# ARE YOU A STAR?

• What does it mean to be a STAR in Early Childhood?

Take 1 minute to turn and talk to your colleague on your right or left and tell them about a SUPERSTAR in early childhood education you know (when you were in preschool, or someone you worked with in the past, or someone you admire and want to emulate currently).





EARLY CHILDHOOD
EDUCATORS ARE
STARS

ECE STARS STRIVE TO GIVE A
HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATION TO
ALL CHILDREN (AGES 0-5)

ZLATA STANKOVIC-RAMIREZ, PHD (DR. Z)

## PURPOSE OF THIS KEYNOTE:

Early Childhood
Educators <u>are:</u> STARS,
CHAMPIONS, AND
RELENTLESS
ADVOCATES

Early Childhood
Educators <u>are</u>:
AGENTS OF
CHANGE

Early Childhood
Educators <u>provide</u>:
HIGH-QUALITY
EDUCATION FOR
YOUNG CHILDREN

Early Childhood
Educators <u>advocate:</u>
FOR ALL CHILDREN
THAT SHOW UP TO
OUR PROGRAMS

Early Childhood
Educators often:
IMPROVE THEIR
PRACTICES AND
LEVEL UP

# PART 1:

• Early Childhood Educators <u>are:</u> STARS, CHAMPIONS, AND RELENTLESS ADVOCATES



# I AM A STAR (SUPER)- YOU ARE A STAR-WE WORK WITH YOUNG CHILDREN AGES 0-5

## DR. Z – HERE TODAY (SCAEYC)

- Breaking Generational Cycles.
- Working Intrinsic Rewards (we find it fulfilling, interesting, enjoyable).
- ❖ I am not afraid to sing, dance, get silly and have fun at my place of work.
- Constantly improving my craft as an educator.

## ECE HERE TODAY (SCAEYC)

- Breaking Generational Cycles.
- Working as a teacher because...YOU ARE PASSIONATE ABOUT HELPING CHILDREN LEARN, GROW, AND DEVELOP.
- You are not afraid to sing, dance, get silly and have fun at your place of work.
- Constantly improving your craft as an educator.



# CHILDREN LOOK UP TO YOU - TO THEM: YOU ARE A STAR!

# WHAT IS THE BIG DEAL ABOUT 0-5?

- The human brain develops 90% in the first five years of life.
- It's the most crucial time of all our lives.
- What we see, do, eat, and where we spend our time matters.
- Early childhood matters!
- You matter.
- YOU ARE A BRAIN ARCHITECT.
- YOU ARE A **SCIENTIST** (examining childhood daily).



# PART 2:

 Early Childhood Educators <u>are</u>: AGENTS OF CHANGE



# ADVOCATE FOR CHILDREN & AGENT OF CHANGE

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Shm-KRh4LFg
- Every time you advocate for or on behalf of a child in your class you are an agent of change.
- Every time you advocate for materials for your classroom/children you are an agent of change.
- Every time you advocate for your co-worker to get accommodations they need- you are an agent of change.

# QUALITY PRESCHOOLS?

FEATURE

#### Improving Quality in Early Childhood **Settings: A Roadmap for Mentors**

Zlata Stankovic-Ramirez, Racquel Washington, and Sam Horn



A lead prekindergarten teacher, Jessica, was having difficulties managing children during circle time and transitions. Her assistant teacher only worked part time so, on the days that she was alone with 15 children, she struggled. She approached the director to ask for help.

15 students and it's hard to get them to focus during difficult times, investigate concerns, during circle time and then transition to center time. Once in center time, I can't motivate them to clean up before we go outside. I need help."

Director: "I can give you an extra set of hand: in the morning sometimes, but if other rooms need the person to stay in ratios, you will have to manage the classroom on your own. What if I got the mentor to help you with some strategies? Jessica: "Yes, I am willing to do anything.
Please send her my way."

Later that week, the Child Development
Specialist Mentor checked in on Jessica.

Mentor: "Hi Jessica! May I observe you in the classroom and offer some strategies?"

Jessica: "Yes, please. I need help with circle

time, transitions, center time, and going outside.

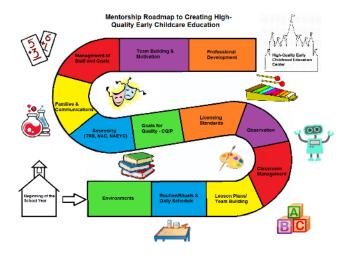
In the early childhood profession, the relationship between mentors and mentees can Table "Observation, Coaching, Modeling" created by Samuel Hom.

arriers to success and offer attainable goals, so the mentee must be flexible and open to uggestion in order to improve (Howe & Jacobs, 2013). Historically, mentor programs ave diminished over time due to insufficient zoal attainment, as well as a lack of collaboration. However, if they build relationships at are rooted in trust and utilize reflective ractices, a positive relationship can flourish Isik-Ecran & Pekins, 2017).

The term mentoring refers to guidance and couragement. A mentor conducts observaons and provides constructive feedback to levate the quality of practice (Feeney, 2012). vever, coaching refers to a partnership, a ollaboration between equals. The coach assists e early childhood teacher by identifying their strengths (Toll, 2018). The path to success ecessarily involves a blend of mentoring and coaching throughout the year. Some examples

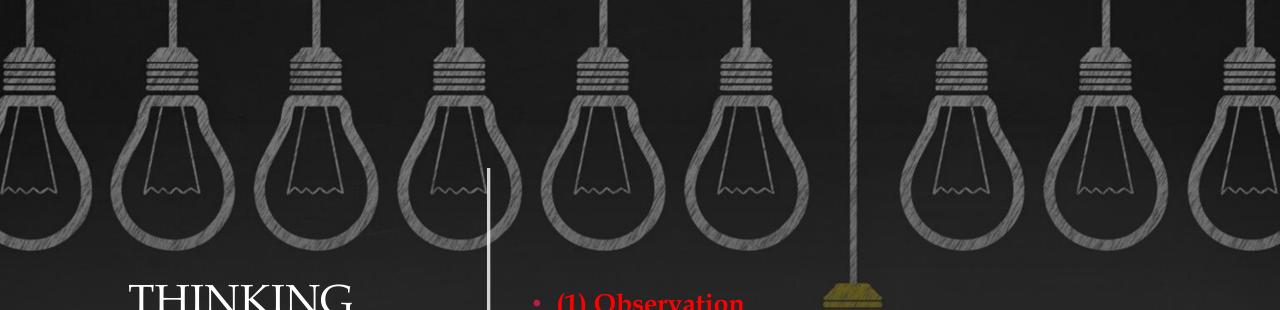
would be observations, side-by-side coaching, and collaborate with coaching techniques to and modeling (Wood et al., 2016).





# ROADMAP TO HIGH QUALITY

- July Environments January Goals for Quality CQIP
- (continuous quality improvement plan)
- August Routine/Rituals & Daily Schedule February Assessing (TRS Texas Rising
- Star, NAC National Accreditation
- Commission, **NAEYC** National Association
- for the Education of Young Children)
- September Lesson Plans/Team Building March Families & Communications
- October Classroom Management April Management of Staff and Goals
- November Observation May Team Building & Motivation
- December Licensing Standards June Professional Development



THINKING MORE ABOUT **QUALITY IN** ECE

- (3) (Lesson Plans, Routine/Rituals & Daily Schedule, Classroom Management)
- (4) Licensing Standards & NAEYC

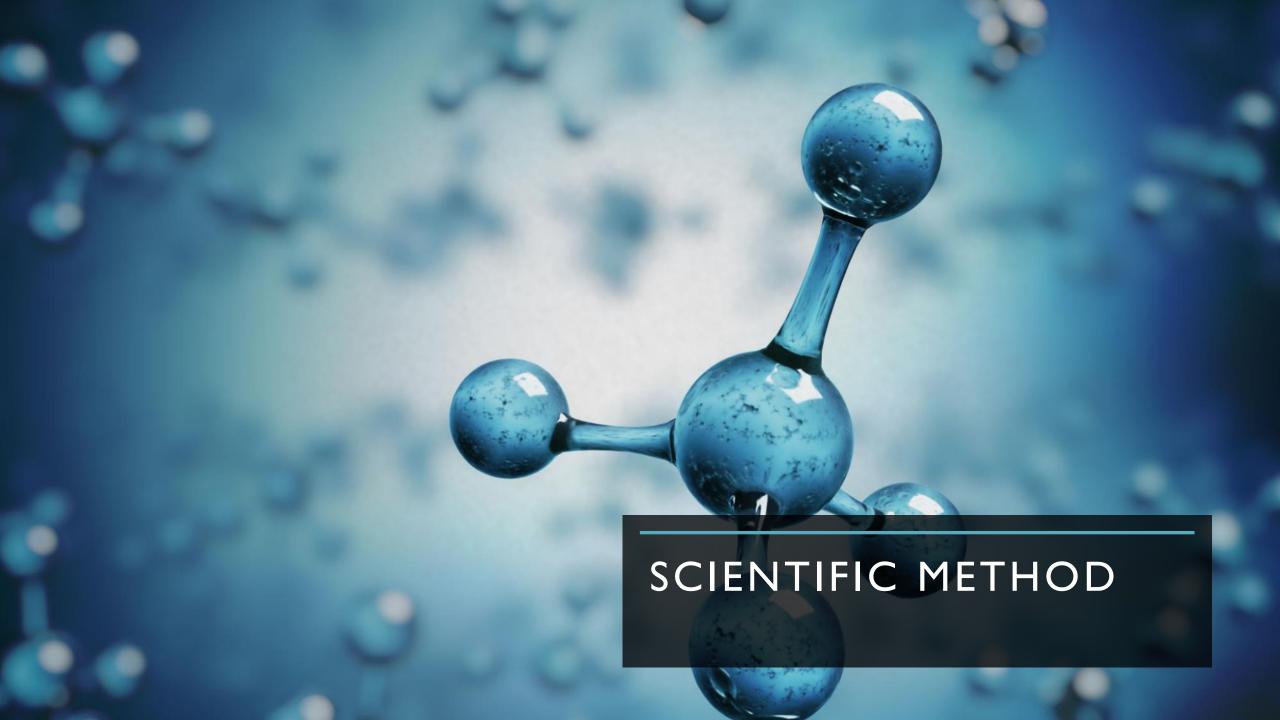
# PART 3

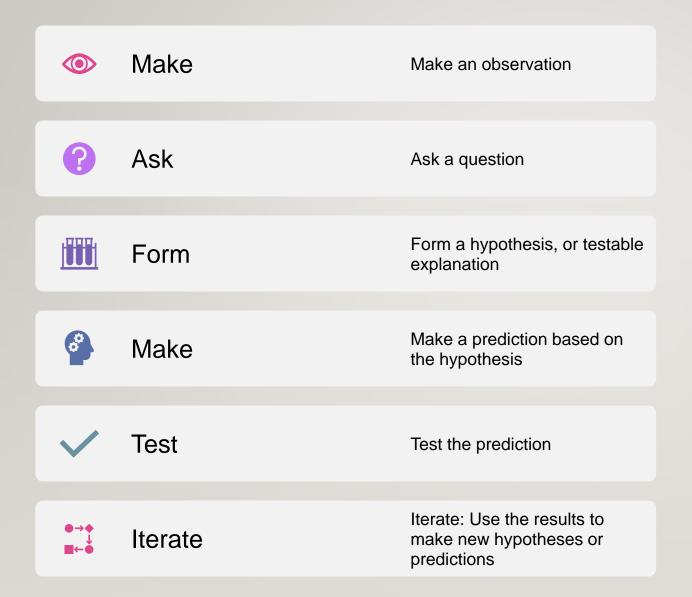
• Early Childhood Educators <u>provide</u>: HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATION FOR YOUNG CHILDREN



# OBSERVING CHILDRENFOLLOW THE CHILD

HOW DO WE EFFECTIVELY OBSERVE CHILDREN?





# THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD

# "SO WHAT?" HOW RESEARCH STUDIES SHAPE OUR WORK WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

SCIENTIFIC STUDIES INFORM OUR PRACTICE

WORKING WITH YOUNG
CHILDREN SHOULD BE
BASED ON HIGH
QUALITY LATEST
RESEARCH AVAILABLE
TO US AS PRACTIONERS

WHEN WE KNOW
BETTER, WE DO BETTER



## RESEARCH AND AREA OF INTEREST AND STUDY

- ❖Built Environments for Young Children (0-8)
- ❖ High Quality Early Childhood Education (0-8)
- ❖ Developmentally Appropriate Practices (0-8)

## HOW TO OBSERVE CHILDREN IN **ENVIRONMENTS - GATHERING** DATA

#### **MAIN IDEAS:**

#### NOT P.I.E.S.

Physical, Intellectual, Emotional, and Social

#### P.L.A.C.E.S.

Physical, Language, Aesthetic, Cognitive, Emotional, and Social

• Adapted from Kostelnik, M., Soderman, A., & Whiren, A. (2015). Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum: Best Practices in Early Childhood Education (6th ed.). London, UK: Pearson.

FEATURE by Zlata Stankovi-Ramirez and Josh Thompson

#### Rethinking developmental domains to improve classroom observations

"How did you teach Clarissa her colors?" asks Ms.
"I didn't," says Mr. Dan, the toddler teacher. "I just

started observing her more carefully." "Tell me about that," says Ms. Laura.

"Well, one day I noticed how excited Clarissa became while matching color swatches from the sensory shelf," says Mr. Dan. "Then I watched her play with finger paints. She seemed to love comparing

"Later, she began matching colors in books-especially A Color of His Own about the chameleon. She even carried that book from the library corner across Purposes for observation the room over to the sensory shelf to match identical . To know an individual child

"No, I didn't 'teach' her the colors," says Mr. Dan. "I just watched her and noticed what she liked. Her interest in colors gave me clues about where I could



Teachers can learn so much from observing children. Effective teachers use various methods to observe and know the whole child, as listed in Table 1

Narrative-type strategies include 1) writing anecdotal records, like the incident above, 2) using running records, recording on paper everything going on in real time, and 3) reflecting about a child's experience and writing about it (as in a diary) outside the classroom, after the moment has passed

- To assess growth
- To evaluate a program

- Anecdotal records · Running records
- · Diary method
- Checklists Sampling
- Event-sampling

Table 1: Purposes and strategies for observation (Head Start, 1999)

Similarly, checklists can serve a useful function in recognizing key behaviors or sequencing observa-

Sampling strategies include observation during a specific time interval (behaviors during a 20-minute eriod, for example) or by a specific event or behavor. Sometimes teachers may gather various samples child's work in a portfolio-pieces of artwork,

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# NEW DAP (4TH. EDITION) 2022

- Major shift in emphasis, away from standards-based and towards a transformative view of the young child.
- Reemphasizing the diversity and uniqueness of the individual CHILD.
- Instead of Ages and Stages, Waves and Cycles.

THE EARLY YEARS

#### WHAT EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS KNOW ABOUT DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICE

Teaching young children requires an understanding of the interactions among typical patterns of child development, children's individual characteristics, and their social and cultural contexts.

## By Josh Thompson & Zlata Stanković-Ramirez

n the 1980s, at a time when education policy makers appeared to be intent on "pushing down" the elementary grades curriculum into the preK years, particularly with a focus on math, reading, and other academic content and skills, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) - the largest professional organization in the field of early education - set out to articulate its distinct mission and principles. Building on decades of research and practice in early care and education, the resulting position statement, Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP), provided much-needed guidance to professionals working with children up to eight years in age (NAEYC, 1987). Teachers of young children, the document argued, must approach their work with compassion, curiosity (Thompson, Geneser, & Walker, in press), and careful attention to two core considerations: young children's most typical ages and stages of development (their commonalities) and each child's unique developmental needs (their individuality).

At the time, many leaders in the field were concerned about the widespread use of harmful teaching practices in early care and education. Thus, the document included charts and tables describing and distinguishing between appropriate and inappropriate classroom strategies. However, critics argued that this defined developmentally appropriate practice in terms of what it is not, dwelling too much on the things educators shouldn't do. Thus, the second edition of the framework,



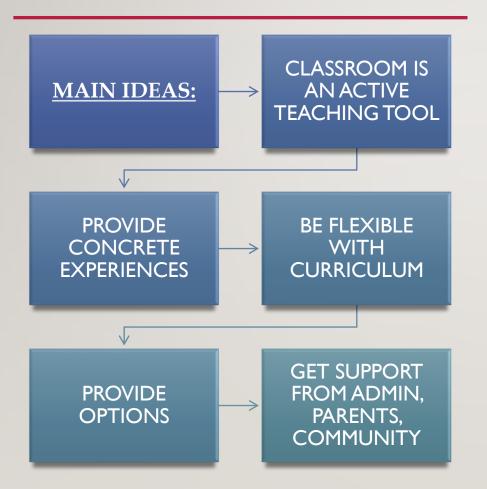
JOSH THOMPSON (Josh Thompson@tamuc.edu; @billyjoshtex) is a professor of early childhood education at Texas A&M University-Commerce. ZLATA STANKOVIĆ-RAMIREZ (ZRamirez@coastal.edu; @stanovic\_zlata) is an assistant professor of early childhood education at Coastal Carolina University, Comway, SC.

## INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY

- 1) Please close your eyes for 60 seconds and think about your favorite place to play when you were a child ages 0-85.
- 2) Where are you?
- 3) What are you doing?
- 4) Who are you with?
- 5) What is the physical environment around you?
- 6) Write down where you are on a piece of paper or type it in your phone.
- 7) Let's find out TOGETHER about your responses.



## ENVIRONMENT IS A TEACHING TOOL



FEATURE by Zlata Stankovic-Ramirez and Catherine Dutton

#### The classroom as a teaching tool: Evolving spaces to meet children's needs

T ike many teachers, Jessie spends lots of hours Lisetting up her preschool classroom for the new school year, carefully considering how materials influence and support the interests of the children. When the children come into the room, excitement is

In early October, road construction starts outside the school. The children are fascinated! What is happening outside? Those cones! The workmen and their hats! They are truly engaged with the happenings in their surroundings.

Jessie takes note of these changes and shifts the theme for the next month in the classroom to community helpers, including construction. Jessie brings in hard hats and safety vests for the dramatic play center, traffic cones and maps for the block center, and three new books on road construction and heavy equipment for the library.

\_ \_ \_

The classroom environment is a living and evolving teaching tool. Yes, a teaching tool! Every inch of the classroom has a specific and useful purpose, and these purposes are reviewed and modified whenever necessary to support children's growth and development.

During planning time, teachers think about what equipment or materials they need to add, remove, or store away for later use. As children's interests' change and the year progresses, the environment around them ideally shifts to reflect new topics and interests. Curiosity sparks learning, and children often share their curiosities with friends, parents, and teachers.

As teachers, we need to ask ourselves if we are listening to the children and making changes to the environment that meet children's needs. The cycle of observing, reflecting, and planning allows children to unleash their interests knowing that we're there to help them decode the complexities of the real world.

#### The classroom: An active teaching tool

Some schools have preset themes or learning units, unchanging from year to year. Unfortunately, this practice doesn't recognize the ever-changing personalities, temperaments, cultural backgrounds, interests, and needs of one group to the next. A better approach is to build a curriculum that truly follows the children's interests, and recognize that themes will emerge with infinite variety throughout the

Remember, simply adding materials isn't enough. When children indicate a new interest-in conversation, by creating a new game, in construction play, or in dramatic play-engage and ask questions. Determine what the children already know (background knowledge)

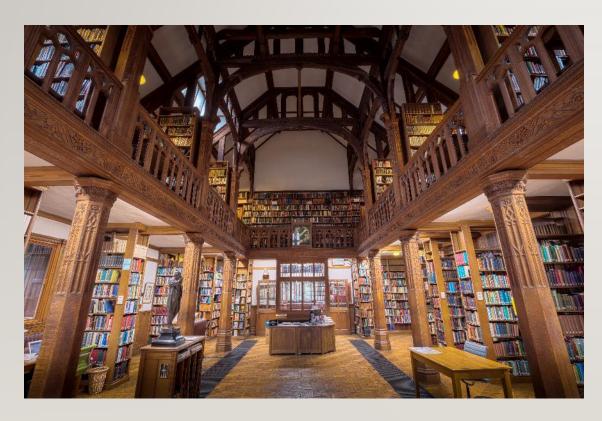


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# EXAMPLES OF BUILT ENVIRONMENTS





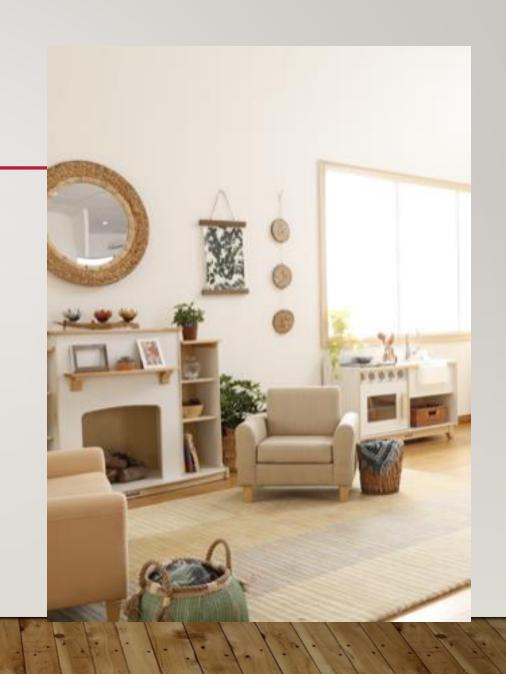
# WHY ENVIRONMENTS MATTER

Built environments are important because humanity spends more than 90% of their time indoors (Goldhagen, 2017).

In 2011, 12.5 million or 61% of children under the age of 5 were in childcare arrangements such as centers and family homes (Laughlin, 2013).

Early childhood environments influence children's development and become a part of their biography (Greenman, 2017).

Young children spend an average of 30.6 hours/week in non-parental care (National Council for Educational Statistics, 2016).





# INS RING SPACES FOR YOUNG

# COMPONENTS OF HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENTS

NATURAL Light

SPACE to move, create, build and explore

EASY ACCESS to all materials

DEFINED spaces and areas

MODIFICATION of environments as needed throughout the year

ORGANIZATION and intentional placements of materials

WALLS that are meaningful – children's eye level (80/20) TIME to set up and clean up for the day or for an hour session





### WHAT BARRIERS DO PROFESSIONALS FACE IN CREATING OPTIMAL PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENTS?

#### **SPACE:**

- a.) Natural Light/Windowsb.) Dedicated Spacesc.) Access to Outdoors

- d.) More Square Feet for Centers/Storage
- e.) Flex Seating

#### **BUDGET:**

- a.) \$0-\$200/Year + Own \$b.) Don't Know/Unsure of Budget + Own \$c.) Have Everything Needed

#### TIME:

- a.) Before/After School
- b.) Weekends/Late Nights
  c.) Own Lunch/Children's Nap Time

# RESTRICTIVE EQUIPMENT-CONTAINER BABIES

- Children do best on the floor without being buckled in and licensing limits the amount of time infants can spend buckled and prefer infants on the floor free to move.
- Babies need to be close with and held by their caregivers or on the floor exploring.



# INFANTS #FREERANGEBABIES

- Best infant rooms provide room for exploration.
- In this image you can see that books (board and cloth), soft toys, and a pull up bar with a mirror are provided for the infants in class.
- Books, Manipulatives, Balls, soft blocks, etc. are typical items in an infant room.



## **TODDLERS**

- Toddlers need to move, explore, and have opportunities to develop.
- Centers emerge in toddler environments and provide mobile toddlers the opportunities they need to absorb the world around them.
- Some typical areas that you may see in toddler environments are: art, block, literacy, dramatic play, music and movement, math and manipulatives, and nature and science.
- Do centers need to be the same size?
- How often should I change the materials in the centers?
- What should be on the walls?



# TODDLERS NEED SPACE TO EXPLORE

- Toddlers need space to explore and practice their new independence and freedom now that they are becoming mobile.
- It's important to have areas/centers where children can find items they need to create, learn, and grow.

### PLAYING IN CENTERS AND CREATIVITY



- Twos can start to spend time in areas/centers with other peers.
- Twos are ready to get creative, allowing opportunities that help them explore and grow by providing intentionally rich experiences helps strengthen multiple skills.



## **PROVOCATIONS**

- It's important to have areas/centers set up but to also think about provocations.
- Provocations are items that are intentionally set up to encourage children to explore.
- Setting up opportunities for twos helps them get excited and enticed to explore a new material.

PART 4

• Early Childhood Educators <u>advocate:</u> FOR ALL CHILDREN THAT SHOW UP TO OUR PROGRAMS.



# SERVING FAMILIES MEANS KNOWING FAMILIES

"You must know your self and the impact of your own family and up bringing (how you were raised) before you can know the children in your class and understand their up brining (how they are being raised)"

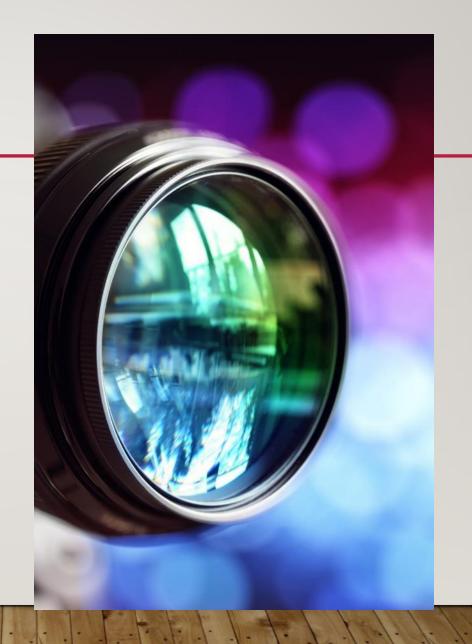
"You must REALLY know them to SERVE them"

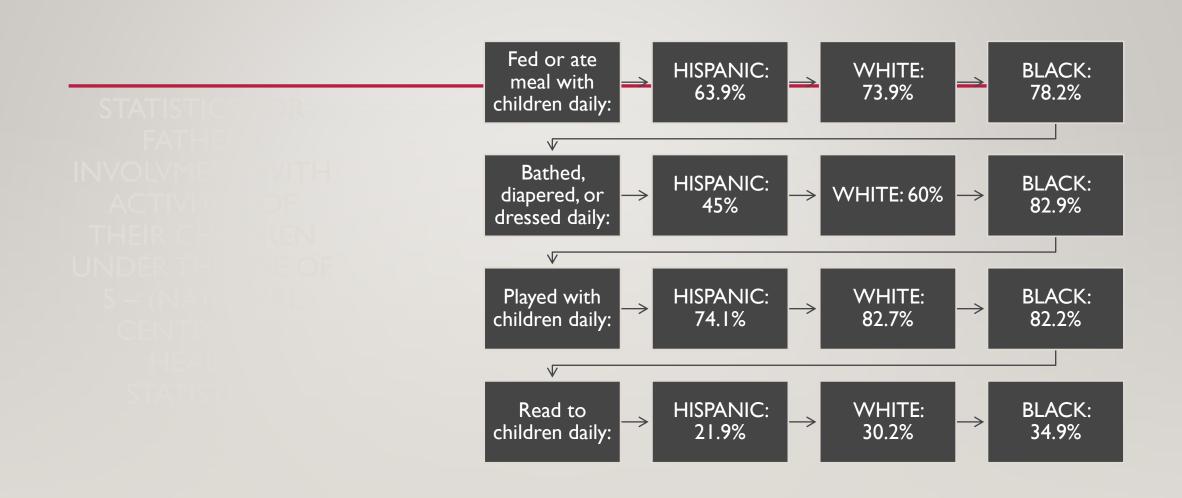
"You must remove your implicit bias and judgements in order to truly get to know the children and their families"

WHICH IMPLICE

BIAS ARE VE REMOVING HERE WITH THIS VILLEO?

HTTPS://YOUTU.BE/0IANR8YGDOW





## WHAT IS YOUR PREFERRED METHOD OF COMMUNICATION?

1.) At pick up

2.) Face-to-face

3.) Phone Call

4.) Text Message

5.) Email

6.) Apps

7.) Social Media

## "GOOD JOB"

- ✓ NOT EVERY SCHOOL DAY WILL GO WELL AND NOT EVERY DAY IS A GOOD DAY
- ✓ HOW SHOULD WE

  COMMUNICATE WITH FAMILIES

  ABOUT THE DAY A CHILD

  EXPERIENCED IN OUR TIME

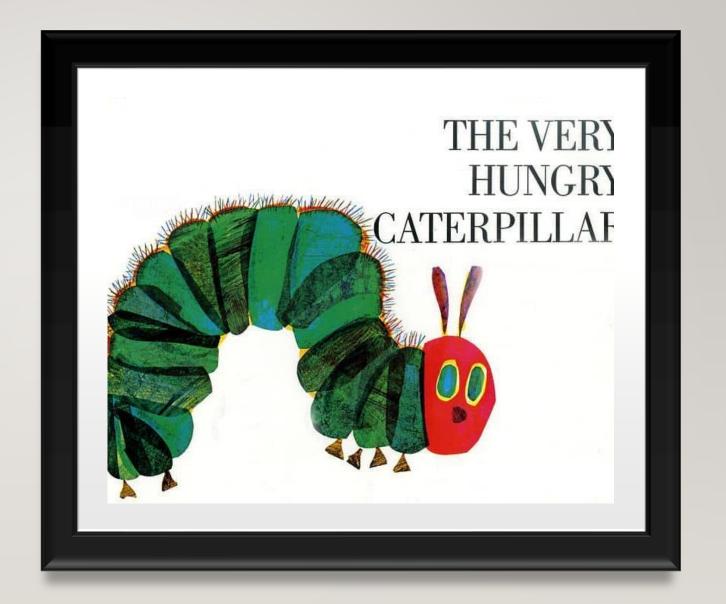
  TOGETHER WITH THEM?





#### LIBRARY

- Children continue their path to reading in Infancy, Toddlerhood, and Twos.
- This center strengthens their love for books and builds on their vocabulary.
- Children learn sequencing and reading repetitively and that helps with their word association.



#### DRAMATIC PLAY

- Dramatic play encourages children to explore different roles.
- This center improves gross and fine motor skills.
- By watching others, the children improve their social and emotional skills as well as build their language skills.





#### ART

- In this area, children are expressing themselves and using their creative imagination.
- Skills that get developed in art are problem solving, cognitive, critical thinking, fine motor, language, and language skills.
- Children also build their social skills and their self esteem.

#### **BLOCKS**

- Children learn math, science, and language skills in the block center.
- Children also learn how to problem solve in this center.
- Their creativity and imagination grows, and they build their self esteem.





#### **MANIPULATIVES**

- When children fit small pieces together, they are working on their concentration and developing their fine motor skills.
- Children learn matching, sorting, and classifying.
- In the block center, children also learn how to follow directions and their number concepts as well as critical thinking.

#### **SCIENCE**

- In science center, children are learning by exploring through their 5 senses.
- Children build their language skills and their motor skills.
- In addition, children discover patterning and the scientific method.





#### MATH

- Children learn their shapes and spatial relationships in math center.
- Children learn patterning, sequencing, counting and to problem solve.
- Children also learn 1 to 1 correspondence and counting objects.

#### **MUSIC**

- Music allow children to be creative and express themselves.
- Music helps gain listening skills and helps children learn to discriminate differences in sounds.
- Children in music center are learning timing, rhyme, and patterns.





#### **SENSORY**

- Children in the sensory center strengthen their fine and gross motor skills.
- Children in the sensory center learn to problem solve and build their language.
- Children also gain an improvement in their social sills and sensory center helps to improve and strengthen all 5 senses.

#### Welcome a New Baby to the Family

Contributed by Dr. Zlata Stankovic-Ramirez

Tell your child about the pregnancy first!

Before you share with extended family and close friends, have the conversation with your child first. This way if they are excited or disappointed or nervous, you can have those important talks before people ask, "are you excited to be a big brother/sister?"

Have all the talks

There will inevitably be lots of questions. Spend as much time as needed to talk through all the things that come up throughout your pregnancy.

Prepare the environment with your child
Involve them as you set up the nursery, buy things like furniture, toys, clothes and other baby things. Talk about why babies need so many things and explain that they too, had all these things when they were a baby.

Take a special trip as a family of 3

Kind of like a "babymoon" but this one's all about celebrating your family of three before you welcome a fourth person into the mix. Give your child your full attention and make some great memories

Set realistic expectations about your time with the new baby

Have lots of conversations about how much the new baby will need Mama to feed.

Have lots of conversations about how much the new baby will need Mama to feed, cuddle, love and spend time with her. Of course, also talk about how much they matter too! It's just that new babies depend on you for everything, they're not big like you!

Set aside special times with your older child

Every day have time with your older child to be together with your full attention, doing what they choose - play games, read a book, watch a show, whatever makes them feel loved. Even 10 minutes of alone can fill their cup (but try to make it longer)

Check in often

Ask your child often how things are going with having a baby around. Explain what's going on with the baby because things will change frequently. Help them be as involved (or not involved) as they'd like.

#### SUPPORTING PARENTS- CREATING RELATIONSHIPS



# EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS OFTEN: IMPROVE THEIR PRACTICES AND LEVEL UP

HOW CAN YOU IMPROVE YOUR PRACTICE? HOW CAN YOU LEVEL UP?

#### IN THIS SESSION YOU RECEIVED TOOLS:



I.) Watch Rita Pierson's Ted Talk.



2.) Organize a No Small Matter Documentary watch party at your center or in your community.



3.) Engage in scientific inquiry and ACTION RESEARCH in your classroom and share your findings in journal articles, conferences, and maybe even a practical book.



4.) Check out Inspiring Spaces for Young Children and work on intentionally transforming your classroom over a semester or school year.



5.) Ask families about their preferred method of communication and communicate with them frequently. Share what children are learning in each center with families and advocate for play based learning. Provide useful articles to them that they might need.



6.) Advocate for yourself to gain time to set up and clean up your classroom at the start and end of the day.



7.) Ask for Professional Development that is MEANINGFUL to you and that will help you grow your skills.

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- Thank you!



#### QR CODE FOR THE KEYNOTE SESSION

