

Connections

The EESLPD West Office Newsletter

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Hello World.....

Welcome to this great big wonderful world Dominic Michael Recchio!

celebrating new life makes me think of the excitement of spring renewal. I love everything about spring, with the exception of the allergies that are currently wreaking havoc on my throat, ears, and eyes. I love seeing the buds on the trees that seem to all be in full bloom within hours and feeling the cool breeze that reminds us that warmer weather is approaching. I am invigorated by the extra sunshine that gives us the chance to spend more time outdoors with our kids. Spring is like a renewal of my senses, a renewal of appreciation for life, and a renewal of embracing optimism. I recently came across an article that said, "Research shows that we can actually change the circuitry of our brains by committing ourselves to being optimistic." Over the years, I have definitely learned that it is much easier to build optimism by keeping my own problems in perspective. When we practice putting things into perspective it promotes mental vitality and allows us to more easily consider the feelings and perspectives of others. Perspective shifting opens our minds to new possibilities, allows us to suspend judgment and can actually lighten our mood....making us more optimistic! As we dive into the last quarter of our program year, into wrapping up the year with our teachers and our colleagues, let's all commit to a renewal of our sense of optimism. Let's embrace our collective optimism and make it through the remainder of the year, together, with enthusiasm and energy.

"Passion is energy. Feel the power that comes from focusing on what excites you." -Oprah Winfrey

Happy Renewal!

Amanda

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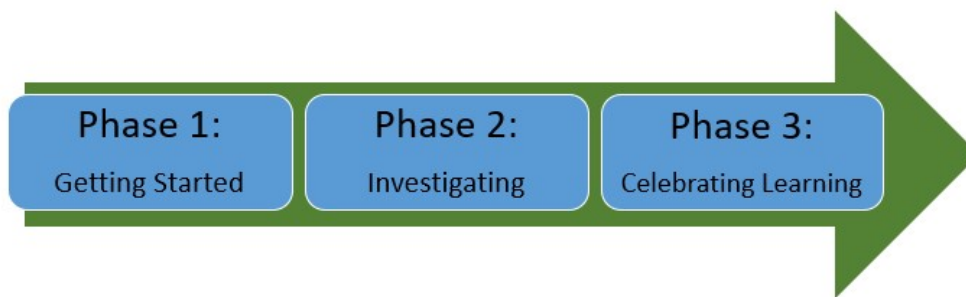
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Mentor Minute

Project-Based Learning (PBL)

According to Dr. Sylvia Chard, Professor Emeritus of Early Childhood Education at the University of Alberta, Canada and author of several Project-Based Learning resources, "Project Based Learning refers to a set of teaching strategies that enable teachers to guide students through in-depth investigations of real-world topics that are worthy of a student's attention and effort. Projects develop within a framework where teaching and learning are seen as an interactive collaborative process between teacher and student." Several components encompass Project-Based Learning such as determining the topic, engaging in real-life experiences, and sharing what was learned with others. However, when guiding a teacher through the implementation of Project-Based Learning, it can be difficult to know where to start. As always, it is important for mentors and evaluators to be mindful of where a teacher is currently and then start from there. In this 2-part Mentor Minute, three phases of coaching a teacher through the implementation of the Project-Based Learning Continuum will be discussed. Phase 1: Getting Started will be focused on in March while the other two phases will be explored further in April.

Project-Based Learning Continuum



For teachers who are interested in Project-Based Learning but unsure of where to start, they might be encouraged to take pieces of the PBL and plan a mini-project with a small group of children in the classroom to explore a particular interest. A teacher would still process through the same steps, selecting a topic, providing different ways for children to investigate and learn for themselves and then lastly to share with others what they have learned. Encouraging teachers to focus on a mini-project at first will help them to begin to get comfortable with each step and be able to ask for guidance along the way before planning a larger project.

Steps of Phase 1: Getting Started

FIRST-Guide teachers to:

- Select a possible topic
- Determine children's interests, common experiences, and prior knowledge (What do the children talk about during the day, what things are they drawing or building during center-time?)
- Plan a possible direction and resources (What resources/materials will be needed?)
- Brainstorm and create an Anticipatory web for planning to determine if there is enough interests/resources to make a viable study
- If a study is viable, align learning objectives with your planning web (What skill building opportunities can teachers embed into the study?)

THEN-Guide teachers to:

- Start a topic web with children to determine what children know and what questions do they have
- Provide time for children to explore and build their knowledge and new vocabulary (What experiences can be planned that encourage children to explore and find out for themselves? What questions might emerge after exploration has begun?)
- Determine ways that children's beginning knowledge with later knowledge will be documented
- Provide various materials to encourage children to document what they are learning in a variety of ways (i.e. through drawings, clay representations, etc.)
- Think about ways to involve families in the study. (What talents or resources can they provide?)



Sandy Thompson has worked as a Mentor and Evaluator with the EESLPD UNC Charlotte Office since September 2017.

When asked what she likes best about her job, Sandy shares, "There are two things I like best about my work with EESLPD: I simply love watching teachers grow and seeing the positive changes made in their classrooms due to their growth. I also love, love, love the team I work with! They have been an awesome support system for me with this being my first year working with EESLPD. It feels like one big, happy, family! I'm so grateful!"

Away from work, one of her favorite things to do is crochet. Whenever she has a spare moment to relax and unwind, she pulls out her crochet needle and yarn.

Her favorite children's books are *The Wind Blew* and *The Doorbell Rang* by Pat Hutchins because "the children wanted me to read them often. They really enjoyed filling in the blanks."

COLLABORATOR CORNER

Ginny Johnson is the site administrator at Anson Children's Center and has been partnering with the EESLPD for 7 years. She appreciates the support and training given to teachers and mentors/evaluators by the EESLPD and says, "This helps me better able to support the teachers I serve."

In her free time, Ginny likes to stay active by practicing yoga and playing pickleball. She shares, "These are fun activities that keep me in shape and my energy level up to where it needs to be."

Although she has several favorite children's books, if she had to choose just one it would be *The Mitten*.



"Highlights from the Field"



Brooke Hough shares, "I continue to be amazed by the interactions and activities that take place in a particular classroom of a teacher I support. During a recent classroom observation, the children were observed using new center tags they had created. The teacher later said children were invited to draw pictures of themselves and write their names. The activity sparked conversation among the children about hair color, skin tones, eye color, etc. The teacher used this opportunity as a teachable moment to discuss similarities and differences between the students and teachers. What a great way to embrace the diversity of the children in the classroom!"

Gail Hicks contributes, "Throughout my years in the field of exceptional education/early education, we have experienced significant growth in our understanding and acceptance of the idea of developmentally appropriate best practice for "all" children. Being a part of the EESLPD team has allowed me to continue supporting efforts to ensure inclusive practices for all children.

Recent positive inclusion practices I have observed:

- Physical therapists working directly in the classroom; being involved in the planning of large group meeting time and planning the gross motor activity for a rainy day.
- A therapist modeling for the early childhood staff and participating as everyone shared their observational data. Therapists sharing ideas with the early childhood teacher in planning the next steps for each child and take time to write a note to the families.
- Large group meeting time where all children selected their personal space seating and supports based on their individual needs, e.g., clothes baskets, cube chair, carpet square or sensory swing.
- Therapists (SLP, PT, and ABA support) and educational staff being at eye level with the children during book reading and discussions of their day.
- One child needing the sensory swing is quietly moved by the physical therapist while the excitement and conversations continue.
- As the children transition to centers, therapists move to a center with the children and provide the support needed according to the child's individual education plan.
- During nap, the teacher is observed facilitating a discussion on observational data, new strategies learned from therapists and next steps in the lesson planning for individual children.

It is clear that our efforts are paying off. We have so much to celebrate!"



DID YOU KNOW?

The EESLPD Office at UNC Charlotte will be able to hire additional full-time Mentors and Evaluators for the 2018-2019 program year. If you know of anyone who may be interested and who may be a good fit, please let them know that positions will be posted to the UNC Charlotte employment website (<https://jobs.uncc.edu/>) in May.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

March 2018

Leadership Team Meeting

March 20th and 21st-Hickory, NC

***IMPORTANT REMINDER-Effective this program year (2017-18) for EESLPD, NC State Board of Education Policy requires(3)observations for teachers holding Continuing (SPII) Licensure.** This is a change from the 2 observations required in the past.

April 2018

Region 2 (Joanie) Team Meeting

April 10th -10:00am-12:00pm

Region 1 (Kyle) Team Meeting

April 11th -3:00pm-4:00pm

Region 4 (Stephanie) Team Meeting

April 12th -12:00pm-2:00pm

Region 3 (Amanda) Team Meeting

April 16th -12:00pm-2:00pm (please note time change)

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>