de establecer un “andamiaje” durante las actividades de juego, no solo maximiza la estimulación adecuada del infante, pero también promueve una conexión profunda y significativa entre el infante y el adulto a su cargo. El estar informado en desarrollo de infantes le proporciona a los adultos a su cargo las herramientas necesarias para crear experiencias adecuadas de estimulación.

El juego infantil se desarrolla en una serie de experiencias que se van transformando desde la exploración hasta actividades más complejas (Wortham y Wortham, 1989). La exploración infantil y la manipulación de objetos les proporciona un entendimiento de los objetos que ellos manipulan tanto desde el nivel de la función del objeto como la relación física con el cuerpo. Este entendimiento establece la base para luego con el tiempo entender la funcionalidad del objeto después de repetidas oportunidades de manipulación del objeto, mientras “practican” su habilidades de resolución de problemas. Por ejemplo, cerca de los 2 meses los bebés patean y pueden patear objetos (por ejemplo una pelota) cerca de sus cuerpos por accidente. A medida que desarrollan una coordinación adicional del cuerpo entre los 4 a 5 meses, los bebés comienzan a tocar estos objetos más resueltamente y empiezan a entender las consecuencias de sus movimientos. En ese momento entienden que si mueven sus pies pueden patear la pelota. A continuación de esta etapa, los bebés pueden agarrar la pelota entre sus pies y luego pasarla de los pies a las manos a medida que continúa el desarrollo de la coordinación entre manos y pies. Al observar de manera intencional y estar consciente de las etapas de desarrollo del infante, los adultos a su cargo pueden incorporar actividades simples de juego (una pelota) para estimular el desarrollo del niño. La siguiente tabla incluye información de desarrollo, actividades de juego, y reflexiones que pueden ser utilizados por los adultos con infantes a su cargo durante el primer año de vida.

Infant Development Through Play/ Desarrollo Del Infante A Traves Del Juego

WHAT'S HAPPENING?	INTERACTIVE PLAY IDEAS	REFLECTIONS
2 – 6 months		
Infants are interactive at this age. They enjoy babbling; they may babble and then pause, waiting for the caregiver to respond. These babbling-response cycles teach them about the back and forth of conversations. Infants also tend to imitate, which helps them acquire new skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During infant babble it is important for caregivers to talk and babble back. These early “conversations” are the predecessors of speech development. Caregivers and infants engage in back-and-forth interactions with gestures (i.e. holding out an interesting object, encouraging the infant to reach for it and then signal to give it back). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do caregivers and infants enjoy communicating with each other? What do caregivers say or do that gets a reaction from the infant?
Toward the end of this developmental period, infants may be able to roll, become better at reaching and grasping, and will begin to sit with assistance. They also begin wanting to explore a variety of textures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caregivers introduce one toy at a time for infants to focus on, and explore each one. Infants lay on the back and caregivers hold a variety of toys over their chest within the infant's reach. Infants will love reaching up and pulling them close. Caregiver will learn what most interests the infant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What kind of toys or objects does the infant seem most interested in?
Infants this age love to explore. They learn from looking at their surroundings, exploring, and begin to learn orienting their bodies in space.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Placing the infants in different positions (on their back, stomach, lifted). Each position gives them a different perspective, and a chance to move and explore in different ways. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do the infants use their body to explore? Which position do they like the best and least? What is the infant's activity level? More mobile or more laid-back?
6 – 9 months		
Infants use many sounds, gestures and facial expressions to communicate their needs. Their actions are their communications.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caregivers should talk a lot with the infants, label, and narrate for them things that go on around them, and especially with them. Give infants time to respond. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are infants communicating their wants and needs? Mostly using sounds? Gestures?
Infants this age can also use toys in more complex ways. Through imitation they may use objects functionally.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caregivers introduce jack-in-the-box type of toy. Present infants an opportunity to try objects before caregiver does it again. This teaches infants cause and effect. Seeing that they can make things happen builds their self-confidence and makes them want to take on new challenges. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are the infants imitating their caregivers?
Many infants at this age can roll over both ways, scoot, and even crawl.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caregivers encourage infants to use their body to get what they want. If a toy is out of reach and they signal wanting it, caregivers bring it close enough for infants to grab. This builds their confidence. Caregivers create an environment that is safe and interesting for exploration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are infants using their body to explore, to express their feelings?
9 – 12 months		
Infants this age are very good at communicating their needs and wants. They are also very persistent in their actions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caregivers help infants handle their feelings by acknowledging their frustrations and helping them calm down and try again. This helps infants manage their very strong feelings and develop self-control. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caregivers describe infant's personality.
Infants this age have developed their understanding of object permanence, they understand that when something is not in their visual range it still exist.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caregivers play hide-and-seek games. Disappearing and reappearing games like this help the infant learn to cope with separation and feel secure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are infants handling separation? What helps make the transition easier?
Infants this age do things repeatedly; this helps build their self-confidence. Their ability to move in new ways (crawl, stand, even walk) makes it easier to explore and helps them make new discoveries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caregivers create periods in the routine to intentionally observe infants and learn what they can do. Caregivers follow the infants' lead. The more infants direct the play, the more invested they are, and the more they will learn. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are infants' favorite activities in this stage? What are infants doing independently? What do they find challenging?

Source: <http://www.zerotothree.org/child-development/brain-development/healthy-minds.html>

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Resumen

El juego tiene una influencia significativa tanto en el desarrollo del infante como en el lazo entre el infante y el adulto a su cargo. Al ser espectadores intencionales, facilitadores y participantes activos del juego, los adultos pueden maximizar la experiencia del juego de los infantes a su cargo y estimular el desarrollo de cada infante individual. Los adultos familiarizados con las características de cada etapa de desarrollo dentro de cada infante individual a su cargo, proporcionan oportunidades relevantes para el juego que son estimulantes y enriquecedoras. Los adultos que son perceptivos, flexibles e intencionales en sus interacciones con los infantes a su cargo, reconocen que en cada momento hay un potencial para aprender sobre ellos mismos y los infantes a su cargo. Este proceso de aprendizaje respalda el desarrollo sano del infante.

QUE SUCEDE?	IDEAS DE JUEGO INTERACTIVO	REFLEXIONES
2 – 6 meses		
En esta etapa los infantes son interactivos. Disfrutan balbucear; pueden balbucear y luego hacer una pausa esperando la respuesta del adulto a su cargo. Estos ciclos de balbuceo-respuesta les enseña el ir y venir de las conversaciones.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Durante el balbuceo del infante es importante que los adultos a su cargo les hablen y balbuceen de vuelta. Estas “conversaciones” tempranas son los predecesores del desarrollo del lenguaje. Los infantes y adultos a su cargo entablan una interacción de ir y venir con gestos (por ejemplo, sostener un objeto interesante, incentivando al infante a alcanzarlo y luego hacerle señas para que lo devuelva). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cómo disfrutaban los infantes y los adultos a su cargo la comunicación entre sí? Que dicen o hacen los adultos que logran una reacción del infante a su cargo?
Los infantes también tienden a imitar, lo que les ayuda a adquirir nuevas habilidades.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Durante el balbuceo del infante es importante que los adultos a su cargo les hablen y balbuceen de vuelta. Estas “conversaciones” tempranas son los predecesores del desarrollo del lenguaje. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cuáles son los juguetes u objetos que al infante pareciera interesarle más?
Los infantes y adultos a su cargo entablan una interacción de ir y venir con gestos (por ejemplo, sostener un objeto interesante, incentivando al infante a alcanzarlo y luego hacerle señas para que lo devuelva).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cómo disfrutaban los infantes y los adultos a su cargo la comunicación entre sí? Que dicen o hacen los adultos que logran una reacción del infante a su cargo? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cómo usan los infantes su cuerpo para explorar? Cuál posición les gusta más y cuál menos?
6 – 9 meses		
Los infantes usan muchos sonidos, gestos y expresiones faciales para comunicar sus necesidades. Sus acciones son su comunicación.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Los adultos deben hablarle mucho a los infantes a su cargo, nombrar y narrarles las cosas que suceden a su alrededor y especialmente con ellos. Darle a los infantes tiempo para responder. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cómo comunican los infantes sus deseos y necesidades? Más que todo mediante sonidos? Gestos?
Los infantes en esta edad pueden usar los juguetes de maneras más complejas. A través de la imitación pueden utilizar objetos de manera funcional.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Los adultos a su cargo introducen el juguete tipo caja de sorpresa (o caja de resorte). Le presenta al infante la oportunidad de probar los objetos antes que el adulto a su cargo lo vuelva a hacer. Esto le enseña al infante causa y efecto. Ver que pueden hacer que las cosas sucedan ayuda a desarrollar la confianza en sí mismo y les incentiva a asumir nuevos retos. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cómo imitan los infantes a los adultos a su cargo?
Muchos infantes en esta edad pueden darse vuelta a ambos lados, correrse a un lado e inclusive gatear.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Los adultos fomentan en los infantes a su cargo el uso de sus cuerpo para obtener lo que ellos quieren. Si un juguete está fuera de su alcance y ellos indican que lo quieren, los adultos a su cargo lo acercan lo suficiente para que el infante lo agarre. Esto desarrolla su confianza. Los adultos con infantes a su cargo crean un ambiente que es seguro e interesante para la exploración 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cómo utilizan los infantes su cuerpo para explorar, para expresar sus sentimientos?
9 – 12 meses		
Los infantes a esta edad son muy buenos en comunicar sus necesidades y deseos. También son muy persistentes en sus acciones.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Los adultos ayudan a los infantes a su cargo a manejar sus sentimientos al reconocer sus frustraciones y ayudándolos a calmarse y probar de nuevo. Esto le permite a los infantes manejar su sentimientos fuertes y desarrollar auto control. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Los adultos describen la personalidad de los infantes a su cargo.
Los infantes en esta edad han desarrollado su entendimiento de la permanencia del objeto, ellos entienden que aún cuando algo no está en su campo visual, éste todavía existe.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Los adultos juegan al escondite con los infantes a su cargo. Estos juegos de desaparecer y aparecer ayudan al infante a aprender a hacer frente a la separación y sentirse seguro. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cómo manejan los infantes la separación? Qué ayuda a hacer más fácil la transición?
Los infantes a esta edad hacen cosas de manera repetida; esto les ayuda a desarrollar la confianza en sí mismos. Su habilidad de moverse de nuevas maneras (gatear, pararse, inclusive caminar) les hace más fácil explorar y les ayuda a encontrar nuevos descubrimientos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Los adultos crean períodos en la rutina para observar de manera intencional a los infantes a su cargo y aprender lo que ellos están en capacidad de hacer. Los adultos siguen las señales de los infantes a su cargo. Mientras más dirijan los infantes el juego, más involucrados están y más van a aprender. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cuáles son las actividades favoritas del infante en esta etapa? Qué hacen los infantes de manera independiente? Qué encuentran ellos desafiante?

Learning the Infant Toddler Way

Two toddlers sit together enjoying a picture book, while three infants are busy pouring water into a sand and water table. Across the room a caregiver sings softly while gently rocking an infant to sleep. Quality programs include activities that engage infants and toddlers in brain based activities and reflect a philosophy of inclusion for all infants and toddlers.

By the time a child is 36 months old, she will have gone through three distinct stages: young infant, mobile infant, and toddler. Infant spaces should be home-like in nature. In other words, there are comfortable and stimulating places to learn, explore, and develop. It is also critically important that the care provider makes every effort to provide a welcoming and interactive environment for infants and their families. In addition, care providers should strive to create a bond with every baby that will make her feel loved, safe, and secure, in her new environment.

Most professionals avoid the word curriculum when speaking about infants, because a quality infant program is based on allowing infants to follow their own schedules. Developmentally appropriate infant schedules are individualized because each child has a unique internal clock. While there must be times during each day to eat, sleep, and play, those times will vary. A quality infant-toddler program meets the individual emotional, physical, and social needs of each child. Cognitive and physical development is stimulated through interaction with others and by exploring developmentally appropriate objects in the environment while social and emotional development is encouraged through interaction with caring, responsive adults.

To build a foundation for all future learning, infants and toddlers need opportunities to do the following:

- Interact with responsive caregivers
- Look, listen, and respond to what is going on around them
- Explore their world with enthusiasm and wonder
- Actively engage in daily routines and novel experiences
- Reach milestones at their own pace
- Develop social and emotional skills in a nurturing environment

With that in mind, let's examine the components of a quality program for infants and toddlers.



Snuggle time reinforces social and emotional development

Social and emotional skills develop through intentional, nurturing caregiving in the early years. The sooner we infuse caregiving practices that grow and enhance these skills, the better chance we have of helping infants, toddlers, and their families develop resilience, an important component of social/emotional development because which involves the capacity to cope with changes and challenges. A hug, a snuggle, or sometimes just a pat on the back helps him feel secure, which in turn encourages him to trust people and explore relationships with others. This exploration and the subsequent development of relationships with others lead to his overall emotional development.

Emotional development refers to how a child feels about himself, the people in his life, and the environment in which he plays and lives. This develops through consistently positive interactions with his caregivers and his family. When an infant or a toddler is consistently and gently comforted by his caregiver, he learns that he is important and that his emotions are valid.



SNUGGLE BUGGLE, I LOVE YOU

Learning Objective: To promote bonding and attachment

What to Do	Observations
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Hold the baby in your arms and rock her back and forth.2. As you rock, say the words, “Snuggle buggle, I love you.”3. On the word you, kiss a part of her body—head, nose, toes.4. As the child grows older, she may ask to play this game.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the baby seem to enjoy the rocking motion?• Does the baby enjoy the snuggle you give her?• Does the baby seem to anticipate what you will do next, either by moving her body or moving her head?

Adapted from *125 Brain Games for Babies*, Revised, by Jackie Silberg, with permission from Gryphon House, Inc., <http://www.gryphonhouse.com>

Opportunities for communication development-also build cognitive skills

Long before infants say their first words, they are busy learning to communicate with others in a variety of ways. For example, because infants are social by nature, they will gaze into the eyes of a caregiver, and will recognize the faces of the people they see most often. They constantly listen to the sounds around them, and quickly learn that by reaching out to interact, they will get the attention of adults. For this reason, it is critically important that adults respond consistently to a child’s cries, as this reinforces her understanding of how to gain the attention of others. Soon, an infant begins to make cooing noises as she experiments with the sounds she can make. Before long, the infant is beginning to put syllables together, such as *da-da-da* or *ba-ba-ba*. Infants also use non-verbal communication such as pointing to an object. By pointing, perhaps she is communicating that she wants you to give her something, or maybe she is trying to tell you that she likes the way that object looks or feels.

By 18 months of age, a child will have approximately 20 to 30 words in his vocabulary and may attempt to vocalize to music. Eventually, this leads to the child’s knowing and using his own name, along with constant self-talk and subsequent attempts to communicate using two-word phrases. In addition, most toddlers this age use and understand the word no frequently. At two years of age, a child is expected to have at least 50 words in his vocabulary and to be using two and three-word phrases.

Between 24 and 36 months, if language development is progressing well, an explosion of new words will occur. The child’s vocabulary should exceed 300 words, and he will be asking questions.

The following are a few ideas to help infants and toddlers communicate:

- Respond to the infant’s vocalizations, as this helps to form an understanding of reciprocity and turn-taking sequences with adults.
- Talk about what you are doing. Remember that infants and toddlers understand far more than they can express verbally
- Play games that encourage using language and sounds. Read, read, read! It is the most important thing an adult can do to build communication and cognitive skills in young children.



Learning the Infant Toddler Way *continued*

THE BODY CHANT

Learning Objective: To begin to identify body parts

What to Do	Observations
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Say the following chant to the baby: <i>Here are my eyes.</i> (Point to your eyes.) <i>There is my nose.</i> (Point to your nose.) <i>Here are my fingers.</i> (Wiggle your fingers so the baby can see them.) <i>Where are my toes?</i> (Point to your feet.)2. Try a different way of saying the chant: <i>There are your eyes.</i> (Point to baby's eyes.) <i>Where is your nose?</i> (Point to baby's nose.) <i>I see your fingers.</i> (Reach down and wiggle the baby's fingers.) <i>I see your toes.</i> (Reach down and wiggle the baby's toes.)3. Repeat until the baby tires of the activity. As the child learns to anticipate this fingerplay, she may try to babble or talk with you.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the baby anticipate what will happen next by trying to point to her body parts?• Does the child giggle or smile during this chant?• Does she try to “talk” along with you?

Written by Clarissa Willis

Well-defined spaces enhance learning

Infants and toddlers are naturally curious, and they have special ways of learning about the world and exploring their environment. Appropriate early experiences provide the base for knowing and understanding their world, and offer experiences that shape their early development. It is essential to design environments that match infants' and toddlers' ways of learning, and to allow them to influence the process. When designing learning spaces for infants organize items and materials together in one place. These learning spaces can be set up in the classroom, or they can be placed in colorful tubs and moved in and out of the area. Carefully selected toys, materials, and props should be responsive to infants and encourage them to influence their environment. In these learning areas, they will be able to see items, play with them, and continue to use them as long as they are interested. This method of organization enables the teacher to develop a classroom community that is both appropriate and interesting for infants. It also ensures that objects, movement, and experiences are included that positively affect all areas of development: cognitive, language, social-emotional, and motor.

The following areas are recommended for your young-infant classroom:

- **I Can Move!:** Spaces for crawling, rolling and wiggling arms and legs
- **Do you see what I see?:** Toys, books and materials that encourage the infant to visually explore, such as colorful board books, pictures of family members and of an infant-friendly mirror at floor level.
- **Touch:** Encourage tactile development by providing materials of different textures. (Don't forget to also incorporate some supervised water play activities into the mix.)
- **Listen:** Materials that make noise such as rattlers and bells.
- **Read to me:** Lots of board books with colorful pictures. Read to infants often!



Suggestions for older infant and toddler learning spaces might include all of the ones above and the following:

- **Home living:** Add child-size furniture, plastic food, a table and chairs and some play pots and pans to encourage young children to explore. Don't forget to include a few multi-cultural dolls and a child-sized 'cooking utensils'.
- **By Myself:** A quiet place where a child can go to relax. Furnish this center with soft pillows, soft music and indirect lighting if possible.
- **Music:** Put out some musical cymbals, bells, and other appropriate 'noise makers' and encourage children to play music. Also include opportunities to hear music with many different beats and from various cultures.
- **Dramatic Play:** Find hats of all varieties, appropriate dress-up clothes and colorful scarves. Encourage children to dress-up, put on some music and have a parade in your classroom.
- **Library:** A library center for toddlers should include a toddler-size sofa, and many colorful books both fiction and non-fiction for children to explore.

Time to sing and listen to music

Music is a universal language and singing builds brain connections and enhances learning. What's even more important is that children don't care if you can sing or not-- they enjoy it anyway! Introduce infants and toddlers to all types of music from soft lullabies to reggae. Even infants enjoy being held in your arms while you sway, dance, or bounce to a beat. Don't be afraid to experiment with music, and while there is plenty of children's music available for download, young children also enjoy the opportunity to sing along with you. Encourage toddlers and mobile infants to cross the midline of their bodies with their hands while they dance; you are not only building brain cells through music you are also building them through movement.

Connect with families

Daily reports designed to provide families with written documentation of each infant's feeding, diapering, and exploration time—keeps the family connected and involved in the child's daily routine. Build rapport with families by communicating often and by providing opportunities for them to be involved in activities at school. Ongoing assessments, such as portfolios and documentation panels, provide multiple opportunities for authentic assessment and progress monitoring and they provide additional opportunities for families to learn more about what their infant or toddler is learning every day.

Remember to Play!

Make sure that attractive, attention-getting elements are part of the infant and toddler playtime environment. Provide toys such as unbreakable mirrors, blocks, and items of different textures. Play is the primary way that infants learn how to communicate, move, socialize, and understand the world in which they live. Play impacts all aspects of learning, brain development and growth. It builds motor skills, develops communication, and encourages social emotional growth. So be sure to provide opportunities for infants and toddlers to play, and don't forget to join in the fun. Enjoying playful moments with young children can be just as beneficial for adults as well as for children.

RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS WORKING WITH INFANTS TODDLERS AND TWOS:

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Making a Play Space

An impromptu playful moment on a snowy winter afternoon reveals a complexity of movement that can be easily overlooked upon first glance. As I watch a group of neighborhood boys' continuous coming together and breaking apart they connect with their surroundings. Their playing resembles 'organized chaos' and prompted me to ask, "What encouraged this playful encounter?"

The boys were playing in the street and the neighboring yards, along with interacting with the materials around them: the snow, the street, the car, clothing, the air, sticks, rocks, etc. Their world was full of movement and change and their playing, which appeared chaotic also included moments of calm. For them, anything was possible. The relationships and interconnections between the bodies and materials were key to the realization of the emerging play possibilities

The world the boys were creating was open to any possibility. Their playful disposition was an indication of the positive feedback and excitement that comes from engaging with the world in a unique way (Lester, 2011). There were no definite outcomes, no apparent boundaries, and no adult directing the playing. The boys were playing with one another, the snow, the car, in a way that was unique to that specific moment in time. It illustrated how playfulness can appear whenever activity and desire open space.



If we respect the intrinsic value of play (and to remember to be playful ourselves) we can create a space of openness and difference; a space that welcomes the unexpected... a space where adults are in the present moment with the children; a space that lets children just "be."

The play scenario also illustrates that a play space is much more than a physical place. The play space I discovered on that snowy evening consisted of the interrelations of the boys and the things in the environment. And the environment is Everything. Bodies (people and things) are ever meshing together, flowing, connecting, and then moving on, a continuous shaping of our world (Ingold, 2011). There are so many influences on the production of space, including play spaces, and the first thing that usually comes to mind is the physical setting.

Children look at space differently than adults, asking, "What can I do here?" They want to be

able to make sense of the space, but also welcome just enough unknown to merit further exploration. Researchers (Chatterjee, 2005; Kytta, 2006) point out that a space is child-friendly if there is plenty of room, lots to do, and feels safe. Children need spaces for exploring the environment with plenty of play materials to stimulate imaginations that will create further mobility, exploration and discovery (Kyttä 2006). We can support the play process by providing a physical setting that is affordance rich and inviting, always offering more to come and by encouraging playfulness, which celebrates the uncertainty and the messiness of play.

Teachers' responses to their students are very important. Being open to moments of silliness and fun could have an impact on students' mood and perhaps on motivation. A playful adult is willing to laugh, follow a child's lead, and create an environment that is open to new things. Power (2011) states that playfulness has many qualities and is motivated from within. Playfulness is about the process not the products and aids in the enjoyment of the present moment. A playful teacher creates a 'what if' environment open to endless potential.



We can also support play through our understanding that children respond to their play environments in a variety of ways. Including children in the conversation is a good way to provide insights into the different ways we can support play. Observations of children playing and having informal conversations with children are all methods to receive feedback and gain new ideas. Respecting and listening to children will enhance understandings of children's preferences and can inform 'planning for play.'

Adults have a great influence on the prospects of play, and our ability to support play without directing the play can increase the opportunities for children to engage with the world in a unique way (Lester, 2011). Planting, nurturing and growing the seeds of understanding and respect for the intrinsic value of play and reconnecting with our own playful selves, creates an environment that supports children's special way of 'being' and seeing the world.

When planning for play, place equal value on the relational nature of space as to the physical components of a space. Instead of planning a space in the context of specific behaviors, also plan for disturbance of space and (although it sounds a bit like an oxymoron) for the unexpected: It is the notion of creating surprise and disturbance that is relevant here ...keep spaces from becoming fixed, (keep them) constantly open to children's playful possibilities and to consider the virtualities that exist in space at any given moment...(Lester, 2013:209)

Playing affords the opportunity for children to 'thrive and shape their world' (Lester and Russell, 2008). If we respect the intrinsic value of play (and to remember to be playful ourselves) we can create a space of openness and difference; a space that welcomes the unexpected; a space that celebrates the messiness of play; a space that trusts the myriad of ways children learn through their play; a space where adults are in the present moment with the children; a space that lets children just "be."

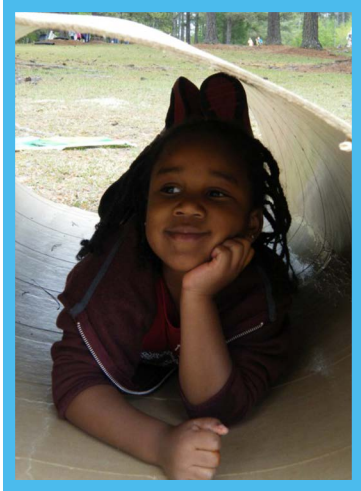
Check out these websites for great ideas on creating a playful environment:

- <http://beactivekids.org/bak/Front/PlayAlliance.aspx>
- <http://www.playengland.org.uk/resources/nature-play-activity-recipes.aspx>
- <http://www.letthechildrenplay.net/2010/01/how-children-use-outdoor-play-spaces.html>
- <http://www.playengland.org.uk/resources/people-make-play.aspx>

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According to the National Wildlife Federation (NWF), the average American child spends four to seven minutes in unstructured play per day and more than seven hours per day in front of an electronic screen; childhood obesity rates have doubled in the last 20 years; the U.S. has become the world's largest consumer of ADHD medications; and pediatric prescriptions for antidepressants have risen sharply. The NWF cites numerous health benefits enjoyed by children who spend time playing in natural settings, including improved fitness, raised Vitamin D levels, improved distance vision, decreased stress, enhanced social interactions and perhaps a reduction in ADHD symptoms.¹

Seven minutes in unstructured play per day is hard to fathom and quite shocking! It seems like a great time to remind our

communities about the importance of unstructured play, in not only a child's life, but an adult's life as well. Even though play is such a wildly interpreted concept and defined differently, research validates that children all over the world effortlessly develop physically, cognitively, linguistically, socially, and emotionally through play.

The bottom line is that play is essential to children's optimum growth and development.² The United Nations believes play is a basic right of every child. Article 31 of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) declares that children have the right "to relax, play, and participate in a variety of age-appropriate cultural, artistic, and recreational activities." ([View Child-Friendly Language Poster](#) of the CRC and a [new video on Article 31](#) Child's Right to Play)

So what do we mean when we use the word play? The NC Play Alliance classifies activity as play when children engage their imagination and become decision makers in terms of who, what, where, when and how the activity occurs.

Children engage in different types of play. Common forms of play include dramatic play, constructive play, and organized games. Children take on imaginary roles in dramatic play. In constructive play, children construct forts and games using loose parts such as blocks, cardboard, and sticks. Organized games include rules and assigned roles.

The play continuum for young children runs the gamut from playing alone to cooperatively playing with other children. The highest level of play is when the activity is organized by those playing and everyone has a role. As children mature and develop they tend to move back and forth along this play continuum based on the opportunities they are provided.



We were blessed to hear from and talk with an incredible play expert, Dr. Stuart Brown, at the recent [US Play Coalition](#) conference at Clemson University. Dr. Brown reiterated that importance of play throughout the lifespan and that physical activity is directly connected to healthy brain development. Through play, children become stronger and more coordinated in both their gross and fine motor skills.² Cognitively children develop as they interact with their environment and each other.³ While playing, children's imagination is fueled as they engage in classifying, sorting, constructing, problem solving, experimenting, observing, predicting, questioning, planning and reflecting. Linguistically children benefit as they communicate and interact with other children and adults.⁴ When children play cooperatively and engage in problem solving they benefit socially.





Emotional development comes from a sense of increased independence, self-confidence, and risk taking.⁵ Play is a natural and healthy way for children to act out their fears and reduce their stress.

As we grow and mature something seems to happen to play in our lives. In the United States, preschool classrooms begin to look like kindergarten classrooms with an increasing focus on “rigorous” learning and rote academic practice. Kindergarten classrooms start to look more like 1st grade classrooms and so forth. By the time our children are in 3rd grade, play is almost unheard of and is certainly deemed secondary to formal academic learning. Gone are the days of block play and housekeeping in kindergarten classrooms. This is NOT the norm in other countries. Finland, Sweden and Switzerland are examples of countries that successfully delay the start of formal education until the age of 7. By the age of 10, these children have caught up with our children and by middle school they outperform them academically and report higher levels of well-being.⁶



The NC Play Alliance is committed to changing this trend of devaluing play so that children can grow with a sense of wonderment and accomplishment. Early childhood educators and parents can be role models and stimulate children’s interest and overall development through play, in a really fun way! When did we, as adults, lose that spark, that inner child who liked to have fun, experiment, and just play for no other reason than play itself? We can promote play by providing the opportunity; the time, the space, and a variety of props. Play Daze every day!



Think of the dynamic connection between the environment, the child, and the task. Nature freely provides play props that engage children for hours. We see this all the time when children are playing on the beach with nothing but sand, water and seashells. Examples of natural items include: sticks, stones, water, dirt, hay, sea shells, flower petals, and bamboo. Other engaging props that are easy to provide include: pots, pans, mini-shovels, sheets, tarps, rope, bungee cords, balls, cardboard boxes, and scrap materials. Any change in the environment, child, and/or task will provide a whole new opportunity for the child along with a totally unique response. Play allows for so much growth through multiple interactions and experiences.



Be Active Kids *continued*

Just as play is important in children's growth and development, it is equally as important in the professional growth and development of all adults.⁶ Learning more about what play is and how best to utilize it in our educational practices will enhance our teaching practices, moving us closer to our educational goals that will lead to happy, healthy, intelligent children. Below are a few ways we as adults can grow and develop:

1. Take the Play Challenge:

- I will provide a ton of play opportunities for my children in order that they will grow and develop in a unique and fun environment.
- I will lead by example and make time to play and have fun.

2. Attend a play-focused professional development event:

- Attend the NC Children and Nature Conference in Asheboro at the NC Zoo on March 27.
- Attend the [Early Childhood Physical Activity Institute](#) in Raleigh at Marbles Kids Museum on July 14 and see [Rae Pica](#) and [Mike Lanza](#).
- Attend the NCaeyc Conference in Raleigh at the Convention Center on September 11–13.
- Attend the [Natural Learning Initiative](#)'s Design Institute (focusing on Nature Play) in Chapel Hill at the NC Botanical Gardens on October 1–3.

3. Continue to learn more about play:

- Check out some great resources at [NC Play Alliance](#).
- Check out some great resources at [Children and Nature Network](#).
- Check out some great resources at [International Play Association](#).

All that we do, we do for the children of North Carolina. Let's raise the bar and raise the amount of time that the children of North Carolina are spending in unstructured play each and every day. Together, we can make a positive difference!

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- ⁸ Making a Mud Kitchen booklet: guidelines, ideas, and materials: <http://www.muddyfaces.co.uk/making-mud-kitchen-jan-white-p-1399.html>
- ⁹ National Wildlife Federation 2012 Dirt Report: The Dirt on Dirt: <http://www.nwf.org/Be-Out-There/Why-Be-Out-There/Dirt-is-Great.aspx>



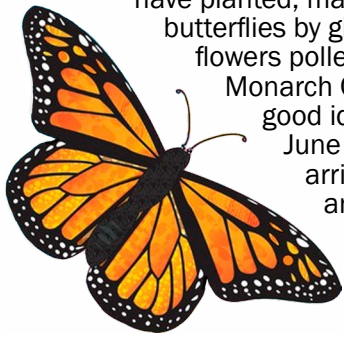
Butterflies: Transformative Growth

Written by Alex Laube,
STEM Programs Lead,
Marbles Kids Museum & IMAX Theatre



Spring is an exciting time for young learners. The world outside is changing and the warm weather encourages exploration of all the new life that has laid dormant over the winter months. One of the ways that I love to tackle the topic of growth with young learners is through Monarch Butterflies. The Butterfly life cycle is an amazingly rich topic for learning about growth and change by using our powers of observation and talking about what we see. Early spring is a great time to start your Monarch investigation by learning about milkweed, which is the food source for both the caterpillar and the adult Monarch. Early learners are fascinated by the growth of plants so a great way to start talking about how things grow and change is by sprouting milkweed seeds in individual cups on a sunny windowsill while it's still cool outside. This presents an excellent opportunity to talk about how things grow and change as the seed sprouts and the plant begins to grow. Your young learners will enjoy caring for their seeds by watering them, making sure they get plenty of sun and watching the plants grow. Once the weather warms up you can relocate your sprouts outside to start or become part of your existing insect garden. This process of planting presents a great opportunity for a literary connection: you can read *The Tiny Seed* by Eric Carl. One of the great things about Milkweed seeds is that just like the tiny seed in the book they are spread by wind. Once your milkweed is ready to spread its seeds, your young learners will love to set the seeds free and watch as they float away on tiny parachutes. As your young learners make observations about changes in the plants as they grow you should take the time to talk about the different jobs that the leaves, roots, stems and flowers have.

In mid to late April you can start to look for the first Monarchs on their way back from their amazing journey to Mexico.



These Butterflies may stop to feed or lay their eggs on the milkweed you have planted, making for excellent opportunities to make observations. Talk about how the plants help the butterflies by giving them food in the form of nectar and the butterflies help the plant by spreading the flowers pollen. Once you have a group of tall and strong milkweed plants you can begin to raise your Monarch Caterpillars! Keep in mind that one caterpillar can eat an entire plant as it grows so it's a good idea to plant a lot of milkweed. A great time to start this process is the middle of May to early June but you could easily start in July, August or early September. Once your Caterpillars have arrived, it's simply a matter of cleaning the container, laying down a slightly damp paper towel and adding rinsed milkweed leaves from your insect garden. Your young learners will marvel at these amazing creatures as they eat, crawl and grow. This presents a great opportunity to help young learners learn to observe with their eyes and not with their hands because the caterpillars are delicate and the germs from our hands can make them sick. Take time to ask great open ended questions that encourage observation like "what is that caterpillar doing?" and "how have our caterpillars changed since the last time we observed them?" Monarchs only spend about 2 weeks as caterpillars so the time from egg to Chrysalis is short enough to keep young learners attention and the growth process is rapid enough that they will see changes almost every day. This also presents a great opportunity to make a literary connection and read Eric Carle's *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. You can discuss how the caterpillar in the book is alike and different from the one they have observed over the past few days. At the end of this period, the caterpillar will climb to the top of it's enclosure and preform one of nature's greatest transformations. Changing into a Chrysalis and then emerging 10 days later as an adult butterfly. Once the Chrysalis has hardened you will need to move it very gently to a new enclosure where it will have plenty of room to hang. The process of exiting the Chrysalis is truly amazing and something young learners will ask lots of great questions about if they are lucky enough to view it. Once your adult Butterfly has eclosed you only need to provide it with a clean sponge soaked in fruit juice so that your young learners can continue to observe these amazing creatures. One thing young learners are fascinated by is the way a Butterfly feeds using it long straw like proboscis to drink and tasting with its feet! Once all of your butterflies are ready to fly, you can have a butterfly release party near your insect garden and celebrate the amazing process of growth that your milkweed plants, your caterpillars and your young learners have gone through.

Some fantastic connecting activities to do during your butterfly investigation include:

- Design your own butterfly using pipe cleaners and coffee filters.
- Create your own caterpillar using recycled egg cartons.
- Learn a Butterfly lifecycle dance where young learners start out crouched in a ball as a tiny egg, then hatch and crawl around as a caterpillar, then stand up and become very still as a chrysalis and finally enclosing, spreading their wings and flying as an adult butterfly.

For more information on how to raise Monarch Butterflies visit <http://www.monarchwatch.org/>

To order everything you need to start raising your own Monarch Butterflies visit <http://educationalscience.com/>

For an amazing IMAX field trip to see "Flight of the Butterflies 3D" visit <http://www.imaxraleigh.org/>

Shape NC: Preventing Obesity by Instilling Healthy Habits Early

Here in North Carolina, roughly three out of every 10 young low-income children ages 2 to 4 years old are either overweight or obese. Nationally, [a recent article in The New York Times](#) highlighted a study that found that a third of children who were overweight in kindergarten were obese by eighth grade. And almost every child who was very obese remained that way.

THE GOOD NEWS? While these numbers are staggering, they do provide clarity on what may be the most effective intervention point when it comes to addressing the problem of high obesity rates and rising health care costs—our youngest children birth to five. And, here in North Carolina, there is a program that is doing just that.

Shape NC: Healthy Starts for Young Children is a six-year, \$6 million initiative of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina (BCBSNC) Foundation and The North Carolina Partnership for Children, Inc. (NCPC) created to increase the number of children starting kindergarten at a healthy weight. Shape NC assists communities across the state to promote healthy eating and active play among North Carolina's youngest children, from birth through age five. The initiative works with child care programs to instill healthy behaviors early on, creating a solid foundation for a healthy life. In its first three years, Shape NC engaged 19 communities spanning 27 counties to improve healthy eating and active play for over one thousand of our state's children.

At **Friendly Avenue Christian Preschool** in Guilford County, children are planting pumpkins and harvesting squash in their Outdoor Learning Environment, they are washing their pedal cars at Water Play Day, and they are surprising their parents by trying new vegetables straight from the garden. The children at Friendly Avenue are learning how to lead a healthy life because the preschool is promoting nutrition, physical activity, and outdoor play as a part of the daily routine. Even small changes like ensuring meals include whole grains, making container gardens, and adding physical activity to daily transitions, are all making big differences. Teachers are fostering a sense of inquiry and investigation and are using the outdoors as an extension of the classroom, reinforcing that healthy activities are a part of many aspects of our lives, not just one. Much of this work has been a part of the Shape NC program. The program helps communities and child care centers develop environments, practices and policies that encourage young children to be healthy. This is accomplished by creating a strong and vital network of local experts and programs to provide ongoing support to centers in instilling healthy behaviors. Three of the major statewide programs are **Be Active Kids®**, **Preventing Obesity by Design**, and the **Nutrition and Physical Activity Self Assessment for Child Care (NAP SACC)**.

In **Shape NC's recent third year report**, results showed that child care centers across the state almost doubled the number of healthy best practices adopted, increasing the percent of best practices met from 40 percent to 74 percent. Significant improvements occurred in increasing active play, limiting screen time, offering of healthy food and beverages, and including outdoor play. For Shape NC kids, this means more healthy fruits and vegetables, more physical activity and a healthy start to life. Because Shape NC was built on the Smart Start network, it also uses the same multi-level approach for funding. The Smart Start network has the ability to develop state-wide partnerships like the one with BCBSNCF, and combine it with fundraising at the local level. By having a presence in the communities across North Carolina, relationships with child care centers, parents, caregivers, and health care providers, Smart Start provides local support that maintains state-wide accountability and outcomes.

THE GREAT NEWS? The BCBSNC Foundation recently supported the continuation of this collaboration with NCPC for an additional three years. The next phase of the project will focus on expanding the Shape NC program to 240 additional child care centers. These centers will receive technical assistance to improve nutrition, increase physical activity and develop outdoor learning environments.

There is still a lot more work to be done, but what Shape NC has shown us is that it can be done and everybody has a role in improving the health of North Carolina children. Friendly Avenue Christian Preschool is one example of the immediate benefits of an environment that develops healthy minds and bodies. It will take all of us to make a significant shift in trends over the long term to build a healthier North Carolina.





Shape NC: Healthy Starts for Young Children is a six-year, \$6 million initiative by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation and The North Carolina Partnership for Children, Inc., that increases the number of children starting Kindergarten at a healthy weight.

Shape NC works with child care programs to instill healthy behaviors early on, creating a solid foundation for a healthy life.

IN ITS FIRST THREE YEARS SHAPE NC...

ENGAGED
19 COMMUNITIES

SPANNING
27 COUNTIES

TO REACH
1,000 CHILDREN



ACROSS
NORTH CAROLINA

FOR SHAPE NC KIDS THIS MEANS...



More
Fruits &
Veggies

9% → 40%

Rise in percent of children being provided with beans or lean meats one or more times per day.

34% → 80%

Rise in percent of children being provided with fruit two or more times per day.

32% → 60%

Rise in percent of children being provided with vegetables two or more times per day.

Rise in percent of children being provided with 90 minutes or more of physical activity.

51% → 85%

Number of child care centers made improvement to outdoor learning environments including adding bike paths and vegetable gardens.

19
74

Staff members at child care centers improved at least one of their own health behaviors, including eating more fruits and vegetables and more physical activity.



More
Physical
Activity



A Healthier
Start

Over the course of each school year, trends showed the percent of children who reached a healthy weight is gradually improving.



www.smartstart.org/shape-nc



BlueCross BlueShield
of North Carolina
Foundation

An independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association

Healthy Plates and Healthy Play

Canned fruit cocktail—your days are numbered! Here in Wake County, a new program is changing the way children eat and play in child care. Farm to Child Care (F2CC) is growing the connection between local farmers and child care centers—an idea that supports healthy child development and our community's economy.

Spring creates increased opportunities to get children outdoors and moving. Farm to Child Care helps centers engage children with farmers, the food they eat and gardening. It's the perfect season to evaluate your playground and gardening area. Could they be better? Could you include more local, fresh fruits and vegetables in your menu?

To children, this is about fun new ways to play and eat, but the program is actually addressing a serious need. In Wake County, 16.9% of children aged 2–4 are overweight and 15.7% are obese (according to 2011 Nutrition and Physical Activity Surveillance System (NC-PASS) data. Children who are overweight or obese as preschoolers are 5 times as likely as normal-weight children to be overweight or obese as adults, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

Turning the Tide: Healthier Choices

The national movement to bring healthier, local food to child care centers, where many children spend the lion's share of their day, is active in Wake County. Why eat a cantaloupe shipped hundreds of miles from Mexico when our own local farmers can supply one fresh from the field just down the road? Wake County SmartStart, Advocates for Health in Action (AHA), and Wake Cooperative Extension worked through last summer with several F2CC pilot sites including Raleigh Nursery School, where the playground area at the school was redesigned, and the pantry shelves went from canned vegetables to fresh, local offerings.

AHA, a collaborative of 60 partners and members, fosters and supports community efforts to make healthy eating and physical activity the way of life in Wake County. Through a grant from John Rex Endowment, AHA, Wake County Cooperative Extension and Wake County SmartStart are working together to bring local produce for snacks and meals to children in child care centers serving low-income children through the Farm to Child Care pilot program. Raleigh Nursery School is one of eight centers that participated in a 9-week Farm to Child Care pilot in Wake County this past summer. "700 children and staff enjoyed a variety of locally grown produce this past summer, including nearly 90 at Raleigh Nursery School", said Michele McKinley, project coordinator for AHA. "By enjoying local fruits and vegetables, children in these centers learned that food doesn't come from a can—it's grown in a field first. Center directors said the children and staff loved the local produce—even roasted okra, which some might think young children would not eat." Farmer Bennie Glenn of Genesis Farm in Holly Springs delivered locally grown produce weekly to Raleigh Nursery School and several other centers for the pilot.



Brenda High Sanders and her daughter Keisha Sanders, who run Raleigh Nursery School, are to be commended. Opening a can is certainly easier than preparing fresh produce, but they recognize the benefits of fresh food. In fact, they are committed to growing enough food to feed their entire center. "Last summer, only fresh vegetables and fruits were served. Where our shelves used to be stocked with cans, they were full of fresh produce," Keisha Sanders said. That is commitment to change. The results? Children are learning where foods come from.



They are awakening their taste buds to new foods. With the expanded playground space, new winding sidewalks and play spaces, they are broadening their outdoor experiences. Raleigh Nursery School children and their parents are making healthier choices, and those choices are changing future generations.

While Raleigh Nursery School was able to embrace building raised beds and harvested food for meals, other centers expanded their F2CC efforts specific to their centers preferences. At Wanda's Little Hands Educational Center, a farmer set up a produce stand once a week to help parents buy local produce for their dinner table. Every center is different and no two pilot sites looked exactly alike.

Wake County SmartStart (WCSS) works to make lives better for children birth to age five. Part of that work is collaborating to raise the quality of care in child care

centers—through implementation of innovative programs like F2CC. WCSS supports sustainable programs to create real impact in the community. With Farm to Child Care, WCSS worked to get child care centers engaged in dream sessions, as demonstration sites, and with program consultation.

This year WCSS was invited to build upon the Farm to Child Care pilot experience, and submit a proposal to fully fund the program in its next phase. With additional funding, more local farmers can be matched with centers in need, continuing the early successes of the pilot. WCSS also works with Preventing Obesity by Design (POD-Wake), a program through NCSU's College of Design, identifying sites for playground and gardening projects. These two programs have the potential to change the way we think about food and play in child care educational settings, and make children's time in care a healthier more enjoyable experience. **For more information about:**

By enjoying local fruits and vegetables, children in [a nine-week Farm to Child Care pilot in Wake County] learned that food doesn't come from a can—it's is grown in a field first.

- **Farm to Child Care:**
Michele McKinley, Project Coordinator
919-656-8842 or mmckinley@wakeaha.org.
- **Wake County SmartStart**
Phyllis Barbour, Director of Community Relations
919-723-9271 or pbarbour@wakesmartstart.org

STEM in Early Care & Education



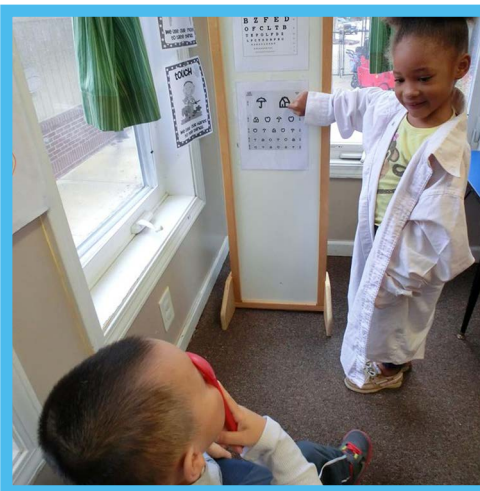
What is STEM and what does it have to do with early care and education? STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math. These are important components of a child's education if they are to be successful in the 21st century. The latest research informs us that children in countries around the world are consistently outperforming U.S. students in the STEM subjects. According to the National Math and Science Initiative, 60 percent of the new jobs created in the coming years will require STEM-related skillsets that only 20 percent of the population possesses.

Preschool is the perfect time to develop these skills because children at this age are natural scientists and have positive attitudes toward learning. All quality early childhood programs should practice STEM activities every day.



Science activities include exploring water and sand, comparing and contrasting natural materials like rocks and soil, rolling balls across the room, and looking through a magnifying glass to count how many legs are on the bug that was caught during outdoor play. **Technology** activities include computers, but also identifying simple machines like gears and wheels and pulleys. **Engineering** in preschool happens in the block area. The children are planning and designing structures every day with little teacher direction. **Math** activities include counting, matching shapes and making patterns. Measuring is easy too, especially with unit blocks where two of one size equal one of the next size up.

A perfect example of how STEM activities can happen naturally if teachers allow it—children working for days on a root on the playground. They are learning science by observing the changes, making predictions, trying new things, and sharing their discoveries. They are naturally interested in how things will work to get the root up. They are using engineering by using different tools and trying different things to get the root up. This process will continue as the teacher provides different tools to facilitate their natural curiosity.



The Internet is a great resource for finding ideas to incorporate into each week's lesson plans. By labeling the STEM activities on the lesson plan, parents will learn what STEM is all about and the importance of teaching it. Sesame Street has even jumped on board and developed a digital, interactive destination that includes games, engaging

videos, and hands-on activities aimed at inspiring young children to laugh and smile while they incorporate STEM concepts into everyday moments. <http://www.sesamestreet.org/parents/topicsandactivities/toolkits/stem#03a1521f-66a6-4db8-aab8-2e3691e448df>





For those of us who need a visual, Youtube provides the perfect opportunity. At the following link, Dr. Diana Wehrell-Grabowski shows highlights of a recent hands-on STEM lesson she conducted for four-six year olds in a voluntary preschool classroom. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HgIYzOh2n2E&list=PLGnplCT7ylv1bq3u6LwBdubuD14IcMZkQ>

There are also numerous great free resources on the Internet. STEM Sprouts provides a Teaching Kit. The goal of this curriculum is to assist preschool educators in focusing and refining the naturally inquisitive behaviors of three to five-year-olds on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). We have found it very useful. The Boston Children's Museum's excellent [STEM Sprouts Teaching Guide](#) assists preschool educators in focusing and refining the naturally inquisitive behaviors of three-to-five-year-olds in STEM.



As the Executive Director of Partners In Learning Child Development and Family Resource Center, I have created a [STEM board](http://www.pinterest.com/pilcdc/science-technology-engineering-and-mathematics-stem/) for our teachers and others in the early childhood field. <http://www.pinterest.com/pilcdc/science-technology-engineering-and-mathematics-stem/>

STEM education must start in the earliest years at the time that children's interests, desires, and abilities are formed. This important beginning leads to students' success and choices in elementary through high school math and science.



Many preschool teachers are already teaching STEM concepts without even realizing it. By recognizing the need and learning how to focus on the four areas of curriculum, we can prepare our children for the 21st century.

Norma Honeycutt is the Executive Director of [Partners In Learning Child Development & Family Resource Center](#). Norma is one of the state's strongest advocates for early care, education, and intervention serving on boards and commissions throughout the state. Norma is also a CBRS therapist and facilitates support groups, activities, and other programs for families of young children.

The Secret to Making Technology Work in Pre-K

At McDowell County Head Start, NC Pre-K Teachers Use Tablet Technology to Overcome Language Barriers and Bridge the Technology Gap for Children and Their Parents.

The value of pre-K is indisputable: Long-term research studies spanning decades have shown that high quality pre-K produces lifelong benefits, including increased high school graduation rates, higher earning potential and reduced crime rates. Individual intervention in early education proves far less costly than intervention in school-age programs. Every dollar invested in high-quality early learning programs provides approximately an eight dollar return. This is compared to less than a two dollar return for school-age programs and a dismal less than half a dollar return for youth job training.

A similarly large body of literature establishes that the use of technology in education results in positive outcomes for children. The results of efficacy studies conducted with [TeachSmart](#)® by Hatch interactive whiteboard software and with [iStartSmart](#)® by Hatch tablets back up this research. A [2010 study](#) and a [2012 study](#) both showed significant gains in preschoolers' literacy and math skills and improved outcomes on standardized test scores after regular use of appropriate technology over one school year.

Factors like language barriers and learning difficulties present seemingly insurmountable hurdles that leave children at risk for falling behind their peers in core literacy and math skills. These issues must be addressed during the critical first five years before a child enters Kindergarten. Technology speaks a universal language and presents an exciting opportunity for teachers, empowering them to communicate with children across these barriers.

So what gives? Why isn't technology dramatically impacting outcomes in every school across the country if most classrooms are now equipped with interactive whiteboards, tablets, computers and multi-touch tables? All of this hardware is not equipped with the right software to engage, educate and enhance the enlightenment of our youngest learners.

According to a 2012 article in *Young Children* by McManis and Gunnewig, "[Finding the Education in Educational Technology with Early Learners](#)," technology facilitates meaningful learning for young children only when it is developmentally appropriate, includes tools to help teachers implement technology effectively and is fully integrated into the classroom and curriculum.

A comprehensive [position statement](#) and review of research on the role of educational technology in early learning released in 2012 by the [National Association for the Education of Young Children \(NAEYC\)](#) and the [Fred Rogers Center](#) makes similar suggestions for Best Practices when using technology in the early learning classroom:

1. Use technology to achieve individual learning goals that take into account individual age, development, needs, interests, language, culture and abilities. Effective technology includes appropriate activities for every child regardless of background and native language.
2. Provide training, resources, support and guidance for teachers to promote digital literacy and empower them to use technology effectively.
3. Technology is a bridge to strengthen connections between home and school, encouraging parental involvement and improving parent-teacher relationships.
4. Reporting tools show whether children are advancing through scaffolded skill levels and whether intervention is needed. Instruction can then be provided at each step along the way so that teachers can provide informed and effective learning experiences faster than ever, before the critical window of opportunity passes for children to learn key foundational and basic skills.



5. Integrate technology into traditional classroom activities. The focus of the classroom should not be the technology. The technology should enhance the focus of the lesson. Technology and media complement appropriate traditional classroom activities.

These are all keys that teachers at [McDowell County Head Start](#) in Marion, NC have discovered. Their secret to success is using appropriate technology as a tool to facilitate the learning process, helping children achieve learning goals that are sensitive to their individual cultural needs, and developing stronger relationships with parents. Lorrie Smith, an NC Pre-k/Head Start Lead Teacher, uses iStartSmart tablets and the Hatch Reporting Management System to guide intervention with informed instruction. “By applying the reporting tools to monitor child progress, we have cut down on the number of short assessments and observations we would otherwise have to do to gauge each child’s understanding of math and literacy skills,” said Ms. Smith. “As a result of using the reporting tools we have opened up a lot of time. We now spend that extra time interacting with children one-on-one and in groups.”

The teachers at McDowell Head Start also use technology to refocus lessons when reports show a child is struggling with a specific skill. “We use the iStartSmart software to reset the focus of Shell Squad Games, directing the tablets to present activities that concentrate on the specific skills that the reports show each child needs to learn.” Because the reporting system has freed up time for the staff, they can spend more time working with children to further practice skills using traditional classroom activities.

Deborah Leazer, Head Start Lead Teacher, has seen remarkable progress from native Spanish language students in her classroom. [See her video testimonial here.](#) “Several children are Hispanic and do not speak English. When they are watching stories on the tablets, they are now repeating the words in English!” she exclaims.

Digital literacy requires ample support and professional development for staff. McDowell County Head Start implemented training to introduce the technology to teachers to ensure they would feel comfortable using the tablets and the reporting software. “Hatch provided us with unlimited support and hands on training via Webinar when we initially began setting up our tablets,” Ms. Pitman stated. “They have been wonderful to answer our questions and troubleshoot anytime, and for anyone who calls them.”

Teachers are bridging the technology divide with iStartSmart tablets. “The advances in technology have given us the opportunity to provide our teachers and children an innovative way to learn in the classroom,” Jennifer Pitman, Education Coordinator for McDowell County Head Start, remarked. “While the teachers use the tablets to reinforce literacy and math skills, they are also teaching children an additional skill, which is the use of technology. We are fortunate to be able to give our children this advantage.”

That bridge extends to the home-school connection, setting the stage for parents to support children in school. Ms. Smith has seen the tablets serve as a relationship-builder between teachers and parents who primarily speak their native language. “I’ve seen our native Spanish-speaking students go home and teach their parents how to use tablets and computers that they have at home,” said Ms. Smith. Children learn how to use the iStartSmart tablets in the classroom and it increases their comfort level with other types of technology. “Spanish-speaking parents have then brought their tablets to the classroom to ask questions and I use that as an opportunity to make suggestions about activities they can do at home that will help children learn the skills we are focusing on in school.”

The door to the 21st century classroom is open. Join McDowell County Head Start and step inside.

For more information about how Hatch Technology can help you uncover the secret to using data-based reporting to improve outcomes for your program, visit HatchEarlyLearning.com.



A Call for Sustainable Education



What is Sustainability?

Over the last decade, “Sustainability” has become a familiar term throughout many communities and cultures. The term’s Latin origins translate as: *tenure*, “to hold” and *sus*, “up”. Merriam- Webster defines sustainable or sustainability as “to be used without being completely

used up or destroyed, to be able to last or continue for a long time.”

In the 21st century we have molded this term to describe new ways of thinking about how we as humans relate with our planet Earth.

Many industries and businesses see the trend and have adopted some form of sustainability from sustainable business practices, sustainable agriculture, to social sustainability, however, most often mentioned is sustainable development. In 1987, the UN documented sustainable development’s most quoted definition, “sustainable development is development that meets the needs

of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” The description has caught the eye of the general public as the issue of climate change grows across the US and global markets. As a result, the art of being “sustainable” has become ever more popular. Sustainability holds roots in our daily lives whether it’s taking out the recycling, shopping for food locally, or shifting our energy sources from coal and oil to sustainable recourses such as solar and wind. Though the term sustainability has been around for decades, popular culture is now just beginning to open its eyes and recognize the true meaning and importance behind its principles. Communities and industries across the globe are searching for sustainable ideas to solve old problems. This article will dive a little further into the principles and concepts of sustainability to help introduce the topic of “sustainable education”, and what it means for our young children’s development.

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Three Dimensions of Sustainability

There are three main dimensions of Sustainability that are used as the foundation and roots of all sustainable practices. These three dimensions are social, economic, and environment, and are also known in many circles as people, planet, and profit. Though there are lots of ways to present the three different aspects of Sustainability, the most common can be seen in the Venn diagram in Figure 1.

The Social dimension largely centers around the idea of stewardship; that the system is aware of the effects it will have on the people and cultures involved. The Social dimension aims to insure that the ideas of peace, security, and social justice are not negatively impacted and that the system will create a better relationship between all its participants.

The Economic dimension is focused around whether the system or set of actions will, “not diminish the prospects of future persons to enjoy levels of consumption, wealth, utility, or welfare comparable to those enjoyed by present persons.” (Bromley). A successful system must be able to sustain a positive economic role within its society. Businesses must remain profitable to be successful, no matter how social or environmental their practices.

An environmentally sustainable system, unlike many systems of the past, looks beyond the economics and aims to reduce harmful impacts on our environment and looks to uphold our most vital recourses. Environmental management is the most overarching theme in sustainability and sustainable development. Access to clean water, safe food, clean air, and minimal consumption of environmental resources is the base of the three dimensions of a sustainable system. Working the three dimensions together is to insure that we apply responsible, proactive decisions and innovations that minimize negative impacts and balance the growth of the system. Now that we have a better understanding of the foundations for sustainability let’s look into how we can apply it to the idea of “Sustainable Education.”

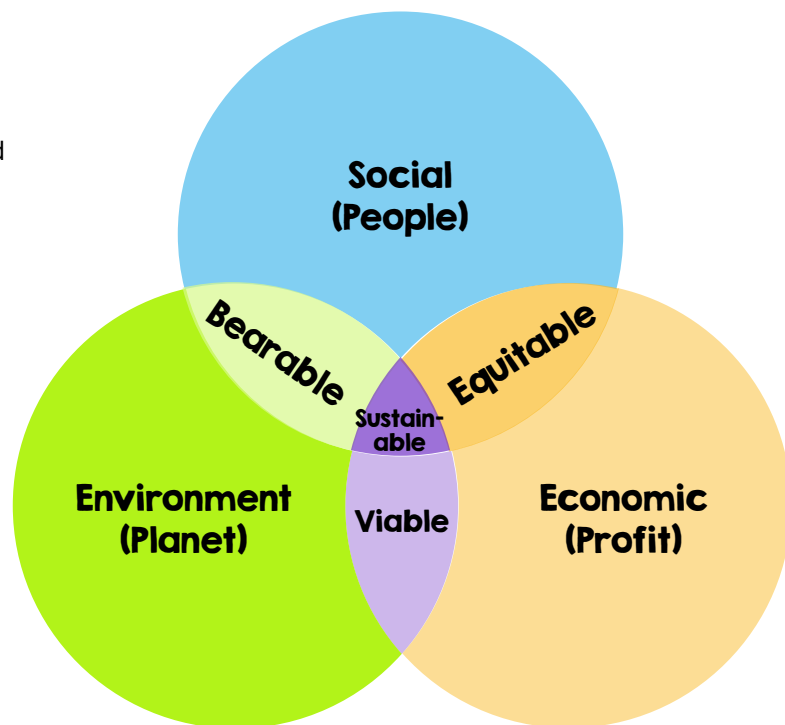


Figure 1: Venn diagram showing the interaction between the three dimensions of Sustainability and how without all three dimensions a particular system could be considered non-sustainable. (Adams)

Applying Sustainability to Education

How can we apply the ideals of sustainability into the education setting? The answer can be found all across the country as dozens of classrooms, as explained later, have taken the first initial steps to incorporate sustainable practices into childhood education. At its core, sustainable practices answer the essential questions that we ask ourselves of today's educational processes. It could be said that childhood educators are much similar to sustainable as they aim to develop young people's skills, attitudes, knowledge, and thought processes. Parallels between the two can be seen in the following:

- **Cultural Preservation:** How can we preserve the histories and heritages of our cultures, how do we develop the ability to discern what to change and what to preserve for future generations.
- **Responsible Citizenship:** The rights and responsibilities associated with being a member of functioning community. How we teach students to assume their role of leadership and participation.
- **Healthy Community:** Teaching students the value of responsible healthy living. Demonstrating the importance of clean air, water, soil, and the overall healthy community commons.
- **Inventing the Future:** Instilling the skills of vision, imagination, and creation to encourage a will to design a better future for themselves and for their communities.

The similarities run deeper than the just the ones mentioned here so we can imagine that the idea of “sustainable education” isn't far around the corner. Implementing sustainability education fills a much needed gap in our children's education.

Benefits of Sustainable Learning

A large portion of teaching sustainability is connecting students with real-life, on- the-ground work that is being done in their communities. To help students understand sustainability, we must ask them to learn from the people creating it. Teaching sustainability should involve engaging students to critically examine the state of their community and involving them with the work of community members and organizations, NGOs, businesses, farmers. Outreach and support must be given to help these groups effectively work with students, parents, teachers and schools. Educating young students on the values of community and understanding their environment to prepare them for the new, vastly different world they will encounter when they grow older. You'll find that communities educated about sustainability will support educating their children about sustainability; they have a vested interest in developing the capacity of parents and citizens to understand sustainability and the need to educate children to create a more sustainable world. In the UK there have been a number of studies done to produce evidence that shows that sustainable schools raise standards and enhance well-being. The studies show that sustainable schools engage young people in their learning therefore improving motivation, behavior, and promote healthy school environments and lifestyles. Also, the studies find that sustainable schools advance community cohesion by making valuable connections between the school and its parents, caretakers and the wider community. (PEEC) Read more about the impacts of sustainable schools in “[Evidence of the Impacts of Sustainable Schools](#).”

Implementing Sustainable Education Practices

Educators in the United States are in a position of continuously updating and improving their teaching approach as well as education goals. Therefore, much effort is needed to lobby educational organizations and the sustainable community members to demonstrate the efficacy and outcomes of sustainability education curricula and programs. The involvement of teachers and students in the creation of sustainability along with networking efforts needed to work out effective strategic partnerships between sustainability educators and districts, schools, and teachers. (Dernbach) Some teachers are able to teach about sustainability as a stand-alone subject, either as part of a course or in some cases, full courses. Others work sustainability into their materials as the contextual basis for core subjects, or for various kinds of student projects. (Church, Skelton) Below are four approaches that schools and teachers have adopted (for more detail on these strategies, reference “[Sustainability Education in K-12 Classrooms](#)”):

Strategy 1: Sustainability as its own subject

Strategy 2: Sustainability as the context within which to teach core subjects

Strategy 3: Sustainability projects

Strategy 4: Sustainability at the school-wide or district level to guide institutional and curricular innovation—thematic

A Call for Sustainable Education *continued*

Resources for Sustainable Learning

Cloud institute for Sustainable Education: The Cloud Institute's mission is to ensure the viability of sustainable communities by leveraging changes in K-12 school systems to prepare young people for the shift toward a sustainable future. The Institute helps to prepare school systems and their communities to educate for a sustainable future by inspiring educators and engaging students through meaningful content and learner-centered instruction.

- [Resources and Curricula](#)
- [Cloud Standard \(K-2\)](#)
- [Fish Game Video](#)
- [System Thinking Video](#)



United States Environmental Protection Agency:

The EPA has been a leader in sustainable education and has established the following sectors dedicated to promoting and practicing sustainability: Urban Sustainability and the Built Environment; Water and Ecosystem Services; Energy, Biofuels, and Climate Change; and Material Management and Human Health.

Terracycle: Founded in 2001 Terracycle has changed the way we see waste. Terracycle's goal is to be a trusted resource for families, schools, communities, and even corporations to find tips, stats, facts, tactics, and news to help them live a greener, cleaner lifestyle. Together, we are Eliminating the Idea of Waste®.

1. [Lesson Plan \(K-2\)—Where do apples go?](#)
2. [Lesson Plan \(K-2\)—How can we take care of our commons?](#)
3. [Lesson Plan \(K-2\)—Is that trash or treasure?](#)

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Perry-Manning Serving State and National Levels

NCAeYC offers our sincere congratulations to NCECF Executive Director Susan Perry-Manning on her election as Secretary of the NAEYC Board of Directors! Thank you Susan for commitment, support and leadership.

NAEYC is the world's largest organization working on behalf of young children. It has nearly 80,000 members from more than 300 Affiliates and more than 120 countries, including teachers, administrators, parents, educators, and policy members. Its mission is to serve and act on behalf of the needs, rights and well-being of all young children with primary focus on the provision of educational and developmental services and resources.

Susan has more than two decades of experience in early childhood issues and nonprofit management. Prior to joining the [NC Early Childhood Foundation \(NCECF\)](#), she served as the Vice-President and Senior Director for Policy and Programs at The North Carolina Partnership for Children, Inc. (NCPC), where she provided senior leadership to the organization.

During her tenure at NCPC, Susan conceptualized and authored a three-year, \$3 million dollar early childhood obesity initiative for the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation of North Carolina; was part of core writing team that developed North Carolina's winning \$70 million dollar, four-year federal Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant application; created and secured more than \$2 million in private and federal funds for an intensive leadership initiative; and helped craft a successful bipartisan effort to overcome significant legislative threats to eliminate all Smart Start funding.

Prior to coming to Smart Start in February 2010, Susan was the Deputy Executive Director for Child Care Aware of America, where she was responsible for contributing to the overall strategic direction of the organization, and overseeing program, policy, and research initiatives to support high-quality early care and education services for children and families across the United States.



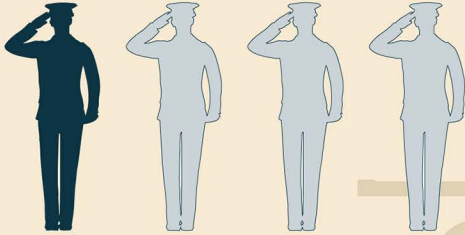
The following two pages are examples of the powerful infographics created and shared by the Foundation. Check out all their great resources at their website:

<http://ncearlychildhoodfoundation.org>

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS PROTECT OUR NATIONAL SECURITY, ENSURE OUR ECONOMIC PROSPERITY AND REDUCE CRIME.

Military leaders, business executives and law enforcement are calling for greater early childhood investments to overcome significant challenges.

NATIONAL SECURITY



75% of Americans 17 to 24 cannot meet the military's eligibility requirements.ⁱ

THAT IS NEARLY

775,000 YOUNG NORTH CAROLINIANS UNABLE

TO JOIN THE MILITARY.

ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

80-90 MILLION ADULTS
NEARLY HALF THE US WORKFORCE

DO NOT HAVE THE BASIC EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS REQUIRED TO ACQUIRE AND ADVANCE IN JOBS.ⁱⁱ

NC EMPLOYERS:

REPORT POOR COMMUNICATION SKILLS

60%



Six out of 10 surveyed North Carolina employers reported communications skill gaps among job applicants.ⁱⁱⁱ

CRIME PREVENTION

At-risk children that didn't attend quality pre-kindergarten were 5 times more likely to become chronic criminal offenders by age 27.^v In FY 2012-13, the NC General Assembly appropriated in state general funds \$1.38 billion to the Division of Corrections and \$266 million to the Division of Child Development.^{iv}



\$=\$1 Million



EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS BUILD BRAINS!

THE BRAIN IS ONE OF THE ONLY ORGANS NOT FULLY DEVELOPED AT BIRTH.

EARLY EXPERIENCES DETERMINE HOW BRAINS ARE WIRED.

90%

OF CRITICAL BRAIN DEVELOPMENT HAPPENS IN THE FIRST FIVE YEARS OF LIFE.

1	2	3	4	5
J F M A M J J A S	J F M A M J J A S	J F M A M J J A S	J F M A M J J A S	J F M A M J J A S
O N D O N D O N D	O N D O N D O N D	O N D O N D O N D	O N D O N D O N D	O N D O N D O N D



EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS AND HIGH QUALITY PROGRAMS PRODUCE RESULTS



THE GAP CLOSING By 3rd grade, about one-third of the achievement gap can be closed by early education.^{vi}



HIGHER SCORES NC 3rd graders have higher standardized reading and math scores and lower special education placement rates in counties that received more funding for Smart Start and More at Four (NC PreK) when those children were younger.^{vii}



High quality early childhood programs increase graduation rates by as much as 44%. NC's graduation rate hit a record high of 82.5% in 2013.^{viii}



**= \$152 MILLION
IN SAVINGS**

A 5% increase in male high school graduation rates is estimated to save NC \$152 million in annual incarceration rates.^{ix}



HIGHER EARNINGS Participants in high quality early childhood programs have higher earnings, pay more taxes and are less likely to rely on government assistance.^x



10% RETURN

Every dollar invested in early education produces a 10% return through increased personal achievement and social productivity.^{xi}

<http://www.first2000days.org/>

There are only 2,000 days from the time a child is born to when that child begins kindergarten.

**First
2000
DAYS**
Early Investment
A LIFETIME OF RESULTS

ⁱ Mission Readiness. (2009). Ready, Willing, and Unable to Serve. Washington, DC: William Christeson, Amy Dawson Taggart and Soren Messner-Zidell.

ⁱⁱ National Commission on Adult Literacy. (2008). Reach Higher, America: Overcoming Crisis in the U.S. Workforce. New York, NY.

ⁱⁱⁱ America's Edge. (2013). Ensuring North Carolina's Global Success. Washington, DC: Stephanie Schaefer, Lindsay Warner, and Susan L. Gates.

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^v Fight Crime: Invest in Kids. (2012). High-Quality Early Care and Education: A Key to Reducing Future Crime in North Carolina. Washington, DC: Stephanie Schaefer and Lindsay Warner.

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^{ix} Heckman, J. J. (2013). Invest in Early Childhood Development: Reduce Deficits, Strengthen North Carolina's Economy. Chicago, IL.

^x Burr, J. & Grunewald, R. (2006). Lessons Learned: A Review of Early Childhood Development Studies. Retrieved from http://www.minneapolisfed.org/cations_papers/studies/earlychild/lessonslearned.pdf

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NC Early Educator Certification

More than 43,000 early educators work with young children in out of home settings in North Carolina. Hundreds more work on the behalf of children age birth to twelve providing technical assistance, professional development services, and more. The early care and education workforce earns low wages and lacks the employment benefits and professional status typically afforded to professions with college-educated professionals. North Carolina early childhood workforce studies have found key motivators for reducing turnover of early educators include better pay, better benefits, respect for individuals working in the profession, and opportunities for professional growth.

What is Early Educator Certification? Early Educator Certification (EEC) is the first-in-the-nation field-wide certification for early educators, which addresses key motivators that support a high quality workforce. EEC recognizes and validates the educational accomplishments of the early childhood and school age workforce through an assessment of an individual's verified level of educational achievement based on a standardized scale and assigns an EEC level. As with other occupations, EEC requires ongoing continuing education to maintain an active certification status. Certified early educators may also become endorsed for their documented knowledge, experience, and ongoing education in a specific role.

CERTIFICATION	ENDORSEMENT	COST SAVINGS	REWARDS & BENEFITS	PROFESSIONAL GROWTH
Certification provides individuals with two forms of professional recognition documentation: a professional, frame-ready certificate and card featuring their unique EEC number and provides consumers with information about the education of the individual provider.	Specialized professional endorsements exist for early educators working in program administration, professional development, and technical assistance roles to provide consumers with an indicator of the quality of those providing services.	Certification is held by the individual early educator providing a portable form of point-of-hire documentation for use by employers. EEC serves as an equivalent form of teacher education verification for NC child care facility licensing purposes.	An EEC Savings Center provides certified early educators with discounts on everyday items, airline tickets, computers, cell phones, and more. Discounts on early childhood supplies, legal and financial tools, discounted banking services, and more are available to certified early educators.	Low cost/no cost high quality, in-depth continuing education options, networking, a professional association membership, and more are made available to certified early educators by the Institute and in collaboration with partnering organizations and entities.

What benefits do certified early educators receive? EEC serves as an equivalent form of teacher education verification for NC child care facility licensing purposes. Certified early educators may also use their certification level as verified documentation to apply for employment at all regulated child care programs in North Carolina—saving the employee and employer time and money. All certified early educators, regardless of where they are employed, have access to EEC Rewards & Benefits, which provide discounts on goods and services and professional growth opportunities.

Who is the certifying body for early educators in North Carolina? The North Carolina Institute for Child Development Professionals (Institute) is a non-profit organization that has worked since 1993 to increase the education and compensation of early educators working with or on the behalf of young children age birth to twelve in early care and education settings in North Carolina. Program policies and activities of the Institute are overseen by the Board of Directors which is composed of early childhood experts and early educators who work directly with children, administer early childhood programs, teach in community colleges and universities, and administer organizations and agencies that support the provision of child care in North Carolina.

Who can be certified? All early educators who work directly with, on the behalf of, or intend to work with children age birth to 12 are eligible to be certified by the Institute.

What does it cost to become certified? With support from the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant, the state has a goal of certifying 80% of the early childhood workforce by the end of 2015. All early educators who work directly with, on the behalf of, or intend to work with children age birth to five are eligible to receive their certification for \$10 through the end of June 2014.

The screenshot displays the 'Early Educator Certification Marketplace' website. At the top, it features the logos for the 'Institute for Child Development Professionals' and the 'SAVINGS CENTER'. Below the header, a banner reads: 'Debra, welcome to Early Educator Certification Marketplace! Join the other 1,543 certified early educators who benefit from this program'. A search bar is located on the right. The main content area is divided into four columns, each with a title, an image, and a statistic:

- SAVINGS AND REWARDS:** Image of a coin being dropped into a slot. Statistic: 1,543 Certified early educators and guests visited in the.
- EXCLUSIVE OFFERS:** Image of several smartphones. Statistic: 143 Certified early educators saved on Exclusive Offers.
- A HEALTHIER YOU:** Image of a green apple and a measuring tape. Statistic: 365 Healthy Tips.
- GIVING BACK:** Image of hands forming a circle. Statistic: 2,000 Public School Projects funded.

Who can be endorsed? Early educators who work in administrator, technical assistance, and professional development roles in North Carolina may apply for endorsements tailored to their specific role. Visit the website link below to learn more about endorsements available to the field and how to apply.

Where do I find EEC renewal options?

Continuing education units (CEUs) and college credits are available for certified early educators across North Carolina and online .

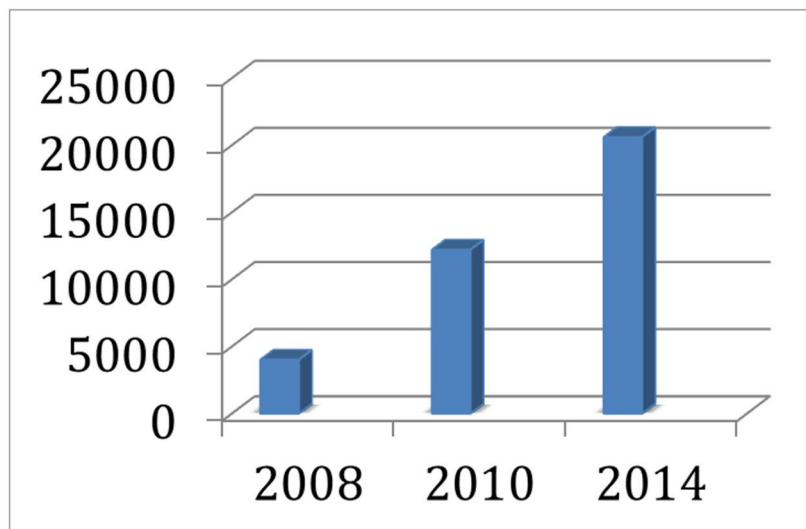
Learn more about early childhood college course, certificates, and degree options available at <http://ncicdp.org/education/course-degree-options/>. Financial support is available to help early educators afford a college education. Click on the College Education Financial Aid tab on the Institute's website (<http://ncicdp.org/education/cost-financial-aid/>) to learn more.

Learn more about CEU options available on the Institute's CEU Events calendar at <http://ncicdp.org/ceu-events/>. Financial aid may be available.

How do I learn more about the Institute and EEC? Visit the website links below or email the Institute at info@ncicdp.org.

- North Carolina Institute for Child Development Professionals: <http://ncicdp.org/about-us/>
- Early Educator Certification Toolkit: <http://ncicdp.org/certification-licensure/ee-toolkit/>
- Early Educator Certification Endorsements: <http://ncicdp.org/certification-licensure/endorsements/>
- Early Educator Certification Rewards & Benefits: <http://ncicdp.org/certification-licensure/ee-rewards/>

Number of Early Educators Certified in North Carolina



Photos courtesy of Mike McGlynn Photography

Getting Intentional About Supporting *Each* Child: The Difference You Can Make

Recent research in the early childhood field has revealed that, when it comes to quality in early childhood programs, one size does not fit all. The learning and development of each child is influenced by gender, race, ethnicity, language, ability, socio-economic factors, and especially family — factors that comprise each child's unique culture. Here are a few examples.

- Preschool boys are expelled 4.5 times more than girls; and African-Americans are twice as likely to be expelled as Latino and Caucasian children and more than five times as likely as Asian-American children (Gilliam, 2005).
- Under-resourced children score far lower than their more economically advantaged peers on virtually every standardized test, statewide or national, and the dropout rate for low-income students is five times greater than for their high-income counterparts (National Dropout Prevention Center, 2012).
- Dual language learners are heavily overrepresented among low-achieving students (within the bottom 5% – 25% of the achievement distribution) and severely underrepresented among high achievers (within the top 5% – 25% of the achievement distribution) (Lee, Grigg, & Donahue, 2007).

From the earliest days, “development and learning occur in and are influenced by multiple social and cultural contexts” (National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC], 2009). To be successful early learners, children “need to feel safe and secure in their many identities, feel pride in their families, and feel at home in their early childhood programs” (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010). To achieve their full potential, each child needs support from comfortable, confident, capable leaders and educators who recognize and capitalize in positive and effective ways on both their sameness and their differences.

Early childhood leaders are in the unique position of developing programs that embody a current and important trend—the shift from supporting *all* children to supporting *each* child. More than a word substitution, this switch acknowledges that each child benefits from administrators, teachers, and programs that intentionally and explicitly support both who they are and how they learn. This distinction is so important that the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) changed the language of their standards for the preparation of early childhood personnel. Where the standards used to speak to preparing students to work with *all* young children, they now require higher education programs to document how they are preparing future early childhood professionals to work with *each* child (NAEYC, 2009b).

Another example of the importance of getting more explicit about our commitments to supporting each child may be seen in a recent joint position statement from NAEYC and the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) (DEC/NAEYC, 2009). The document underscores that “the desired results of inclusive experiences *for children with and without disabilities and their families* include a sense of belonging and membership, positive social relationships and friendships, and development and learning to reach their full potential.”

The Difference Intentionality Can Make

What difference can this kind of intentionality make? Here are a few examples from recent research studies.

- High-quality, culturally responsive early learning environments are critical to closing the achievement gap between children living in poverty, especially children of color, and their peers (Whitebrook, Gomby, Bellm, Sakai, & Kipnis, 2009).
- An effective teacher can have a stronger influence on student achievement than poverty, language background, class size, and minority status (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Jacob, Lefgren, & Sims, 2008; Kane & Staiger, 2008; Nye, Hedges, & Konstantopoulos, 2004; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005; Rockoff, 2004).

Many programs reveal their commitment to diversity by the photos they hang on the walls. But authentic approaches to supporting *each* child and family require intentional decisions about all aspects of a program. Operationalizing the intentional shift from *all* to *each* concept requires knowledge, skill, collaboration with family, community and teaching partners, and, more than anything else, leadership.

Focused attention in four key areas—policies, family engagement, environments and practices, and professional development—can provide opportunities to incorporate a more explicit emphasis on the diversity of the children and families served by each program. Interested? Think about the following.

- How recently have you reviewed *policies* to see whether they align with your priorities for being reflective of and responsive to cultural, linguistic, and ability diversity? For example, do you have a *parent* handbook? Or a *family* handbook? Many programs are intentionally shifting to the term family to acknowledge the diverse configurations of caring adults in the lives of young children. While this may seem like a simple word replacement, the broader term will embrace and welcome families headed by an aunt, grandmother, guardian, or two dads.

- Recent studies have shown that successful *family engagement* can contribute tremendously to success of young children. Children whose families are effectively engaged show higher preschool performance and promotion to next grade and more positive engagement with peers, adults, and learning. Successful family engagement has even been shown to buffer the negative impact of poverty on academic and behavioral outcomes (Harvard Family Research Project, 2006). But true *family engagement* requires different approaches than the traditional methods used to support parent involvement. How are you engaging families as partners, decision makers, and experts?
- Do the *environments* in which you support young children (inside and out) authentically reflect the children and families you serve? Do the *practices* (everything from greetings and praise to guidance and groupings) employed each day to support each child reflect knowledge of cultural differences, family priorities, and evidence-based practices? With mounting evidence that children benefit from programs that build congruency with the cultural beliefs, values, and priorities of the families served, many programs are looking for ways to incorporate authentic aspects of home into both their spaces and the learning that is facilitated in those spaces.
- Professional development refers to the many ways in which we support the adults who work with young children to acquire and apply relevant knowledge and skills. High quality programs incorporate opportunities for training, mentoring, coaching, technical assistance, or other forms of professional development on a regular basis. Building intentional programs requires opportunities for all staff to examine their own culture (and biases), learn about the cultures of the children and families, discuss and try out intentional approaches, reflect on how well those changes worked (or didn't), and adjust accordingly. How intentionally are you incorporating these opportunities into the professional development provided for your colleagues?

How could a dedicated leader examine the extent to which he or she is supporting *each* child and family? Here's a way to start. The chart below provides a framework for examining current practices in these four areas to assess the extent to which they provide explicit attention to each child and family. Consider answering each of the questions on your own as a starting point. Think of specific examples and illustrations.

Bold, committed leaders will view this set of questions as an opportunity to engage diverse family members and community partners in a conversation about the extent to which they see intentionality reflected in the programs that serve their children. Intentional leaders will gather input on how to more explicitly and effectively serve each child and use it to develop a plan of action and change that will lead to enhanced learning opportunities for all young children.

The Difference You Can Make

At the end of the day, it will be easy to identify the leaders who use explicit and intentional approaches to support each child and family. They will be the individuals who will be able to say to any family member, "we designed this program with *your* child in mind. Let me tell you how." And they will be able to do just that.

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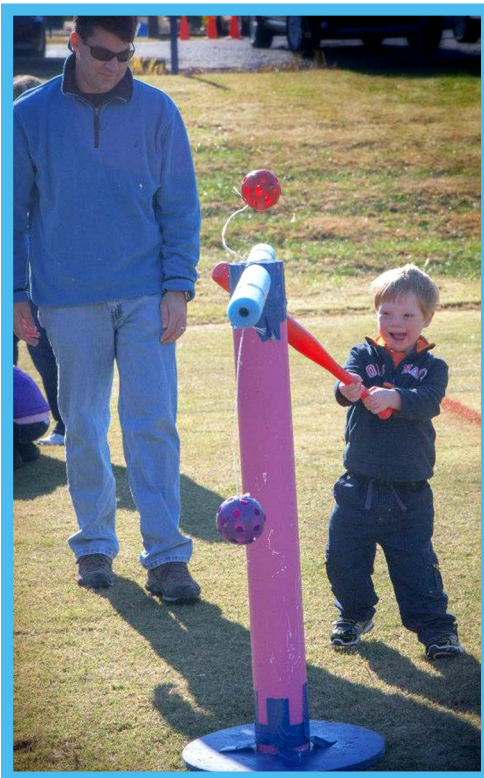
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INTENTIONAL APPROACHES TO SUPPORTING DIVERSITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

Ask yourself...	What are examples of intentional practices?
Do your policies reflect your intentionality?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do your efforts have an explicit and intentional emphasis on young children who are culturally diverse (includes racial, ethnic, socio-economic, and other aspects of diversity)? On young children who are dual language learners? On young children with disabilities? Do you have agreed upon definitions of key terms to use in your work (e.g., cultural competence, inclusion)? Do you have guiding principles to underscore your shared commitment to diversity in all aspects of your work?
Do your family engagement efforts reflect your intentionality?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have you incorporated an explicit and intentional emphasis on authentically engaging families who are culturally and linguistically diverse? Are you also engaging families who have young children with disabilities? Is input from family members shaping the quality of your work? Are you building the capacity of diverse families to support the capability and success of their children? Are family members helping you to intentionally and effectively support practices that connect home cultures and experiences to their learning?
Do your programs and practices with young children reflect your intentionality?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are you intentionally and effectively supporting practices that connect children's cultures and experiences to their learning? Are you shaping teachers' personal capacities and attitudes to support each child's achievement? Do program characteristics (e.g., teacher-child ratios, time for small groups or one-on-one interactions, materials in multiple languages) support individual children? Do environments authentically reflect the children, families, and communities you serve?
Are your professional development efforts growing the capacity and diversity of the professionals who support children and families?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do early childhood professionals have a strong knowledge base about evidence-based practices for supporting young children who are culturally, linguistically, and ability diverse? For example, do they understand the process of second language acquisition? Are they familiar with evidence-based practices that support inclusion? Promoting bilingual development of young DLLs? Do you have explicit requirements for early childhood professionals in developing their capacity to support young children who are culturally, linguistically, and ability diverse? Are you using intentional strategies to increase the diversity of the individuals who work with young children?

As Far As We Expect

Written by Jill Wagoner
Freelance Writer & Marketing
Specialist, Special Needs Blogger



The growth and development of a child is dependent on the people, influences, and opportunities that surround them.

We know that the foundation for developmental advancement is laid in the first five years and that children grow and develop at a pace during these years unequal to any other time in their life.

As the parent of a child with special needs this fact is one laden with pressure. We get only five short years to lay the foundation for our child's developmental future. How is it that even possible when you take into account delays, medical complications, and all the necessary early intervention? The answer is people, lots of people with knowledge and big hearts. Raising a child with special needs takes more than a village. It takes a dream team of parents, extended family, friends, doctors, therapists and, for the working parent, childcare professionals. Quality childcare is imperative when you leave your child with these professionals eight to ten hours a day, five days a week for the majority of these first five years. Our son Cooper was diagnosed with Down syndrome the night he was born. At the time we knew little about the diagnosis, however, we knew that we would love him unconditionally and that his life would be just the same as we had planned, including school, church, extracurricular and more. We chose to enroll him at Partners In Learning Child Development and Family Resource Center, a five-star model inclusion childcare center accredited by NAEYC, because we knew that there would not only be the knowledge of what he needed, but also the high expectations we have for him and his future.

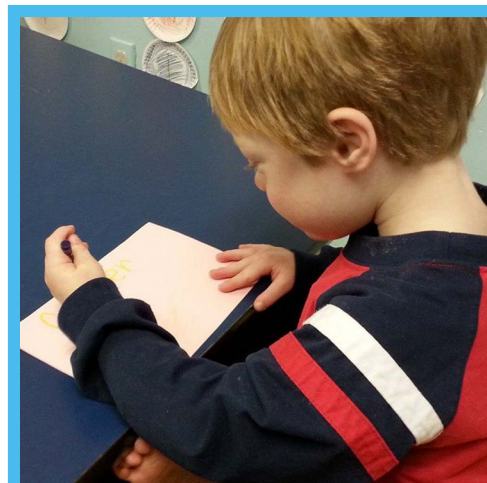
At Partners In Learning, Cooper has received not only care and love, but the evolution of a team of people who have directly affected his development. He has had the opportunity to be part of a phenomenal inclusion program where he has been challenged by his typical peers, around other children with special needs, and afforded the opportunity to inspire and encourage others. Cooper is now four and nearing the end of his journey at the center. It's a time

enveloped in pride and excitement about the next steps into the school years and reflection of all the time, energy and care it took to get to this point. Cooper began attending Partners In Learning at just eight weeks old. From the very beginning the teachers did not look at him as a child with low muscle tone and developmental delays, but rather looked into those almond-shaped blue eyes filled with curiosity, hope and determination and saw a child who was destined for many things.

When he was one, the children started eating independently. I remember he was having a hard time because his fine motor skills were behind and every time he would scoop his spoon through the bowl, it would slide into his lap. His teacher took it upon herself to make a special tray to keep the bowl or plate he was using in place. When he was 18 months old and still not walking, his teacher spent time with him every day working on standing and trying to take steps. When he was three one of his teachers spent half a day, on her day off, at his IEP meeting and then stayed after to talk to the therapists about ideas in the classroom. The teachers made accommodations along the way, whether it was a special chair, visual charts for routines and directions, or special arrangements for his cubby. The examples could fill a book. When you have a child with limited verbal skills communication is paramount. The teachers provide us a daily journal with information about our son's day, including what he learned, activities he was engaged in and any other important information to pass on.

All children with special needs deserve the right to be taught and the expectation to learn in an environment with their peers. All of his teachers along the way found ways to make sure he could participate and be included in all the activities with his classmates, no matter what the hurdle. It is this kind of dedication to children with special needs that makes the difference for a child who works ten times harder than his peers to do the same things they do. It is this kind of dedication that helped our child grow and prepared him for transition into an inclusive school setting where he will be successful in the future.

Jill Wagoner is Board Secretary for *Partners In Learning* and parent of a child with special needs. A former journalist and current marketing and public relations professional, Wagoner is a writer, speaker and advocate for individuals with special needs and organizations who support them. Learn more at www.coopieinc.blogspot.com.



Where All Can Play: Including Young Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Classrooms

Sherese teaches 11 two-year-olds in her early childhood classroom. Each child is very different, but Sherese works with families to assure that each child receives the care and education they need. When she learns that a child recently diagnosed with autism will be enrolled in her classroom, Sherese feels overwhelmed. How will she care for and teach a child with a disability? What will a child with autism need, and what will his family expect? When Sherese shares her concerns, her director explains that it is important that their program be inclusive. Sherese wants this too, but she is not quite certain what inclusion is, and what it means for her teaching team, and the children in her class.

Sherese's experience is not unusual. Many young children with disabilities spend their days in early childhood programs. For early childhood professionals, meeting the needs of children with disabilities can be overwhelming. They may feel unprepared to offer the extra supports that children with disabilities may need. Early childhood professionals can work with families and early intervention professionals and therapists to provide high quality inclusive care and education—to support the development and learning of children with disabilities in their programs.



What is inclusion?

Inclusion is at once a philosophy, a policy, and a set of practices that support access, participation and support of children with disabilities in early childhood settings. The Division for Early Childhood (DEC) and NAEYC wrote a joint position statement to define early childhood inclusion and recommend ways to improve inclusive care and education for young children with disabilities and their families:

Early childhood inclusion embodies the values, policies, and practices that support the right of every infant and young child and his or her family, regardless of ability, to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts as full members of families, communities, and society. The desired results of

inclusive experiences for children with and without disabilities and their families include a sense of belonging and membership, positive social relationships and friendships, and development and learning to reach their full potential. The defining features of inclusion that can be used to identify high quality early childhood programs and services are access, participation, and supports. (DEC/NAEYC 2009)

Ultimately, all young children benefit from high-quality inclusive care and education. Regardless of their ethnicity, race, family economic status and ability, children deserve high quality care and education, including healthy and safe environments, challenging educational experiences, and caring relationships. High quality inclusion means that all children with disabilities have access to the same settings and experiences that typically developing children have. Accommodations, such as ramps for wheelchairs and walkers can help children access playground equipment. Children with disabilities can sometimes use technology, such as iPad talking apps, to participate during story time and communicate with teachers and peer. Picture schedules can be used to support daily transitions for children with autism. Teachers and families can work together to support friendship development among children with and without disabilities. In all of these circumstances, early childhood teachers can work with families, therapists, and specialists to meet a child's participation needs, and their educational goals.

What can help teachers implement high quality inclusive practices in their program?

Early childhood professionals benefit from administrative supports and high-quality professional development. The National Early Childhood Inclusion Institute, sponsored by FPG Child Development Institute, is the premier event for people from all early childhood sectors who come together to learn, share, and problem-solve about inclusion for young children. Over the course of the popular three-day conference, participants hear about the latest research, practices, programs, and issues in early childhood inclusion from national and international experts. The Inclusion Institute holds pre-institute workshops and over 40 sessions for early childhood professionals who work with children with disabilities and their families. Pre-institute workshops and sessions include strategies for partnering and collaborating with families, using technology to support children's learning goals, supporting play skills and using assessment to support learning and development. All sessions are designed as interactive learning and sharing experiences, and are presented by nationally known experts on early childhood inclusion.

Registration for the 2014 National Early Childhood Inclusion Institute is now open. For more information about the Institute's programming, please visit: <http://inclusioninstitute.fpg.unc.edu/>

If you need help with registration for FPG's pre-Institute workshops or for the Inclusion Institute, please contact Jay Hargrove at jay.hargrove@unc.edu or 919.966.0888.

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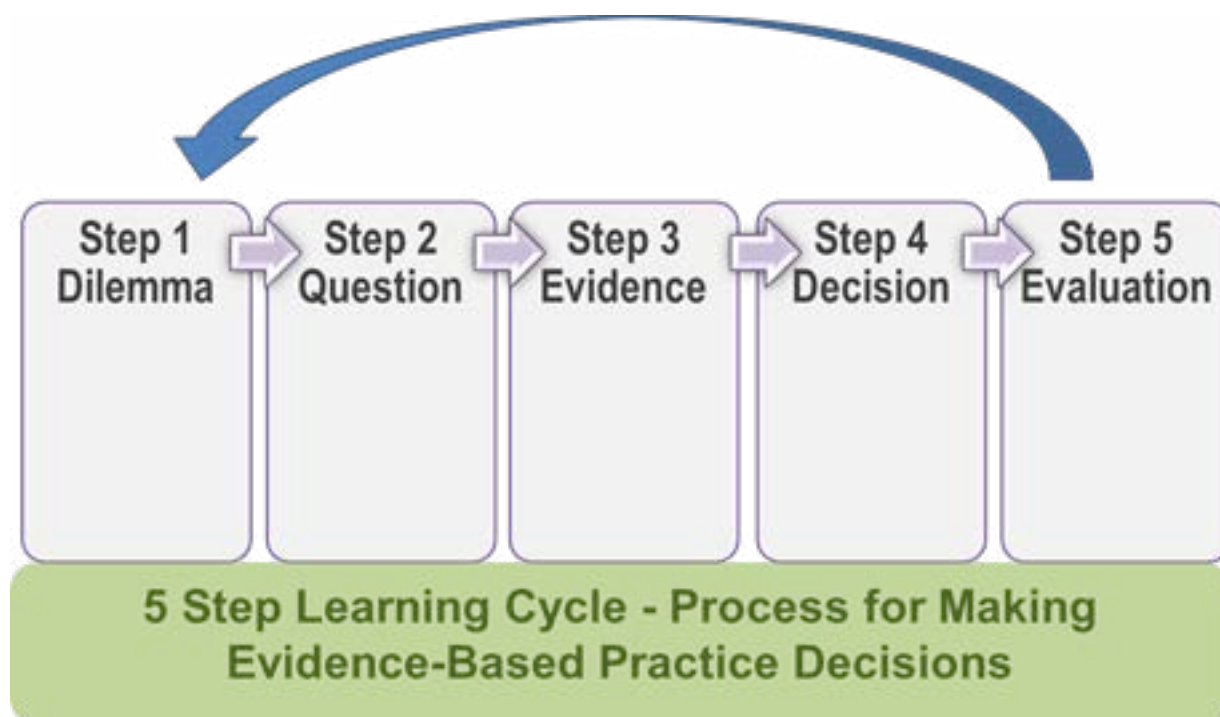


CONNECT Modules At Your Fingertips

Are you a faculty or a professional development (PD) provider looking for resources to help your learners implement evidence-based practices and develop their skills as teacher researchers?

Look no further—CONNECT offers web-based multimedia modules that include instructor support materials. Information is presented in a variety of formats including audio and video clips, activities, and handouts and is available 24/7 with the options to use online or offline. The modules are also easily adaptable to the needs of multiple audiences, contexts or formats (i.e., online, blended, face-to-face). As noted by a community college faculty, “There are quite a few of us who are one-man shows in community colleges. Because of this, we sometimes have to teach content that we may not be well-versed in and need help to find the best available resources. CONNECT has served as a support”. CONNECT Modules have been popular across the country and around the world. Since June 2010, they have been a resource to over 160,000 online users.

So what are CONNECT modules? Each module focuses on a discrete practice in a key content area (e.g., family-professional partnerships, assistive technology) and is organized around the 5-Step Learning Cycle™. The 5-Step Learning Cycle™ is an innovative approach for making evidence-based practice decisions. It is based on realistic problems to solve and the importance of integrating multiple perspectives and sources of evidence (Center to Mobilize Early Childhood Knowledge, n.d.; Buysse et al. 2012; Winton et al. 2013). The following description of the 5-Step Learning Cycle™ is adapted from the CONNECT modules website (Center to Mobilize Early Childhood Knowledge, n.d.).



In **Step 1**, the learner is introduced to a real life practice dilemma. The dilemma is presented from a practitioner's perspective. A family perspective is also often included to convey the importance of considering the family's values and experiences as part of a decision-making process. In **Step 2**, the learner identifies a practice-focused question about the dilemma that can be answered through various sources of evidence including the best available research. This step helps the learner move from the dilemma, which raises all kinds of possible foci and questions, to a specific practice focus and establishes the problem-solving context for the learner. In **Step 3**, the learner identifies and appraises key sources of evidence related to the practice focus. This process includes further defining the practice focus and learning to recognize examples of it by observing video clips of the practice, followed by observations in real practice settings. The sources of evidence that learners are exposed to include the following: (a) a summary of the best available research evidence on the practice; (b) policies (e.g., Head Start Performance Standards, joint position statements) related to the practice; and (c) experience-based knowledge using perspectives of practitioners and families about the implementation of the practice. In **Step 4**, the learner integrates all of the information learned in Step 3 and appraises its relevance to the unique context of the dilemma (e.g., the practice setting(s), characteristics of child, values of family, their own values and experiences) in order to make an informed decision and develop a plan for implementation. And finally, in **Step 5**, learners are introduced to tools and strategies to evaluate the impact of the practice being implemented.

Collaboration is key in the development of CONNECT modules, resources and courses. This was done by engaging users in co-developing and field testing resources or by assessing and responding to the needs expressed by key stakeholders. An example is in the development of the *Foundations of Inclusion training curriculum* (<http://community.fpg.unc.edu/connect-modules/instructor-community/module-1/Training-Module-on-Early-Childhood-Inclusion>). This resource was developed upon request from the North Carolina Department of Child Development and Early Education (NC DCDEE) to have a standardized curriculum for an introductory training on inclusion. Working closely with Child Care Resource Inc. to organize and facilitate a 4-month PD sequence, the first draft of the curriculum was piloted with 29 early childhood professional development coordinators and other North Carolina Child Care Resource and Referral professionals. As part of the pilot, these PD coordinators and TA professionals implemented the curriculum with child care directors, teachers, and other early childhood professionals. Their feedback and suggestions help shape the training curriculum.

CONNECT has something for everyone; whether you are a faculty or TA professional who needs a high quality video example of an environmental modification on Monday morning or a child care director who wants to conduct in-house training to help your staff learn about evidence-based practices to support children with disabilities. The table below shows the key features and topics in CONNECT Modules.

CONNECT Modules <http://community.fpg.unc.edu>

For early childhood faculty and PD providers

Instructor support including:

- Facilitation and assessment guides
- Links to personnel preparation standards
- Online discussion board
- Downloadable handouts, activities, video and audio clips

Topics (all also available in Spanish):

- Embedded Interventions*
- Transitions
- Communication for Collaboration
- Family-Professional Partnerships
- Assistive Technology*
- Dialogic Reading
- Tiered Instruction—Social Emotional Development and Academic Learning

* A 12-minute *Foundations of Inclusion video* is included in Modules 1 and 5. A training curriculum is also available for instructors for this resource.

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Promising Autism Research

More children than ever are being diagnosed with autism, which means more parents than ever face a dizzying array of often expensive treatment options. Giving parents and professionals authoritative information is the purpose of a new review spearheaded by the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Without a thorough review of autism interventions, Allison Smith of Pawtucket, R.I., might never have asked to try video-modeling to help her twin sons, age 4, develop the key motor skill of blowing a feather, a stepping stone to speech. “Knowledge is power,” said Smith, who found video-modeling on a list of proven interventions from the National Professional Development Center (NPDC) on Autism Spectrum Disorders, a multi-university center to promote the use of evidence-based practices. UNC is one of three NPDC operating sites. “Knowing what works has given us the upper hand in acquiring appropriate therapy and tools.”

Autism incurs an average lifetime price tag of \$3.2 million per person, according to a 2007 research study in the Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine. But the Autism Society estimates that early diagnosis and effective interventions can reduce that lifetime cost by two-thirds.

“Parents often pay for interventions that have no evidence behind them,” said FPG director Samuel L. Odom, who co-headed the new review. “This report will allow them to make the best choices.” In this five-year update for the NPDC, UNC scientists screened 29,000 articles about autism spectrum disorders to find the ones proven to work best.

Compared to the 24 proven interventions in the 2008 report, the new report lists 27. Applying even more stringent criteria this time, the FPG team dropped “structured work systems” and added five practices: “exercise,” “structured play groups,” “scripting,” “modeling” and “cognitive behavior intervention.” After considering more studies, scientists also renamed and broadened one category, “technology-aided instruction.”

“Expanding the list offers more tools to educators and service providers. This improves outcomes for children with ASD,” said Kristine Ganley, a training and technical assistance provider at George Mason University. NPDC’s report on evidence-based practices provides important guidance for professionals and families. Before NPDC’s list, parents and professionals often searched for practices online, with unreliable results. “Some interventions may seem cutting-edge, but we don’t yet know if they have any drawbacks or trade-offs,” said FPG investigator Connie Wong, the new report’s lead author and co-head of the review of research. “Our report only includes what’s tried and true.”

Read the full report:

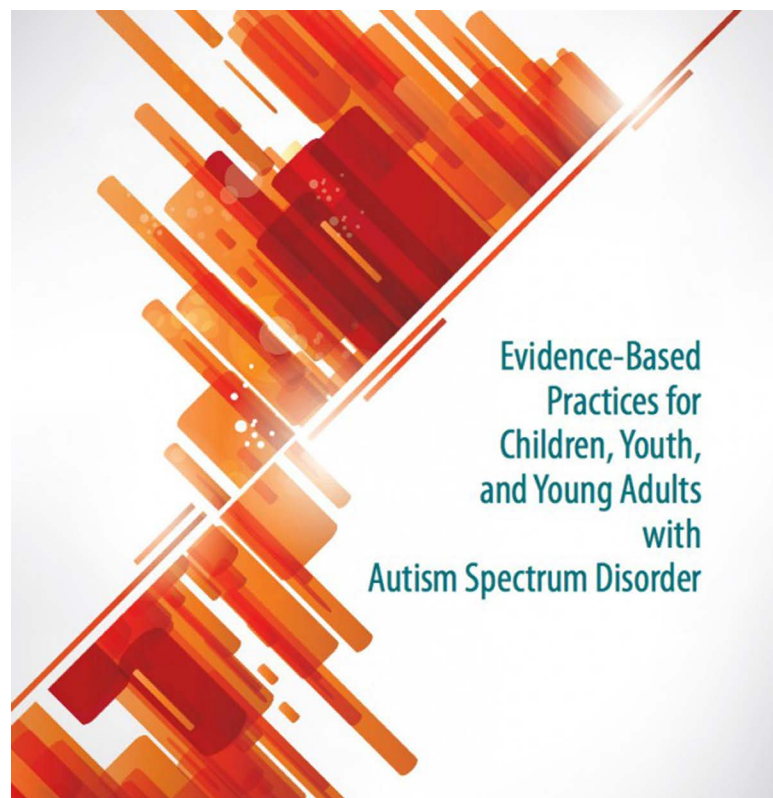
<http://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/sites/autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/files/2014-EBP-Report.pdf>

Find more resources at the National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders: <http://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/>

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Autism Evidence-Based Practice Review Group
Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Knowledge is power. In this five-year update for the National Professional Development Center (NPDC) on Autism Spectrum Disorders, UNC scientists screened 29,000 articles about autism spectrum disorders to find the ones proven to work best.



Children with disabilities deserve to receive a preschool education that provides enriching experiences that lead to healthy development, both academically and socially. However, one effective strategy is often ignored: Father involvement in inclusive preschool classrooms. Fathers can have an important influence

on their children with and without disabilities. Children need their fathers to be involved in their preschool classrooms because fathers provide unique skills that can benefit students with and without disabilities in a variety of ways.



The current state of father involvement in preschool classrooms:

- Fathers tend to have a lack of communication with teachers compared to mothers.¹
- Fathers may be more likely to participate indirectly than mothers (for example, fathers might help locate services for their children, but not attend meetings with service providers).¹
- Fathers surveyed expressed interest in information from teachers about how to more effectively work with their child with disabilities, but have not received or been offered this information.²
- Fathers indicated that they would prefer that classroom parental involvement activities were scheduled for evenings and weekends, but they were typically during the workday.²

Why Is This A Problem?

Fathers have natural skills that make them effective in preschool classrooms. When fathers play with their children with disabilities, the following positive effects occur for children: (a) increase in language and literacy skills,³ (b) enhanced social-emotional development,³ and (c) more use of symbolic play.⁴ These positive benefits are unique to the natural play, including rough-and-tumble play, that fathers often engage in with their children. Fathers can also be effective in special education interventions. Research shows that fathers typically have lower levels of stress regarding their child's disability than mothers.⁴ Researchers believe that this can benefit the child because fathers may not become as distressed when children with disabilities do not show progress or cooperate. By showing less stress and working with the child with disabilities, fathers can actually improve family dynamics overall.⁴

Strategies For Involving Fathers

In order to involve fathers in inclusive preschool classrooms, teachers can employ strategies that will overcome the barriers that exist. Some strategies include:

- Show that you understand fathers' 'life-context variables' (skills, knowledge, time, and energy).⁵ For example, many fathers work full-time.
- Accommodate these 'life-context variables' for fathers, increasing their likelihood to participate. For example, schedule an activity for fathers to participate in with their children in the preschool classroom late in the afternoon.⁵
- Specifically and directly invite fathers to participate, rather than having an open invitation to parents in general.⁵
- Involve fathers in activities that build upon the positive effects that fathers naturally have.²
- Clearly communicate to fathers the vast impact they can have on their child's development, to increase classroom participation.⁵

Research suggests that specific classroom activities that would enhance the natural positive effects that fathers have on children with and without disabilities include puzzles, pretend play, oral storytelling, emergent writing, and turn-taking games.³ Using the strategies outlined above, teachers can begin to grow the involvement of fathers in inclusive preschool classrooms. Involving fathers can make all the difference in the development of children with disabilities!

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- ⁵ Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., Walker J. M. T., Sandler, H. M., Whetsel, D., Green, C. L., Wilkins, A. S., & Closson, K. (2005). Why do parents become involved? Research findings and implications. *The Elementary School Journal*, 106(2), 105-130.

The Importance of Social-Emotional Development

Social emotional growth in young children is the foundation for all other development, and support of this domain is the most critical aspect of school-readiness. Since 2000, a wave of research reviews supports the finding that social-emotional health in the preschool years predicts future school and life successes¹. In fact, in 2004 the Center for Evidence-Based Practices reported that early onset behavior problems are the *single best predictor* for many future negative outcomes, including adolescent delinquency, incarceration, substance abuse, gang involvement, unemployment and divorce. Early childhood teachers report that children's disruptive behavior is the single greatest challenge they face² and faculty in higher education early childhood programs report that students are least likely to be prepared upon graduation to work with children with persistent challenging behaviors.³

Social-emotional skills include the ability to:

- form relationships,
- be attentive and follow directions,
- concentrate and persist at difficult tasks,
- identify, understand and communicate your own emotions, and recognize feelings in others,
- constructively manage strong emotions, and solve social problems.

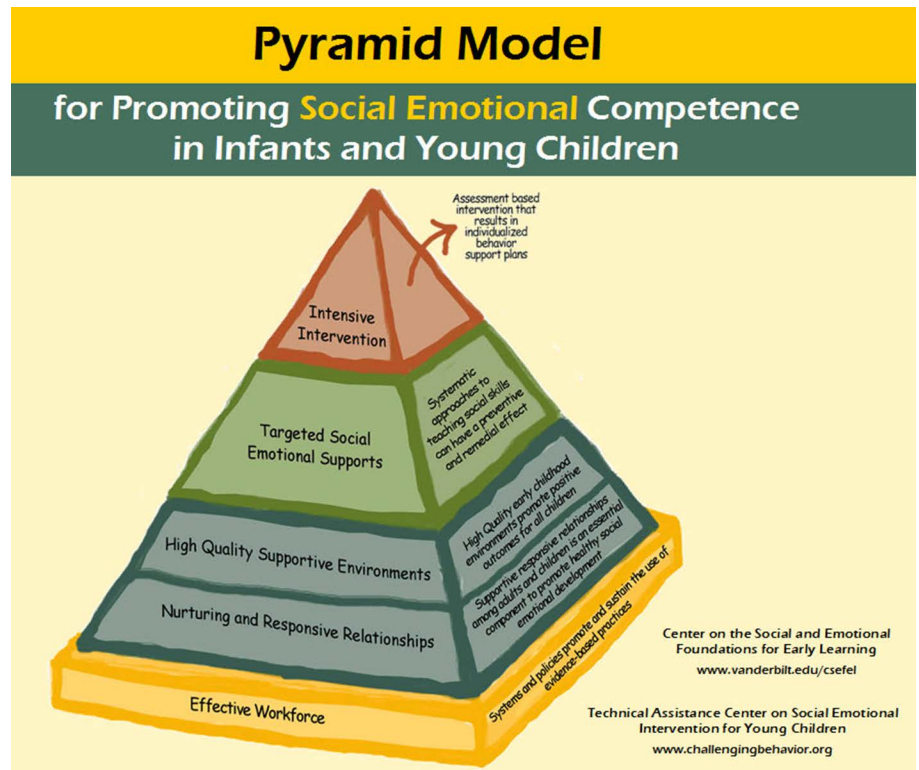
These social and emotional skills are learned within the context of nurturing, secure relationships and flourish in environments that meet the security and stimulation needs of the child. Children need teachers who understand the importance of social-emotional skills and are equipped to foster their development through their daily interactions, the environment they provide, and specific teaching strategies. Unfortunately, only about 40% of children entering kindergarten possess adequate social-emotional skills needed for future success.⁴

Since 2005, the *Promoting Healthy Social Behaviors in Child Care Centers (HSB)* project⁵, an initiative of the NC Child Care Resource and Referral Council, has provided technical assistance across NC to help teachers in licensed child care classrooms support the social-emotional development of young children. Behavior specialists use the Pyramid Model to help teachers make personal and programmatic improvements in their teaching practices to better support children's social-emotional growth. Training on Pyramid Model strategies is also available.

In the next issue of *Milestones*, we'll explore the Pyramid Model in more detail, and learn about the importance of building positive relationships.

REFERENCES:

- ¹ Off to a Good Start, 2000; Neurons to Neighborhoods, 2001; Eager to Learn, 2002; Set for Success, 2002; Ready to Enter, 2002; Emotions Matter, 2002; Hardwired to Connect, 2003.
- ² Arnold, et al, 1998; YOshikawa & Knitzer, 1997.
- ³ Hemmeter, 2004.
- ⁴ Rimm-Kaufman et al, 2000; Blair 2002.
- ⁵ For more information or to request services from the HSB Project, contact Smokie Brawley, Statewide Project Manager, Child Care Resources Inc., sbrawley@childcareresourcesinc.org



How the IMPACT program is striving towards excellence in Cabarrus County and the field of Early Childhood Education

Educators who work with children from Birth to Age 5 can often be found working in varied settings ranging from corporately funded childcare to centers in homes, but they are all held to the same standards when it comes to satisfying expectations set forth by parents, program administrators and state regulatory agencies.

As the focus of educational research changes so do these expectations and the individualized learning needs of young children. Quite often it becomes a struggle for early childhood providers to continuously provide high quality care while adapting to the growing needs of the field. According to early childhood educators, it is imperative that improvement efforts are available to ensure access to on-site support. This will promote their success and continual professional growth regardless of whether they are working in the traditional/ church daycare or a family childcare home.

This need had already become evident to other community-based agencies like Thompson Child and Family Focus and the Cabarrus County Partnership for Children who have partnered together to implement a new Early Childhood-based program called IMPACT (Improving and Mastering Programs thru Accreditation, Collaboration and Training). The primary focus is to bring onsite technical assistance and coaching to early childhood programs in Cabarrus county. It is the goal of these agencies to work collectively and provide a variety of services to all regulated early childhood programs at no cost while encouraging the implementation of developmentally appropriate practices and other high quality initiatives to increase environment rating assessments scores; and to strive towards NAEYC accreditation. IMPACT utilizes highly trained Professional Development Specialist to provide individualized on-site technical assistance, facilitate in-service trainings and provide information to local community resources.

What are some of the services provided by the IMPACT program?

- Technical Assistance
- Development of quality improvement plans
- Mock ITERS/ECERS and FCCERS assessments
- Classroom Observation with feedback
- On or offsite in-service training
- Free monthly in-service training
- One on one relationship with a Professional Development Specialist
- Training available for those interested in NAEYC accreditation
- Access to groups such as Director's group, FCCH group and Lead Teacher Mentor group
- Access to program and community resources

How do I get more information on the IMPACT program? Contact QuWanya Smith Thompson at 704-817-1615 or qsmith@thompsoncfc.org

Who is Thompson Child & Family Focus? Thompson Child & Family Focus is the premier provider of clinical and prevention services for children and families across the Carolinas. The Charlotte, NC-based nationally accredited nonprofit agency changes the lives of at-risk children and families through therapy, education and care. Last year, Thompson served more than 13,000 children and families from its seven locations specializing in clinical and behavioral treatment, developmental education and proactive care. With more than 300 employees, and a 128 year-old mission of care, Thompson serves children and families through healing, teaching, worship and play. For more information, please visit thompsoncfc.org.



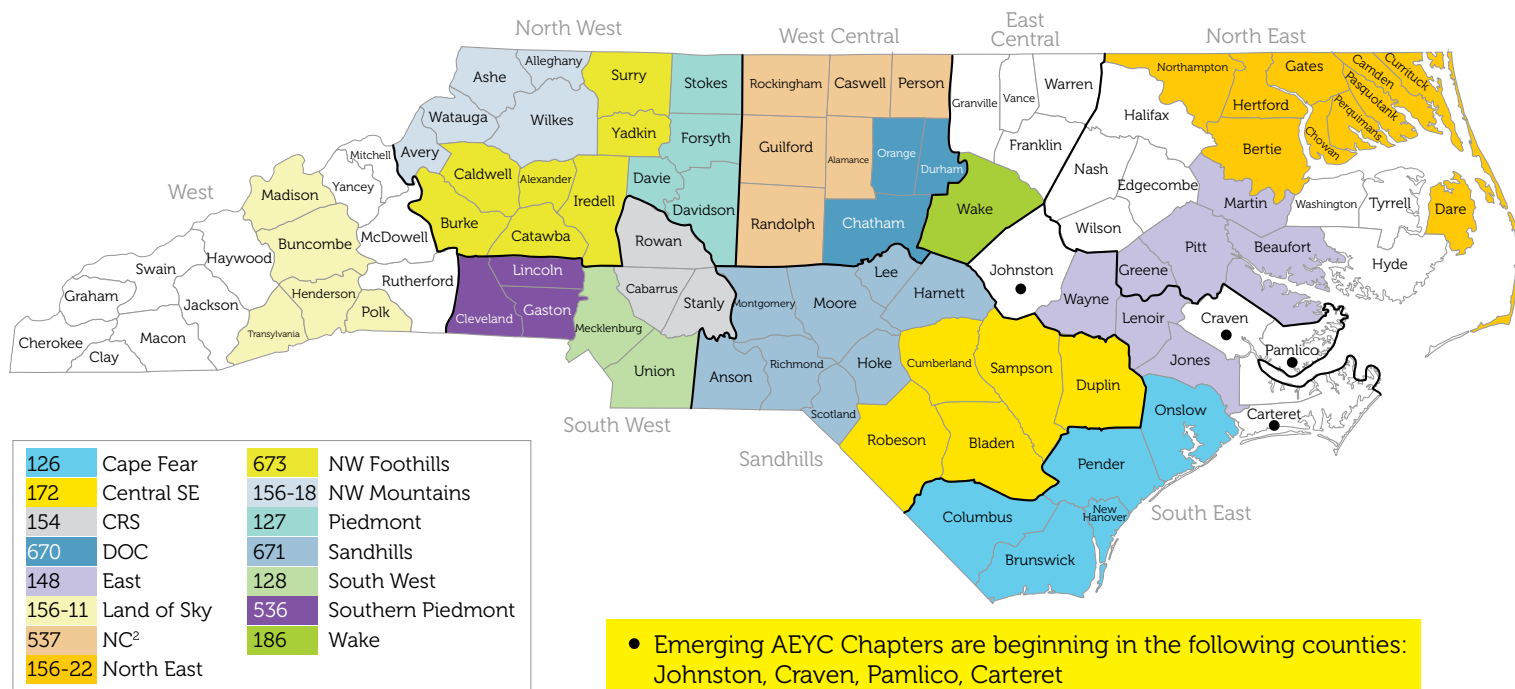
Photo courtesy of Mike McGlynn Photography

North Carolina's Chapters and Local Affiliates

NCaeyc Local Affiliate Map

(NCaeyc Regions noted w/black outline)

as of March 1, 2014



Local Affiliate Counties

Cape Fear: Brunswick/Columbus/New Hanover/Pender/Onslow
Central South East: Cumberland/Robeson/Sampson/Bladen/Duplin
CRS: Cabarrus/Rowan/Stanly
DOC: Orange/Durham/Chatham
East: Beaufort/Martin/Pitt/Lenoir/Greene/Wayne/Jones
Land of Sky: Buncombe/Henderson/Transylvania/Polk/Madison
NC²: Rockingham/Guilford/Randolph/Alamance/Caswell/Person
North East: Northampton/Hertford/Bertie/Chowan/Perquimans/Pasquotank/Dare/Camden/Currituck/Gates

Northwest Foothills: Iredell/Alexander/Catawba/Surry/Yadkin/Burke/Caldwell
North West Mountains: Watauga/Avery/Ashe/Wilkes/Alleghany
Piedmont: Forsyth/Stokes/Davie/Davidson
Sandhills: Moore/Lee/Montgomery/Richmond/Scotland/Hoke/Harnett/Anson
Southern Piedmont: Gaston/Lincoln/Cleveland
Southwest: Mecklenburg/Union
Wake: Wake

Learn how to get involved in chapter or local affiliate activities!
 Contact Lorie Barnes at lbarnes@ncaeyc.org.

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