

Connections

The EESLPD West Office Newsletter

April 2018

Volume 2 Issue 4

Join Us As We Celebrate the 2018 Week of the Young Child!



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During the week of April 16th- 20th, we will join the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) celebrating early learning, young children, their teachers, and families.

Each day this week, the EESLPD Office at UNC Charlotte will send a special message to the 344 teachers that we PROUDLY serve. We want to do all that we can to let them know how special they truly are and how much positive impact they have on the lives of young children, their families, and the field of early childhood education.

As you visit sites this week, please be sure to share an extra THANK YOU, an extra hug, and an extra SMILE with each teacher. Empower them through your appreciation and GRATITUDE! Please also encourage your teachers to share this week's experiences through photos on our "EESLPD West" Facebook Page and on NAEYC's Facebook Page. NAEYC is encouraging a week of classroom activities to support the celebration:

Music Monday! April 16, 2018

Sing, dance, celebrate, and learn

TRY THIS: Find the beat to connect music, movement, and math. Practice clapping, drumming, or stomping to the beat of the music while counting.

Tasty Tuesday April 17, 2018

Healthy eating and fitness at home and school

TRY THIS: Measure your ingredients while making your snacks! Ask children if they'd like the same or different amounts of each ingredient.

Work Together Wednesday April 18, 2018

Work together, build together, and learn together

TRY THIS: Practice organizing blocks by size! Try building a block tower with large blocks on the bottom and little blocks on top!

Artsy Thursday April 19, 2018

Think, problem solve, create

TRY THIS: Bring art outdoors! Offer dark and light paper, chalk and pastels, and suggest children create their own versions of the day and night sky!

Family Friday April 20, 2018

Sharing family stories

TRY THIS: Invite parents for a Family Friday breakfast, where children can prepare and share breakfast treats with their families!

With Gratitude,
Amanda

Mentor Minute

Project-Based Learning

The April Mentor Minute continues the conversation about Project-Based Learning - looking specifically at strategies on how a project might develop (Phase 2) and ideas on how to celebrate children's learning at the conclusion of the project (Phase 3). A reminder for mentors and evaluators is to be mindful of where a teacher is currently and where they fit in the following scenarios: teachers may not yet be ready to consider new information; for some teachers it is just introducing the concept; yet others supporting them in understanding of project based learning, the process and connecting them to resources.

Benefits of Project-Based Learning:

- Strategies that enable teachers to guide children through in-depth studies of real-world topics.
- Intentional but adaptable framework where teaching and learning are seen as interactive process
- Children feel highly motivated and actively involved in their own learning
- Often results in high-quality child-produced work
- Opportunities for children to grow as individuals and collaborators
- 21st Century Learning is embedded throughout Project-Based Learning

Project-Based Learning - Phase 2: Developing the Project (Investigating)

Teachers as they develop the project; plan and provide many opportunities for children to explore and investigate a topic. Books, materials, Internet searches, learning experiences, field trips and/or visitors can be planned to help children build their knowledge of the topic. Teachers observe children, listen to their conversations and questions and provide ways for children to explore further. Teachers by being familiar with curriculum standards and learning goals can authentically connect learning goals to the study (Foundations LDC-9: Children comprehend and use information presented in books and other print media) supports children in seeking information about their topic; (Foundations CD-15: Children explore the world by observing.....asking questions....represent what they learn through... drawing, modeling, building...) supports children in creating observational drawings/creative representations and (Foundations LDC-13: Children use writing and other symbols to record information....) supports children in labeling and writing in their representations. Phase 2 provides many opportunities for children to learn new information and to also correct children's misinformation.

Questions to encourage teachers in Phase 2: Developing the Project (Investigating)

- How can you develop an on-going visual of what children are learning? (Topic web, KWL) How might you document and continue to add new information that is being learned?
- How can you Introduce families to your study? (inviting their expertise, collecting no-cost supplies/resources, classroom/ volunteers and planning for parent/child projects)
- What site visits or classroom visitors might you plan for that would provide opportunities for children to find answers to their questions and investigate further? (experts can be anyone that has knowledge of the topic)
- How might you plan opportunities for children to create observational drawings to document what they are learning? Children's drawings capture so naturally the progression of their knowledge/skills learned.
- What are some ways that you could plan for children to work in teams to investigate and create representations/drawings?
- What skills can be embedded into your study? How can you align children's learning objectives?
- How might you include children in creating the props/signs/artifacts that will be needed in the study?

References:

- Helm, J.H. & Katz, L.G. (2016) *Young Investigators*. (3rd, ed.). New York: Teachers College Press
- Helm, J. H. (2015). *Becoming young thinkers: Deep project work in the classroom*. New York: Teachers College Press

Additional Project-Based Learning Resource Links:

- The School Bus Project- Article by Ruth Harkema in Early Childhood Research and Practice journal
- The Philadelphia School Preschool Dog Project-Slideshow

Mentor Minute (cont.)

Project-Based Learning-Phase 2: Developing the Project (Investigating)



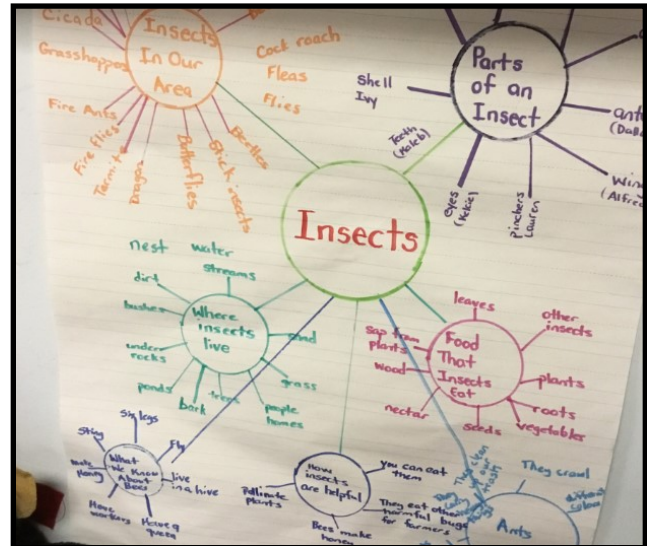
A butterfly habitat was added for children to investigate first hand the life cycle of a butterfly.



The teacher provided science journals for children to make observational drawings to document changes in the butterfly habitat.



The teacher provided various materials and planned experiences to encourage children to explore and investigate insects. Children's observational drawings were added to their Insect Project Class Book.



A topic web documents progress of Insect Study over time.



Children worked in a small group to create a model of a caterpillar. The teacher placed a non-fiction book nearby for the children to refer to as needed.



Project-based learning promotes many opportunities for children to work together. These two children created a representation of an ant hill.

Project-Based Learning-Phase 3: Celebrating Learning

After children have had ample time and opportunities to explore and investigate various aspects of a project, it is important to celebrate their learning (Phase 3). This can be done in various ways.

Questions that encourage teachers in Phase 3: Celebrating Learning

- What are some ways that the children could share with each other what they have learned?
- What are some ways that the children could share with their families what they have learned?
- What are some ways you could share what was learned with families whom are unable to attend a project concluding event?
- Did any community members share their expertise with the class about a project topic? If yes, how could you include them in your culminating project activity?



During circle time, children shared with each other what they have learned about an animal study (left) and a bridge study (right).



A documentation panel showcases what children learned and created during a study of recyclable materials (left).

A video was taken of a tree project culminating activity. Families who were unable to attend were sent the video link (right).

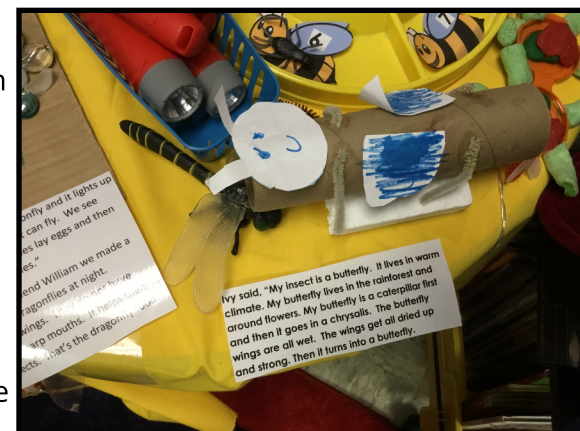


[Click here for video link](#)



Children shared with families what they had learned through finished representations of an Insect study (left).

Creative representations are displayed. The teacher-dictated notes reflect each child's growing knowledge of butterflies (right).





Heather Taylor is the Quality Assurance Program Lead with the EESLPD. She has worked with the office in several capacities over the last 8 years. Heather expresses, "The thing I like best about working with the EESLPD Office is that it's always moving, always in motion. The people who make our work possible are always learning and evolving, including those in leadership, the mentors/evaluators, teachers, and the children and families we support. The work inspires me."

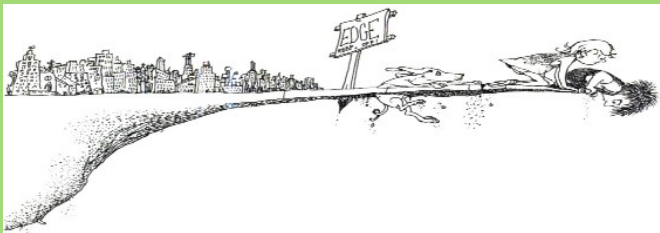
Her favorite children's book is *The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats.

When asked about her interests outside of work, Heather shares, "I'm one of those people who enjoys most things. I have a lot of interests. There's not a lot I don't like to do. If someone asks me, 'What do you feel like doing?' I usually answer, 'I'm up for anything, what you do want to do?' And I really mean it. "

COLLABORATOR CORNER

Tara Kidroske is a NC Pre-K Program Specialist with the Guilford County Partnership for Children. She has partnered with the EESLPD for 2 years. Tara shares that what she likes best about her work with the EESLPD is "building relationships with teachers and witnessing their professional growth."

Her favorite children's book is *Where the Sidewalk Ends* by Shel Silverstein.



Some of Tara's hobbies include international travel and spin cycling class.



"Highlights from the Field"

Kawanna Jackson shares, "I've had the pleasure of working with a teacher this year that reminds me of the motto 'Stay Hungry. Stay Foolish.' by Steve Jobs. This teacher is hungry to find ways to improve her teaching and she implements new ideas and strategies that we talk about in her post conferences and in her own research. On one observation, I told her that I saw her students organizing themselves in teams and working together to complete a building in the blocks center. Her eyes lit up and she said, 'Yessss! I have been talking to my students and showing them how working together as a team will help get the job done faster. I've been telling them that teamwork makes the dream work!' This teacher also found a way to implement some elements of the Project Approach and team building skills as the students talked about buildings. She helped to again organize the students into teams and each group of students had a job in the construction of buildings that they actually made. When I noticed on my visit what she had done, she explained how she wanted to take the teamwork approach to another level. The excitement in her eyes about the strategies that she began implementing told me that the satisfaction of seeing her students put concepts that she has taught into action was the most fulfilling part of her work. Her excitement and her students' success in turn is the most fulfilling part of my work."

Cheryo contributes, "I am excited about the experience that I have had with a teacher who has demonstrated phenomenal professional growth. When I first began to serve her, she was very insecure about the evaluation process. She lacked the technology skills necessary to navigate Home Base, address and receive emails, and there was no use of technology in her classroom. She was in charge of the learning that took place for the children and there was little critical thinking taking place by the children. Building a strong relationship with this teacher was the first thing that I had to do. She would come to believe that I would support her through the process. I am so happy to say that I have served this teacher for four years and I am so elated about the progress that she has made. She is comfortable articulating the rationale for what she is doing in her classroom. She has a classroom that is nurturing, the children take charge of their learning, she has innovative ideas, literacy rich activities that are planned with intentionality and she is using technology in the classroom with her children and for her professional growth. Her parents are actively involved in the planning process and are happy to have their children in her class. Her site administrator relies on her to support other teachers on the staff. Her leadership skills have improved because of her growing confidence and ability to share in ideas with her colleagues. She reflects on her teaching practices and makes necessary modifications in the interest of the children. The evidence of her growth is in the children's assessment data that she collects throughout the day. Experiencing this kind of progress makes serving teachers a joy for me!"

Nan Lee talks about an experience she has had with two SP11 teachers who both expressed during the 'getting to know' you visits that they were discouraged with teaching and applying for jobs out of the field. Nan shares, "In both cases my initial (and subsequent) observations showed a highly skilled teacher, responsive to children, insightful, skilled in designing meaningful experiential activities, successfully managing a diverse group of children, etc. I used the technique of 'noticing outloud' specifically what I saw and why each discussion point was consistent with excellent practice. In both cases it took until the second post conference for the teacher to trust me and to express that her joy in teaching was beginning to return. Both teachers decided to stay in the field and are continuing their magic with young children. I've had many good experiences helping grow new teachers but the situations I described, helping to keep excellent teachers in the field, seemed to be especially meaningful. Those experiences remind me of how valuable supportive relationships are with teachers as we attempt to mentor and evaluate these important individuals."

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

April 2018

Observation 3 complete in NCEES/Home Base
(Continuing (SP11) teachers in RENEWAL YEAR)

April 24th

Observation 3 locked in NCEES/Home Base
(Continuing (SP11) teachers in RENEWAL YEAR)

April 28th

May 2018

Final PDPs-Completed in NCEES/Home Base (All teachers)

May 4th

Final PDPs-Locked in NCEES/Home Base (All teachers)

May 8th

Full Team Meeting (WebEx link to join below)

May 14th -2:00pm-3:00pm UNC Charlotte Staff

-30 minute break

-3:30pm-4:30pm Staff and Partners

<https://uncc.webex.com/uncc/j.php?MTID=m6c0d352c396d8de21dcaeb6b7ecf9340>

Final Observation and Summative locked in NCEES/Home Base
(Any teachers requiring a licensure action -conversions/extensions)

May 15th

Last workday for Part-time EESLPD UNC Charlotte Staff

May 15th

For more information about the EESLPD West Office at UNC Charlotte, please follow this link:

<https://ceme.uncc.edu/early-educator-support-licensure-and-professional-development-eeslpd-office>