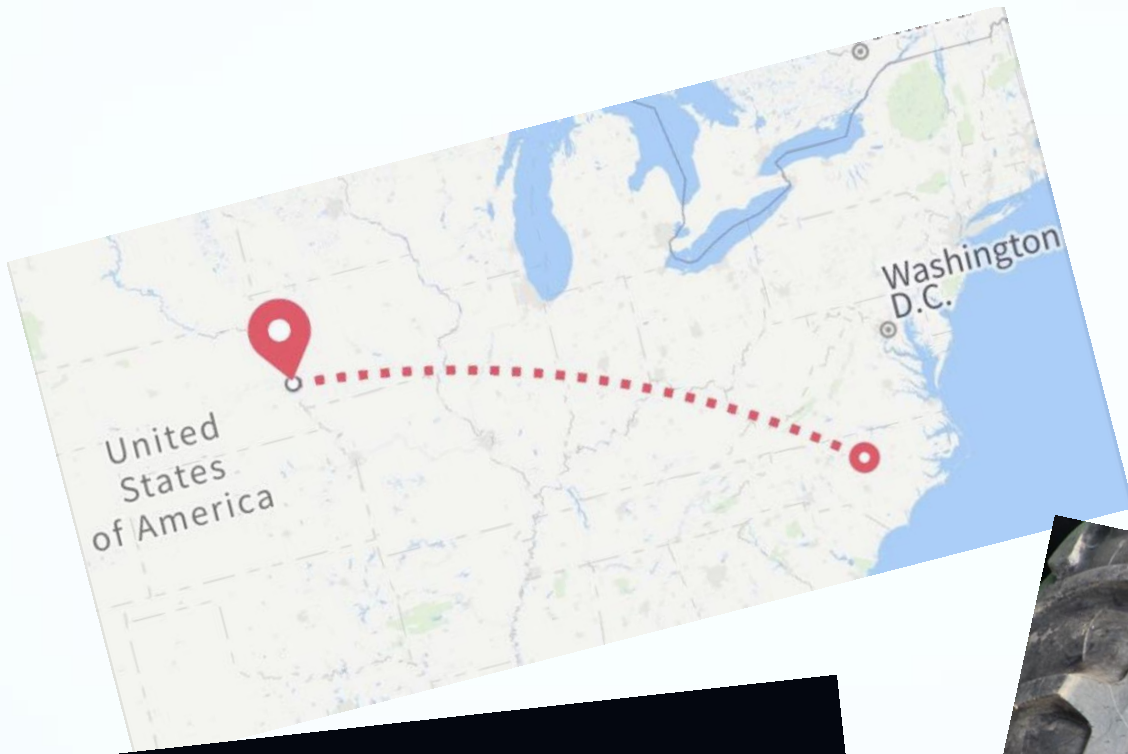




# Building on Common Ground: Supporting Children through Strong Prek-K Teacher Relationships

Presenter: Juliana Harris  
Buffett Institute  
January 24, 2019





**Leadership**  
is about making others better  
as a result of your presence and  
making sure that impact lasts in  
your absence.

— Sheryl Sandberg  
COO of Facebook



# Goals for Today

- **Analyze** national data trends in relation to Prek and Kindergarten practices
- **Explore** the role of authentic alignment to support children's speaking and listening abilities and overall success
- **Identify** and **share** effective practices to support the development of children's speaking and listening skills for our youngest learners
- **Reflect on** the role we can play individually and systemically to insure positive school experiences for our youngest learners

# What Do We Know?

- The early childhood years (birth – age 8) are the **most powerful years** for learning, growth and development
- Very sensitive time for **brain development**
- Development occurs in **ALL** domains
- Young children need a **wide variety** of engaging and appropriately challenging environments and experiences during this phase

# What Do We Know?



- Children Today
  - Are technologically savvy
  - Use technology as a main means of communication & play
  - Live in a fast-paced world
  - Live in increasingly diverse communities
  - Spend more time INSIDE than OUTSIDE
  - Are more overweight than the generation before
  - Spend less time with their families than they do in child-care
  - Are exposed to more dangers and threats than their parents were as children

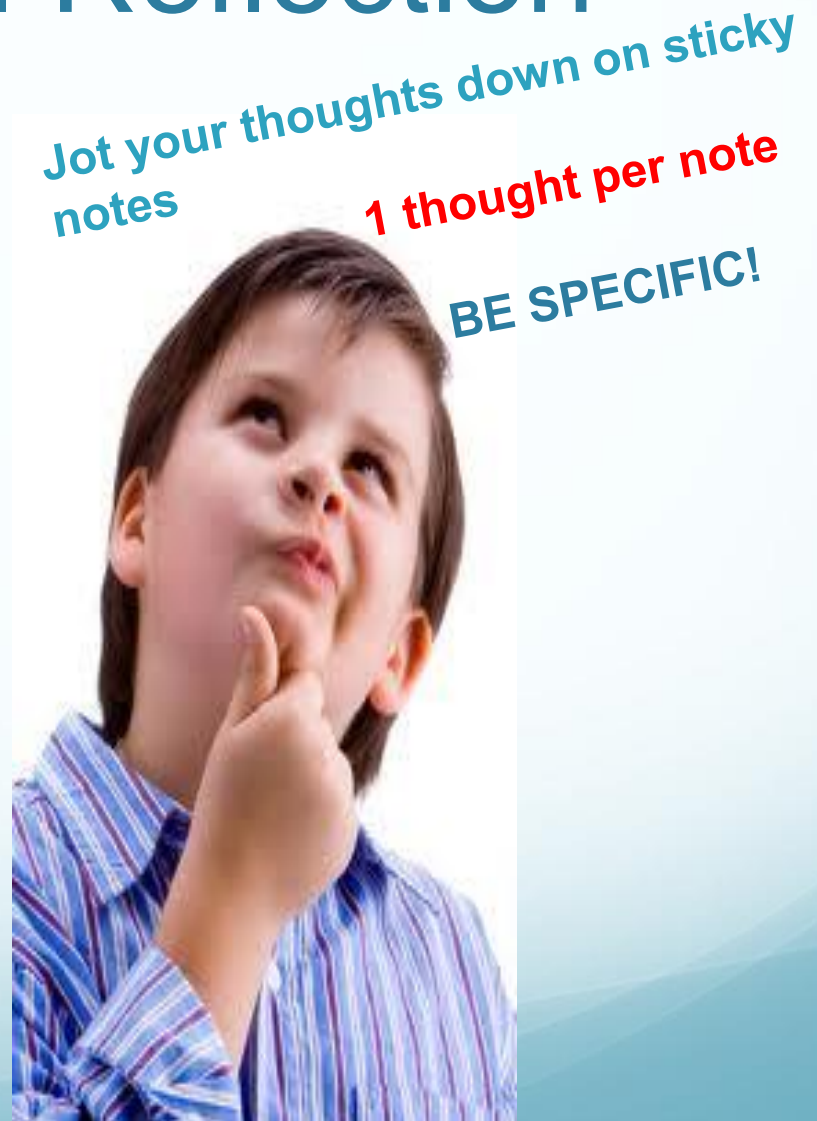
# What Do We Know?

- Although the 21<sup>st</sup> Century brings new experiences for young children, *their developmental patterns and ways of learning have not changed*



# Quiet Individual Reflection

- What do **YOU** know about how 4 & 5 year olds learn?
- What do the theories say? What does brain research say?
- What do young children need?
  - To be happy
  - To be healthy
  - To be successful



# *Creative Collaboration*

## “I Am 4” OR “I Am 5”

- Gather into “grade alike” small groups (*no more than 4*)
  - Share & Discuss your ideas
  - Sort your sticky notes
- ▶ Create a poster illustrating what your small group knows about young children who are 4 OR 5 years old





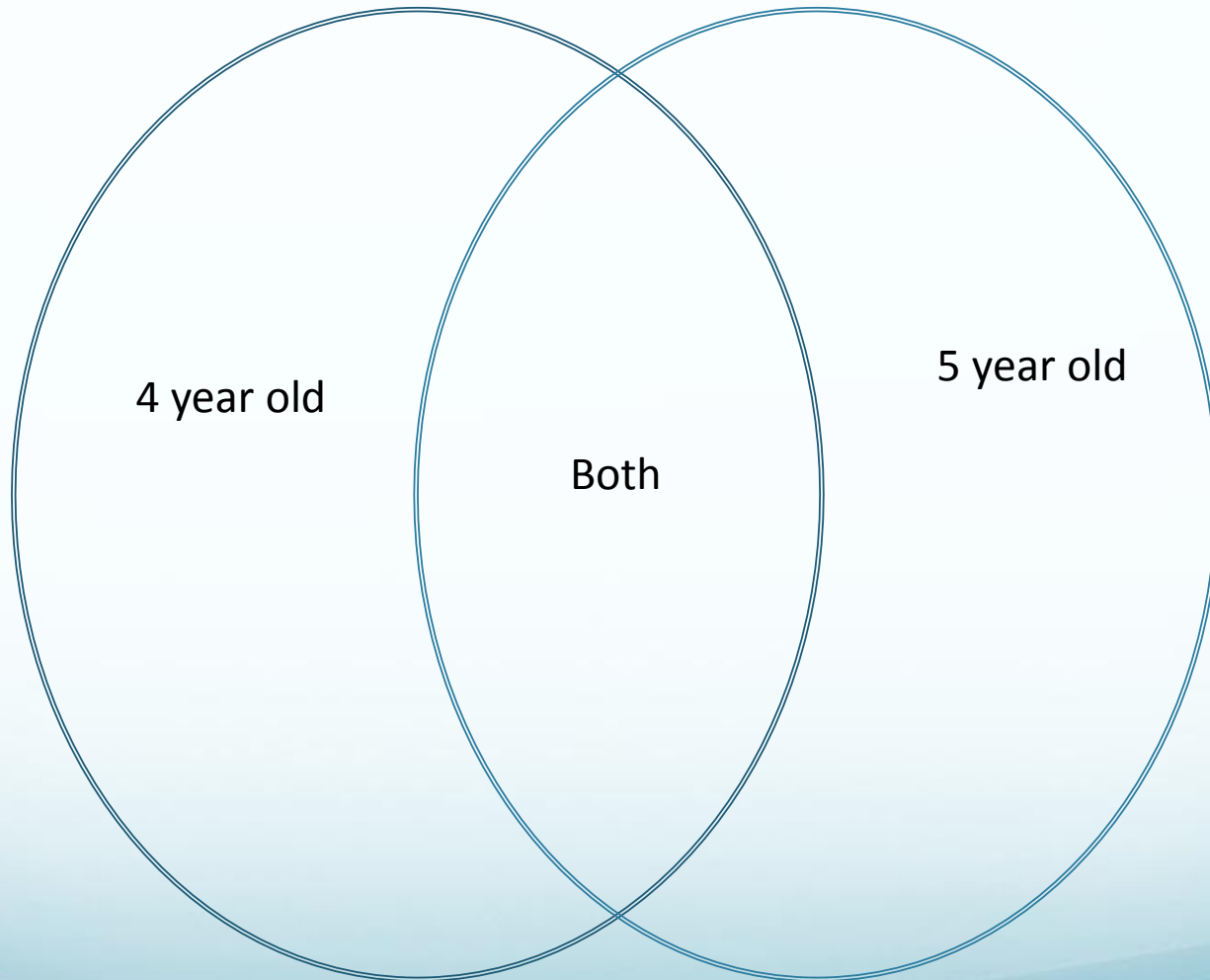
# Let's Share!



# What did you notice?



# Commonalities



# What Do We Know?

- **Families are their children's first teachers**
- Families bring a wealth of knowledge to the table
- The culture of a family influences a child's experiences in kindergarten
- Positive relationships between families and teachers support children's success



(Keyser, 2006)



# What Do We Know?

- **Solid Foundation of Theory**

- Piaget
- Dewey
- Montessori
- Froebel
- Bruner
- Vygotsky



- **Common Understanding Throughout All Theories:**

- Young children learn skills and concepts best through **active exploration and interaction** with their environment

# What Do We Know?

- **Key Foundational Processes** underlie children's developing competence and predict success in school across the age-span from age 3 through grade 3:
  - **Executive function:** focused attention, persistence, planning, reasoning, flexible problem-solving
  - **Self-regulation:** regulating emotions, behavior, & thinking according to situation
  - **Oral Language development**
  - **Positive relationships**

(Bredekamp, 2012)



# What Do We Know?

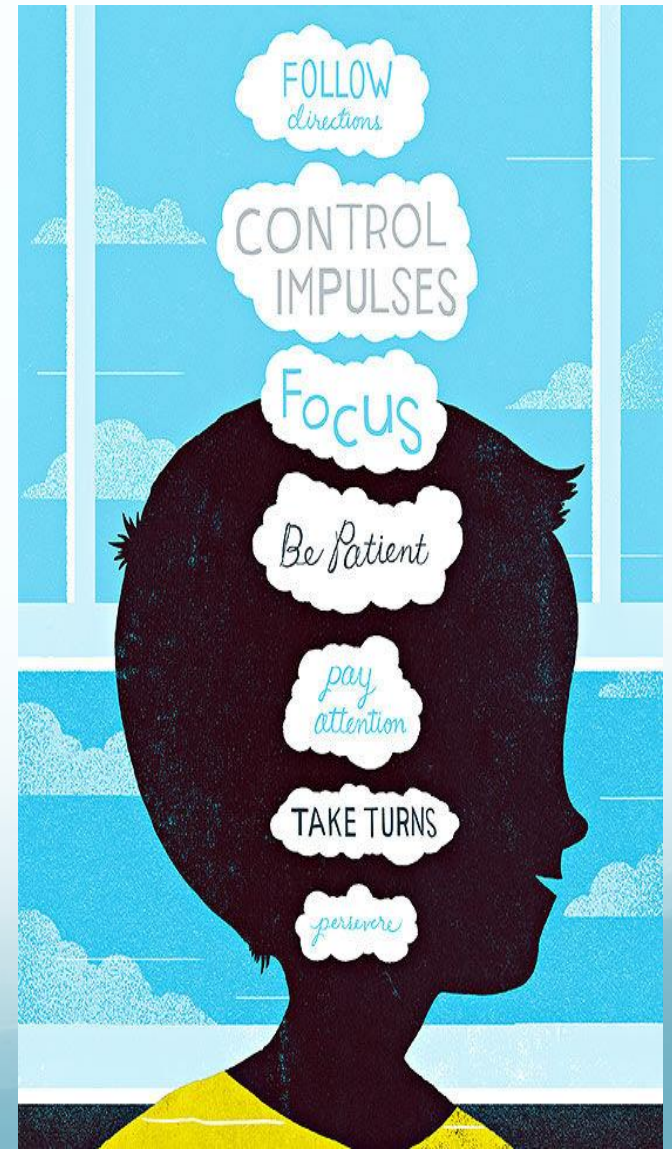
- Research repeatedly shows that the **quality of interactions between children and teachers** has long lasting impacts on child development and learning.
- A **positive relationship between a child and her teacher** predicts school success through 5<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Relationships are constructed through **meaningful** language interactions.

(Pianta, 2009; Ritchie, 2013)



# What Do We Know?

- The development of executive function helps children:
  - move between their own perspective and the perspective of another
  - recognize that others have needs
  - organize their own learning
  - thrive in a variety of learning environments





# What Do We Know?

- The brain's synaptic network makes connections when children...

- Play
- Touch
- Think
- Move
- Discuss
- Interact with each other



in an enriched learning environment where they have opportunities to be **physically**, **socially**, and **intellectually** immersed in learning.

# What Do We Know?..

- When children are **actively engaged in a task**, learning outcomes are strengthened
- Classrooms function best and provide the most opportunities for learning when students are **well-behaved**, consistently have **important things to do** and are **interested and engaged** in learning tasks.

(Boykin & Noguera, 2011; CLASS, 2009)



# What Do We Know?

- **Oral language development is key to learning**
- Children need to talk...to think out loud
- Children need opportunities to build their vocabulary through meaningful and engaging learning experiences and conversations.



# What Do We Know?

- Children learn and develop best when they are a part of a ***community of learners*** – a cooperative group in which all participants consider and contribute to one another's well-being and learning.



# What Do We Know?

Children...

- are more highly motivated to learn
- learn more
- enjoy learning more
- feel more positive towards the subject being studied
- have increased positive regard for their teachers
- are more accepting of one another

when they work together collaboratively with peers as opposed to working competitively or individually

& Johnson, 2013)

(Johnson



# What Do We Know?

- **Choice** in the classroom
  - Supports children's intrinsic motivation to learn
  - Encourages children to learn from each other
  - Draws on different strengths, abilities and interests
  - Maximizes children's learning
  - Gives meaningful practice



(Bredekamp & Copple, 1996; Hendrick, 1996; Deci & Ryan, 2002; American Psychology Association, 1997; Gardner, 2007)

# What Do We Know?

- When we offer children choices, we are allowing them to practice the skills of **independence** and **responsibility**, while we guard their health and safety by *controlling and monitoring the options*.



(Maxim, 1997)

# What Do We Know?

- Children develop in four domains—physical, cognitive, social, and emotional—and not at the same pace through each. No two children are the same; each child has a unique rate of development. In addition, no two children have the same family, cultural, and experiential backgrounds.
- Assessment is challenging during early childhood because a child's development is **rapid, uneven, episodic, and highly influenced by the environment.**



# What Do We Know?

- The expression of what young children know and can do would best be served in ways other than traditional paper and pencil assessments.
- A “one-size-fits-all” assessment will not meet the needs of most young children

(Guddemi & Case, 2004)



# What Do We Know?

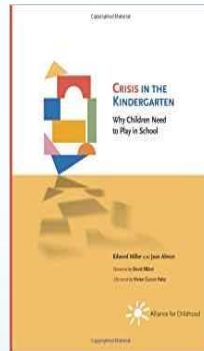
- The research is consistent...

**Teachers must be intentional** in the way they interact with children during their *play*...as they work to provide effective and appropriate instruction supported with observation-based assessment while interacting with children in engaging learning environments.



# What Do We Know?

- “The importance of **play** to young children’s healthy development and learning has been documented beyond question by research. Yet play is rapidly disappearing from kindergarten and early education as a whole.”



Miller & Almon, 2009

*The Crisis in the Kindergarten Report*

[http://www.allianceforchildhood.org/sites/allianceforchildhood.org/files/file/kindergarten\\_report.pdf](http://www.allianceforchildhood.org/sites/allianceforchildhood.org/files/file/kindergarten_report.pdf)

# What Do We Know?

“research shows that ***pretend play*** strengthens capacities, including sustained attention, memory, logical reasoning, language and literacy skills, imagination, creativity, understanding of emotions, and the ability to reflect on one’s own thinking, inhibit impulses, control one’s behavior, and take another person’s perspective...”

*DAP p. 132*

And yet...there's a problem!

# Importance of PreK/K Alignment

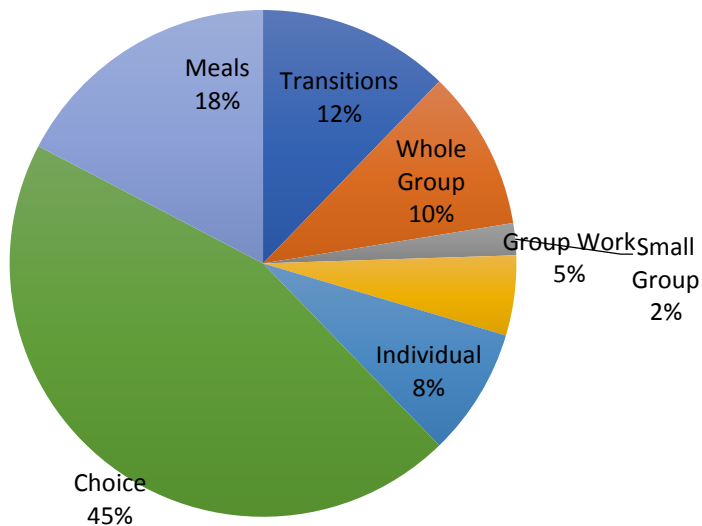


# What do the data say???

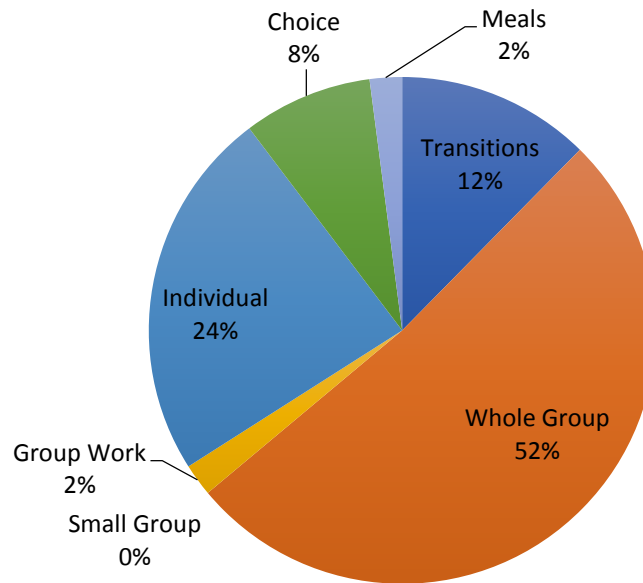
## **EDUSNAP**

- Minute-by-minute experiences of children through the course of a day
- 27 variables
- Random selection of 4 children (2 boys, 2 girls)
- Analyzes amount of time in activity settings, engagement, academic content

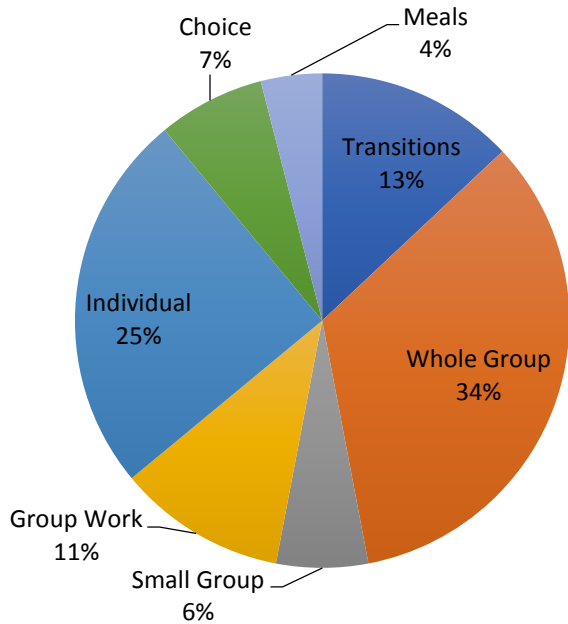
## Activity Settings PreK



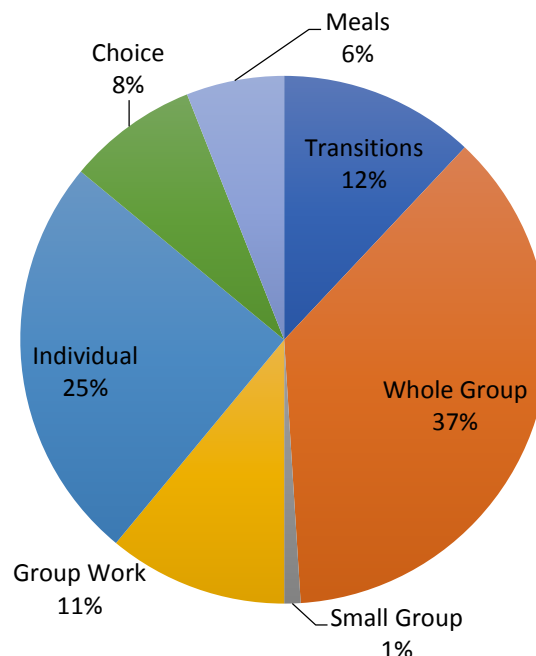
## Activity Settings K



## Activity Settings-2nd



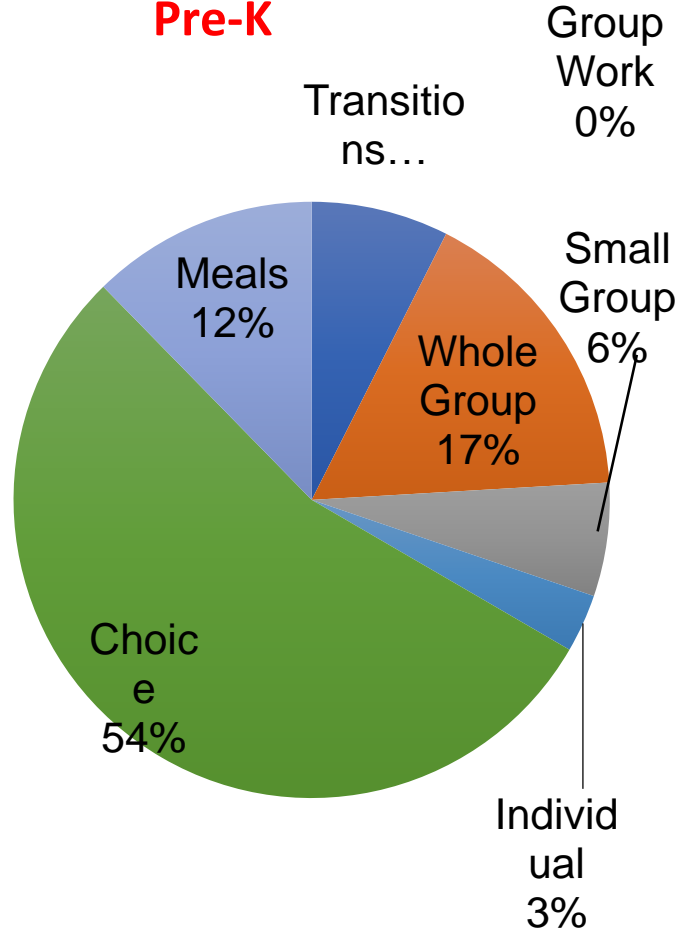
## Activity Settings-3rd



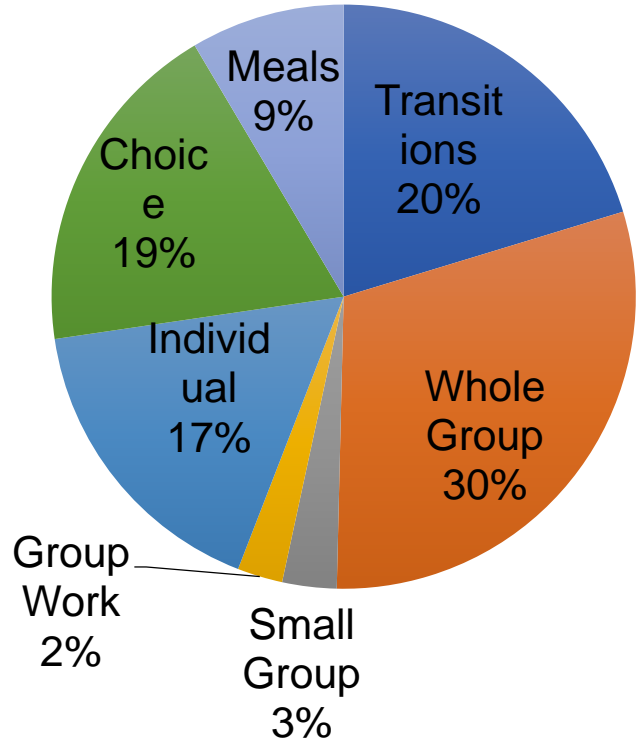


# PreK and Kindergarten Activity Settings

## Pre-K



## Kindergarten



# What are the implications?





# Prek or Kindergarten?



# Prek or Kindergarten?



# Prek or Kindergarten?



# Prek or Kindergarten?



# Prek or Kindergarten?





# Prek or Kindergarten?



# Prek or Kindergarten?



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# Prek or Kindergarten?



# Prek or Kindergarten?

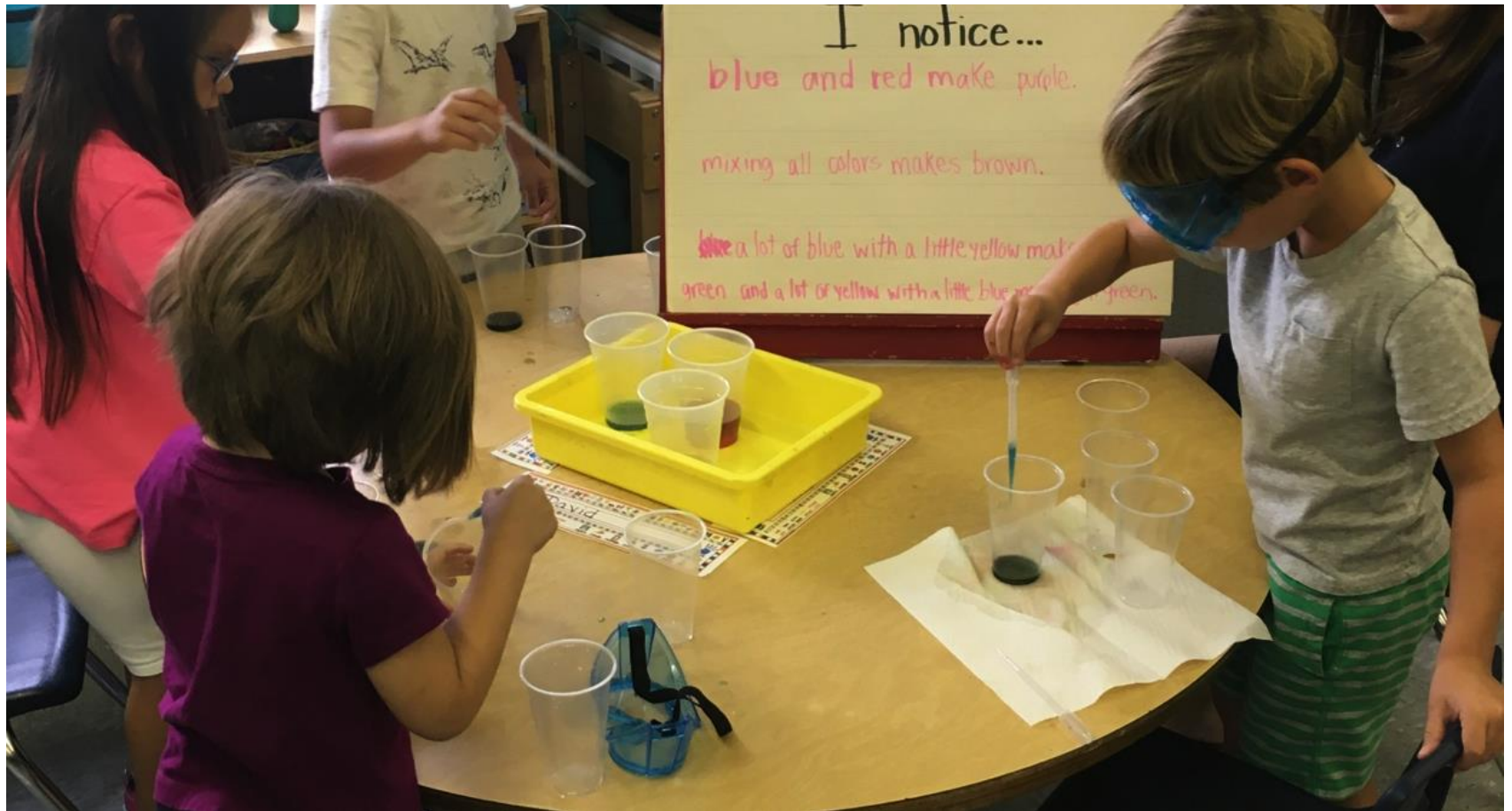


# Prek or Kindergarten?





# Prek or Kindergarten?



# Prek or Kindergarten?



# What do you NOTICE?



# Important elements of **ALIGNMENT**



## STANDARDS

What children are expected to know and do.

**Standards are set by states and describe the skills and competencies students should develop by the end of each grade.**

---

## CURRICULA

What children are taught.

**Classroom experiences that support state standards and the state's early learning developmental guidelines.**

---

## INSTRUCTION

How children are taught.

**Teachers at every level who are trained in child development and prepared to provide experiences that meet children's developmental needs.**

---

## ASSESSMENTS

What and how children's progress is measured.

**Assessments that inform instruction and are based on standards that measure what children have been taught.**

# Activity: What Do You Wish You Knew?

- What do you wish you knew about the other grade level that would help you be a more intentional teacher?
  - As a Pre-K teacher, what are the things you wish you knew from the kindergarten teacher's perspective?
  - As a K teacher, what are the things you wish you knew from the pre-k teacher's perspective?
  - As an administrator, what questions do you have about Prek and K practices?
- Jot down your ideas & questions



# Shoulder to Shoulder

- When the music starts, begin walking around the room.
- When the music stops, raise your hand signal:
  - Prek: Thumbs up
  - K: High Five
  - Admin: Peace Sign
- Find a partner that is NOT job-alike and share 1 question you wrote down.

# From Martin to Beaufort: My Transition



# Prek-1<sup>st</sup> Grade

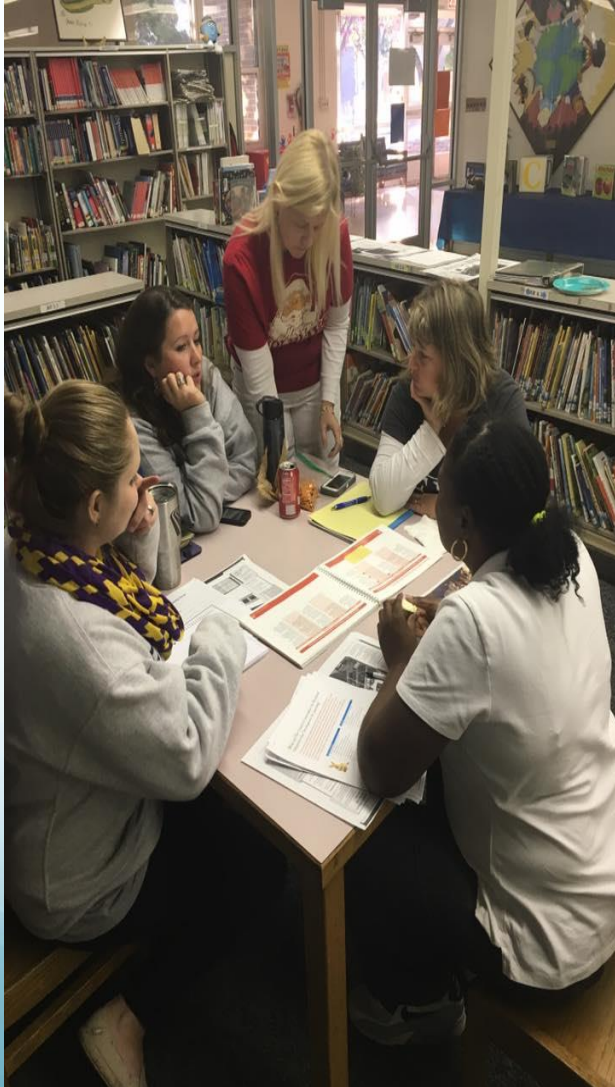




# Observations

- Prek and K teachers did not communicate
- Had misperceptions about one another's standards
- Prek felt there was pressure to push academics
- Prek understood formative assessment tool (TS Gold) and K was just learning the process for KEA
- Both groups needed PD on center/play-based learning and appropriate practices with a focus on skillful questioning

# PreK-K Collaborative F



## Foundations for Early Learning and Development-NC Standard Course of Study Crosswalk

- ▶ **Goal APL-6:** Children use a variety of strategies to solve problems.
- ▶ **Indicators:**
- ▶ **APL-6n:** Describe the steps they will use to solve a problem.
- ▶ **APL-6o:** Evaluate different strategies for solving a problem and select the strategy they feel will work without having to try it.
- ▶ **APL-6p:** Explain how they solved a problem to another person.
- ▶ **APL-6q:** Seek and make use of ideas and help from adults and peers to solve problems (“how can I make this paint get off my pants?”).
- ▶ Monitor and evaluate their progress and change course if necessary.
- ▶ Check their answers to problems using a different method, and they continually ask themselves, “Does this make sense?”
- ▶ Understand the approaches of others to solving complex problems and identify correspondences between different approaches.

## Table Activity Example: Formative Assessment and Standards

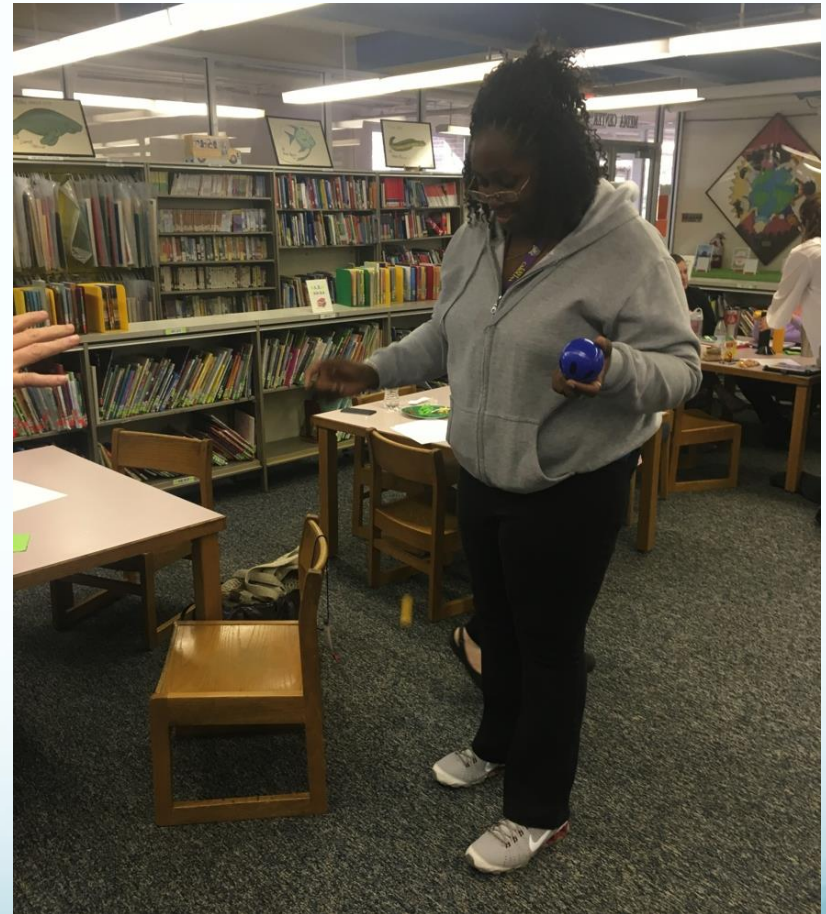
- With your table group, observe the picture of children working with blocks.
- Discuss possible learning that is being demonstrated based upon the children's work.
- What questions might you ask the child to probe deeper into their understanding?
- Link possible learning to Foundations or Common Core/Essential Standards. Write possible learning goals on the chart paper provided.



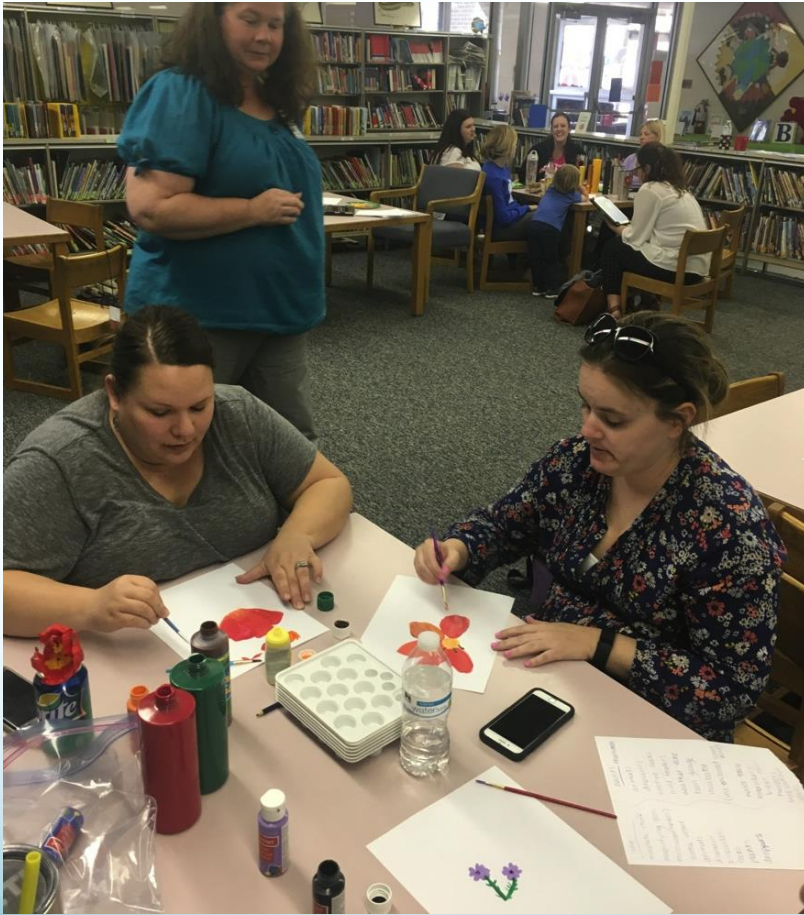
# Modeling Best Practice Through PD



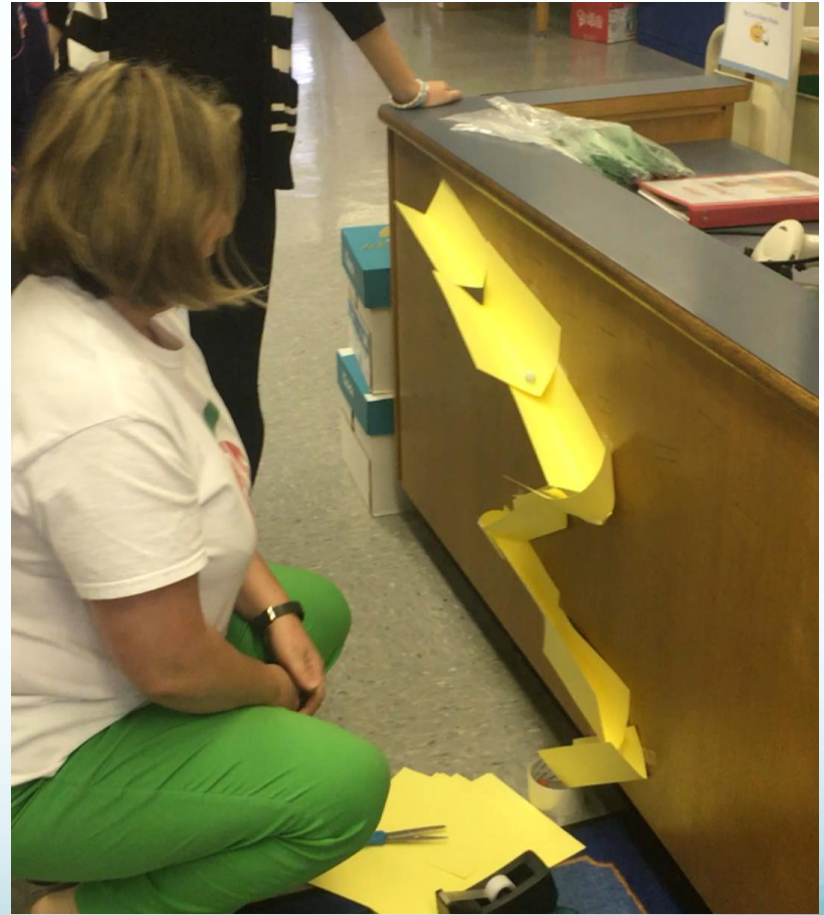
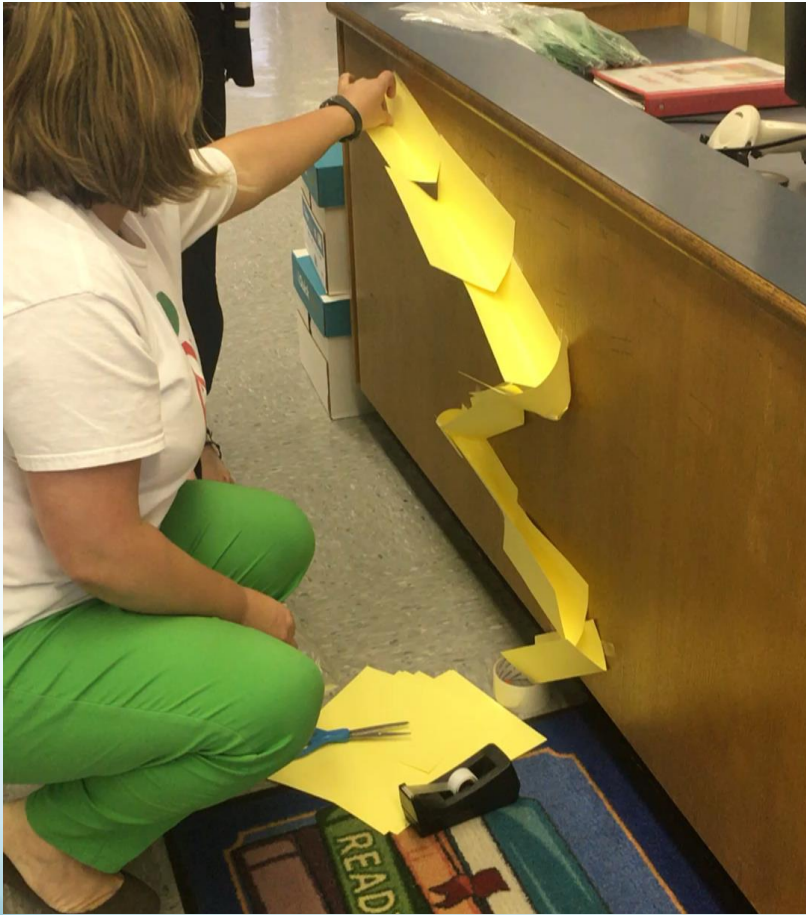
# Modeling Best Practice Through PD



# Modeling Best Practice Through PD



# Modeling Best Practice Through PD





# Reaping the Rewards

- Walls of communication began coming down
- K teachers began to visit Prek teachers; planned meaningful transition activities (class visits, included each other in parent info nights, etc.)
- Transition planning for students with special needs took place
- Teachers began sharing ideas and practices began to align across grades
- Prek included TS Gold reports in folders that transitioned to K and K teachers ACTUALLY looked at them!!!
- First grade began to wonder why they weren't involved!!!

# More Observations...

- Lots of time where children were working independently even when the work was designed in stations
- Lots of paper-pencil activities
- Questions from teachers stopped short of leading children to metacognitive thinking

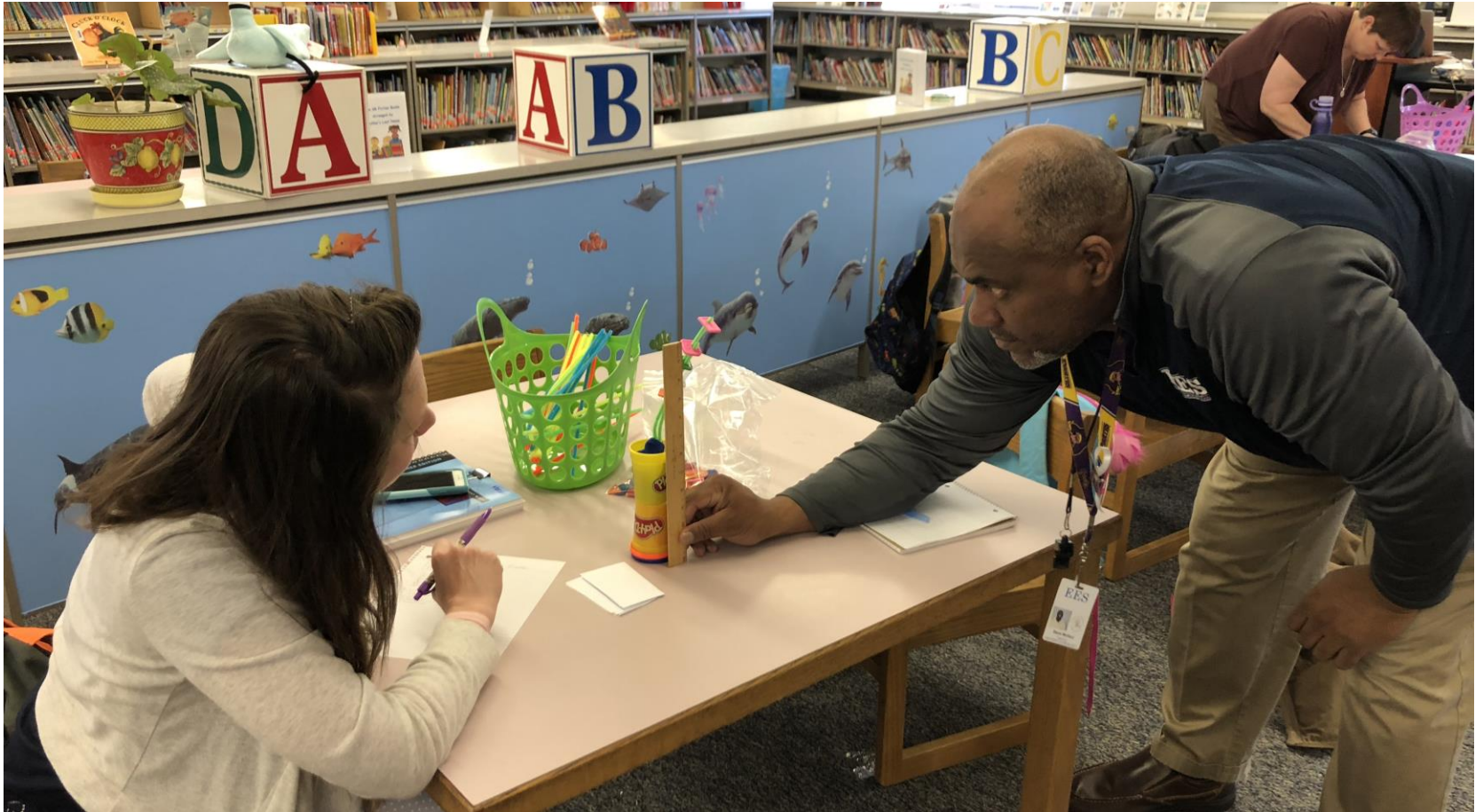
# Growing this Idea Upwards

- 1<sup>st</sup> grade teachers began to ask how they could incorporate more active learning in their instruction
- K teachers began to talk with 1<sup>st</sup> grade teachers about students in meaningful ways as well as supporting families in transitions
- Round 2 of the professional development series began

# Focus on the Predictors

- Small group instruction
- Peer collaboration
- Oral Language Development
- Vocabulary Development
- Early Math Concepts
- Scaffolded Instruction
- Metacognition

# STEAM in the Early Years



# STEAM in the Early Years



# STEAM in the Early Years



PD +

Collaboration +

Permission to Take Risks

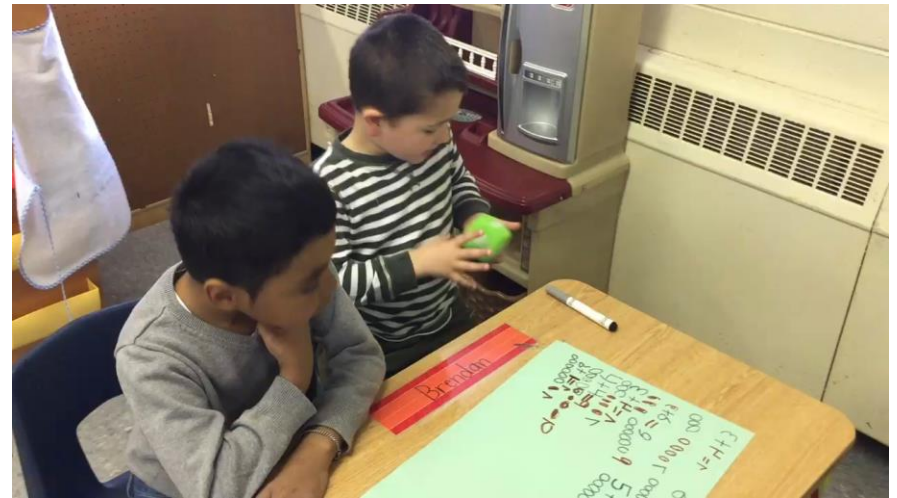
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# Opportunities for High Level Thinking, Collaboration, and Oral Language Development



# Teachers Valuing Children Talking and Striving to Reach Metacognitive Thinking



# Sharing Our School's Vision

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gr-JGM-Fpw8>

# What Will You Do About It?

## Part 1

- Jot down what you are already doing in your classroom/school that demonstrates aligned practices and helps insure smooth transitions for children.
- Write down next steps for improving alignment in your classroom and/or school.

## Part 2

- Turn and Talk
- Share with your shoulder partner what you are already doing. Then share what your next steps will be.

Share  
Out!



# How Can I/We...

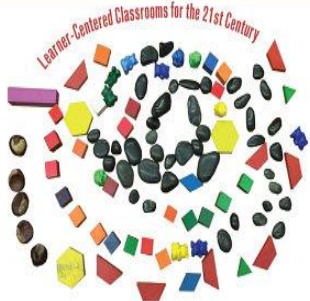
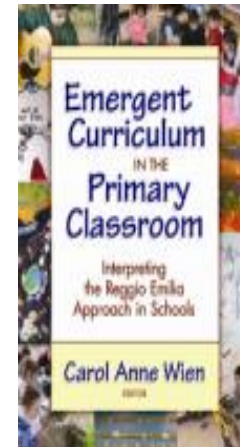
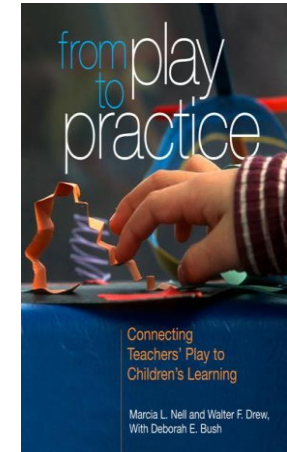
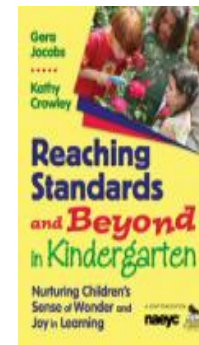
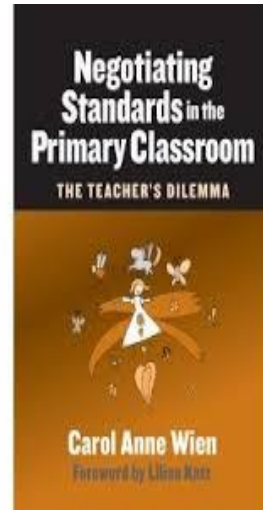
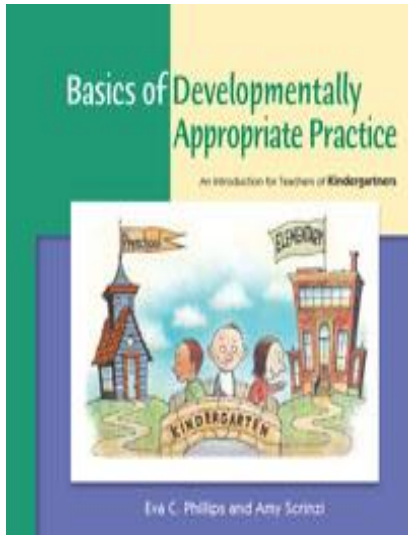
- ***Improve the alignment of appropriate practices from Prek to K?***
- ***Insure the continued development of children's oral language and speaking & listening skills from Prek forward?***

***What is the first step???***

# It Starts with a Conversation!

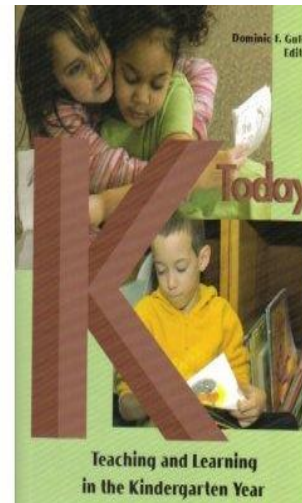
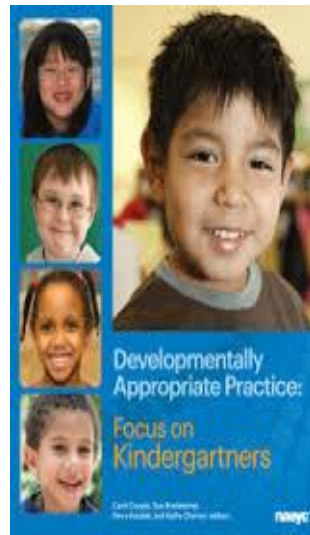


# Favorite Resources



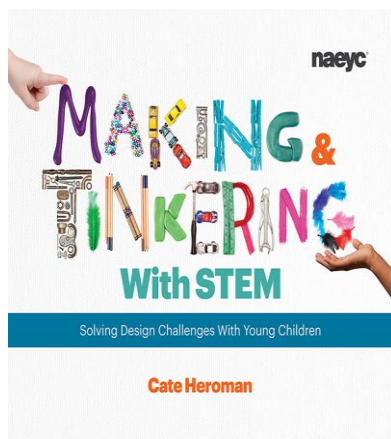
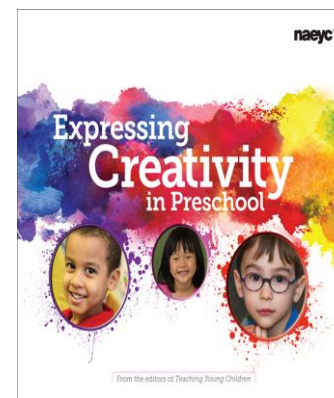
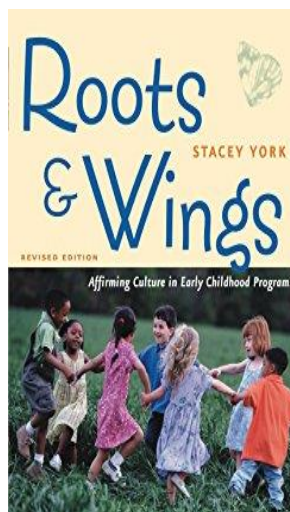
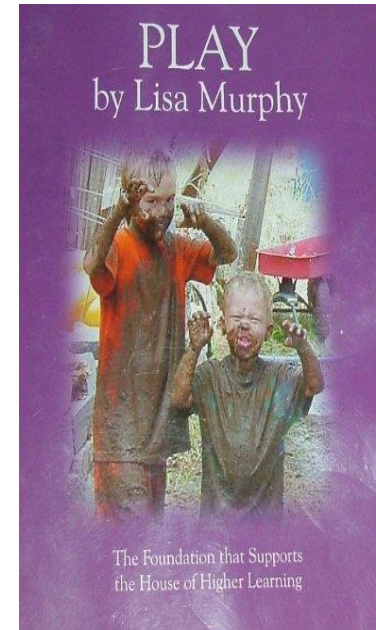
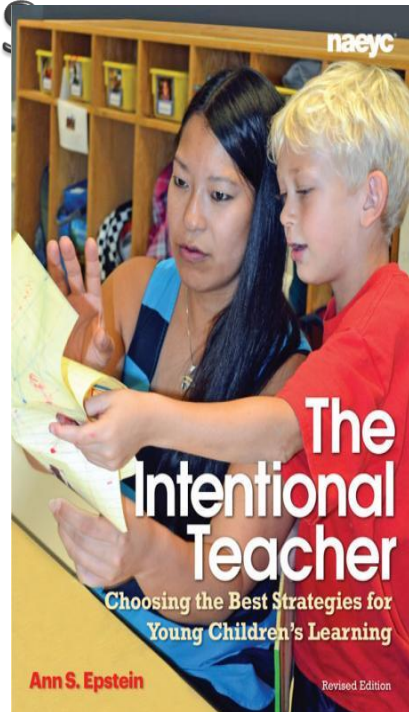
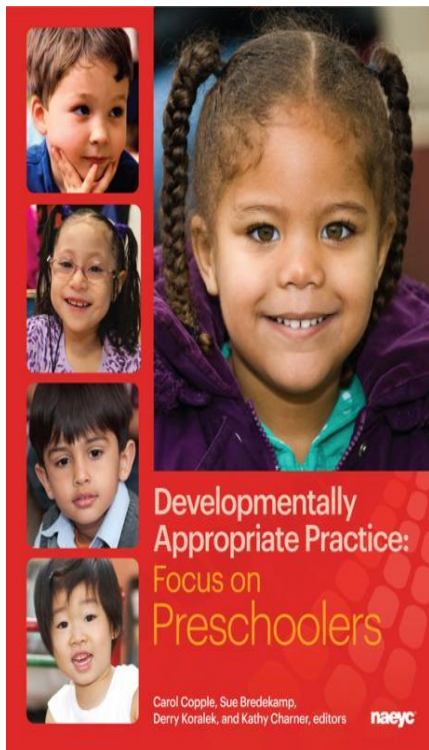
Julie Diamond, Betsy Grob, and Fretta Reitzes, Editors

Foreword by Vivian Gussin Paley  
Prologue by Ruth Charney

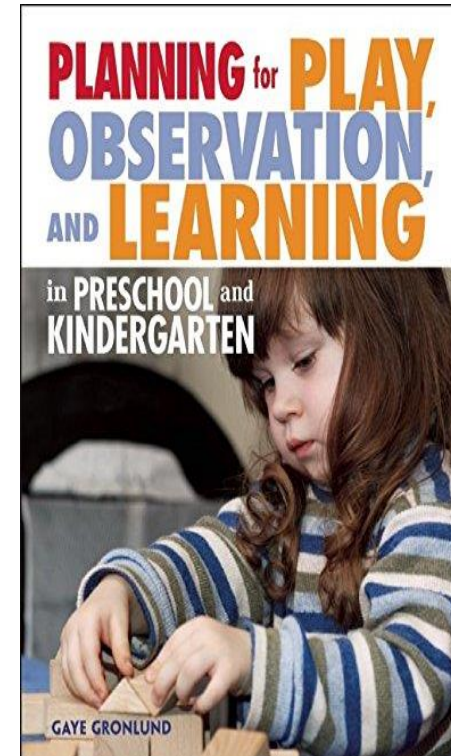
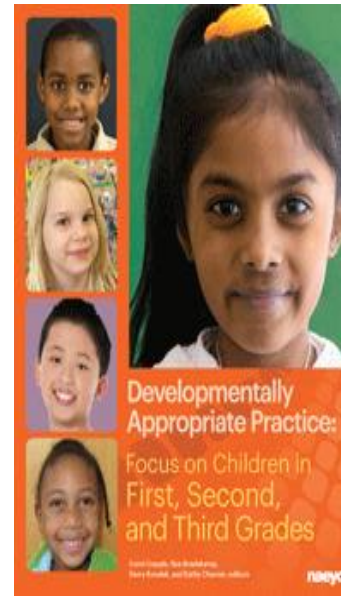
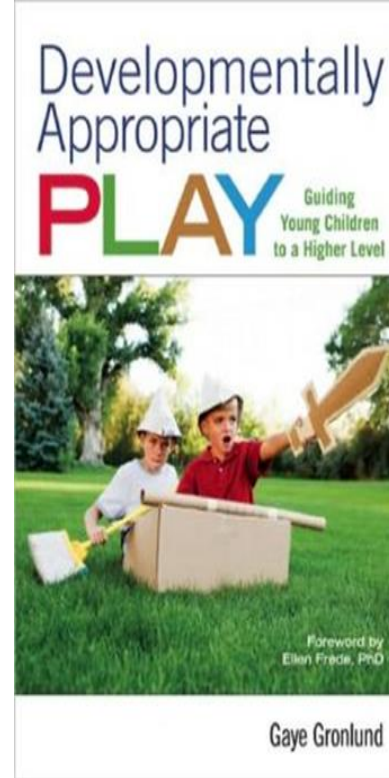
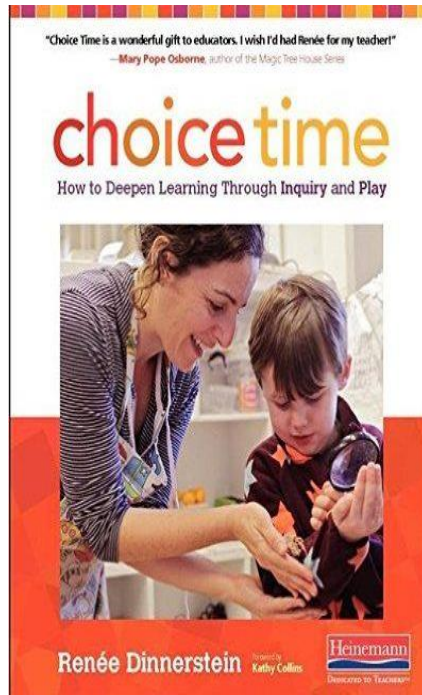
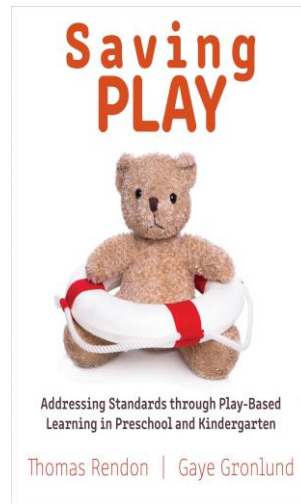
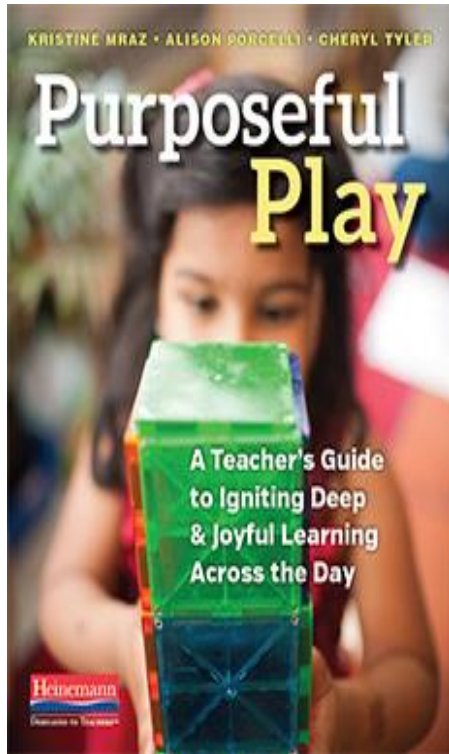




# Favorite Resources



# Favorite Resources



# NC Online Resources

- NC Guide for the Early Years, Second Edition

<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/curriculum/primaryk3/guide4early-years.pdf>

- NC Office of Early Learning

<http://www.earlylearning.nc.gov/Kindergarten2Grade3/Kindergarten.asp>

<http://www.earlylearning.nc.gov/Kindergarten2Grade3/resources.asp>

<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/curriculum-instruction/home/transitions.pdf>

# Online Resources

- The Crisis in the Kindergarten Report  
<http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED504839.pdf>
- ASCD, The Whole Child Initiative  
<http://www.ascd.org/whole-child.aspx>
- ASCD, The Whole Child Initiative, What Works  
<http://www.wholechildeducation.org/what-works>
- ASCD, The Whole Child Initiative, Making The Case  
<http://www.wholechildeducation.org/take-action/making-the-case>

# Online Resources

- *FirstSchool*, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, Chapel Hill, NC

<http://firstschool.fpg.unc.edu/>

<http://firstschool.fpg.unc.edu/firstschool-briefs-firstschool-learning-environments-supporting-relationships>

<http://firstschool.fpg.unc.edu/node/99>

# Online Resources

- National PreK-3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Workgroup: PreK-3<sup>rd</sup> Every Year Matters

<http://prek-3rdgradenationalworkgroup.org/node/1>

- Reducing the Achievement Gap by 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Webinar Series

<http://prek-3rdgradenationalworkgroup.org/sites/prek-3rdgradenationalworkgroup.org/files/PreK-3rd%20NWG%20Webinars-Summary.pdf>

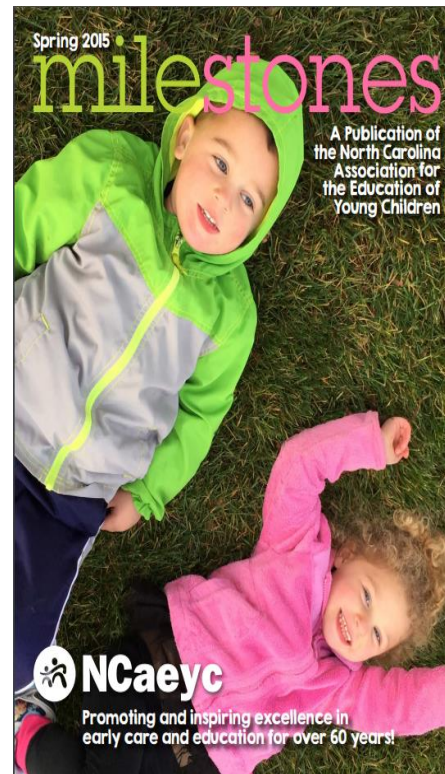
# Online Resources

- Center on the Developing Child, Harvard
  - Executive Function  
[http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/reports\\_and\\_working\\_papers/working\\_papers/wp11/](http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/reports_and_working_papers/working_papers/wp11/)
  - Other Reports and Working Papers  
[http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/reports\\_and\\_working\\_papers/](http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/reports_and_working_papers/)
- Jensen Learning (Eric Jensen) – Teaching with the Brain in Mind  
<http://www.jensenlearning.com/>

# Online Resources

- NAEYC <http://www.naeyc.org/>
- NCAEYC <http://ncaeyc.org/>
- NCAEYC Milestones Journal Articles
  - NC's PreK & K Demonstration Program article pg. 2
  - Centers in K pg. 19

<http://ncaeyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/MSspring2015-SPREADS.pdf>





# Video Resources

- New Jersey Department of Education
  - Video Series: *High Quality Kindergarten Today*  
High-Quality Kindergarten Today is a 3-part series that highlights best practices in kindergarten based on the comprehensive NJ Kindergarten Implementation Guidelines. Throughout the series, Dr. Dorothy Strickland, Rutgers University Education Professor, Emerita, talks about developmentally appropriate teaching practices in the kindergarten classroom.
  - <http://www.nj.gov/education/ece/k/hqktoday/>

For more support  
or  
just to keep in touch

Juliana Harris  
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## What's The Point?

by Dr. Jean

If you cover every objective in the curriculum, but don't have time to play outside or take field trips -

**What's the point of kindergarten?**

If you do every page in the workbook, but don't have time to laugh, do show and tell, or sing a song -

**What's the point of kindergarten?**

If you know all your letters and sounds and numbers and sight words, but don't know how to be a friend or share -

**What's the point of kindergarten?**

If you score high on the standardized test, but don't like school -

**What's the point of kindergarten?**

If you master every skill and have 2 hours of screen time, but don't have time to play in the block center or housekeeping or do puzzles -

**What's the point of kindergarten?**

If teachers are so overwhelmed by the demands, expectations, and assessments they are given that they don't have time to hug, smile, read, cheer, cherish, and look in the eyes of those wonderful little children in their classroom -

**Then what's the point of being a kindergarten teacher?**

But we know that five is a magical time, and children only have one chance in a lifetime to be five. SHUT YOUR DOOR and hold hands, sing, dance, paint, tell stories, make believe, play outside, and continue to give children happy memories!

And only you can do that because YOU are a kindergarten teacher and YOU are SPECIAL and AMAZING just like the children you teach!