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A Qualitative Exploration of Early Educator Retention and Within-Year Turnover

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Walden University

College of Education and Human Sciences

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Elizabeth Dupin

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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the review committee have been made.

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Walden University

2024

Abstract

A Qualitative Exploration of Early Educator Retention and Within-Year Turnover

by

Elizabeth Dupin

MA, Walden University, 2018

BS, Indiana State University, 2007

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Early Childhood Education

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May 2024

Abstract

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) programs are experiencing high turnover, resulting in lower teacher retention rates. High turnover hinders program quality, creates financial strain, and adversely affects program sustainability. Despite efforts to increase educator retention, a rural midwestern ECEC program's administrative team continues to experience declining retention and high within-year turnover. This study aims to explore early educators' perceptions of the organizational factors that contribute to teacher retention and within-year turnover in the selected ECEC site. The research study explores organizational factors using Herzberg's two-factor theory of motivation. The qualitative data collected from current and previous early educators employed at the midwestern ECEC center indicated a gap in practice that influenced educator retention and within-year turnover. Inconsistent onboarding practices create challenges that impact the collective efficacy of the program and influence educator retention and turnover. A professional development curriculum designed to facilitate comprehensive, data-driven onboarding was created to address the gap. ECEC centers play an essential role in local communities. Understanding organizational factors can contribute to teacher retention and generate positive social change in the lives of children, their families, and their local community.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables	v
Section 1: The Problem.....	1
The Local Problem.....	1
Rationale	4
Definition of Terms.....	5
Significance of the Study	7
Research Questions	8
Review of the Literature	8
Literature Search Strategy.....	9
Conceptual Framework.....	10
International Research	12
Turnover.....	13
Retention.....	17
Implications.....	21
Summary	22
Section 2: The Methodology.....	25
Research Design and Approach	25
Participants.....	26
Data Collection	28
Research Practices	33
Data Analysis Results	35

Theme 1: Inconsistent onboarding and induction practices create challenges that impact the collective efficacy of the program and influence retention and turnover.	35
Program-wide Challenges.....	36
Theme 2: Relationships and positive social aspects in the working environment strongly influence job satisfaction and contribute toward educator retention.	41
Relationships.....	41
Social Aspects.....	43
Suggestions from Educators	45
Theme 3: Both personal and organizational factors influence an individual’s intentions to stay or leave an ECEC center; however, some factors significantly mitigate dissatisfaction and contribute to educator retention.....	46
Personal Factors	47
Organizational Factors	47
Research Questions.....	49
Summary	53
Section 3: The Project.....	54
Introduction.....	54
Rationale	54
Review of the Literature	56

Literature Search Strategy.....	57
Onboarding	57
Organizational Socialization.....	61
Addressing Educator Needs.....	62
Project Description.....	63
Purpose.....	63
Target Audience.....	64
Goals and Learning Outcomes.....	64
Professional Development/Training Curriculum Components and Timeline	65
Orientation Week.....	66
Mentor Program	68
Project Evaluation Plan.....	69
Project Implications	70
Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions.....	73
Project Strengths and Limitations.....	73
Recommendations for Alternative Approaches	75
Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change	75
Reflection on Importance of the Work	76
Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research.....	76
Conclusion	78

References	80
Appendix A: The Project	91
Overview	91
Important Information.....	92
Interview and Welcome Process	93
Welcome Presentation	97
Orientation Week	106
Induction Mentor Program.....	108
Mentor Resources	110
Appendix B: Training Presentation Slides.....	121
Active Supervision.....	121
Conscious Discipline	131
Nutrition.....	145
NAEYC Standards, Accreditation Process & Code of Ethics	160
Circle Time & Emergent Literacy	171
Counting Collections & Math Activities	182
Play-Based Learning.....	193

List of Tables

Table 1. Early Educator Retention.....	1
Table 2. Within-Year Turnover	2
Table 3. Categories Created by Eclectic Coding	31
Table 4. Conceptual Framework Codes.....	32
Table 5. Research Question: What are early educators’ perceptions of the factors influencing teacher retention in the selected ECEC center?.....	50
Table 6. Research Question: What are early educators’ perceptions of the factors influencing within-year turnover in the selected ECEC center?.....	52

Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

The problem addressed in this study was that despite adopting new retention practices for the 2017/2018 academic year, a rural midwestern early childhood education and care (ECEC) center's administrative team continues to face challenges retaining early educators, particularly beyond the first year of employment. The selected ECEC site is accredited by the National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and rated a level four out of four in the state quality measurement system. The ECEC center consistently serves between 100 and 115 children, with a staff of 25+ early educators. The center is well-established in the community and has a reputation for providing high-quality early education and care for children from birth to six years old.

The site's administrative team has faced educator recruitment and turnover challenges for the past seven years. In 2017, administrators adopted a new retention plan that included increased compensation and two additional paid leave days. Despite this effort, the program administrators continued to face challenges with educator retention.

Table 1

Early Educator Retention

	Total Number of Employees	Number Retained	Number Who Left	Retention Rate
2017/2018	34	20	14	58.82%
2018/2019	39	13	26	33.33%
2019/2020	31	12	19	38.70%
2020/2021	31	21	10	67.74%
2021/2022	44	20	24	45.45%
2022/2023	47	29	18	61.70%

Note. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the program enrollment dropped to 18 children. A substantial number of the retained employees were at home on temporary layoff receiving unemployment benefits and chose

not to return. The program also hired seven new employees in late May and June. If those employees were removed, the 2020/2021 retention rate would be 38.7%, which is more consistent with previous years.

In 2019, the ECEC center’s administrative team created an employee benefits package that includes financial assistance for continued education/professional development, paid time off, flexible scheduling, and scheduled compensation increases to retain early educators. The program owner credited these employee benefits as positive recruitment tools but believed they have little influence on retention. The program director found the within-year turnover particularly troubling for the program (Administrator 1, personal conversation, April 15, 2022). She calculated that within-year turnover costed the program approximately \$1,000 per employee, based on costs associated with licensing requirements such as background checks, drug screens, initial training modules, etc. (Administrator 1, personal conversation, April 15, 2022). She believes the high within-year turnover rate posed a significant financial burden to the general operations of the ECEC program (Administrator 1, personal conversation, April 15, 2022).

Table 2

Within-Year Turnover

	Employees Who Left	Left Within First Year	Within-Year Turnover Rate
2017/2018	14	11	78%
2018/2019	26	14	53%
2019/2020	19	11	57%
2020/2021	11	8	72%
2021/2022	24	17	70%
2022/2023	18	14	77%

Program administrators also believe that within-year turnover affected the social climate of the building and influences the physical and emotional health of the staff (Administrators 1 and 2, personal conversation, April 15, 2022). These beliefs coincide with longitudinal research in Louisiana that concluded high levels of within-year turnover negatively impact the working environment of educators and administrators who remain with the program (Bellows et al., 2021). The ECEC center's administrative staff believes the consequences of turnover increase the amount of stress in the working environment and contribute to further turnover (Administrator 2, personal conversation, December 19, 2022).

Within-year turnover likely hinders early educators' ability to provide safe, consistent education and care, compromising the quality of their site and the early learning experiences provided (Bassok et al., 2021; Bellows et al., 2021). During the program evaluation, the assistant director expressed concerns over the continuity of care provided (Administrator 2, personal conversation, December 19, 2022). She calculated that 57% of their current employees have been with the program for one year or less (Administrator 2, personal conversation, December 19, 2022). The program administrators feared that in their current situation, the educational philosophy and program mission are not well known among the staff, which could compromise the fidelity of services provided to families (Administrators 1 and 2, personal conversation, December 19, 2022).

Declining educator retention and increasing with-year turnover threaten the ECEC center's future ability to consistently provide high-quality early education and care. The

financial strain on the program's general budget caused by the need to increase funding for recruitment, onboarding, and training also poses significant concerns for the program's future operations. This program is the largest ECEC in its area and the only program to accept state vouchers for low-income families (Administrator 1, personal conversation, April 15, 2022). Its closure would significantly impact the community, leaving many families without access to preschool or childcare for their young children.

Rationale

While teacher retention is problematic across multiple settings, it is observed that private early childhood education and care (ECEC) centers serving children from birth to five years of age experience significant teacher turnover (Caven et al., 2021), resulting in lower retention rates. Because early childhood education is offered through varied settings, including privately-owned centers, federally-funded Head Start, local and state-funded public schools, faith-based programs, and home-based settings, tracking workforce data is challenging (Bassok et al., 2021). Each sector operates independently with no centralized data source or points, further hindering retention efforts in ECEC centers. Despite these data tracking challenges, a growing body of research points to high levels of teacher turnover resulting in low retention rates, diminished quality of services, equity issues, and financial burdens (Garcia & Weiss, 2019; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). Previous researchers also asserted that teacher retention may be linked to teachers' wellbeing (Grant et al., 2019b, 2019a; Jeon et al., 2018).

The selected ECEC center's administrative staff has observed declining retention contributing to diminished quality, financial burden, equitable enrollment concerns,

increased within-year turnover, and concerns for educator wellbeing (Administrators 1 and 2, personal conversation, December 19, 2022). It was necessary to speak with early educators to gain a more profound understanding of the factors influencing teacher retention and within-year turnover and their role in the ECEC setting. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore previous and current early educators' perceptions of factors influencing teacher retention and within-year turnover in the selected early childhood education and care center.

Definition of Terms

Burnout: A psychological response to chronic work-related stress characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Ford & Forsyth, 2021).

Caregiver: Professional caregivers work in early childhood programs, facilitating learning experiences and providing care for children's various needs. Early educators are sometimes called caregivers, particularly infant/toddler teachers. (Kwon et al., 2020).

Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Setting: A program that provides early education, typically preschool or PreK, and childcare for young children. These settings serve children from birth to five years and may or may not include services for school-age children as well. ECEC settings include publicly-funded centers, subsidized childcare, Head Start, school-based preschool/PreK, privately-funded preschools and childcare centers, registered ministries, community organizations, and home-based programs. (Bassok et al., 2021)

Highly qualified: Refers to the education and competencies acquired by an educator. The requirements for educators vary among states, with some requiring a bachelor's, some a CDA credential, and 23 states with no educational requirements. Qualifications often vary among age groups, with infant/toddler teachers having different requirements from PreK, even when housed in the same setting. (McLean et al., 2016)

Job satisfaction: Positive or negative judgments made during self-evaluation that reflect the intrinsic and extrinsic rewards gained within the context of their position (Grant et al., 2019a).

Motivation: Teacher motivation is influenced positively or negatively by intrinsic and extrinsic motivators. In Herzberg's motivational theory, motivators represent intrinsic factors, and hygiene refers to extrinsic motivation factors. (Tran & Smith, 2020).

Professional commitment: The level of a teacher's job satisfaction or dissatisfaction that determines their intention to remain at or leave their job/career (Grant et al., 2019a).

Retention practices: Practices such as onboarding, induction strategies, mentor programs, or professional development are designed to retain highly qualified teachers in an education program

Self-efficacy: One's capacity to behave in ways that lead to specific achievement, often developed through self-evaluation (Jeon et al., 2018).

Teacher shortage: "The inability to staff vacancies at the current wages with individuals qualified to teach the fields needed" (Garcia & Weiss, 2019).

Teacher wellbeing: The teacher's physical, mental, emotional, and social health (Tanaka et al., 2020).

Turnover: Turnover occurs in early childhood education and care settings when one educator leaves and another fills the position (Schaack et al., 2022).

Working environment: Sometimes referred to as working conditions, a working environment is a combination of factors that affect a teacher's general job duties, including the physical environment, economic factors, organizational structures, and social climate (Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018).

Significance of the Study

Low educator retention creates high levels of turnover. Previous studies emphasize the negative consequences associated with high levels of educator turnover. Turnover financially strains programs (Garcia & Weiss, 2019; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020), creates problematic working environments (Schaack et al., 2020, 2022), and diminishes learning outcomes for children (Kwon et al., 2020; Sulek et al., 2015). Inequitable access to ECEC centers contribute to workforce instability and impacts local communities. Improving the selected ECEC center's retention practices would facilitate retaining highly qualified early educators, provide equitable access to high-quality early learning experiences, and enhance teacher wellbeing within the program. Early educators are leaving the field at an alarming rate, leaving many organizations struggling to provide preschool and childcare (Caven et al., 2021; McMullen et al., 2020). Organizational challenges threaten the selected ECEC center's long-term stability (Administrator 1, personal conversation, December 19, 2022). A better understanding of early educators'

perceptions of the factors influencing retention and within-year turnover provides valuable insights into the multifaceted situation and facilitates developing a retention plan that meets the needs of the ECEC center and its early educators. Addressing retention and within-year turnover concerns strengthens the ECEC center's organizational ability to foster holistic child development, support local families, and contribute to the larger workforce within the community.

Research Questions

This research project intended to better understand early educators' perceptions of factors influencing teacher retention and within-year turnover in the selected ECEC center. The research project aimed to use the valuable insights provided by previous and current early educators to create a retention plan that meets the unique needs of the selected ECEC center. The guiding questions for this research project are as follows:

1. What are early educators' perceptions of the factors influencing teacher retention in the selected ECEC center?
2. What are early educators' perceptions of the factors influencing within-year turnover in the selected ECEC center?

Review of the Literature

The fragmented nature of the ECEC field hinders research because programs operate independently in multiple settings and rarely coordinate their workforce data (Bassok et al., 2021). ECEC is housed in public/private schools, center-based programs, Head Start, faith-based programs, and home-based settings. Each center has a variety of funding sources and accountability/quality requirements, which vary by state, further

impeding data collection (Bassok et al., 2021; Bellows et al., 2021; Grant et al., 2019a). Despite these challenges, it is reported that privately owned early childhood education and care programs serving children from birth through five years old have high teacher turnover rates, with infant-toddler teachers comprising the highest rates (Caven et al., 2021; Kwon et al., 2020). Research on teacher turnover and retention indicates its factors are multifaceted and vary among educational settings, which further suggests that comprehensive retention strategies and implementations must also be setting-specific to address the unique needs of educators.

Literature Search Strategy

Teacher retention and turnover are closely linked. While a large body of research exists on teacher turnover, less research focuses specifically on within-year turnover. A comprehensive literature review was conducted to explore teacher retention and within-year turnover, with relevant articles from multiple databases, including Thoreau, Education Source, ERIC, Science Direct, and Taylor and Francis Online. Citation chaining through Google Scholar and previously published Walden University dissertations were also used to obtain relevant research articles within the past five years. Keywords used to obtain articles include but were not limited to *teacher retention*, *turnover*, *within-year turnover*, *retention practices*, *human resource management*, *job satisfaction*, *teacher wellbeing*, and *mentor programs*. Each of these terms was searched, along with one of the following terms: *early childhood education*, *preschool*, *childcare*, or *daycare*. Multiple search terms narrowed the focus of the search to settings similar to the early childhood education and care (ECEC) center selected for this capstone project.

Conceptual Framework

Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory, also referred to as Herzberg's two factor theory, emerged in the 1960s and has been applied to multiple fields of practice to explore the concepts of motivation, job satisfaction, increased wellbeing, and employee turnover (Mitsakis & Galanakis, 2022; Peramatzis & Galanakis, 2022). Maslow's hierarchy of needs influenced Herzberg's theory (Acquah et al., 2021). Herzberg theorized two categories of organizational factors influence employees' job satisfaction. Hygiene factors represented extrinsic needs and were initially referred to as "the need to avoid unpleasantness." In contrast, motivation factors represent intrinsic motivators initially associated with "the need for growth or self-actualization" (Peramatzis & Galanakis, 2022). Hygiene and motivation factors operate on separate continuums. Herzberg theorized that hygiene factors cannot motivate employees, and managers who try to use hygiene factors as motivators often produce negative effects (Acquah et al., 2021).

Hygiene factors include an organization's company policy, supervision, working conditions, status, and salary (Acquah et al., 2021; Peramatzis & Galanakis, 2022). These factors do not motivate employees; however, they do play an important role in meeting employee expectations and preventing job dissatisfaction (Chiat & Panatik, 2019). Organizations must carefully consider and manage hygiene factors to maintain employee productivity and decrease job dissatisfaction, in turn promoting retention and reducing employee turnover (Chiat & Panatik, 2019; Mitsakis & Galanakis, 2022). Satisfied employees tend to be more creative, productive, and committed to their organization,

whereas dissatisfied employees are less productive, exhibit less professional commitment, and are more challenging to motivate (Peramatzis & Galanakis, 2022).

Motivation factors are intrinsically motivated and may include an individual's sense of achievement, recognition, responsibility, opportunity to participate in decision-making, challenges, an opportunity for promotion, and personal growth (Acquah et al., 2021; Chiat & Panatik, 2019). Motivation substantially influences job performance, professional satisfaction, and intention to stay with an organization. Research identifies a significant connection between staff satisfaction and efficacy (Peramatzis & Galanakis, 2022). Motivators challenge individuals to develop their talents and build professional expertise, making them a key factor in organizational performance, workplace climate, and employee retention (Peramatzis & Galanakis, 2022).

Applying Herzberg's two-factor theory to the problem of declining retention and increasing within-year turnover suggests the need for balancing hygiene and motivation factors within ECEC organizations. A greater emphasis on job demands, working environments, and teacher wellbeing is being placed on ECEC settings and human resource management to mitigate turnover and support retention (Kwon et al., 2021). Teachers' job satisfaction and motivation affect learning outcomes in educational settings (Toytok & Acar, 2021). If either or both factors are irregular, inadequate, or missing from an organization, the individual's sense of satisfaction is compromised (Kwon et al., 2021; Toytok & Acar, 2021). Herzberg's two-factor theory serves as a foundation for talent-centered educational leadership models (Tran & Smith, 2020). A comprehensive

literature review was conducted to explore organizational factors influencing teaching retention and turnover.

International Research

Teacher turnover, particularly in early childhood settings, poses an international challenge for education systems (Eadie et al., 2022; Rasanen et al., 2020; Thorpe et al., n.d.). Declining teacher retention and high levels of turnover are international concerns. Researchers have gained insights to inform their retention practices in evaluating Australia's educational reform. Australian researchers also report their "long daycare centers," which provide services for children from birth to five years, experience high levels of turnover (McKinlay et al., 2018). Multiple studies have concluded that high levels of turnover impact the quality of services provided, have adverse effects on children's and teachers' wellbeing, and hinder the delivery of early interventions (McKinlay et al., 2018; Sulek et al., 2015; Thorpe et al., n.d.). Qualitative explorations conducted in Queensland suggest more comprehensive training, retention incentives, and additional classroom support could increase job satisfaction and educator retention (Sulek et al., 2015). Early childhood programs also report high levels of turnover, attrition, and job dissatisfaction (Eadie et al., 2022; McKinlay et al., 2018; Thorpe et al., n.d.).

Similarly, British researchers report a lack of interest in entering the education field, suggesting that cultural views of educators and the system may hinder recruitment and retention (Perryman & Calvert, 2020). Researchers who conducted longitudinal studies collected data that presented a steady decline in educators' intentions to stay in their current role, with few teachers remaining more than five years, and many leaving

within their first year of teaching (Perryman & Calvert, 2020; Rasanen et al., 2020).

Studies conducted throughout Great Britain, Finland, and Sweden produced data that cited low wages, few benefits, excessive paperwork, and physical/emotional exhaustion as reasons educators leave the field (Perryman & Calvert, 2020; Rasanen et al., 2020).

The Education Department of China concluded that preschool teachers are more likely to experience social isolation and prejudice because of a general lack of public awareness regarding preschool's significance and its role in the community (Guo et al., 2021). As observed in other studies, early educators working in childcare settings are seen as less professional than their colleagues in different settings, which leads to higher attrition rates and less interest in the ECEC field (Guo et al., 2021; McKinlay et al., 2018; Perryman & Calvert, 2020). Similarly, early educators in the US have a higher turnover rate and lower salaries than their kindergarten colleagues (Grant et al., 2019a).

International research findings coincide with studies conducted in the United States, reflecting similar challenges, perceptions, and organizational factors. Declining teacher retention, high levels of turnover, increased job dissatisfaction, inadequate working conditions, and negative perceptions of early educators are emerging themes in research. Researchers report teaching as an "unattractive profession" based on high turnover rates, excessive attrition, inadequate training and support, stressful working environments, and lower pay scales (Garcia & Weiss, 2019).

Turnover

Turnover occurs in early childhood education and care settings when one educator leaves and another fills the position. The ECEC field is characterized by occupational

instability (Schaack et al., 2022), with numerous advocacy groups attempting to professionalize ECEC by creating a more standardized system. Previous studies' researchers assert that working conditions, teacher wellbeing, and low compensation influence educator turnover (Kwon et al., 2020; Schaack et al., 2020, 2022). Ironically, high levels of turnover were also cited in qualitative explorations as a reason for declining retention (Bellows et al., 2021; Schaack et al., 2020). Early educators expressed frustration at inconsistent staffing, changes in leadership, and a lack of consistent co-teachers in their classrooms (Grant et al., 2019a; Schaack et al., 2022). High educator turnover creates various consequences for programs, educators, and children.

Consequences for Children and Families

High levels of turnover threaten equitable access to consistently healthy, safe early learning environments (Sulek et al., 2015). Staffing shortages, particularly in low-income urban communities, force some programs to reduce enrollment or close completely. Young children form attachment relationships with their caregivers. These relationships support early developmental needs, making infants and toddlers vulnerable to the adverse effects of turnover (Kwon et al., 2020). Children ages one to three who experienced continuity of care with little or no turnover scored higher on social competence and self-control than their peers; teachers reported fewer behavioral problems (Kwon et al., 2020). Strong attachment relationships also foster language development. Young children in lower-quality environments and those who experience high levels of turnover exhibit weakened language and communication skills (Caven et al., 2021), decreased vocabulary, higher levels of emotional stress, and fewer emotional

regulatory skills (Jeon & Wells, 2018). Additionally, high levels of turnover can significantly influence academic and behavioral outcomes (Jeon & Wells, 2018; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020).

High levels of turnover also create stress for early educators, leading to “teacher burnout” and a decreased capacity for caregiving and fostering early learning (Grant et al., 2019b; McMullen et al., 2020). Teachers working with a diminished capacity tend to be less responsive and engaged, unintentionally creating adverse conditions for children and families.

Consequences for Teacher Well-being

Reasons commonly reported for teacher turnover include stress, poor working conditions, emotional exhaustion, and burnout (Grant et al., 2019b; Jeon et al., 2018). Early educators’ working environments influence their intention to remain or leave a program. Teacher-perceived “classroom chaos” contributes to teacher burnout, diminishes teachers’ self-efficacy, and reduces their professional commitment (Grant et al., 2019a). High turnover levels create inconsistent or inadequately trained staffing situations, which generate additional stress and responsibilities for the retained staff.

High levels of turnover threaten the program’s collective efficacy and create a negative working environment (Ford & Forsyth, 2021). Working environments shape educator perceptions. Further, negative perceptions may compromise an educator’s general wellbeing, including their physical and emotional states, influencing their job performance (Grant et al., 2019a; McMullen et al., 2020). An early educator’s psychological wellbeing significantly affects the classroom climate and holistic

development (Jeon et al., 2018). Early educators report physical health concerns, such as ergonomic pain and obesity (Kwon et al., 2021). They also report psychological health concerns such as depression, burnout, low self-efficacy, and secondary trauma (Susman-Stillman et al., 2020; Tanaka et al., 2020). High levels of turnover challenge ECEC programs' organizational operations and create a cyclical situation with adverse outcomes for educators, children, and communities.

Consequences for Early Childhood Education and Care Programs

Teacher turnover, which often results in shortages, creates a substantial financial burden for ECEC programs and consumes significant economic resources (Garcia & Weiss, 2019; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). Additionally, high levels of turnover create an influx of new and often inexperienced teachers, which can disrupt the program's organizational stability (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). Organizational instability hinders collective efficacy and may prevent it from meeting collective goals and improving, weakening its effectiveness (Ford & Forsyth, 2021). Chronic instability disrupts social networks within the organization necessary for creating and working towards a collective vision, mission building, instructional quality, and purposeful professional development (Ford & Forsyth, 2021; McLean et al., 2016). Because turnover contributes to organizational instability and adversely affects children and teachers, many administrators and ECEC leaders have shifted their focus to emphasize retention practices.

Retention

Educator retention is the inverse of turnover. Retention practices focus on organizational stability, continuity of care, and retaining highly qualified early educators and caregivers within a program. Retention-minded program administrators create positive working environments that support educators and consistently deliver responsive early learning experiences. Administrator support is often at the center of retention-minded programming. Previous researchers indicate that working conditions and positive professional identity strongly predict retention (McKinlay et al., 2018). Leaders use a variety of practices and strategies to cultivate working environments and cultures that facilitate successful, purposeful educator experiences.

Retention Practices

ECEC leaders utilize various practices to focus on educator retention. Increased planning time, professional development, opportunities for collaboration, and involvement in decision-making are some less formal retention practices (Ford & Forsyth, 2021). Onboarding, mentor programs, induction process, and embedded training are more formal practices to enhance educators' experiences and increase retention. Retention practices foster social networking among early educators in the ECEC program. They also plan for and provide ongoing professional development, continued collaboration, and support for teacher wellbeing. Teachers who feel less isolated have opportunities to share challenges and collaborate with colleagues to find reasonable solutions. Fostering professional social networks enables educators to seek emotional, contextual, academic, social, and relational support from colleagues, which contributes to

healthy emotional processing of stress and more successful teacher outcomes (Ford et al., 2019; Sikma, 2019). Educators and caregivers who feel supported in their working environment are more likely to be autonomously motivated. Autonomously motivated educators tend to feel less pressured, manage stressful situations better, and cultivate more responsive, empathetic learning environments (Angel et al., 2018). Consistently utilizing retention practices creates positive early learning environments that support educators, children, and communities.

Benefits Packages. Early educator salaries are generally lower than teachers in other settings or occupations with similar educational requirements (Kwon et al., 2021). Compensation is closely linked with attrition. Additionally, many early educators are not provided with healthcare benefits, influencing some intentions to leave the field. Advocates believe increasing compensation, providing access to healthcare benefits, paid professional development, and differential pay in hard-to-staff schools may contribute to educator retention (Schaack et al., 2022; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). Some retention-minded program administrators also provide incentives such as catered lunches, gift cards, positive comments, or reserved parking spaces (Hammonds, 2017). Whereas positive associations with benefit packages exist, they only address extrinsic motivations for teaching, which may not be enough to retain teachers. Retention-minded education leaders should thoughtfully consider benefits packages and couple them with other retention practices to meet the holistic needs of educators (Tran & Jenkins, 2022).

Onboarding. One commonly cited reason for turnover is inadequate training for new teachers. New teachers do not feel adequately prepared to provide parent support,

handle challenging behaviors, and implement effective classroom management (Hammonds, 2017). Inadequate training extends beyond novice teachers because it creates stress for the current teaching staff and disrupts the delivery of services provided to children and families (Sulek et al., 2015). Retained staff members are then responsible for training new employees while performing their job duties.

An onboarding program that provides teachers with a comprehensive induction plan containing orientation to the program, access to supportive social interactions with colleagues, and ongoing targeted professional development supports educator retention (Hammonds, 2017; Sikma, 2019). Induction refers to a specific period of additional training and socialization (Sikma, 2019). Providing an onboarding plan with an induction period that supports early educators' social, physical, and psychological needs builds each educator's self-efficacy, strengthening the teaching staff's collective efficacy (Tanaka et al., 2020). A holistic approach to onboarding may reduce within-year turnover and support educator retention.

Mentor Programs. Another component of successful onboarding/induction is mentor programs that pair new teachers with veteran teachers. Connecticut's Teacher Education and Mentoring (TEAM) program is a state-mandated program, yielding promising results for retention. The state's department of education reported that most teachers who completed the five-module formal mentorship were still teaching in their position after three years, including in their lowest-performing school districts (Hanita et al., 2020). Based on their results and positive association with retention, some education leaders suggest extending mentorships beyond induction to support early educators at

each career level (Sikma, 2019). However, programs with high levels of turnover may not have enough veteran teachers to support a formal mentor program.

Embedded Training. Retention-minded leaders utilize embedded training to provide targeted professional development. Administrative and collegial support substantially influence educator retention (Hanita et al., 2020; Sikma, 2019; Tran & Jenkins, 2022). Teachers who participate in meaningful professional development and are provided timely reflective feedback develop pedagogical expertise, tend to feel less isolated, and demonstrate a higher self-efficacy (Keiler et al., 2020; Susman-Stillman et al., 2020). Ongoing professional development fosters critical skills necessary to provide developmentally appropriate early learning experiences. Meaningful ongoing professional development is essential to increasing teacher motivation, efficacy, and retention (Bressman et al., 2018). Professional development should focus on teachers' holistic needs to support early educators, foster collective efficacy, and build educator autonomy (Ford et al., 2019).

Retention Strategies

Various strategies are employed in retention-minded programs. Many current retention initiatives provide educator incentives and are a reactionary approach to turnover. Strategic retention planning employs various retention practices to meet individual needs and reach collective goals. Some ECEC leaders believe a talent-centered educational leadership (TCEL) strategy encompasses both proactive and reactive practices to focus on retaining highly qualified teachers and caregivers (Tran & Jenkins, 2022). TCEL views retention through the lens of employee experiences and emphasizes

understanding educator needs, anticipating needs and potential challenges, and mapping a plan to address specific challenges and needs (Tran & Jenkins, 2022). Its core principles emphasize a leadership model that focuses on inclusive talent management, data-informed decision-making, respectful working environments, focus on social engagement, and an understanding that educator needs and student needs are not mutually exclusive (Tran & Smith, 2020).

Reflective supervision that promotes self-efficacy, emotional awareness, empathy, and compassion strengthens early learning environments (Susman-Stillman et al., 2020). Another strategy of retention-minded program administrators is frequent, intentional, skill-targeted feedback. Mindfully using feedback as part of reflective supervision and mentoring programs addressed educator-specific needs (Hammonds, 2017; Keiler et al., 2020). Retention-minded strategies focus on a holistic approach to program leadership that emphasize the positive experiences of educators, children, families, and communities. This holistic approach to ECEC creates supportive working and learning environments.

Implications

This research project explored early educators' perceptions of factors influencing teacher retention and within-year turnover to create a targeted retention plan for the selected ECEC center. This project aims to increase teacher retention and decrease within-year turnover in the selected ECEC center by addressing the program's specific organizational needs. It is likely that other education leaders in rural, privately-owned ECEC centers experience similar challenges with declining teacher retention and its

associated consequences. This project could contribute to positive social change by providing valuable insights to ECEC program administrators facing similar challenges with declining retention and increasing within-year turnover. Replications of this study with a larger sample, such as a regional, state-wide, or cross-sector exploration, could contribute to advocacy efforts to stabilize the workforce and professionalize early educators to create a more standardized field of practice.

Summary

The field of education has experienced high levels of teacher turnover, which directly affects school settings and student outcomes. However, the highest level of turnover is reported in privately owned ECEC programs serving children from birth to five years old (Caven et al., 2021). Infant-Toddler teachers are a vulnerable population with high levels of turnover (Kwon et al., 2020). Social views that undervalue the important role of ECEC and view early educator as less-skilled professionals may contribute to turnover (Schaack et al., 2020).

High levels of turnover are associated with lower-quality programs and may have adverse effects on children's development (Caven et al., 2021; Kwon et al., 2020), teachers' wellbeing (Grant et al., 2019b; Jeon et al., 2018), and diminish the quality of the program (Ford & Forsyth, 2021). High levels of within-year turnover disrupt the continuity of care and financially strain ECEC centers. Administrators focus attention on retention plans that employ practices to mitigate educator turnover in ECEC centers and boost retention rates.

Retention-minded administrators utilize reflective supervision and intentional skill-targeted feedback to promote self-efficacy, support early educators' social-emotional needs, and provide meaningful professional development opportunities. Additionally, benefits packages offer incentives for recruiting and retaining early educators. Onboarding/induction programs provide new teachers with the skills, training, and support needed to successfully manage classroom behaviors and provide high-quality early learning experiences. Mentor programs pair teachers, which supports social-emotional needs while providing additional training and feedback. Mentor programs are typically designed for new teachers; however, some researchers report that mentor programs should be designed to support teachers at every level (Sikma, 2019). Retention strategies and practices that focus on program quality and educators' needs build collective efficacy and address the holistic needs of children, educators, and the organization.

ECEC centers play a vital role in the community. Centers that provide equitable access to high-quality early learning experiences help stabilize the workforce, foster holistic child development, support children and families, and facilitate closing achievement gaps. Declining levels of teacher retention pose a serious threat to the contributions ECEC centers can make to their local communities.

ECEC centers, like the one selected for this study, continue to experience organizational challenges in retaining early educators and addressing the consequences of high levels of within-year turnover. Despite earlier retention efforts, the selected ECEC program's administrative team continues to observe a pattern of declining teacher

retention and high within-year turnover. Program directors fear the situation seriously threatens their program's quality and long-term organizational stability. This study intended to explore the perceptions of previous and current early educators within the selected ECEC center to better understand the factors that influence educator retention and within-year turnover. The research project aimed to use the valuable insights collected to create a retention plan to address the specific needs of the selected ECEC center.

Section 2: The Methodology

Research Design and Approach

The problem addressed through this study was that despite adopting new retention practices for the 2017/2018 academic year, a rural midwestern ECEC center's administrative team continues to face challenges retaining early educators, particularly beyond the first year of employment. This study aimed to explore previous and current early educators' perceptions of the factors influencing teacher retention and within-year turnover in a selected early childhood education and care (ECEC) setting. The following questions guided the study:

1. What are early educators' perceptions of the factors influencing teacher retention in the selected ECEC center?
2. What are early educators' perceptions of the factors influencing within-year turnover in the selected ECEC center? Qualitative methods were used to collect data.

Qualitative research has been defined as “an exploratory investigation of a complex social phenomenon conducted in a natural setting through observation, description, and thematic analysis of participants' behaviors and perspectives for the purpose of explaining and/or understanding the phenomenon” (Burkholder et al., 2020, p. 83). This study was an exploratory investigation of the complex social phenomena of teacher retention and within-year turnover. Quantitative methods could show the extent of the problem; however, qualitative methods are necessary to gather educators' perceptions of the specific organizational factors that influence the problem. Qualitative research is essential in early childhood education because it provides a picture of the

multifaceted system connecting children, families, ECEC services, and communities (Mac Naughton et al., 2010). It also provides a means of responsive practice by researching the behaviors and complex interactions that shape the context of early childhood education and care (Mac Naughton et al., 2010). Through qualitative methodology, researchers develop a complex understanding that can be used to explore further, explain, describe, or build theories for how phenomena work within the natural setting (Burkholder et al., 2020).

Participants

Clearly defined participant selection criteria are essential to meaningful qualitative research (Burkholder et al., 2020; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). For this study, purposeful sampling was employed to obtain twenty-four participants. “Purposeful sampling provides context-rich and detailed accounts of specific populations and locations” (Ravitch & Carl, 2021, p. 83).

Twelve participants from the participant pool represented current early educators at the selected ECEC center. Participants range in experience between 1 and 22 years of teaching. Additionally, twelve participants represent early educators who left the selected ECEC center for another educational setting or professional field. Their employment with the selected ECEC center ranged from 3 months to 29 years. The number of participants was chosen to ensure data validity and provide a diverse and comprehensive perspective of the perceived organizational factors that influence teacher retention and within-year turnover.

Because this study explored organizational factors influencing both teacher retention and within-year turnover, it was necessary to collect data from those who have been retained, as well as those who have opted to leave the selected ECEC center. A posting was made on the center's employee communication app to invite current early educators to participate in the research study. The invite included a Walden University email address so the educators may privately message to participate. This process was used to protect the identity of the participants and facilitate their confidentiality. The program director maintains a database of previous employees' contact information. Emails were sent to the addresses on file. A social media invite with my contact information was also posted to my personal Facebook page to invite individuals to participate in this research study.

All efforts were made to protect the confidentiality of the participants throughout the research study. Private email and direct messages facilitated the invitation and scheduling processes. Interviews were held outside the selected ECEC center, and no raw data was shared with the center's administrative staff. The researcher and project closely adhered to the guidelines set by the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB), including courses in research ethics, carefully crafted interview protocol, informed consent prior to interviews, clearly defined methodology practices, and member checking. This study, 05-22-23-0723877, was approved by the Walden University IRB and ethically conducted according to the guidelines set.

Data Collection

Qualitative research aims to incorporate the participants' voices into presenting the findings (Burkholder et al., 2020). For this study, I used semistructured interviews to collect data. In semi-structured interviews, the researcher constructs interview questions and probes to gather information from the participants. The use of probing questions is also anticipated for specific questions or as created by the researcher during the interview process (Burkholder et al., 2020). Semistructured interviews are used for an in-depth description of processes and experiences, to learn how participants interpret events and experiences, and to understand and integrate multiple individual perspectives (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Semistructured interviews provided context-specific experiences and perceptions from the early educators participating in this study.

A self-generated, university-approved interview protocol was used for data collection. The protocol had 10 questions for participants, anticipated probing questions, and a space dedicated to analytic memo writing. Analytic memos were used throughout the data collection and analysis processes as compared to journal entries (Saldana, 2021). The dedicated space for analytic memos with each participant's interview facilitated data organization and reflective research. Additional notes were added to a field journal with each round of coding.

Interviews were recorded with an audio device and transcribed following the discussion. The recordings were kept in my home office. Interview protocol sheets, accompanying analytic memos, and the interview transcripts were filed together in a

research portfolio by the participant's coded number. Names were not used in the presentation of findings.

Understanding the role of the researcher is essential for a qualitative study, and identifying one's positionality before collecting data is recommended for researchers at every level (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Reflecting on one's social identity, positionality, and how external and internal aspects of personal experiences could shape the analysis processes that influence the research is essential to a successful qualitative study (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). As an early educator who has left and returned to the selected site, I have personal experience with the organizational factors that influenced my retention, intention to leave, and my decision to return; however, it was important that my voice not overshadow the voices of the participants. This study aimed to explore early educators' perceptions of the organizational factors that influence teacher retention and within-year turnover. To effectively answer the guiding research questions and fulfill the purpose of this study, my role was as an empathetic but objective researcher who carefully collected and analyzed the participants' perceptions.

Data were collected through audio-recorded semi-structured interviews using an interview protocol. Interviews were transcribed using a two-step process. Initial transcription was conducted using Otter transcription software, and then interviews were manually edited to ensure the accuracy of the transcript. All transcription processes have advantages and disadvantages; manual transcription is highly labor-intensive and time-consuming, while AI transcription is faster but can generate mistakes (Burkholder et al., 2020). Utilizing both software and manual transcription efficiently and accurately helped

to collect the data and provided an organized system for storing digital transcripts. The ability to listen to and read transcripts also facilitated the coding cycles.

Analytic memos are intended to focus engagement and can also be used as data (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Analytic memos during data collection and analysis facilitated rigorous, meaningful qualitative research. Reflexive journaling was also used throughout the data collection and analysis processes to mitigate potential researcher bias. Reflexive journaling is a central tool for qualitative research that cultivates structured reflexivity throughout the research study (Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

Coding Process

Eclectic coding is considered a form of open coding appropriate for qualitative research studies, particularly for beginning researchers (Saldana, 2021). Eclectic coding is also used as an initial exploratory technique and can be combined with other coding methods (Saldana, 2021). Eclectic coding guided the analysis cycles with emotion, descriptive, and evaluation codes generated from the data obtained. Audio recordings were reviewed for the first coding round, and emotion codes were generated based on the tone of voice and word choices. Codes included tired, frustrated, anxious, passionate, and apathetic. Analytic memos from the interviews were reviewed, and reflexive journaling about the current stage of the coding process was recorded.

Qualitative analysis is an iterative process, through which subsequent coding cycles produce additional codes. A second round of analysis generated descriptive codes from the qualitative data. These codes were then grouped into the following categories: induction challenges and suggestions, organizational factors, social aspects, relationships,

personal factors, and challenges. Analytic notes and reflexive journaling accompanied this round of analysis.

Table 3

Categories Created by Eclectic Coding

Category	Codes
Relationships	Interactions with kids; purpose; “lightbulb moments”; connections with family; community influence; community; enjoy the children; relationships
Social Aspects	Social aspects; encouragement; communication; admin support; expectations; shared experiences; common goals; feedback; supportive culture; someone to learn from
Organizational Factors	Progress; quality; welcoming; safety; Conscious Discipline; core values; child-centered; consistent expectations; safety
Personal Factors	Working mom; “really unpredictable”; benefits; childcare costs; schedules; pay; benefits; “mental toll”
Challenges	Induction Challenges – “first year was really tough”; training; consistency; training request; inconsistent support
Divided into Subcategories: induction challenges, program-wide challenges, individual challenges, and suggestions	Program wide challenges – inconsistent support; challenging behaviors; budget strain; inconsistent environment; new employees; adverse effects; inconsistent routine; working conditions; continuity of care; inconsistent onboarding; adverse effects Individual challenges – frustration; extra work; lack of time; tired; overwhelmed burnout; coping strategies; burden of training; stress management; physically/emotionally demanding Suggestions – licensing support; advancement; meaningful PD; informal mentor; professional development; known expectations

Statements pertaining to Herzberg’s two-factor theory were used to generate codes and align the data collected with the conceptual framework of this study. Hygiene factors, motivators, job satisfaction, and job dissatisfaction served as the framework components to organize and analyze the qualitative data collected. Descriptive codes were generated for the participants’ perceptions of the ECEC center that influenced their job satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

Table 4*Conceptual Framework Codes*

Component	Codes
Hygiene Factors	Onboarding, paid time off, hours/schedules, salary/pay, benefits, staffing needs, working conditions
Motivators	Social aspects, relationships, rewarding, child-focused, helping children, Conscious Discipline
Job Satisfaction	Social aspects, child progress, known expectations, admin communication, Conscious Discipline
Job Dissatisfaction	Staffing, long hours, stress, challenging behaviors, climate, effects on children

During the coding process, reflexive notes and analytic memos were recorded. Categories, reflexive notes, and analytic memos were grouped to discover emergent themes. The categories challenges, hygiene factors, and job dissatisfaction indicated program inconsistencies and a gap in practice regarding educator onboarding. The categories social aspects, relationships, organizational factors, motivators, and job satisfaction indicated that the social climate of the program significantly influences job satisfaction, self-efficacy, and employment intentions. The categories personal factors, job dissatisfaction, hygiene factors, and the subcategory individual challenges indicated that educator retention and turnover is a multifaceted situation with no one clear solution. However, some motivators outweighed other factors. An individual's employment intention is heavily influenced by personal experiences.

I then conducted a literature review to elevate the emergent themes with previously presented literature in the field. Multiple perceptions presented in this study align with previously conducted studies. Job-related stress, burnout, and a lack of self-efficacy were cited as intentions for leaving the teaching profession (Herman et al., 2020; Steimle & Ryan, 2023). Hammonds (2017) concluded that new teachers often feel

inadequately prepared to implement effective classroom management, particularly for challenging behaviors. The most frequent codes were consistency, inconsistency, social aspects, and communication. Categories generated by codes, analytic memos, and literature review indicated three themes that were used to inform the creation of this capstone project.

Research Practices

Credibility was established through data triangulation and member checks. Throughout the data analysis process, transcripts and analytic memos were compared to identify patterns among participants' perceptions of the organizational factors that influence educator retention and within-year turnover. The themes generated were compared to findings from other relevant research studies conducted within and outside the United States. Participants in this study reported organizational factors similar to those of participants in previous studies. Member checks were another practice employed to establish credibility. Participants received a draft of the data analysis. Responding participants agreed that the themes presented reflected their experiences in the selected ECEC center. Participants also reported they believed their experiences were similar to other early educators in similar settings.

Transferability was established by systematic qualitative practices and adherence to university guidelines. This study followed a basic qualitative design, employing practices such as open-ended interview questions, the use of an interview protocol, interview transcription, and coding processes. The coding process for this study included eclectic coding, a priori coding, and analytic memos to create codes, categories, and

themes based on the transcript data. This study also closely followed Walden University's Institutional Review Board guidelines and practices for ethical research. Whereas qualitative research is not intended for replication, the research practices employed in this study maintain elements of transferability. This project design could be used to obtain valuable data from other ECEC programs willing to participate in research.

Confirmability was established through reflexive notes and member checks. Reflexive notes were written following each participant interview. As a researcher, it is essential to ensure that the participants' perceptions are accurately portrayed in the research findings. As a former early educator at the participating ECEC center, I had previous experiences with its organizational factors. Being cognizant of my personal experiences and my role as a researcher helped to reduce bias. As part of the member checking process, participants received a data analysis draft and were asked to respond to the email. Participants were specifically asked, "Do the themes presented in this study reflect your personal experiences as an early educator?" Participants were also provided a space for additional feedback if they felt facets of their experiences were not accurately or entirely portrayed. One hundred percent of participants responded, indicating the themes generated in this study reflect their personal experiences and perceptions regarding early educator retention and within-year turnover.

The detailed description of the research design, methodology, and analysis process established dependability. Rigorous qualitative research practices were employed and detailed within the study. The practices described in this study could serve as a model for future research to determine organizational factors that influence early educator

retention and within-year turnover. The rigorous qualitative research practices, adherence to university guidelines, review of relevant literature, and systematic data collection and analysis promote trustworthiness through credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability.

Data Analysis Results

After careful analysis of the data, the following themes emerged.

Theme 1: Inconsistent onboarding and induction practices create challenges that impact the collective efficacy of the program and influence retention and turnover.

Of the 24 participants interviewed, no two described the same onboarding process. Each educator had a different experience and timeline for entering the ECEC center. Participants also described varied induction levels, with some educators having a full month induction period and some having no induction period as part of their onboarding. Even though Participants C4 and P10 had begun at the same time, their onboarding and induction experiences varied.

Multiple participants acknowledged their onboarding met the state requirements for training; however, they felt that it inadequately prepared them for their daily job functions and coping with everyday stressors associated with their position. Participants who had left the ECEC setting for other educational settings spoke of longer induction periods, mentor programs, and routine staff meetings that empowered them with the skills and support necessary to succeed in their current positions. Participants currently employed at the ECEC center believe that the program is making positive changes in its

onboarding practices. However, they suggest that more consistent training for new employees before they enter the classroom would benefit the program.

Program-wide Challenges

Inconsistent onboarding practices hinder the program's collective efficacy because they create an unstable organizational culture and fail to produce shared experiences and common goals. Multiple participants reported that they did not feel adequately prepared for their job when entering the classroom. Some participants mentioned classroom experiences prior to onboarding, with multiple participants stating they had to figure out classroom management techniques, policies, and procedures as they were happening in the classroom.

Participant C1 discussed her first year in the program, working with children of varying abilities without specialized training. She described it as "a really rough first year." She has observed the program's administrative team focusing more on onboarding employees and providing additional training in the past few years but feels like many new educators still enter the classroom feeling overwhelmed at the tasks they need to complete in the classroom during a typical day. Participant P3 described her overall onboarding as a positive experience; however, she later felt that she was not fully prepared for the quality measurement and accreditation observations in her classroom. She spoke about not knowing the same information her colleagues knew, which made her room less prepared and created stressful working conditions as she had little time to change the physical environment.

Participants C3, C4, C6, P9, P10, and P11 reported requesting additional training to manage their job responsibilities better. These participants spoke about advocating for more meaningful professional development. Each participant talked to a program director about needing more training or beginning an educational program such as a CDA credential or associate's degree. These early educators also described frequent, short-term feelings of job dissatisfaction when they doubted their self-efficacy after experiences in the classroom where they felt inadequately prepared for the situation. They also expressed a desire for more administrative support and feedback to mitigate stressful classroom experiences. They reported having to seek help and ask questions, with varying responses from administrators.

Because educators were focused on their self-efficacy and advocating for their personal needs, they narrowed their focus to their individual classrooms rather than the collective efficacy of the program and collaboratively working with colleagues. Participant P9 expressed regret about not working more collaboratively with colleagues. She reported that perhaps if she had others to work with, she could have overcome some of the mental fatigue associated with the job and stayed in the ECEC center. Similarly, Participant P3 reported she enjoyed working with the children and admired the program's child-centered philosophy; however, she could not cope with her current classroom situation and the inconsistent support provided.

Early educators who perceive themselves as inadequately prepared and advocating for their personal needs hinder retention efforts and contribute to higher turnover levels. All 24 participants believe high turnover situations adversely affect the

children because they disrupt daily routines and influence their perceived sense of safety. Participant P7 explained that she has coping strategies for managing change as an adult. Still, young children have not developed those strategies, and she believes the turnover situation is much more overwhelming for children than adults. Multiple participants working with infants and toddlers expressed their concerns about high turnover periods because it produces fear and anxiety in the children and disrupts the continuity of their care.

Educators also described how inconsistencies in onboarding practices shifted the burden of training new employees to the current educators. Multiple participants expressed frustration and exhaustion when the burden of training new employees was added to their responsibilities while still caring for children. Participant C7 spoke of a year when she had four different assistants. She said that each time she got a new assistant, it was like “starting over again” in the classroom. She recalled that year was substantially more stressful than other years because the flow of the class was disrupted, daily routines were disrupted, the children exhibited more challenging behaviors and emotional upset, and she found herself struggling to provide high-quality early learning experiences while also training her assistant on classroom management techniques, procedures, and best practices. She reported feeling more physical and emotional fatigue that year and higher job dissatisfaction, which heavily influenced her intent to leave.

She also noted that her current situation is more positive with the new focus on retention and that the stability significantly influences her intention to stay. She has a good working relationship with her current assistant. “We have a good rhythm, and that

makes the day better for kids and for us.” Participant C5 expressed a similar sentiment regarding staffing consistencies, “When we’re all on the same page, it’s just better for the babies. They have a better day. And when they have a good day, we have a good day.”

The situations, perceptions, and concerns described by the participants highlight an area for improvement and an opportunity to strengthen the program’s collective efficacy. Focusing on more consistent onboarding practices could provide better organizational stability, improve early educators’ perceptions of support and self-efficacy, and enhance classroom climates for both children and educators.

Induction Challenges

Another pattern found in the data is inconsistent induction periods. Induction periods are intended to support employees during their initial experiences with the organization. Each of the 24 participants reported a different induction period and level of support for that period, with multiple participants who reported not having an induction period. Consistent induction plans create organizational stability and can mitigate inconsistencies and job dissatisfaction.

Multiple employees who had left the ECEC center to accept positions in the public school system compared the two induction experiences. Participant P5 recalled that at the ECEC center, she learned from another teacher, but not in a formal sense. They just shared information because they enjoyed working together. However, in the public school setting, she had a year-long induction period with monthly meetings for new teachers to gather and collaborate, along with a formal mentor who checked in regularly and provided structured support. Similarly, Participant P12 described working in multiple

ECEC centers where the induction periods varied but were typically less than one month. However, when she accepted a position in a public school setting, the school provided a one-year induction period with a formal mentor, monthly teacher meetings, and a bi-monthly administrator check-in. She credited that induction period to her feelings of self-efficacy and feeling supported and encouraged as an effective professional educator.

Creating an induction plan to meet the needs of newly hired early educators could also strengthen the ECEC program's collective efficacy and contribute to retention efforts. An induction plan that consistently provides opportunities for collaboration and structured layers of support would enhance the ECEC center's organizational stability and create a more cohesive staffing situation while mitigating educator stress and job dissatisfaction. Following a model that mirrors public school systems, where early educators are consistently provided with a one-year induction period, could significantly reduce the center's within-year turnover rate.

Suggestions from Educators

During the data collection, participants were asked what suggestions they had for increasing educator retention rates. Of the 24 participants, only two mentioned higher wages, 11 mentioned healthcare and 401K benefits, and three mentioned larger childcare discounts. The majority of participants mentioned targeted support, collaboration opportunities, more professional development, licensing support, mentor opportunities, support staff, and consistently communicated expectations and feedback. Participant P2 urged administrators to:

Listen to the teachers and really hear what their needs are. I know sometimes their hands are tied from state mandates and whatnot. But if they really listen to what teachers need, and teachers feel supported, and they're being heard, a lot more can be accomplished.

Both current and previous early educators suggested enhancing program consistency, providing more support and meaningful professional development opportunities, and increasing time for collaboration. Based on the data collected, early educators want administrative staff to anticipate their professional needs and consistently provide support, training, and collaborative opportunities to meet those needs, particularly within their first year of employment at the ECEC center.

Theme 2: Relationships and positive social aspects in the working environment strongly influence job satisfaction and contribute toward educator retention.

Two categories of codes emerged when examining the data: relationships and social aspects. In Herzberg's two-factor theory, hygiene factors represent organizational factors such as onboarding and induction processes intended to decrease job dissatisfaction (Chiat & Panatik, 2019). Motivation factors influence professional satisfaction and perceptions of self-efficacy (Peramatzis & Galanakis, 2022). Relationships and social aspects emerged as two salient motivators influencing job satisfaction and contributing to early educator retention.

Relationships

During the data collection process, all 24 participants were asked what aspect of their ECEC position they enjoyed the most. Every answer included some aspect of

relationships. Participants reported they enjoyed their interactions with children and watching their progress. They also enjoyed connecting with families and contributing meaningfully to their community.

Participant C4 stated, “I particularly like working in the community that I live in and feeling like I can create a positive impact on the children and families.” Participant C8 said the aspect of her job she found the most rewarding is “the relationships that I get to build with the children and watching them continue to grow after they leave my classroom.” Similarly, Participant C9 stated she loves watching children meet their milestones and then has an opportunity to share that child’s success with their family. Participant P2 said, “It’s so rewarding, working with children daily and helping them to see their full potential.” Multiple other participants spoke fondly when they discussed working with children and families and their role in the community.

The professional relationships early educators build with children and their families are a strong motivator contributing to educator retention. Participant C3 said she often thinks about leaving her position at the ECEC center, but then she thinks about the kids and knows she wouldn’t enjoy another field. Similarly, Participants C1, C7, P3, and P9 left the ECEC center for employment with higher wages and benefits but returned to early childhood education and care because they missed the connections with children and families and realized their professional passion for early education was important to their happiness. Participant P9 elaborated, “Working as an infant/toddler teacher fed my soul, but not my children.” After a brief stint in another field, she and her husband were able to shuffle finances so that she could return to early childhood education.

It is essential for administrators to understand the importance of relationships as motivators to help manage hygiene factors that enable program consistency and provide opportunities for early educators to create positive connections with the children in their care, their families, and the larger community. Acknowledging that relationships are a key motivator for many of their current staff also provides administrators with keen insights for hiring new employees and cultivating their staff and organizational climate. Feeling a sense of purpose and making a positive contribution are key intrinsic motivators that boost professional commitment and contribute to longer retention.

Social Aspects

Several participants mentioned that social aspects are an important part of their workday because they tend to work long days, with all 24 participants reporting to work a full-time 40+ hour work week. Educators spoke about turnover situations negatively impacting the climate of their center. Participant P10 spoke about times that she felt very isolated during short-staffed periods. Participant P3 explained that when the center is short-staffed, and educators work alone in ratio with children, they do not know if another person can provide a bathroom break. Not knowing when you can go to the bathroom or have a sip of water can be stressful. That level of uncertainty takes a mental toll on a person. Participants P4, P7, and C2 all spoke of the importance of having someone to collaborate with, share ideas, and learn from.

Culture. Unfortunately, turnover is a cyclical process. Sometimes, people leave because of the effects of turnover, which creates a higher turnover and amplifies its effects, resulting in less retention and more turnover. Participants in this study observed

that a culture of consistency is paramount when working with young children. Multiple participants discussed how inconsistencies amplify challenging behaviors, increase emotional upset in children, and generate uncertainty for teachers, which increases stress and anxiety. Participant C1 explained, “It is really challenging to plan and implement learning activities when you never know who is going to be in your room.” Participant C3 discussed how inconsistencies amplify her emotional fatigue because the children need additional emotional support from her and exhibit more challenging behaviors, increasing her stress during the workday. She discussed periods of teacher burnout and how she has learned to cope with those experiences to take care of herself and still provide the best care possible for her children at school.

Creating a culture of consistency is challenging for ECEC centers. One way to contribute towards consistency is by addressing educators’ social needs. Participants in this study reported that encouragement, consistent administrative support, clear expectations, frequent communication and feedback, and opportunities to create and discuss shared goals are important motivators for them. The data suggest that addressing educators’ intrinsic social needs creates a supportive climate that mitigates job dissatisfaction and elevates professional commitment by ensuring educators feel seen and heard.

Mentor. The participants in this study had mixed emotions regarding their experiences and perceptions of mentor programs. When asked about mentor programs, several participants felt it would be helpful for new teachers to have a mentor. Participant C6 said,

That would have been great for me; my first year was really rough...when they expect you to lesson plan, learn to do the COR, work on your CDA, have the room ready for Paths to Quality, and teach your kids, it's really stressful and hard.

For this new educator, every aspect of the position was unknown. She found herself in a situation where she was learning new content, skills, technology, and strategies while still being asked to provide exceptional care for young children.

Inversely, Participant P10 discussed being in a mandatory mentor program. She felt it created additional work for the mentor and strained the relationship between her and her colleague, the designated mentee.

Participant P4 observed another challenge with mentor programs: they typically pair an experienced teacher with a new one. Often, in high turnover situations, there are not enough experienced teachers to serve as mentors for newly hired teachers. Multiple participants expressed frustration with the desire for a mentor but the lack of feasible options for working with one.

Suggestions from Educators

Participant P12 suggested a less traditional approach to mentoring by pairing new teachers together and providing time for them to observe other teachers, discuss their observations, and share ideas. Similarly, Participants C10 and C11 asserted they do not believe they need a mentor for everything. Still, having someone for specific things would be helpful, suggesting a more targeted approach to mentoring. Participant P1 suggested a "buddy system" where you are paired with another person to periodically check in and share ideas. Participant P8 suggested a similar system of pairing teachers so

they had someone to talk to about classroom stress. This pairing would not necessarily work together but would check in with one another and provide emotional support and encouragement.

Participants also suggested using consistent, frequent staff communications to create a culture of consistency. Participant P8 feels “things just go better when we are all on the same page.” Multiple participants mentioned frustration with miscommunications and feelings of isolation. Multiple participants suggested a system of communication that enables everyone in the building to have the same information. They also indicated that common goals, encouragement, classroom success stories, and shared experiences are communicated with the staff. The data collected show frequent communication and feedback are significant motivators in increasing job satisfaction, contributing positively to educator retention.

Theme 3: Both personal and organizational factors influence an individual’s intentions to stay or leave an ECEC center; however, some factors significantly mitigate dissatisfaction and contribute to educator retention.

Educator retention is a multifaceted situation with no clear solution for reducing turnover. Comprehensive strategies must be employed to increase retention. Talent-centered human resource approaches contribute to building retention by empowering staff to grow professionally. It is important to note that an individual’s intention to stay or leave a profession is highly individualized and often complex.

Personal Factors

A unique dichotomy emerged for some codes. For example, “working mom” was coded for some individuals’ reasons to remain in the ECEC center and for some individuals’ reasons to leave the ECEC center. Participant C1 explained that her position “worked nicely for our growing family.” Participants C2, C3, and P6 remarked that this job was good for working mothers because of the schedule. Participants C4 and C7 commented that they needed the childcare discount that comes with the position to afford high-quality care for their young children. They both mentioned that they could probably find higher-paying jobs elsewhere; however, they would not make substantially more if they had to pay full price for childcare. Inversely, Participant P9 said, “It is hard to be a working mom when you work with young children all day and come home to care for young children at night.” Participants P7 and C6 discussed the financial challenges of working in an ECEC center as single mothers.

Another example of a dichotomous code was teaching expectations. For some, this code was used as motivation to stay. Multiple participants discussed teaching expectations and observing children’s progress as motivation to remain in early education. However, some listed teaching expectations, when coupled with licensing requirements and quality measurements, as stressors that influenced their intention to leave the ECEC center.

Organizational Factors

Despite the differences in personal factors that influence retention and turnover, some organizational factors were identified as aspects of the center that significantly

mitigate job dissatisfaction and contribute to educator retention. Program quality, child-centered approach, core values, emphasis on safety, welcoming environment, and Conscious Discipline were listed by multiple participants as organizational factors that influence their job satisfaction.

Participants C8 and P11 compared their experiences at other centers with the selected ECEC center and reported they chose to remain in that center because of its “family-like atmosphere.” Participant P4 said, “We are always trying to improve and do better...and that’s really important.” Participant C3 explained that she had worked in other centers that did not have the same level of quality. She went on to express how important program quality was in her decision to stay, and when facing difficult situations, she reminds herself that maintaining the highest quality is challenging. Participant C7 reported she remains at the selected center “because they treat children the way I want my kids treated.”

At some point in the interview, 23 out of 24 participants mentioned program quality. Their professional commitment to providing high-quality, safe, welcoming, early learning environments is a strong motivator for their intention to remain teaching at the selected ECEC center. Participants who had left the center spoke positively about its commitment to quality. Participant P5 said she learned “a better way to treat children ... and a better way to teach” during her time there. Almost every participant also mentioned Conscious Discipline at some point in their interview. This curriculum also appears to be a strong motivator for professional commitment.

Research Questions

This research project intended to understand better early educators' perceptions of factors influencing teacher retention and within-year turnover in the selected ECEC center. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are early educators' perceptions of the factors influencing teacher retention in the selected ECEC center?
2. What are early educators' perceptions of the factors influencing within-year turnover in the selected ECEC center?

After carefully analyzing the data collected, a thoughtful balance of hygiene factors and specific motivators mitigate job dissatisfaction and influence early educator retention in the field.

Table 5

Research Question: What are early educators' perceptions of the factors influencing teacher retention in the selected ECEC center?

From Data Analysis	From Literature
Social aspects and relationships influence educators' intentions to stay or leave	Research identifies a significant connection between staff satisfaction and efficacy (Peramatzis & Galanakis, 2022)
Climate affects individuals' stress management	Data suggest beneficial and satisfying relationships between teachers might provide additional incentives to stay at their school (Geiger, 2018)
Program quality and core values are motivators that influence retention	Low wages, meager benefits, and negative work climate influence educator attrition (Kwon et al., 2021)
Consistent communication, support, and feedback are key organizational factors to support retention	Staffing inconsistency placed additional pressure on existing staff and shifted the responsibility of training new staff to existing staff (Sulek et al., 2015)
Turnover is cyclical	
Retention impacts the collective efficacy of the program and perceptions of progress	
Turnover influences perceptions of challenging behaviors and the ability to manage stress and feelings of teacher burnout	

Climate-related hygiene factors such as administrative communication and support, shared goals, consistent expectations, and training practices outweigh some hygiene factors such as pay, benefits, and paid time off. Early educators view low pay and meager benefits as part of the ECEC field. They are willing to overlook them when climate-related hygiene factors and motivators are thoughtfully balanced and presented. Some level of turnover is expected in the ECEC field. The organization's turnover management and level of support to existing educators significantly shape perceptions of self-efficacy in the classroom and intentions to remain in the ECEC setting.

Social aspects of the early educator position are key motivators in retention.

Relationships with children, families, and colleagues, workplace culture, opportunities to collaborate, community contributions, shared experiences, common goals, and consistent communication were identified as motivation factors contributing to early educator retention in the selected ECEC setting. Social aspects of the program were also identified as factors that facilitate stress management and mitigate job dissatisfaction. Inversely, feelings of isolation, lack of support, and inconsistent communication were labeled as factors that compound stress and contribute toward intentions to leave. Social aspects shape perceptions of classroom management, program efficacy, stress management, and ability to cope with teacher burnout.

Table 6

Research Question: What are early educators' perceptions of the factors influencing within-year turnover in the selected ECEC center?

From Data Analysis	From Literature
Inconsistent levels of support influence intentions to leave	The cycle of turnover impedes retention because turnover creates additional stress that leads to more turnover (Sulek et al., 2015)
Challenging behaviors and stress management influence within-year turnover	Frequent changes in caregivers hinder social development; preschoolers can become socially withdrawn or aggressive (Joungyoun et al., 2020)
Turnover is cyclical and creates challenges that make it difficult to retain educators	Teachers enter the field through various pathways, often not participating in a traditional 4-year program. Novice teachers may not be prepared to engage, support, and teach the low-income/diverse populations of children their program serves (Redding & Henry, 2019)
Pay/benefits/paid time off are not good for this field and cause people to leave	
Inconsistent routines/schedules and unpredictable days influence turnover	
Onboarding practices meet requirements but do not necessarily empower educators with skills and confidence to complete job responsibilities	

Within-year turnover is a multifaceted challenge in the ECEC field. Within-year turnover creates a myriad of challenges for the program, including financial strain, inconsistent organizational culture and climate, adverse effects for children, and compounded stress for remaining staff. Unfortunately, recruiting participants with less than one year of employment in the selected ECEC center was difficult and poses a limitation of this study. For context, two early educator participants employed in the selected ECEC center at the beginning of the academic year are no longer employed prior to the year's midpoint. One of the participants left within the year for another ECEC center and returned to the participating program within two months. Multiple participants

described leaving the participating center for another field or setting and returning at some point. Early educators' fluidity further exasperates the turnover cycle in ECEC settings.

Working conditions, challenging behaviors, perceived lack of support, and organizational inconsistencies were identified as factors influencing educators' intentions and decisions to leave the selected ECEC center. These factors contributed to attrition and educator mobility, with most educators leaving for the public school system. The most frequently cited reasons for leaving the selected ECEC center were low wages, lack of benefits, educational costs, longer hours, and inconsistent daily expectations.

Summary

Based on the data collected, this research study affirms that educator retention and turnover are multifaceted, complex situations with no one clear solution. However, organizational factors that focus on program quality, child-centered approaches, and safe, welcoming environments contribute positively toward retaining early educators. A part of generating these types of high-quality ECEC centers is acknowledging early educators' social needs and providing consistent support and communication to meet those needs. Early educators feel that a culture of consistency is best for young children. One area of improvement for this program is generating consistent onboarding and induction practices.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The problem addressed in this study was that despite adopting new retention practices for the 2017/2018 academic year, a rural midwestern ECEC center's administrative team continues to face challenges retaining early educators, particularly beyond the first year of employment. This qualitative study explored previous and current early educators' perceptions of factors that influence teacher retention and within-year turnover in the selected ECEC center. After careful data collection and analysis, a gap in practice regarding the selected ECEC center's onboarding and organizational socialization practices was identified. The data collected through this study and a comprehensive review of existing literature informed the creation of a professional development/training curriculum to facilitate more systematic onboarding practices to meet early educators' needs and improve the selected ECEC center's educator retention.

Rationale

Low educator retention creates high levels of turnover, which is known to have adverse effects on ECEC centers. Turnover financially strains programs (Garcia & Weiss, 2019; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020), creates problematic working environments (Schaack et al., 2020, 2022), and diminishes learning outcomes for children (Kwon et al., 2020; Sulek et al., 2015). Inequitable access to ECEC centers contributes to workforce instability and impacts local communities.

The selected ECEC center's administrative staff had observed declining retention contributing to diminished quality, financial burden, equitable enrollment concerns,

increased within-year turnover, and concerns for educator wellbeing (Administrators 1 and 2, personal conversation, December 19, 2022). Organizational challenges also threaten the selected ECEC center's long-term stability (Administrator 1, personal conversation, December 19, 2022).

Through thematic analysis conducted in this study, three themes emerged:

Theme 1: Inconsistent onboarding and induction practices create challenges that impact the collective efficacy of the program and influence retention and turnover.

Theme 2: Relationships and positive social aspects in the working environment strongly influence job satisfaction and contribute toward educator retention.

Theme 3: Both personal and organizational factors influence an individual's intentions to stay or leave an ECEC center; however, some factors significantly mitigate dissatisfaction and contribute to educator retention.

Implementing a professional development/training curriculum that addresses the unique needs of early educators, provides systematic organizational socialization, and emphasizes educator support can attend to the identified gap in practice. Further, more consistent onboarding and organizational socialization practices may influence collective efficacy, job satisfaction, and the selected ECEC center's organizational culture, improving educator retention. Increased preparation and support through the first year of employment will reduce the within-year turnover rate in the selected ECEC center. Improving educator retention at the selected ECEC center positively contributes to social change because it elevates the program quality, attends to educator wellbeing, facilitates

equitable enrollment practices, and tackles challenges threatening the center's long-term stability, which substantially impacts the local community.

Review of the Literature

Researchers conducting longitudinal studies of Head Start programs concluded a demographic change in the teaching qualifications of preschool teachers. Their study concluded that in 2006, 40% of participating cohort teachers had a college degree. In contrast, only 25% had a college degree in 2009 (Steimle & Ryan, 2023), indicating a trend in the field toward less professionalized teaching staff. The field also continues to experience high levels of turnover, with as many as 40% of new teachers leaving the profession within the first five years (Herman et al., 2020). Job-related stress, burnout, and a lack of self-efficacy are often cited as intentions for leaving the field (Herman et al., 2020; Steimle & Ryan, 2023). The majority of early educators also fall within the generational categories of Millennial and Gen Z. Emergent research indicates these employees may have specific personal and professional needs that differ from previous generations (B. Chillakuri, 2020; B. K. Chillakuri, 2020).

Current literature supports that a successful onboarding program is an essential component of an organization's talent management and contributes to effective employee retention (Sharma & Stol, 2020). A strategically planned and implemented onboarding program provides new hires with the skills and support needed to feel comfortable in their organizational role (Sibisi & Kappers, 2022). Effective onboarding programs are associated with job satisfaction (Song et al., 2015), increased productivity (Olynick & Li, 2020), and authentic social integration (Nielson et al., 2023). While onboarding programs

vary among organizations, a well-designed program reduces anxiety, provides role clarity, and creates a line of communication for newly hired employees (B. Chillakuri, 2020).

Literature Search Strategy

A comprehensive literature review was conducted to further explore the concept of onboarding in theory and practice. Additionally, literature pertaining to organizational socialization was reviewed. Relevant articles were obtained from multiple databases, including Thoreau, Education Source, Science Direct, Research Gate, ELSEVIER, and Emerald Insight. Citation chaining through Google Scholar was also used to obtain relevant research articles within the past five years. Keywords used to collect articles include but were not limited to *onboarding practices, induction, organizational conditions, human resource management, talent management, organizational socialization, onboarding best practice, work-life balance, organizational culture, and workplace culture and stress management*. The literature reviewed was essential to inform the project design.

Onboarding

Onboarding provides opportunities for organizations to ensure newcomers quickly become engaged, productive, and well-versed in the organizational culture (Becker & Bish, 2021). Two commonly adopted models include the Inform-Welcome-Guide (IWG) and 4Cs (Becker & Bish, 2021; Nielson et al., 2023; Ricker et al., 2021). The IWG model emphasizes providing information, socialization opportunities, and professional guidance (Becker & Bish, 2021; Frogeli et al., 2023). The 4Cs model focuses attention on

compliance, clarification, culture, and connection (Becker & Bish, 2021; Nielson et al., 2023). Both models are intended to provide newly hired employees with the information and skills necessary to quickly adapt to their position, connect with coworkers, and adopt the organization's culture.

Millennial and Gen Z Focus

The generation of individuals born between 1981 and 1994 are referred to as Millennials, and individuals born between 1995 and 2012 are referred to as Gen Z. These two generational groups comprise a large portion of the current workforce. Researchers have identified that both cohorts hold distinct expectations for communication, organizational feedback, and career expectations (B. K. Chillakuri, 2020). Younger Millennials and Gen Z have the unique role of “digital natives” because they have never lived in a time without the internet (B. Chillakuri, 2020). In exploring the needs of this demographic, researchers have determined that this cohort has specific expectations regarding meaningful work, work-life balance, personal connections, performance management, and learning, creating a need for human resource managers to reflect upon recruiting and onboarding practices (B. Chillakuri, 2020; B. K. Chillakuri, 2020). Neglecting the needs of newly hired employees can result in job dissatisfaction, disengagement, and high levels of turnover (Song et al., 2015); so, understanding the workforce's needs and carefully designing onboarding programs to meet their needs is a key facet of organizational success and retention.

Comparison to Other Fields

Like many other fields, the ECEC field currently faces many challenges. Despite reporting that implementing a formal onboarding program can produce 50% greater employee retention among new hires, a 2021 Gallup poll reported that only 12% of employees feel their company effectively onboard new employees (Sibisi & Kappers, 2022). Looking to successes in other fields may provide the changes to methods and content needed to elevate onboarding practices within the ECEC field.

Nursing. Nurses and educators share similar working environments. Both professions work long hours in fast-paced settings and are responsible to care for others. Teaching and nursing can be physically, mentally, and emotionally demanding. Both fields have different levels of professionalization that are accompanied by varied levels of responsibilities, training, and content knowledge. Exploring onboarding successes in nursing could provide valuable insight into generating change in ECEC onboarding practices.

Formal onboarding programs for nurses set goals, reflect on critical organizational factors, consider facilitating organizational fit, and examine cost (Ricker et al., 2021). Human resource managers consider possible implications of compassion fatigue, burnout, insufficient staffing, musculoskeletal discomfort, working hours, and excessive workload during the onboarding program design (Tuna et al., 2022). The field was forced to examine and alter its onboarding practices during the COVID-19 pandemic, with most healthcare facilities opting for a virtual format (Koppolu et al., 2023). The Physician Assistant Education Association (PAEA) identified a specific need for onboarding nurse

practitioners. One-third reported not feeling proficient in their first year, citing anxiety, isolation, and lack of confidence in their new role (Morgan et al., 2020). The PAEA set specific onboarding goals to retain providers, promote provider well-being, ensure the quality of care, standardize expectations, provide competence in commonly underdeveloped areas, contribute to long-term success, and develop recruitment advantages (Koppolu et al., 2023; Morgan et al., 2020).

Information Technology and Software Professionals (IT). High levels of turnover characterize the IT field. The job market is flexible because IT professionals are highly skilled and can work remotely. Soft developers can potentially change jobs yearly (Sharma & Stol, 2020). Some experts suggest it may take up to 12 months for a new hire to become productive within the company; recruiting and onboarding practices are essential for companies to invest in professionals who will stay long-term (Sharma & Stol, 2020). Similarly, education settings experience similar challenges with retaining employees and managing turnover's adverse, costly effects (Redding & Henry, 2019). While the IT field acknowledges that most onboarding programs cover general content areas, those that include organizational socialization experience more onboarding success (Sharma & Stol, 2020). Sharma and Stol's (2020) quantitative study determined a strong statistical significance between support and onboarding success.

Supply Chain Management. Human resource managers working within the supply chain field acknowledge the role that effective onboarding plays in job-related familiarization, rapid mastery of work tasks, and increased productivity (Nielson et al., 2023). It is crucial for employees to understand role expectations. The field has created a

framework for structured onboarding that provides detailed, systematic plans for onboarding, induction, orientation, and organizational socialization (Nielson et al., 2023). Carefully designed initiatives are aligned with goals to couple operational actions and corporate strategies (Nielson et al., 2023).

Higher Education. The university setting varies from other educational settings; however, those employees experience similar challenges with job-related stress, workload, and burnout. Clark et al. (2018) published survey findings that 48% of radiology professors reported experiencing burnout within their first five years. Onboarding programs in higher education recommend practices such as empowerment training (Zamiri et al., 2020), reflective practice (Harwood & Koyama, 2022), and structured mentor programs (Clark et al., 2018). Each of these practices intends to mitigate stress, promote educator wellbeing, and support healthy organizational climates with opportunities for collaboration.

Organizational Socialization

A crucial component of onboarding programs is organizational socialization (OS). Organizational socialization influences job satisfaction, work engagement, and self-efficacy (Song et al., 2015). OS provides opportunities for newly hired employees to secure relevant job skills and develop organizational understanding through supportive social interactions with their coworkers (Gardner et al., 2022). Integrating organizational socialization into the onboarding process elevates the organizational culture. The organization's culture influences productivity, job satisfaction, and professional commitment.

Four types of organizational culture are commonly recognized: clan, adhocracy, market, and hierarchy (Olynick & Li, 2020). In their simplest forms, clan emphasizes collaboration; adhocracy values employee individuality; market focuses on competition; and hierarchy relies on conformity and efficiency (Olynick & Li, 2020). In a quantitative study of organizational culture, clan represented the least reported culture; however, the collaborative nature promoted higher levels of productivity and less job-related stress (Olynick & Li, 2020). Organizational cultures that support socialization foster employee wellbeing and self-efficacy (Gardner et al., 2022).

Addressing Educator Needs

Early educators exhibit higher turnover rates than their elementary counterparts, citing burnout, job-related stress, self-efficacy, and school climate (Kim et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2021). Educators experiencing chronic anxiety and stress tend to experience diminished working memory and greater difficulty managing classroom behaviors (Wang & Hall, 2021). Teachers report feeling unprepared to face classroom management challenges and often seek professional development to facilitate personal learning (Sebastian et al., 2019). Onboarding programs that provide comprehensive training develop teachers' sense of self-efficacy and foster wellbeing (Zhang et al., 2021). Creating a "professional learning community" within the organization through supported socialization encourages continued learning, collaborations, shared goals, and reflective practice (Sebastian et al., 2019).

Project Description

A professional development/training (PD) curriculum was created to address a gap in practice at the selected ECEC center. The PD curriculum focuses on the selected ECEC center's onboarding process, including interview practices, professional development, and induction process. While the existing onboarding practices met the state guidelines for licensed childcare centers, participants reported feeling unprepared for their job responsibilities. Participants also reported inconsistency in the content delivery and timelines and the level of support provided throughout the process. An updated onboarding curriculum meets educator and organizational needs which may contribute to increased educator retention.

Purpose

Onboarding programs that focus on practical skills training (Frogeli et al., 2023), organizational culture (B. Chillakuri, 2020; Sharma & Stol, 2020), role clarity (Nielson et al., 2023; Sharma & Stol, 2020), and social integration (B. Chillakuri, 2020; Nielson et al., 2023; Sibisi & Kappers, 2022) contribute to onboarding success, job engagement, and employee retention. Effective onboarding programs also focus on employee wellbeing and support from leadership throughout the process (B. K. Chillakuri, 2020; Sibisi & Kappers, 2022). Emergent research on Gen Z employees in the workforce indicates that personal connection and frequent feedback from leadership are important motivators contributing to job satisfaction and retention (B. Chillakuri, 2020). With these key facets in mind, the PD curriculum and materials were designed to provide more consistent onboarding practices and induction support to newly hired employees. Addressing the

ECEC center's gap in practice should reduce challenges that contribute to declining educator retention.

Target Audience

The PD curriculum is intended for onboarding purposes. Its target audience is newly hired employees at the selected ECEC center. However, this PD curriculum could easily be adapted to meet the needs of other ECEC centers. Despite focusing on newly hired employees, the PD curriculum contains a short-term mentor program. The mentor program enables current early educators to share their knowledge and experiences while learning alongside their mentees. Because this PD curriculum focuses on organizational socialization, the entire staff is included in the professional development process.

Goals and Learning Outcomes

This PD curriculum aims to increase the consistency of early educator preparation before assuming job responsibilities in the selected ECEC center. Multiple participants shared experiences of not feeling prepared, having high-stress levels, and questioning their self-efficacy during their first year of employment. The structure of this PD curriculum intends to equip newly hired early educators with a more comprehensive skill set before they assume their job responsibilities in the classroom. Consequently, consistent professional development and support should alleviate work-related stress, enhance one's concept of self-efficacy, and reduce within-year turnover.

The PD curriculum combines content modules and experiential learning to achieve learning outcomes. Learning outcomes include the following:

1. Newly hired early educator has introductory knowledge of content including math, literacy, play-based learning, active supervision, Conscious Discipline, and NAEYC standards/expectations.
2. Newly hired early educators engage in experiential learning that contributes to work-related skills, including active supervision, facilitating play, and creating/maintaining learning environments.
3. Newly hired early educators participate in a mentor program that increases their knowledge base and contributes to positive self-efficacy.

Professional Development/Training Curriculum Components and Timeline

The PD curriculum includes a two-step interview process, an orientation week, and a short-term mentor program. The timeline for the curriculum is one year. The PD curriculum could be implemented within the academic year following the publication of this research study.

Interview Process

Previously, the selected ECEC center conducted one interview with an administrator and a “working interview” for some positions. A two-interview process was designed to provide more consistency, role clarity, and focus on organizational fit. For the first interview, prospective early educators will meet with an administrator to discuss their previous work experiences educational background, and ask questions about the ECEC center and its position. At this time, prospective employees will also receive a written job description and have an opportunity to discuss the role. At the conclusion of this interview, prospective employees will schedule an appointment for the second

interview. The ECEC administrator will inform the prospective employee of the observational interview schedule and expectations.

The second interview is an observational interview designed to help the administrative team and prospective employees determine if a good organizational fit is likely. The prospective employee will observe two classrooms in the ECEC center for thirty minutes each. During this time, they will have an opportunity to engage in play and observe learning activities and care practices. During their interview, the prospective employee will also be asked to select a book to read to a large or small group of children in at least one of the classrooms.

The administrative team will make an offer to the candidate(s) they feel best fits the available position(s). If an employment offer is made, the newly hired employee will receive their initial paperwork to complete, an orientation schedule, and a welcome video via email. The welcome video will share information about the organizational culture, goals, values, and mission of the selected ECEC center. These changes were designed to provide consistency in practice, enhance role clarity, and outline the center's shared goals and values. Providing this information before the employee's first day will also streamline the onboarding process, helping new employees feel prepared to arrive at the center.

Orientation Week

Previously, orientation tasks were performed during the employee's first month of employment; however, this was not consistently reported, with some participants' orientation happening over a period of months. During this time, the employee was

working in the classroom. Some participants expressed this inconsistency in practice as a source of frustration and felt inadequately prepared for the job responsibilities. A week-long orientation was designed to streamline the onboarding process and take a more systematic approach. This orientation combines training periods, targeted observation, and social integration for the newly hired educator.

The newly hired educator will receive a full week of orientation training, with an 8:30 to 4:00 daily schedule that includes a lunch period. The orientation schedule will be provided in the welcome email sent to newly hired educators. A detailed schedule for orientation week is available in Appendix A. Orientation includes training modules created for this project and state-mandated training for licensed ECEC centers.

Day 1 includes introductions to the administrative team, targeted observations for content from learning modules, personnel policies, and training modules. Modules outline content in health/safety, early childhood education and care settings, child development, and active supervision. New hires will also meet their first monthly mentor.

Day 2 includes training modules in Conscious Discipline, safe sleep practices, CPR, and first aid. Targeted observations are scheduled to locate Conscious Discipline structures and observe routines, as well as naptime routines and procedures. A certified Red Cross instructor provides CPR and first aid training with accompanying paper-based and skills tests.

Day 3 includes training modules in universal precautions, health/safety procedures, nutrition, licensing regulations, and NAEYC standards. The newly hired

early educator will also have an opportunity to work with their mentor for two hours, caring for children and receiving side-by-side coaching with feedback.

Day 4 includes training modules in child abuse, engaging circle times, curriculum, cleaning/sanitation, and toileting practices. The newly hired educator will be able to observe circle time in two classrooms. The new hire will also help with the end-of-day classroom cleaning process and review procedures and expectations.

Day 5 includes training modules in math activities, play-based learning, and visual schedules/individualized supports. The new hire will also have opportunities to observe small group activities and free choice playtime in various classrooms and spend another two hours working in the classroom with their mentor. This day also includes an administrative check-in to outline the next steps in the induction process and an opportunity for the new educator to ask questions for role clarification or seek additional support and guidance.

Mentor Program

Mentor programs have proved to be a powerful tool in organizational socialization and onboarding. Participants in this study expressed positive sentiments regarding mentor programs but were also concerned about accepting the burden of training someone for an entire year. Participants reported previously assigned new hires who were inadequately prepared and required training in the classroom. This process contributed to additional workload, job dissatisfaction, work-related stress, and, for some participants, attrition. A formal mentor program that provides mentors with materials/resources for a specific content area for a one-month period was designed to

support both newly hired and current early educators. This mentor model consistently provides newly hired early educators with a one-year induction period and targeted support of critical components of early childhood education and care.

A detailed list of mentor topics and resources is available in Appendix A. The newly hired educator will receive targeted mentoring in nine content areas, with two months reserved for educator-selected topics. The first-month mentor is a welcoming mentor who provides initial information, facilitates introductions/socialization, and offers support. The educator selects the final two months' topics as a component of reflective practice. A member of the administrative team will facilitate selecting a topic and assign a mentor. Months two through nine will focus on Conscious Discipline, learning environments and materials, active supervision, supporting play, curriculum and learning activities, challenging behaviors, more in-depth Conscious Discipline, stress management and work-life balance, and professional development opportunities.

Project Evaluation Plan

This project will require long-term and short-term evaluation points to determine its efficacy in improving educator retention and reducing within-year turnover in the selected ECEC center. Administrative check-ins are scheduled during orientation, every three months during induction, and at the end of the educator's first year of employment, providing a formative assessment of the PD curriculum's efficacy toward learning outcomes. The program currently conducts annual employee performance evaluations and will continue to do so. The selected ECEC center also engages in annual program evaluation practices to determine its efficacy in meeting goals and maintaining quality

and best practices. The center's administrative team will continue to utilize its reflective practices and annual evaluation procedures. These practices will evaluate short-term program goals of enhanced organizational socialization, increased focus on educator wellbeing, and higher levels of job satisfaction. This study provides the program with its previous retention and within-year turnover rates. The ECEC center's administrative team will continue monitoring retention and within-year turnover rates annually to evaluate the efficacy of the PD curriculum designed in this capstone study. Rate reductions within three years following implementation will be considered a measure of success.

The selected ECEC center annually communicates program evaluation goals and progress to its stakeholders. Stakeholders include families, collaborating institutions, and community organizations. The annual report will include a summary of short-term progress and retention/within-year turnover rates.

Project Implications

Cost is always an issue when implementing new systems within an ECEC program. The new onboarding plan is labor-intensive because it provides structured support for a year-long induction period. The project design creates additional responsibilities for the administrative team and requires some training for the program mentors. However, the consistency of onboarding practices, additional support provided to educators, and positive changes to organizational culture should increase retention, which will offset the cost incurred from higher levels of turnover. So, the long-term

outcomes of the PD curriculum should outweigh the initial expense of training of implementation.

The PD curriculum created aims to mitigate organizational challenges created by onboarding inconsistencies, address the social needs of early educators, and capitalize on organizational factors that contribute to job satisfaction. The project encapsulates the three themes that emerged from the qualitative data collected in this study. This project identified and addressed a gap in practice to provide the selected ECEC center with a data-driven approach to increasing educator retention and decreasing within-year turnover. Ideally, this project will contribute to enhanced organizational culture, improved educator wellbeing, program consistency, and high-quality early learning environments. This project also intends to alleviate the financial burden caused by turnover expenses to facilitate program stability for the ECEC center and the local community.

Currently, the local community expresses concern for access to high-quality early education and care. The community has held multiple meetings regarding the topic and formed an exploratory grant writing committee seeking funds for ECEC in the local community. The selected ECEC center is the largest in the area. Threats to its long-term stability would substantially impact the local community. Stabilizing the center's educator retention, reducing turnover costs, and maintaining equitable access to high-quality early experiences is imperative for the community and its workforce. This project intends to positively contribute to the local community by providing consistent

preparation and educator support for the selected ECEC center, in turn strengthening the program and enabling it to continue serving the community.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Project Strengths and Limitations

This capstone project intended to explore previous and current early educators' perceptions of factors influencing educator retention and within-year turnover in the selected ECEC center. The problem addressed in this study was that despite adopting new retention practices, a rural midwestern ECEC center's administrative team continues to face challenges in retaining early educators, particularly beyond the first year of employment. Through qualitative data collection and analysis, three themes emerged. First, inconsistent onboarding and induction practices create challenges that impact the collective efficacy of the program and influence retention and turnover. Second, relationships and positive social aspects in the working environment strongly influence job satisfaction and contribute toward educator retention. Last, both personal and organizational factors influence an individual's intentions to stay or leave an ECEC center; however, some factors significantly mitigate dissatisfaction and contribute to educator retention.

These three themes indicate a gap in practice within the selected ECEC center. The qualitative data collected and onboarding literature, within and outside the early education field, were reviewed and used to design a data-driven approach to addressing the problem. The resulting project is an onboarding-focused professional development/training curriculum that provides systematic interviewing and orientation procedures, relevant training to meet educators' needs, enhanced organizational socialization, and a mentor program that supports educators through their first year of

employment. The review of literature and data analysis section provided the rationale for the content and timeline of the PD curriculum.

This onboarding program is center-specific. The data were collected from one participating center and created to meet its specific needs. The project encompasses state-mandated training topics with skills early educators reported as necessary for success in their position. The project uses current onboarding practices and accounts for demographic changes in the ECEC center. Because the center employs mostly younger, less-educated teachers, it was essential to research the needs of Gen Z employees in the workforce and organizational support for professional development pathways. The project is also designed with the ECEC center's operating hours to create a feasible orientation training. The project design also considered program size, number of classrooms, access to training, current/previous evaluation practices, and state requirements.

While the specificity of this project is a strength, it is also a limitation. Other ECEC center administrative teams may face similar challenges, but their problem should be addressed differently. The gap in practice identified and addressed in this capstone project cannot be generalized to other ECEC centers in this region without further qualitative research utilizing a larger sample. Replicating this research study with additional programs may yield another strategy for addressing the problem of declining retention in ECEC centers.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

Expanding this research topic could provide valuable insights for improving educator retention in ECEC centers. A mixed methods approach using a larger sample could facilitate further research. Quantitative methods, such as a state-wide survey, could identify onboarding concerns for ECEC centers and could examine the extent of the problem and suggest changes for state-mandated training and licensing guidelines. However, qualitative methods are necessary to determine the support needed to elevate organizational culture through enhanced socialization, promote early educator wellbeing, and evaluate working conditions that contribute to job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Multiple participants in this study indicated a need for administrators and policy-makers to listen to educators' concerns. They want their voices heard and reflected in early childhood policy and funding. Qualitative methodology is essential to explore the phenomenon of educator retention, particularly when viewing it through Herzberg's two-factor theory of motivation.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

ECEC centers play a significant role in the lives of children, their families, and the local community. Families need safe, nurturing environments for their young children. Communities need young children to have meaningful early experiences supporting their holistic development for the current and future workforce. Without access to high-quality early learning and childcare, our communities suffer. Researchers, community leaders, policy-makers, and ECEC leaders must find ways to increase educator retention.

Supporting early educators positively contributes to social change in multiple ways. First, the ECEC is predominantly employed by females, including a substantial number of ECEC centers owned and operated by women. Generating change in this field supports working mothers who may struggle to achieve work-life balance in other professions. Secondly, providing equitable access to high-quality early experiences closes socioeconomic achievement gaps by ensuring healthy child development for all children.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

Increasing educator retention is paramount to stabilizing ECEC centers and maintaining high-quality education and care for children. Early educators are the cornerstone of program quality. This project objectively evaluated program policy, procedures, and practices by speaking with current and previous early educators to identify specific growth areas. This project provides a tangible means of addressing a problem within the field. ECEC administrators facing similar challenges with retention and turnover could use the project design from this capstone as part of their reflective practice and program evaluation to meet their center's specific onboarding and induction needs. Improving early educator retention enhances the quality of education and care provided and positively influences children, families, and local communities.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

The selected ECEC center faces financial challenges created by turnover experiences that threaten the long-term stability of the program (Administrator 1, personal conversation, December 19, 2022). High levels of within-year turnover also hinder the collective efficacy and quality of the ECEC program. This PD curriculum will

better prepare newly hired early educators for their classroom responsibilities. The extended induction period is designed to provide support through the critical first year to reduce within-year turnover. The PD curriculum designed is a data-driven approach to target specific challenges to the program. Implementing these measures should provide both short and long-term success toward goals. Strengthening the selected ECEC program positively impacts the local community. The program is the largest and only accredited facility in the rural midwestern community. Community organizations have voiced concerns regarding the ECEC center's long-term stability and fear that its closure would substantially impact the local community and its workforce. Implementing this capstone project positively will influence the selected ECEC center and its local community.

The selected ECEC center is not the only center in its state experiencing retention and within-year turnover challenges. Other ECEC centers that identify a gap in practice regarding their onboarding practices could use components from this capstone study to create their own PD curriculum. Fields outside of education have adopted more systematic models for onboarding, induction, and organizational socialization practices. Further research of those models could provide valuable insights for ECEC administrators designing retention-minded onboarding programs for their centers. This capstone study could serve as a template for generating a professional development/training curriculum that meets their specific onboarding needs.

Further mixed-methodology research could provide valuable insights into the support necessary for strengthening the state's ECEC framework and communities. A

deeper understanding of the organizational factors influencing early educator retention and within-year turnover could inform upcoming policy initiatives, particularly funding for equitable access to care and professionalizing early educators. Further, a state-wide sample could provide a more nuanced understanding of the problem.

Conclusion

This capstone project is specific to the participating research site and its local population of early educators and was designed as a tangible means of addressing the selected ECEC center's problem with educator retention by addressing a gap in practice. The capstone project provides a comprehensive onboarding program intended to support the needs of younger, less professionalized early educators entering the workforce. The capstone project aims to stabilize practices in the participating ECEC center by generating training opportunities whose consistent implementation would better prepare early educators for challenges faced in the classroom and enhance the collective efficacy of the program.

Through this study, I acknowledge significant challenges in the early childhood education and care field; however, challenges cannot be addressed until the ECEC field can engage in reflective practices at the local, state, and national levels. Identifying the organizational factors contributing to declining early educator retention and increased within-year turnover is imperative for the ECEC field. Children, families, and communities deserve equitable access to high-quality early education and care. Early educators deserve fair compensation and healthy working environments. Thus, implementing a data-driven response to reflective practice will strengthen this

participating ECEC center and its local community. It is a small step toward greater change.

While this capstone project is site-specific, the utilization of the research design and the literature review is advantageous for ECEC center administrators who desire to study the organizational factors that influence educator retention and within-year turnover. Improving educator retention is paramount in providing high-quality early experiences. A better understanding of organizational factors contributing to educator retention and within-year turnover provides valuable insights into supporting educator wellbeing and professionalization. ECEC professionals who choose to generate change locally and share that change with others contribute to improving the larger ECEC framework and repairing a fragmented field that significantly influences our future generations.

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Appendix A: The Project

Overview

This project is intended to address the gap in practice regarding inconsistent onboarding practices that create challenges for program stability and collective efficacy, which contributes to early educator retention and turnover. Previously, the selected ECEC program had an orientation process that met the state requirements for licensed centers; however, it did not have a consistent timeline or levels of support. Participants expressed the previous orientation left them unprepared for the challenges encountered in their position. The stress created by this situation influenced some participants' intentions to stay or leave the ECEC center.

This capstone project has three parts. The first component is a two-step interview process that includes an observational interview. Redesigning the interview process ensures prospective employees know and understand the position's responsibilities. It is also an important recruitment tool to determine a prospective employee's organizational fit. A welcome presentation is designed to communicate information and prepare newly hired employees for orientation.

The second component is a weeklong orientation process that includes state-mandated and researcher-created training modules and targeted observation periods. The researcher-created training modules are based on the data collected to address the inconsistency of training and experience that influenced participants' stress levels and self-efficacy. The provided training is designed for the first week of employment, so newly hired employees are given the skills needed for success in their position. It also

removes the burden of training from the current educators. Multiple participants expressed that training newly hired employees while performing their job responsibilities compounded their work-related stress.

The third component is a twelve-month mentor program that provides organizational socialization and educator support. The mentor program assigns newly hired employees with multiple short-term mentors. Ten topics have been selected, with the remaining two months reserved for employee-selected topics based on their reflective practice and needs. The mentor program also includes administrative check-ins to facilitate consistent communication, reflective practice, and educator support.

Important Information

The participating ECEC center is masked in this study per Walden University's IRB guidelines for doctoral research. [ECEC center] is used for publication on the materials in appendices A and B, and the state's name is redacted. Also, this project refers to state-mandated training. Requirements vary among states. Anyone using this project as a reference must utilize the required training for their state. Lastly, this project includes Conscious Discipline as a training topic. Conscious Discipline is a copyrighted, social-emotional curriculum belonging to Dr. Becky Bailey and her associated companies, Loving Guidance and Conscious Discipline. Materials presented in this study were obtained from the free resources available to the general public on the company's website.

Interview and Welcome Process

This section of the project includes an initial interview protocol for the administrative team. It is a conversational interview accompanied by a tour of the ECEC center. It also includes interview protocols for the observational interview—one page to be completed by the prospective employee and another by the classroom teacher. If a prospective employee accepts a position, (s)he will receive a welcome email that includes a PowerPoint presentation with information for the newly hired employee. In this state, licensed centers' employees must have a physical, background check, drug screen, and TB test on file. The appointment dates are included in this email to ensure that these appointments do not conflict with the orientation schedule.

[ECEC Center]

Initial Interview

Name: _____

Email: _____


 Date: _____

Please, tell me about yourself.	
What attracted you to our position?	
What role do you feel family engagement plays in a program? How would you encourage family engagement in your classroom?	
What skills do you feel are most important for early educators? Which of those is your professional strength?	
What questions would you like to ask me about our program? (if they do not ask any, remind them to feel free to ask questions at <u>anytime</u> during the tour)	

Administrator Signature: _____

[ECEC Center]
Observational Interview

Name: _____

Date: _____ Observation Room: _____

What activities do you participate in during your classroom time?

Classroom Observations

Reflections

[ECEC Center]
Observational Interview

Prospective employee: _____

Date: _____

Please rate the prospective employee's time in your classroom using the following scale:

1 – did not meet expectations 2 – met expectations 3 - exceeded expectations

Classroom Interactions			
Engaged in play	1	2	3
Made eye contact/on child's level	1	2	3
Pleasant tone of voice	1	2	3
Teacher Activity			
Please circle: Circle Time Reading	Small Group Reading	Multiple Individual Reading	
Age-appropriate book selection	1	2	3
Interesting, engaging reading	1	2	3
Use of props (leave blank if not applicable)	1	2	3
Provided opportunities for discussion	1	2	3
Expanded vocabulary	1	2	3

Additional Comments

Teacher Signature: _____

Welcome Presentation



We want to welcome you to [ECEC Center].

We are pleased that you have joined our team of caring, dedicated individuals. Our work with young children is challenging, rewarding, and essential to our community. We shape the future when we work with young children. At [ECEC Center], we want to positively influence the lives of the children and families we serve. Our goal is to provide early education and care of the highest quality. Each day is a new opportunity to make a difference in young children's lives and create a quality program.

Our program has been shaped by the commitment, dedication, and creativity of our employees. Thank you for sharing your talents with us. We hope that you will enjoy your employment at [ECEC Center].

About [ECEC Center]

[ECEC Center] has been serving the local community since 1996; providing culturally responsive, inclusive early education and care for children from six weeks old through kindergarten. We continue to grow and change with the community's needs in each of our three locations.

A detailed handbook is included in this email. The following presentation provides some helpful information about our program, your orientation week, and your new position at [ECEC Center]

[ECEC Center's] Philosophy

At [ECEC Center], every child is a valued member of our school family. We believe that positive, caring relationships are the foundation for learning. We work to develop a positive relationship with each child and support and encourage children as they develop positive relationships with others. We recognize the importance of each child's family and welcome family involvement in all aspects of our program.

We believe...

- All children have the potential to be successful learners
- Early education should be developmentally and individually appropriate
- Curriculum should include both teacher- and child-directed learning experiences
- Children learn best as active participants of their own learning

Our Vision

Our vision is that [ECEC Center] will provide early education and care of the highest quality, encouraging the child's developmental growth and enabling successful, enthusiastic, life-long learning. [ECEC Center] envisions a collaborative early childhood program that supports children, families, and our community.



Our Mission

Our mission is to offer a high-quality early education and care program that enriches the lives of children and their families. [ECEC Center] is committed to maintaining highly qualified staff who utilize best practices to deliver responsive, developmentally appropriate early education and care.

Goals for Our Employees

1. Each employee will be a caring, well-trained, competent early childhood professional.
2. Our work environment will be friendly and supportive.
3. Employees will collaborate and work together as a school family.
4. Employees will have varied opportunities for professional development.
5. Employees will have opportunities for increased compensation.

Important Information

- Cell phones are not permitted in classrooms. Your cellphone must be kept in locker during your scheduled working hours with children.
- A significant portion of our day is spent on our feet or on the playground. We require closed-toed shoes. Comfortable, supportive, athletic-style shoes are recommended.
- Caring for children requires various movements. We ask that you wear comfortable clothes you enable you to move easily.
- More detailed information about professional appearance and cellphone policies are available in the attached staff handbook

Orientation Overview

- Your first week will be an orientation period with a combination of online and experiential learning.
- Your work schedule for orientation week will be Monday through Friday from 8:30 – 4:00 (with a 30-minute lunch break). After your orientation period, you will work the scheduled hours discussed in your job offer.
- We will provide a notebook. If you have another method of organizing your learning, feel free to bring whatever you would like. You will be assigned a personal locker for your belongings at your arrival.

Orientation Week Schedule – Day 1

Meet Administrative Team	Meet First Monthly Mentor
Introduction to Early Childhood and Out of School Learning (ECOSL) – Module 1: Child Development	Classroom Observation (safe learning environments)
Classroom Observation (child development)	Personnel Policies
Introduction to ECOSL – Module 2: Health	Active Supervision Training
Classroom Observation (health practices)	Classroom Observation (active supervision and transitioning children)
Lunch Break	
Introduction to ECOSL – Module 3: Safety	

Day 2

Conscious Discipline Training	CPR Training (and tests)
Classroom Observation (Conscious Discipline structures)	First Aid Training (and skills test)
Safe Sleep Practices – Module 1: Reducing Sudden Unexpected Infant Death	
Safe Sleep Practices – Module 2: Implementation in Childcare Settings	
Lunch Break	
Nap Room Observation	

Day 3

Universal Precautions	Working with Infants & Toddlers (includes Babydoll Circle Time)
Introduction to Paths to Quality	Working in an Infant/Toddler classroom (side-by-side coaching with teacher) – 2 hours
Nutrition Training	
Mealtime Observation	
Lunch Break	
NAEYC accreditation process/standards and Code of Ethics	

Day 4

Child Abuse and Neglect Detection and Prevention Training	[ECEC Center] Curriculum and Lesson Plans
Engaging Circle Times & Read Alouds	Cleaning & Sanitation Training
Classroom Observation – circle time (toddler)	Diaper/Toileting Training & Tour of changing areas and supplies
Classroom Observation – circle time (preschool)	Help staff member clean a classroom and review the procedures
Lunch Break	
Introduction to the New [REDACTED] Early Learning Foundations	

Day 5

Counting Collections & Math Activities Training	Administrative Check-in
Classroom Observation – toddler math	Visual Schedules & Individualized Supports
Classroom Observation – preschool math	Working in mentor teacher's classroom with mentor and children (2 hours)
Play-Based Learning	
Lunch Break	
Classroom Observation – facilitating play in free choice playtime	

Navigating Your First Year at [ECEC Center]

Many new early educators find their first year to be a challenging experience. At [ECEC Center], we strive to offer you the support and training needed for success.

Tools Provided:

- Onboarding process that prepares you for your position
- Orientation that provides general skill set necessary for success before you work in your new position
- 1-year induction period with frequent administrative check-ins and feedback
- 12 short-term mentors to support your needs
- Professional Development Plan to set achievable goals in your personal career path

Mentor Program Overview

At [ECEC Center] we work together as a school family toward our shared goals and our mission to provide high-quality early learning experiences to our local community.

We are a collaborative group of early educators and want to give you an opportunity to work with each member of our school family.

During your first year, you will have a 12 short-term mentors; working with each mentor for a 1-month period. Each mentor will share their expertise with you and provide opportunities for you to ask questions and request resources.



Monthly Mentor Topics

1. Meeting the staff and help getting settled	7. Family Communication & Engagement
2. Conscious Discipline	8. Conscious Discipline
3. Learning Environments and Materials	9. Stress Management & Work-life Balance
4. Active Supervision & Supporting Play	10. Professional Development
5. Curriculum, Lesson Plans, & Learning Activities	11. Your choice – determined by professional development plan
6. Challenging Behaviors	12. Your choice – determined by professional development plan



Orientation Week

Inconsistent onboarding practices created knowledge gaps and miscommunications among early educators in the selected ECEC program, which often generated challenges that hindered the program's collective efficacy. Participants discussed not feeling prepared for classroom challenges when working in their assigned positions. This project creates an orientation schedule that empowers newly hired early educators with information and skills obtained through online and experiential learning methods to address this gap in practice. The schedule is completed before newly hired employees begin working in their assigned positions.

The orientation schedule includes state-mandated training modules, which are indicated with a double asterisk **. It also contains optional training modules selected by the researcher but obtained through the state online learning website. These training modules are indicated with a single asterisk *. The researcher created all other training modules to emphasize specific components discussed by participants in this study. Training modules created by the state are free access to anyone who creates a username and password on the state's Office of Early Childhood and Out of School Learning website. Slides to the researcher-created training modules are located in Appendix B.

Table A1*Orientation – Day 1*

Time	Activity
8:30	Meet the administrative team
8:40 – 9:40	Introduction to Early Childhood ... Module 1: Child Development**
9:40 – 10:10	Classroom Observation (developmentally appropriate practice)
10:10 – 11:10	Introduction to Early Childhood...Module 2: Health**
11:10 – 11:40	Classroom Observation (healthy practices)
11:40 – 12:10	Lunch Break
12:10 – 1:10	Introduction to Early Childhood...Module 3: Safety**
1:10 – 1:40	Classroom Observation (safe learning environments)
1:40 – 2:20	Personnel Policies
2:20 – 3:20	Active Supervision
3:20 – 4:00	Meet first monthly mentor & classroom observation (supervision and transitions)

Note. Times are subject to change slightly based on the length of time to complete training modules

Table A2*Orientation – Day 2*

Time	Activity
8:30 – 9:30	Conscious Discipline
9:30 – 10:30	Classroom Observation (Conscious Discipline)
10:30 – 11:30	Safe Sleep Practices Module 1: Reducing Sudden Unexpected Infant Death**
11:30 – 12:30	Safe Sleep Practices Module 2: Implementation in Childcare Settings**
12:30 – 1:00	Lunch Break
1:00 – 2:00	Observe Naptime (including transition to)
2:00 – 3:00	CPR Training**
3:00 – 4:00	First Aid Training**

Note. Times are subject to change slightly based on the length of time to complete training modules.

Table A3*Orientation – Day 3*

Time	Activity
8:30 – 9:30	Universal Precautions**
9:30 – 10:30	Introduction to Paths to Quality*
10:30 – 11:30	Nutrition in Early Childhood Settings
11:30 – 12:30	Observe Mealtimes
12:30 – 1:00	Lunch Break
1:00 – 2:00	NAEYC standards/accreditation process & code of ethics
2:00 – 3:00	Working with Infants & Toddlers
3:00 – 4:00	Infant/Toddler Classroom Observation

Note. Times are subject to change slightly based on the length of time to complete training modules.

Table A4*Orientation – Day 4*

Time	Activity
8:30 – 9:30	Child Abuse and Neglect Detection and Prevention**
9:30 – 10:30	Engaging Circle Times & Read Alouds
10:30 – 11:30	Classroom Observations (circle times)
11:30 – 12:00	Lunch Break
12:00 – 1:00	Introduction to the New [REDACTED] Early Learning Foundations*
1:00 – 2:00	[ECEC Center] Curriculum and Lesson Planning
2:00 – 2:30	Cleaning & Sanitation Training
2:30 – 3:00	Diaper/Toileting Training
3:00 – 4:00	Help clean a classroom and review procedures with a staff member

Note. Times are subject to change slightly based on the length of time to complete training modules.

Table A5*Orientation – Day 5*

Time	Activity
8:30 – 9:30	Counting Collections & Math Activities
9:30 – 10:00	Classroom Observation (toddler math)
10:00 – 10:30	Classroom Observation (preschool math)
10:30 – 11:30	Play-Based Learning
11:30 – 12:00	Lunch Break
12:00 – 1:00	Classroom Observation (free choice playtime)
1:00 – 1:20	Administrative Check-in
1:20 – 1:50	Visual Schedules & Individualized Supports
1:50 – 3:50	Working in a mentor teacher's classroom with teacher and children

Note. Times are subject to change slightly based on the length of time to complete training modules.

Induction Mentor Program

A consistent 12-month induction program is designed to reduce within-year turnover and provide early educator support. Participants spoke positively about mentor programs but expressed concerns and challenges with implementation in the ECEC setting. Some participants' previous mentor experiences had created additional work-related stress over time. A short-term mentor was designed for this project to address this issue. Short-term mentors enable current educators to share expertise and take on meaningful leadership roles without making a long-term commitment. The short-term

design also facilitates organizational socialization because newly hired employees can collaborate with multiple educators.

Table A6

Monthly Mentor Plan

Month Number	Targeted Mentor Content
1	Introduction to the ECEC program and its staff
2	Conscious Discipline
3	Learning Environments/Materials
4	Active Supervision & Supporting Play
5	Curriculum, Lesson Plans, & Learning Activities
6	Challenging Behaviors
7	Family Communications & Engagement
8	Conscious Discipline
9	Stress Management & Work-Life Balance
10	Professional Develop
11	Employee-selected based on professional development plan and educator needs
12	Employee-selected based on professional development plan and educator needs

Mentors and mentees will meet weekly each month. Meetings will vary in length depending on the educators' needs. During this time, the mentee is encouraged to ask questions, collaborate with their mentor, and request resources. The following materials are designed to facilitate discussion and guide learning; however, the mentor program intends to be flexible to provide meaningful support.

Mentor Resources

[ECEC Center]

Induction Mentor Program

Month 1- Welcome to Our School Family

Week 1	<p>Introductions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce yourself • Find out about their experiences • Share your experiences at [ECEC Center] • Discuss personal interests, hobbies, families, etc.
Week 2	<p>Staff Introductions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the mentee to other staff members – highlight what they do and how they can be helpful • Check in with mentee to see how the first week went • Offer opportunities for questions
Week 3	<p>No meeting this week - mentee will have administrative check-in during this time</p>
Week 4	<p>Introduce the next mentor and content area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why we use Conscious Discipline • Share your experience with Conscious Discipline in your position • Provide opportunities for questions and resource requests

[ECEC Center]

Induction Mentor Program	Month 2- Conscious Discipline
Week 1	Introduce Conscious Discipline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the structures • Physically show different structures in different classrooms • Show the active calming centers and how to use them • Have your mentee select a structure to focus on in their classroom
Week 2	Greetings, Breathing Exercises & I Love You Rituals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach your mentee some greetings • Show your mentee your favorite breathing exercises (2-3) • Teach your mentee your favorite I Love You Ritual • Help your mentee create visuals for greetings and breathing exercises (if your mentee is in a lead position)
Week 3	Safe Place <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss how and when to use the classroom safe place • Provide opportunity for your mentee to ask questions • Show your classroom safe place and materials • Help your mentee create a classroom safe place (if your mentee is in a lead position)
Week 4	Positive Intent <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss positive intent and why it is important for children • Share your experiences • Check in with your mentee – how do they feel about Conscious Discipline? How is going in their classroom? Do they need help with any aspects or additional materials?

[ECEC Center]**Induction Mentor Program Month 3- Learning Environments/ Materials**

Week 1	<p>Environments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit different rooms and look at the arrangement • Go over the different types of centers required for each room and some typical materials found in each • Ask about their room – are there spaces that are problematic? Do they like the arrangement? Do they have their centers clearly defined and marked?
Week 2	<p>Materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the materials in their classroom (if they are a floating assistant, try to visit multiple rooms) • Creating provocations – show and discuss with them some of your favorite materials to pair together, tray activities, sensory bins, etc. • Collaborate with them on how they could use their existing materials to create provocations in their classroom
Week 3	<p>Center Labels and Movement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss how they are moving children among centers • Show them different visual movement strategies for helping children navigate centers, currently in place in other classrooms • Collaborate on transitions to and from centers, and center movement – offer support and help create visuals if needed
Week 4	<p>Rotating Materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show your mentee where additional materials are located • Discuss how often you rotate materials (with theme, with interest, on a scheduled basis, etc.) • Collaborate with mentee on strategies for rotating materials

[ECEC Center]**Induction Mentor Program****Month 4- Active Supervision & Supporting Play**

Week 1	<p>Active Supervision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share some of your classroom management strategies • Ask your mentee about their classroom – how is it going? Are there difficult periods in the day? Is the schedule working well? Etc. • Highlight transition strategies and the importance of counting children often; review the Kaymbu check-in/out process
Week 2	<p>Playground Supervision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss playground supervision • Share ways that you can play with children while still supervising the play of other children • Check in with your mentee on their playground times • Collaborate on strategies for using the additional fenced areas and loose parts to extend/elevate children’s outdoor playtime
Week 3	<p>Supporting Play</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind your mentee that free choice playtime can be challenging; ask them about their room and offer support if needed • Share strategies for supporting play – where do you like to position yourself? How frequently do you move? Do you have a preferred center to begin in? etc. • Collaborate with your mentee on strategies they can use to support play in their classroom
Week 4	<p>Creating Play-based Learning Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (If possible) set aside time to lesson plan together with your mentee • Discuss how to use questions and reflections to extend play into learning opportunities • Share some of your favorite games to play with children and why you like them, what skills the children learn, and what materials they would need to play those games in their classroom

[ECEC Center]
Induction Mentor Program **Month 5- Curriculum, Lesson Plans, & Learning Activities**

Week 1	<p>Curriculum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go through the month’s curriculum with your mentee – highlight where to find the learning goals and the differentiation tables • Locate books from the curriculum together – share your process on selecting books for your classroom • Share some of your favorite activities for the curriculum theme and collaborate on activities to try in their classroom
Week 2	<p>Curriculum and COR Maps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go through the curriculum map with your mentee – show them how to use the map to anticipate upcoming goals and plan accordingly • Go through the COR maps with your mentee – discuss your strategies for documenting observations • If your mentee is a lead teacher, review the process for entering observations into the COR assessment and how/when the data is communicated to families
Week 3	<p>Lesson Plans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If your mentee is an assistant – walk them through your lesson plans, so they know how to read and follow them if they are asked to substitute teach a classroom • If your mentee is a lead teacher – create your lesson plans together; side-by-side coaching to ensure they know how to effectively use the goal setting page and lesson plan template
Week 4	<p>Setting Goals and Creating Intentional Learning Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the goal setting page and discuss how it helps inform the lesson plans and observations collected • Provide an opportunity for your mentee to ask questions, seek materials, etc.

[ECEC Center]**Induction Mentor Program****Month 6- Challenging Behaviors**

Week 1	Quick introduction (if needed) – no meeting because this week is a scheduled administer check-in for the mentee
Week 2	<p>Composure when addressing challenging behaviors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the skill of composure • Share your personal strategies for maintaining composure while addressing challenging behaviors • Discuss triggers – it’s okay to have them and knowing them helps early educators manage triggers more effectively
Week 3	<p>Facilitating conflict resolution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss how and when to intervene with conflict resolution • Review Conscious Discipline vocabulary for resolving conflict • Share your strategies for facilitating conflict resolution • Look at classroom patterns to determine if there is a period of time or specific center with more conflict than others; and collaborate on possible solutions to minimize conflict
Week 4	<p>Implementing Consequences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the difference between redirection and consequences • Review the Conscious Discipline consequence model • Share how you use this model in your classroom and help your mentee with how they might use it more effectively in their classroom

[ECEC Center]

Induction Mentor Program	Month 7- Family Communications
Week 1	Using the Kaymbu app <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review processes for using the communication app – what gets communicated through the app and when • Show how to make a storyboard • If your mentee is a lead teacher – show how to access COR summary data to share with families during conferences
Week 2	Family Engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share your favorite family engagement activities • Collaborate to create engagement opportunities in the mentees classroom
Week 3	Professional Language <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review professional language and discuss why our word choices are important • Review communication policies (ie: social media policy, no private conversations in the foyer, etc.)
Week 4	Calendars and Newsletters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If your mentee is a lead teacher, show examples of various calendars and newsletters in the building • Collaborate with the mentee on when and what format they would like to use for their classroom • If your mentee is an assistant who does not create family communication documents, use this opportunity as a social check-in to see how they are doing in their current position and provide them an opportunity to ask questions

[ECEC Center]**Induction Mentor Program****Month 8- Conscious Discipline**

Week 1	<p>Reviewing Brain States and Tools for Each State</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the three brain states • Discuss what they look like and what tools are helpful to address each state • Provide an opportunity for mentee to reflect on Conscious Discipline use in their classroom and what areas they would like to know more about
Week 2	<p>Review Routines and Structures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on routines and structures in place in the classroom – how they working? Are more materials needed? Should something change? Etc. • If mentee is a lead teacher, help them freshen up visuals and add materials or structures to the classroom
Week 3	<p>Review Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conscious Discipline has several vocabulary terms that are important to implementation; review them with your mentee and make sure they are comfortable with the models (ie: your face looks like this [describe] you seem...) • Provide an opportunity for the mentee to practice noticing, an assertive command, and a consequence model
Week 4	<p>Babydoll Circle Time, Active Calming, and Feeling Buddies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show your mentee where to find the materials for each of these activities (if needed) • Review the active calming process and when it is used • Review baby doll circle time model – make sure to emphasize the need for eye contact, playfulness, and routine • Review how and when to use the feeling buddies • If needed, supply extra materials or photocopies of scripts to help the mentee get started

[ECEC Center]**Induction Mentor Program Month 9 – Stress Management & Work-life Balance**

Week 1	Introduce yourself (if you have not already met this employee) – No meeting this week; it is a scheduled administrator check-in
Week 2	<p>Stress Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss challenges that arise in the ECEC center • Share some of your strategies for managing stress and potential strategies for your mentee (if needed) <p>*This should be an open, non-judgmental conversation. We all have different stressors in our lives. We all have different methods for disengaging stress. Each is valuable and important and should be treated with respect.</p>
Week 3	<p>Work-life Balance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide the mentee with an opportunity to reflect on work-life balance • Share some of your strategies for maintaining balance
Week 4	<p>Socialization & Reflection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By this point, the mentee should be more comfortable with their position at [ECEC Center]. Take this opportunity to socialize with one another and reflect on progress and areas of development.

[ECEC Center]**Induction Mentor Program****Month 10 – Professional Development**

Week 1	Professional Development Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at the [ECEC Center] professional development plan form and discuss the components on it • If comfortable, show your mentee your professional development plan
Week 2	Exploring the TEACH Scholarship and other Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the CDA program • Discuss the TEACH Scholarship for obtaining an undergraduate or graduate degree • If your mentee is interested, look at website for various programs and discuss what is important to them in a program • Feel free to add an administrator to this meeting, if you would like help with providing resources or answering questions
Week 3	Setting Short-Term and Long-Term Goals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate to create some short-term and long-term professional goals for the mentee – Do they plan on staying in early childhood? What leadership aspects would they like to assume at some point? Etc.
Week 4	Creating a Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an opportunity for the mentee to create their professional development plan, offering support as needed.

[ECEC Center]

Induction Mentor Program Topic: _____

Week 1	
Week 2	
Week 3	
Week 4	

Appendix B: Training Presentation Slides

Active Supervision

Elements of Active Supervision

- Set up the Environment
- Position Staff
- Scan and Count
- Listen
- Anticipate Children's Behavior
- Engage and Redirect

Set up the Environment

- Spaces need to be clean and organized
- Furniture is appropriately sized (waist height or shorter, and anchored to the wall if necessary)
- Centers should be clearly-defined spaces with adequate room for play
- Arrange furniture so adults can see every portion of the room
- Use visuals to help children easily navigate the space

Position Staff

Staff should position themselves where they can see and hear children at all times

Know your room and position yourself in areas where you know help is needed (sensory table, dramatic play, etc.)

Keep walkways clear and do not allow children to play in front of entrance/exits

Never leave children unattended

Scan and Count

- Staff should always know how many children they have
- Periodically scan and count
- Follow check-in and check-out procedures on kaymbu
- Count children as part of your transition routines

Listen

- Listen to the room around you - identify when a child needs support
- Avoid background music
- Communicate with children verbally and nonverbally – model appropriate speaking volume for the space

Anticipate Children's Behavior

Positive relationships with the children in your care are essential for active supervision

Know challenging areas in the classroom

Anticipate which children need additional support during transition periods

Position staff members in key areas in the classroom (don't stand and sit together)

Engage and Redirect

- Engaging and supporting children in interesting activities reduces challenging behaviors
- Support play and encourage problem-solving
- Facilitate conflict resolution among peers
- Redirect unsafe behaviors

Active Supervision at [ECEC Center]

- Always know your number – count periodically and often
- Relationships are important – know your children and their needs
- Prepare your environment and have needed materials
- Move around the room – engage with multiple children
- Communicate with your co-teacher and position yourselves accordingly

Examples of Active Supervision on the playground

- Staff members position themselves in a triangle on the playground, so all children can be seen
- Staff members communicate with each other to individualize transitions for children who need extra support moving from the playground to the classroom
- A staff member counts children entering the playground area and verbalizes to her teaching partner that all children are accounted for

Examples of active supervision in the classroom

- A staff member knows that a specific friend tends to be aggressive with toys in the sand table. She anticipates his behavior and stands behind him, prompting his play and engaging him with the materials he has.
- Use materials (trays, rugs, plastic shapes, etc.) to visually designate spaces for children
- During free choice playtime, a staff member stops what she is doing to scan the room, count children, and conduct a quick name-to-face check

Examples of Active Supervision in the Dining Area

- Staff members sit at the table during lunch and engage children in conversation
- A staff member hears a child cough and quickly moves close to check for signs of choking
- Staff members are prepared to take children who eat quickly back to their classroom to reduce waiting time and avoid challenging behaviors

Planning & Managing Transitions

- Move children in small groups
- Create visuals to help children identify and anticipate the routine
- Position staff members so that children can be seen at all times
- Count children during transition periods
- Have a transition plan (walk on tiptoes, fly like butterflies, etc.)
- Clearly communicate transition routines with children
- Have materials prepared for children (to reduce wait time)

Transition Strategies

- Have a signal to begin a transition such as cleaning up in the classroom (ex: timer, “hands on top means time to stop”, etc.)
- Create and display visuals of transitions (ex: jacket in cubby, wash hands, choose a table)
- Use chairs, rug, or colored shapes to designate a space to sit for circle times
- Transition children who are the least engaged (wandering, aggressive play, running, etc.) first

Individualizing Transitions

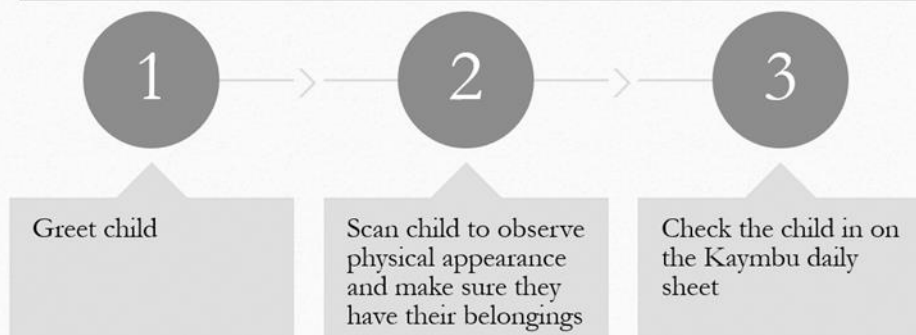
Transitions can be difficult for some children. They may need additional support such as:

- A visual timer to signal a transition
- A five - minute warning prior to a transition
- Moving in a smaller group
- Holding a child’s hand while walking from one area to another
- Individualized transition plan for a child’s day (similar to a visual schedule)

Communicating Effectively

- Avoid announcement – communicate in a calm quiet voice; walk to children and make eye-contact
- Focus on the behavior you want – “walk to the bathroom and wash your hands”
- Use gestures to help children visualize the directions
- Provide motivation – “we need to clean up our blocks, so we can go outside”

Morning Arrival Procedures



Procedures for the Preschool to Childcare Transition

Prepare children to leave preschool for home (do a quick name-to-face check) and walk them to the foyer

Count the children staying for childcare

If you get additional children, count again and do a quick name-to-face check

Active supervision (including transition periods) provides safe, inclusive early learning environments for the children in our care.

Conscious Discipline

INTRODUCTION TO CONSCIOUS DISCIPLINE

Orientation Training for [ECEC Center]

TRAINING DESCRIPTION

In this training, participants are provided a brief overview of the Conscious Discipline social-emotional learning curriculum and identify strategies for implementing it within their local early childhood education program. During this session, early educators will explore classroom structures and routines to incorporate into their daily schedule and lesson plans. Participants will have time for discussion with their mentor following this session. [ECEC Center] has resources available for further study at their site location.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

After completing this session, participants will

- Have a better understanding of the Conscious Discipline curricula
- Identify classroom structures and routines for their classroom
- Set goals for incorporating Conscious Discipline into their daily activities

"At every moment you have a choice between approaching the world with a spirit of love and learning or one of fear and punishing. That choice is yours."

- Dr. Becky Bailey



WHY WE CHOOSE CONSCIOUS DISCIPLINE

Evidence-based

Rooted in neuroscience

Observable learning outcomes

More respectful way to treat children

Models empathy and compassion for others

Supports healthy social/emotional development

TRADITIONAL DISCIPLINE VS. CONSCIOUS DISCIPLINE

Traditional Discipline:

Founded on rules that are upheld through reward and punishment – rules govern behavior

Goal is to obtain obedience

Fear empowers the system – teachers attempt to control children through environmental manipulations

Conscious Discipline:

Connectedness governs behavior

Goal is to change ourselves and support children's development of self, which profoundly impacts others

Conflict is an opportunity to teach

CORE COMPONENTS

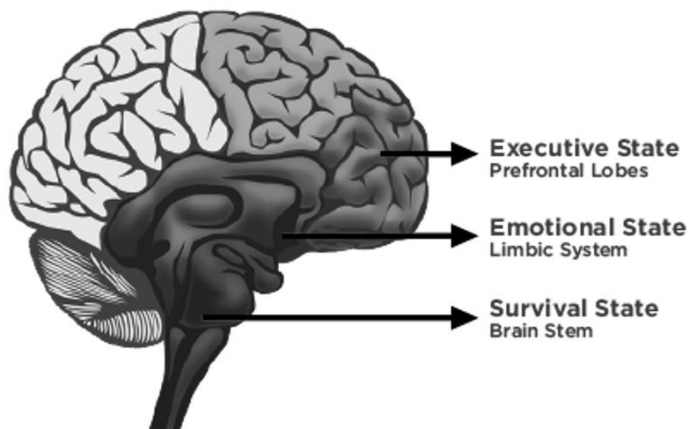
Safety	Connection	Problem-Solving
Composure	Encouragement	Positive Intent
Assertiveness	Choices	Consequences
	Empathy	

Brain State Model

Executive State – What can I learn ?

Emotional State – Am I loved?

Survival State – Am I safe?



The brain always functions as a whole.

WHY ARE BRAIN STATES IMPORTANT?

Internal states influence external behaviors

Understanding how internal states influence behaviors enables us to effectively address the underlying issues and teach new skills

Four Core Objectives:

- 1. To remain in a relaxed, alert state while interacting with children.
- 2. Identify the internal state the child is experiencing so we know which responses will more likely be helpful.
- 3. To assist the child in achieving a relaxed, alert state of learning **before** we attempt to teach a new skill or deliver a consequence.
- 4. To address the behavior by teaching an effective new skill.



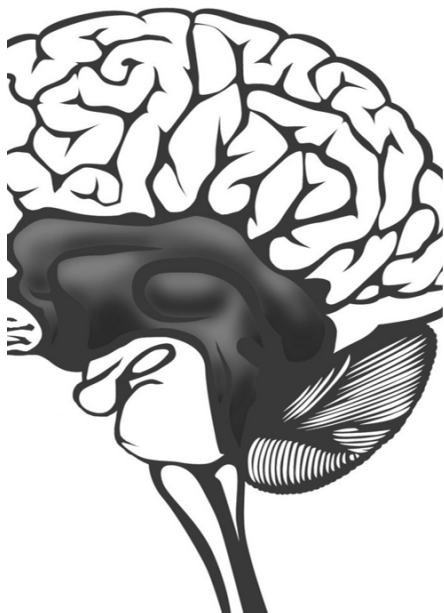
The Survival State

Developmental need – safety

Looks like – hiding, fighting, surrender, wandering, physical reaction

Combined Tools for Creating Safety:

- Noticing
- Assertiveness
- Routines
- Visuals
- Composure
- Safe Place



The Emotional State

Developmental need – connection

Looks like - back talk, yelling, cursing, verbal reactions

Combined Tools for Creating Connection:

- Rituals
- Encouragement
- Jobs
- Empathy
- Choices
- The School Family



The Executive State

Developmental need – problem solving opportunities

Looks like – engaged in activity, learning skills

Combined Tools for Problem-Solving:

- Solutions
- Positive Intent
- Academic Integration
- Consequences
- Executive skills

Why Create a School Family™?

Caring relationships create an optimal environment for learning, alter the physiological state and prime the brain for plasticity.

Optimal Brain Development

- Increased neural plasticity
- Increased resiliency for at-risk children
- Increased development of higher centers of the brain
- Increased coherency with heart

Self-Regulation

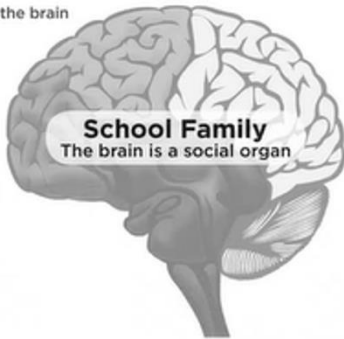
- Seven Powers
- Safe schools
- Bully-proof culture

Integrate SEL with Academics

- Joy in teaching and learning
- No separate curriculums needed

Optimal Learning State of Low Stress /High Challenge

- Increased test scores
- Increased teaching time
- Decreased behavioral problems
- Decreased retentions
- Increased attention spans



School Family
The brain is a social organ

Problem-Solving

- Seven Skills
- Use daily conflicts to teach life skills

Shared Power

- Shift from control to connection

Link Home to School

- School Family extension of Home Family
- Children take skills home
- "Family Privilege" replaced if needed
- Experience healthy family model

Culture of Compassion & Caring

- Increased effectiveness of consequences
- Increased effectiveness of problem-solving
- Increased willingness to change
- Increased cooperation/helpfulness
- Internal motivation
- Increased impulse control

Positive, face-to-face, enthusiastic connection makes us smarter.



THE SCHOOL FAMILY MODEL

- ❖ Optimizes brain development
- ❖ Embeds resilience into the school climate
- ❖ Helps heal the cycle that leads from loss to violence
- ❖ Fosters conflict resolution skills
- ❖ Promotes the effectiveness of consequences
- ❖ Models and teaches our highest values
- ❖ Models shared power and democracy
- ❖ Reignites the inherent joy of teaching and learning

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

“Caring relationships create an optimal environment for learning, alter our physiological state and prime the brain for plasticity” – Dr. Becky Bailey

- Positive, caring relationships are the cornerstone of our program
- All children need to feel loved and supported by their teacher/caregiver
- Classroom structures, routines, rituals, and relationships work together to create a classroom environment that supports development and learning



Child Behavior: Child grabs another child's toy.	Child Communication: I want to play with the toy.
Adult Response: “It's not nice to grab from others.”	Adult Implied Communication: You are not nice for wanting the toy.
“Gentle touches, gentle touches.”	Take the toy gently.
“You know the rules about grabbing. Turn your card to red and you will lose recess.”	Wanting the toy is a punishable act.
“You wanted to play with the toy. When you want a turn say, May I have a turn with the toy, please?”	You wanted to play with the toy. Say, “May I have a turn with the toy, please?” is an acceptable way to get your needs met.

ALL BEHAVIOR IS A FORM OF COMMUNICATION



Session 5: Skill of Assertiveness, Power of Attention

E-Course/Mini-Poster



What you focus on, you get more of.

Assertiveness is essential for setting effective and respectful limits.

Assertiveness Requires:

- Focusing on the behavior we want to see:
 “Stop running.” “Walk.”
 “Don’t be so loud.” “Match your voice to mine.”
- The intention of helping children be successful:
 Teach instead of punish.
- A tone of voice that has no doubt in it:
 Speak in the same matter-of-fact voice you
 would use to say, “The sky is above me.”
- Words and hand motions that clearly tell what
 to do with Name, Verb, Paint:
 Name: “Caitlin,”
 Verb: “Put...”
 Paint: “...the block in the box,” while pointing first to the block and then to the box.



Remember to S.T.A.R.:

Smile,

Take a deep breath

And

Relax!

Three deep belly breaths
 calm your brain and body.

POSITIVE INTENT

We must see children differently, especially our most challenging children, before they can act differently.

Offering positive intent to children fosters acceptance and willingness to reflect on and change behavior.

Our response to challenging behaviors is critical. Our response influences a child’s self-image and relationship with peers

Negative intent always encourages children to be more oppositional

CONSEQUENCES

Consequences are an essential component of Conscious Discipline

- Consequences follow redirection attempts
- Consequences must be consistently used to effectively teach social/emotional skills
- Consequences must be logical and naturally-occurring
- Consequences are not punishments – they are tool for teaching new behavioral skills

CONSCIOUS DISCIPLINE CONSEQUENCE MODEL

1. **Notice the behavior** – “I see you are throwing sand. Throwing sand is not safe. We keep the sand in the table.”
2. **Acknowledge the behavior is a choice** – “If you choose to throw the sand again, you will move to another center.”
3. **Create understanding and have the child repeat the consequence** – “What will happen if you throw the sand again? ... Yes, you will move to another center.”
4. **Support the emotional upset** – “I see that you are disappointed, but you may not throw sand. Throwing sand is not safe. It is our job to keep everyone safe. It’s time to go to another center.”

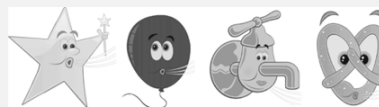
5. Provide choices – “You may go to trains or kitchen, which is better for you?”

6. Be prepared for more emotional upset and support them through the decision-making process. If they are unable to make a decision, you may need to make one for them (such as reading a book together).

7. Help them get started with their new choice

THE SAFE PLACE

- Classroom structure – every room has one. They can look different in each room.
- Children require assistance with the calming process – learning center for emotional control and self-regulation.
- The safe place helps children develop an internal safe place to regulate emotions later in life.
- **Safe Place is not and should never be used as a “time out”**



Creating a Safe Place:

- No specific design
- Comfortable place in the classroom (preferably away from busy areas)
- Should look warm and inviting
- Comfortable seating
- Breathing & Emotion visuals
- “I feel, I choose” tools
- Sensory items
- Shubert or Sophie books

SCHOOL FAMILY ROUTINES & RITUALS

- Routines are how we teach expected behavior – they need to be verbally and visually present in the classroom
- Rituals build our sense of unity, connection, and relationships with others
- All Children needs consistent, predictable routines



I LOVE YOU RITUALS

❖ Playfulness

❖ Eye Contact

❖ Movement

❖ Touch



Five Steps to Baby Doll Circle Time™

- 1 Transition to Getting Your Baby
- 2 Beginning Awareness
- 3 Connection
- 4 Cuddling and Soothing
- 5 Ending and Transition to Next



CorrectiveDiscipline.com



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- Provides opportunities to make connections without increasing staff time or numbers
- Pre-planned or flexible to create your own within the framework

ACTIVE CALMING BREATHING TECHNIQUES

- Breathing helps children and adults reduce and manage stress.
- Physiological influences from deep, slow breathing help return the body and brain to a calm state.
- Breathing helps adults and children maintain composure.



Drain

Extend arms out, pretending your arms are faucets. Tighten arm, shoulder, and face muscles. Exhale slowly making a "sssshh" sound and release all your muscles, draining out the stress.



S.T.A.R.

Smile, **T**ake a deep breath **A**nd **R**elax. Encourage belly breathing where the tummy goes out when the air goes in, and in when the air goes out. Also help children learn to exhale slower than they inhale.



Pretzel

Standing up, cross your ankles. Now cross your right wrist over left, turn your hands so your thumbs are facing the floor, put palms together and interlace fingers. Bend your elbows out and gently turn your hands down and toward your body until they rest on the center of your chest. Put your tongue on the roof of your mouth. Relax and breathe.



Balloon

Place your hands on top of your head and interlace your fingers. Breathe in through your nose as you raise your arms, inflating an imaginary balloon. Release the air in the balloon by pursing your lips, exhaling slowly, lowering your arms and making a "pbbppbb" sound.

A FEW NEW BREATHING TECHNIQUES



- Wonder Woman
- Bunny Breathing
- Spider – Man
- Airplane
- Snake

ACTIVE CALMING

- Have a plan
- Follow through with the plan
- Help children with each task – you are their co-regulator
- Do not have to do every task on the wall
- Map out the transition back to the room **BEFORE** you leave





Shubert's Classroom

- Amazing resource for getting started or refreshing skills
- Each area provides instructions for implementation, video examples, and links to additional resources

Nutrition



Nutrition Training

[ECEC Center]

Learning Objective

After completing this training module, participants will discuss and identify one strategy, practice, and goal for facilitating safe, pleasant mealtimes.



Training Description

Participants will learn [ECEC Center's] expectations and requirements for mealtimes and snacks in this session. This training module highlights nutrition practices, licensing requirements, [ECEC Center's] policies, procedures, and goals. Resources used to create this training are available to participants for self-study following the session. After participating in this session, individuals will have a discussion period and an opportunity to identify one strategy, practice, and goal for safe, pleasant mealtimes with young children at [ECEC Center].

Core Competencies and Foundations

Health, Safety and Nutrition - Professionals realize the importance of meeting the health, safety and nutritional needs of infants, children and youth as a basic and necessary foundation for their growth, development and learning.

- 2.7 nutritional requirements appropriate to the age and unique needs of the infant, child or youth including feeding procedures, food choices and amounts and cultural preferences
- PHG1.3 Demonstrate development of nutrition awareness



Standard:

PHG1.3: Demonstrate development of nutrition awareness

Developmental Continuum from birth to prekindergarten	Infant	Younger Toddler	Older Toddler	Younger Preschool	Older Preschool	Kindergarten Standard
Indicators: Competencies that indicate a child is progressing toward kindergarten readiness.	Express when hungry or full			Respond to physical cues when hungry, full, or thirsty		PE K.3.6.A Identifies health and unhealthy foods and recognizes that food provides energy for physical activity.
	Show food preferences	Try new foods	Make simple food choices depending on personal and cultural preference	Demonstrate basic understanding that eating a variety of foods helps the body grow and be healthy	Communicate about variety and amount of food needed to be healthy	HW K-2.1.1 Identify that healthy behaviors affect personal health
	Begin following a regular eating routine	Follow a regular eating routine	Communicate about various characteristics of food	Participate in preparation of a simple, healthy snack		K.L.S.1 Describe and compare the growth and development of common living plants and animals.
				Express preferences about food	Name food and beverages that help to build healthy bodies	K.L.S.2 Describe and compare the physical features of common living plants and animals.
					Describe physical	K.L.S.3 Use observation to

Early Learning Foundations PHG1.3

Demonstrate development of nutrition awareness

Young children need the appropriate types and amounts of nutrition to fuel their growth and active nature

Nutrition awareness is key for reducing childhood obesity and influences learning outcomes

Early educators have the opportunity to model and empower children to make healthy decision

Establishing nutrition awareness fosters life-long healthy habits and relationship with food



Powerful Practices

Examples of ways adults can support young learners' development of nutrition awareness:

- Demonstrate and educate families on healthy nutrition practices for young children
- Provide materials in the environment that promote nutrition
- Respect familial nutrition choices (particularly for infants), be sensitive to individual needs, and cultural expectations
- Make water available at all times and encourage children to drink
- Assist children in understanding hunger/thirst cues by offering descriptive words
- Model healthy food choices in the environment and follow any relevant program wellness policies
- Integrate nutrition education as a complement to curriculum and at mealtimes and snacks

Regulations for Feeding Children in Childcare Settings

- Children must not be asked to wait. Food must be served immediately when a child sits down.
- Staff must sit at the table and converse with children. Children must be allowed to converse freely.
- Staff cannot eat other foods in front of children.
- Children should wash hands immediately prior to sitting down for the meal.
- Seconds from at least two food components must be available at lunch. Seconds must be given at snack.
- At least 2 hours, but not more than 3 hours, should separate snacks and meals.

Infants

- Infants usually begin solid foods when they are 4-6 months of age.
- Don't be alarmed if an infant doesn't like a food. Wait 1-2 weeks, then try it again. Never force a child to eat.
- Seek a medical opinion if an infant refuses to eat by 7-8 months of age.



Infant Feeding

- Use only commercially pre-mixed formula/ infant food.
- Opened cans/containers of formula and infant food must be covered, labeled with date and time opened, refrigerated and used within 24 hours.
- Formula or infant food must be poured directly from the original container into the feeding bottle or bowl.
- If bottles are prepared ahead of time (i.e. breast milk), each poured bottle is covered, labeled with the child's name, date and time filled, refrigerated and used within 48 hours. Parent must also sign a Safe Transportation Form.
- Breast milk and formula **cannot** be warmed in a microwave oven.
- Feeding and food preparation must occur at least 10 feet from the diapering area.

Infant Feeding

The leftover contents of bottles and baby food containers must be discarded after feeding.

Infant formula and baby food must NEVER be reheated.

During bottle feeding, the infant must be held by a caregiver.

Caregivers must wash their hands before each feeding of individual infants.

Infant & Toddler Feeding

- By 12 months, a child's diet begins to resemble that of the rest of his family.
- Give whole milk to children until the second birthday.
- Encourage the child to feed himself. Give him a spoon and fork at every meal.

Toddler Feeding

- Caregivers and toddlers must wash their hands before each meal.
- Toddlers must be secured with seat belts in highchairs.
- Toddlers must be removed from the highchair after eating.
- Food must be cut up in ½ inch cubes.





Toddlers & Preschoolers

- It is common for young children to be picky eaters or to go on binges where they will only eat a certain food.
- Offer the child food choices and let him decide.
- A child's appetite may change from day to day, even from meal to meal. Don't be alarmed if a child doesn't eat much at one meal.
- Remember, the child's growth may be slowing and he may not need as many calories.
- If the child is growing and developing normally, there is probably no cause for concern.

Facts about Food Allergies

- True food allergies affect only about 2% of children.
- Symptoms of food allergy include: wheezing, difficulty breathing, skin rashes, hives, vomiting, diarrhea, nausea, abdominal pain, swelling around the mouth and throat.
- Symptoms usually develop within minutes of eating a food that causes an allergic reaction.
- Nasal symptoms by themselves, such as congestion or runny nose, are usually not caused by food allergies.
- Symptoms may be mild or severe.



More Facts About Food Allergies

- Food intolerances are more common than food allergies. Intolerances may cause vomiting, diarrhea, spitting up, skin rashes.
- It takes time for a child's immune system to build up a reaction against something. A child may become allergic to a food that (s)he has eaten many times.
- The most common foods that cause allergic reactions are peanuts, tree nuts, shellfish, eggs, milk, soy, and wheat.
- Children often outgrow food allergies.

Regulations for Food Allergies



- All food allergies and special diets must be approved in writing by a physician.
- Food allergies and special diets must be posted in the kitchen *and* in the area where the child is fed.

After reflecting on our program, [ECEC Center]:

Provides fruit juice once daily (1-2 servings only)

Includes more fresh fruits and vegetables in our menu

Transitioned to whole wheat bread

Eliminated or decreased use of some high sodium, high fat foods

Encourages physical activity through careful scheduling

Moving forward, we need to:

1

Provide more nutrition education for children

2

Disseminate nutrition information for parents

3

Make mealtimes and snacks relaxed and pleasant

4

Schedule additional time for engaging physical activity

[ECEC Center's] Obesity Prevention Program

Access to a variety of healthy foods

Nutrition education

Opportunity for physical activity

Limited “screen time”

Parent Education

[ECEC Center] Policy

While [ECEC Center] encourages nutrition-based activities in the classroom, we do not permit food to be used in art or sensory play. We do so because,

- We want children to understand that food is for eating
- We want mealtimes and snacks to be special social experiences
- We do not encourage food waste





Creating a Pedagogy of Care for Meals and Snacks

“Childcare programs – serving breakfast, two snacks and lunch, provide children with up to 75% of their daily nutrition. The part we play in providing sustenance is dovetailed with promoting social and cultural attachments. Feeding children is one of the most fundamental ways childcare supports the family specifically and the community in general. It’s an awesome privilege, but also an intimidating responsibility.”

- Karen Stephens, *Food for Thought*

From *Illuminating Care* by Carol Garboden Murray

1. Care is education – Teachers have intentional plans for children to learn skills at mealtime (scooping, social, descriptive words, etc.)
2. Care is right – Food is not used as a reward, punishment, or bribe. Meals are not a chore or an environmental manipulation.
3. Care is a partnership – Teachers and children sit together at eye level, sharing authentic conversation. Teachers are not hovering over children or busying themselves with other tasks while children eat.

Creating a Pedagogy Continued...

4. Care is bodily – We notice children’s physical space, their posture, motor skills and sensory awareness at meals.

5. Care is art – Artful teaching also includes our pace – moving with mindfulness to demonstrate respect for food and model care of materials, self, and others at meals.

6. Care is science – Teachers practice sound pedagogical approaches based on what we know about how children learn.

7. Care makes us human – The care of children, families, and teachers is interconnected. Snacks and meals should be organized, so teachers can slow down, relax, and engage with students. Teachers also need time aways to eat lunch with colleagues and have adult conversation.

Beliefs that Drive Our Practice

We tend to think it is the adult’s job to make sure children eat

Cultural Belief:

We feel that if we are good caregivers, we must get the kids to eat. It is easy to fall into a pattern of praising or bribing children to “try a bite” at meals and snacks. Often, we associate a child not eating with stubbornness or misbehavior

Pedagogy of Care Practice:

We shift our thinking to see that adults are responsible for providing meals, but the child is responsible for whether and how much they eat. Our responsibility is to provide a safe, comfortable environment that focuses on children’s experiences at the table.

Beliefs Continued...

Praising children is a way to get them to develop good eating habits

**Cultural Belief:**

Adults believe praising children as “good eaters” will encourage them to eat more and they view praise as a positive way to engage with children at meals.

Pedagogy of Care Practice:

Teachers do not praise or scold children around normal bodily functions. They want children to develop internal control and self-regulation. Children are born with an innate ability to control their food intake.

Beliefs Continued...

Leaving food on your plate is wasteful. We should teach children to eat everything they are served.

Cultural Belief:

This standard of eating everything you are served can be harmful to children. Children often eat quickly, so they can get up and play when the expectation is to eat everything. Also, forcing children to eat beyond their satiation distorts their natural control. Children, no matter how much they eat, are almost always encouraged to eat more.

Pedagogy of Care Practice:

We shift our expectations because we want the child to develop internal regulators to indicate fullness and because we respect the food temperament of each child. We do not expect them to eat everything on their plate. We engage in family-style meals, teaching children how to take small, spoon-sized portions and how to stop eating when they are full.







Our Goal

As [ECEC Center] strives to fulfill its mission to provide highest-quality early childhood education and care for the children in our program, we seek to:

- Provide nutritious meals and snacks
- Foster healthy development of nutrition awareness
- Support children's physical, social, and emotional development
- Embed nutrition concepts into our curriculum and daily activities
- Create calm, comfortable, social environments for meals and snacks



Resources for Nutrition and Wellness

- *Illuminating Care*, Carol [Garboden Murray](#)
- *Physical Growth and Development*, The [HighScope Curriculum](#)
-  *Early Learning Foundations' Guidance*
-  *Core Knowledge and Competencies*

NAEYC Standards, Accreditation Process & Code of Ethics

▸ Navigating NAEYC

Orientation Training for [ECEC Center]

What is NAEYC?

National Association for the Education of Young Children

- ❖ Nonprofit professional association that represents early childhood education teachers, center directors, trainers, college educators, families of young children, policy makers, and advocates.
- ❖ Set national standards for quality early childhood education and care
- ❖ Provide professional development opportunities
- ❖ Contribute to research and advocacy efforts for ECE
- ❖ Publishing company creating various resources for early educators

NAEYC Standards 2022

Relationships

Curriculum

Teaching

Assessment of Child Progress

Health

Staff Competencies, Preparation, and Support

Families

Community Relationships

Physical Environment

Leadership and Management

Accreditation

The accreditation process encourages reflective practice and continuous program improvements.

- The process includes:
- Self study
- Program evaluation
- Annual report
- Creating a documentation portfolio
- Visit from a NAEYC specialist every 5 year

Your Participation

Contributing to the documentation portfolio

- At the end of each period, go through your COR observations and add the appropriate NAEYC tag to your anecdotal notes and moments

Participate in the annual program evaluation

- Your voice matters. Fill out the confidential employee survey. Encourage families to complete and return their survey.

Attend a NAEYC professional development conference

- Ask an administrator about opportunities and include one in your professional development plan.

Read a NAEYC publication or blog

Strive to provide highest-quality early education and care in your position

NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct

The NAEYC Code of Ethical conduct is a set of guidelines for responsible behavior, setting a common basis for resolving the principal ethical dilemmas encountered in early childhood education.

Core Values



Appreciate childhood as a unique and valuable stage of the human life cycle



Base our work on knowledge of how children develop and learn



Appreciate and support the bond between the child and family



Recognize that children are best understood and supported in the context of family, culture, community, and society

Core Values

- ▶ Respect the dignity, worth, and uniqueness of each individual (child, family member, and colleague)
- ▶ Respect diversity in children, families, and colleagues
- ▶ Recognize that children and adults achieve their full potential in the context of relationships that are based on trust and respect



Is it an ethical issue?

As written in NAEYC books about professional ethics, when faced with a challenging situation in the workplace, the first thing an early childhood educator needs to do is to determine whether it is an ethical issue. Our experience tells us that this can be a difficult process, one that many are unsure about. The first question you should ask yourself is, “Does it concern right and wrong, rights and responsibilities, human welfare, or individuals’ best interests?” If you answer no to each of these items, the situation is not an ethical issue and you can handle it as you would handle any workplace concern. If you answer yes to any of the items, you are facing an ethical issue. How you respond to it depends on whether it is an ethical responsibility or an ethical dilemma.

Ethical Responsibilities

Ethical responsibilities are mandates clearly spelled out in the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct. These mandates describe how early childhood educators are required to act and what they must and must not do.

It can be helpful to think of ethical responsibilities as being very similar to legal responsibilities in that they require or forbid a particular action. And sometimes legal and ethical responsibilities are the same—for example, mandating the reporting of child abuse.

NAEYC considers ethical code principle 1.1 as most significant responsibility among early childhood educators and care providers

P-1.1—Above all, we shall not harm children. We shall not participate in practices that are emotionally damaging, physically harmful, disrespectful, degrading, dangerous, exploitative, or intimidating to children. This principle has precedence over all others in this Code.

Ethical Responsibilities to Children

Childhood is a unique and valuable stage in the human life cycle. Our paramount responsibility is to provide care and education in settings that are safe, healthy, nurturing, and responsive for each child. We are committed to supporting children's development and learning; respecting individual differences; and helping children learn to live, play, and work cooperatively. We are also committed to promoting children's self-awareness, competence, self-worth, resiliency, and physical well-being.

Ethical Responsibilities to Families

Families are of primary importance in children's development. Because the family and the early childhood practitioner have a common interest in the child's wellbeing, we acknowledge a primary responsibility to bring about communication, cooperation, and collaboration between the home and early childhood program in ways that enhance the child's development.

Ethical Responsibilities to Colleagues


In a caring, cooperative workplace, human dignity is respected, professional satisfaction is promoted, and positive relationships are developed and sustained. Based upon our core values, our primary responsibility to colleagues is to establish and maintain settings and relationships that support productive work and meet professional needs. The same ideals that apply to children also apply as we interact with adults in the workplace.

Ethical Responsibilities to the Community and Society

Early childhood programs operate within the context of their immediate community made up of families and other institutions concerned with children's welfare. Our responsibilities to the community are to provide programs that meet the diverse needs of families, to cooperate with agencies and professions that share the responsibility for children, to assist families in gaining access to those agencies and allied professionals, and to assist in the development of community programs that are needed but not currently available. As individuals, we acknowledge our responsibility to provide the best possible programs of care and education for children and to conduct ourselves with honesty and integrity. Because of our specialized expertise in early childhood development and education and because the larger society shares responsibility for the welfare and protection of young children, we acknowledge a collective obligation to advocate for the best interests of children within early childhood programs and in the larger community and to serve as a voice for young children everywhere.

When you determine that a situation involves ethics and you don't think it is a responsibility, it is likely to be an ethical dilemma. A dilemma is a situation for which there are two possible resolutions, each of which can be justified in moral terms. A dilemma requires a person to choose between two actions, each having some benefits but also having some costs.

Ethical Dilemmas



A common example of an ethical dilemma

A mother asks a teacher not to let her child nap at school; because when he sleeps in the afternoon, he has a hard time falling asleep at night. The teacher must choose between honoring the mother's request, which may have a detrimental effect on the child, or refusing the request, which will have a negative impact on the mother.


Ethical dilemmas are sometimes described as situation that involve two "rights." In the case of the nap, the early childhood educator can conclude that it is morally right to allow a child who needs a nap to nap. But it is also right to keep the child from napping to help a busy mother keep the child on schedule.

Jane, a petite just-turned-3-year-old, is new in Kristen's class. Jane's father brings her to school each day at breakfast time.

As required by licensing and the USDA food program, the school serves milk at breakfast and lunch. Like a number of children in the class, Jane refuses milk and drinks water instead. Kristen allows children to make this choice. One day Jane's father tells Kristen that he and his wife do not want her to allow Jane to drink water until she has drunk at least a full cup of milk. Kristen assures them that she will encourage Jane to drink her milk.

At the next meal, Kristen tells Jane that her family wants her to drink milk so she'll be healthy and grow strong. Jane sobs uncontrollably. Kristen comforts her and allows her to drink water. She tells Jane she will talk to Jane's father about letting her drink water. Jane's eyes grow wide, and she sobs even harder, saying, "Don't tell Daddy! Don't tell Daddy!"

Should Kristen honor the wishes of the family or allow Jane to continue to drink water instead of milk? How could she use the NAEYC Code to guide her thinking and decision making in this situation?



A New Ethical Issue—“Make sure my child drinks her milk”

Process applied to ethical issues

1. Determine the nature of the problem

- ▶ Is it an ethical issue?
- ▶ If it is an ethical issue, does it involve ethical responsibilities or is it an ethical dilemma? (If it is an ethical responsibility, what does the Code mandate that Kristen do? If it is an ethical dilemma, Kristen can seek a resolution using the steps that follow.)

2. Analyze the dilemma

- ▶ Identify the conflicting responsibilities.
- ▶ Brainstorm possible resolutions.
- ▶ Consider ethical finesse finding a way to meet everyone's needs without having to make a difficult decision.
- ▶ Look for guidance in the NAEYC Code. Carefully review its Ideals and Principles—particularly those that apply to responsibilities to children and families.
- ▶ Based on your review of the Code and using your best professional judgment, describe what you think is the most ethically defensible course of action in this situation.

Information about ethical responsibilities and dilemmas is adapted from two NAEYC books, *Ethics and the Early Childhood Educator: Using the NAEYC Code*, second edition, and the newly updated *Teaching the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct: A Resource Guide and The NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct*

Circle Time & Emergent Literacy



ENGAGING
CIRCLE TIMES

SUPPORTING EMERGENT LITERACY IN EARLY
CHILDHOOD SETTINGS

CIRCLE TIMES

- Thoughtfully scheduled circle times enhance classroom routines
- Provide opportunities for children to learn with and from each other
- Help children develop a sense of community and exhibit prosocial behaviors

CIRCLE TIME TOPICS

- LITERACY
- MATH
- MUSIC & MOVEMENT
- WELCOME
- CLASS MEETINGS
- SCIENCE EXPLORATIONS

STRUCTURING YOUR CIRCLE TIME

PLAN A TRANSITION TO AND FROM THE CIRCLE TIME

CIRCLE TIME NEEDS A CLEAR BEGINNING AND END (HAVE A CIRCLE TIME ROUTINE)

COMPONENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE CIRCLE TIME INCLUDE:

- ACTIVITY TO UNITE THE GROUP
- ACTIVITY TO DISENGAGE STRESS – GET THE WIGGLES OUT ☺
- INTERESTING AND ENGAGING MATERIALS
- AN ENTHUSIASTIC TEACHER
- OPPORTUNITY FOR CHILDREN TO CONTRIBUTE TO DISCUSSION AND ACTIVITY



SUPPORTING EMERGENT LITERACY

PREVIOUS EXPECTATIONS

Children listen without talking to others or interrupting teachers

Children keep their bodies still

Children learn print concepts, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, oral language, alphabet, comprehension, and other components of reading simply by listening to the story and later completing activities



WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

- READING ALOUD PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY FOR EARLY EDUCATORS TO FOSTER THE DEVELOPMENT OF VARIOUS LITERACY SKILLS IN A SUPPORTIVE, INTERESTING, FUN, SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT.
- OUR MOOD DICTATES THE CHILDREN'S ENGAGEMENT AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE STORY – MAKE IT FUN 😊
- ENGAGING CHILDREN IN INTERESTING STORIES, WITH OPPORTUNITIES TO INTERACT AND MAKE CONNECTIONS, PRODUCES MORE LEARNING OUTCOMES

CHOOSING THE "RIGHT" BOOK

Ask yourself:

- Will my children enjoy this book?
- Is it age-appropriate for my children?
- Will this book support new knowledge in a topic of interest or learning theme we are investigating?
- Will the children "see" themselves in this book? – representation is important
- Are there opportunities for rhyme, repetition, vocabulary, and language building?

Getting Ready to Read

- Plan ahead - Add title of book and learning objectives to lesson plans.
- Practice - Read book BEFORE reading book to class.
- Write down your literacy objectives. (Suggestion: Add a sticky note to a book page where you would like to ask a question, define a word, etc.)
- Have a plan for generating interest in the book before reading to the children.
- Talk about how we can enjoy good books and that books build brains

LITERACY OBJECTIVES:

- ASK QUESTIONS (USE OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS FOR HIGHER-LEVEL RESPONSES)
- INTRODUCE NEW VOCABULARY AND PROVIDE SIMPLE DEFINITIONS
- ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO MAKE CONNECTIONS (PREVIOUS KNOWLEDGE, LIFE EXPERIENCES, WITH THE ILLUSTRATIONS, WITH CHARACTERS' FEELINGS, AND TO OTHER BOOKS)
- EMPHASIZE RHYMING WORDS
- MAKE PREDICTIONS ABOUT STORY THE CONTENT AND CHARACTERS

LITERACY STRATEGIES

Occasionally run your finger across the text while reading

Some books may offer places to talk about feelings.

Change your voice when reading to reflect the tone of the story or different characters speaking

Retell the story or parts of the story (Encourage children to recall the sequence of events or their favorite character/part of the story)

Encourage interaction and movement



SETTING THE STAGE

- BE PREPARED - GATHER BOOK/PROPS.
- SIT IN CHAIR - OR ON FLOOR - SHOW ENTHUSIASM AND SMILE
- HAVE FUN. ENJOY READING - IF YOU DON'T ENJOY READING TO THE CHILDREN, THEY WILL NOT ENJOY THE STORY
- PROVIDE ADEQUATE SEATING FOR EACH CHILD
- PLAN TO READ THE BOOK MULTIPLE TIMES - WITH NEW QUESTIONS, EXPERIENCES, ETC.

WHAT TO DO:

- ENGAGE IN REPEATED READ-ALOUDS
- INTRODUCE NEW VOCABULARY AND INCLUDE RICH EXPLANATIONS OF VOCABULARY. EMBED EXPLANATIONS IN THE STORY NATURALLY SO THEY ENHANCE CHILDREN'S UNDERSTANDING WITHOUT CREATING DISTRACTIONS.
- MEANINGFUL INSTRUCTION ON CONCEPTS OF PRINT, ALPHABET KNOWLEDGE, AND PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS
- USE A VARIETY OF OPEN-ENDED, THOUGHT-PROVOKING QUESTIONS
- ENGAGE IN POSITIVE INTERACTIONS THAT PROMOTE FEELINGS OF RESPECT AND CONFIDENCE

INFANTS, TODDLERS, AND TWO'S

- READ EVERY DAY - MULTIPLE TIMES EACH DAY
- MAKE SURE THAT THE TOPIC IS AGE-APPROPRIATE, THE BOOK IS AN APPROPRIATE LENGTH FOR LITTLE ONES, THE TEXT IS NOT OVERWHELMING – MAY WANT TO “READ” PICTURES (SHORTEN TEXT)
- LET THE CHILD SIT ON YOUR LAP – CUDDLE UP AND GET COMFORTABLE
- MAKE SURE THAT BOOKS ARE ACCESSIBLE TO CHILDREN
- ENCOURAGE CONVERSATION (TALK/RESPONSE) REMEMBER TO WAIT FOR A RESPONSE FOR 5-12 SECONDS. VERY YOUNG CHILDREN NEED MORE TIME TO THINK ABOUT THE WORDS TO USE WHEN RESPONDING
- ASK JUST ONE QUESTION


 HUNGRY
CATERPILLAR

by Eric Carle

 An Example with *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*

- Possible vocabulary words: caterpillar, tiny, cocoon, nibbled
- Embed your instruction in the story. You may plan to give a definition for a different word each time that you read the book. Don't try too many definitions in one reading.
- Extend the vocabulary activity by making a card with a picture of a cocoon and a short, written definition. Post the card in your library area. Encourage the children to review the vocabulary cards.

Remember:

- You may need to choose a different book or easier/harder words.
- If there are too many words that are new, the book will be difficult for them to understand.

Take a deep
breath!

Increase INTERACTION.

- Use movement. ("Clap your hands while we wait for the chrysalis to turn into a butterfly")
- Call on the child to answer a question or tell something about the story.
- Have everyone repeat a phrase from the story.
- Let child sit on your lap or an assistant's lap. (Make sure that the child can see the book.)

Anticipate that a
child – or children -
may not sit for a
story. Have an
alternate quiet
activity prepared.

WHAT DO I DO WHEN A CHILD WON'T LISTEN?

AFTER READING

EXTEND THE STORY WITH RELATED, RELEVANT ACTIVITIES AND GAMES:

- ART ACTIVITIES
- "ACT OUT" STORY OR PARTS OF STORY
- READ OTHER BOOKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR, ON THE SAME TOPIC, THAT TELL A SIMILAR STORY, ETC.
- MAKE GRAPHS: DID YOU LIKE THE BOOK? WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF THE STORY? WHO WAS YOUR FAVORITE CHARACTER? CONNECTIONS TO THE STORY – DO YOU LIKE? WOULD YOU? HAVE YOU EVER?



EMERGENT LITERACY

WRITING IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THE DAILY ROUTINE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CLASSROOMS.

OUR ROLE:

- ENCOURAGE VOLUNTARY AND PRACTICAL USE OF PRINT
- ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO COMMUNICATE WITH OTHERS THROUGH WRITING
- ASSURE CHILDREN HAVE POSITIVE EXPERIENCES THAT CREATE A DESIRE TO CONTINUE WRITING
- PROMOTE AND ACKNOWLEDGE CHILDREN'S EARLY ATTEMPTS AT WRITING
- PROVIDE NUMEROUS MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCES

The Writing Center

Writing can occur in any center, but each classroom should have a designated “writing” or “publishing” center that provides:

- Easy access to a variety of writing materials and tools
- Well-organized, clearly labeled, developmentally-appropriate materials
- Meaningful materials to produce a message
- Space and time for children to write independently and with adult support

WRITING CENTER CONTINUED...

Writing centers have four basic categories	1. Writing instruments (markers, crayons, pencils, etc.)
	2. Writing surfaces (assorted papers, white bards, cardboard, etc.)
	3. Book-making supplies (blank books, stickers, magazine pictures)
	4. Writing tools (letter stamps, stickers, word/letter/name cards)

WRITING ROLE MODELS

CHILDREN'S FIRST WRITING EXPERIENCES OCCUR WITH THEIR EXPLORATIONS OF VARIED MATERIALS AND THEIR EXPERIENCES WITH EARLY EDUCATORS AND CAREGIVERS.

LEARNING GOALS: WE WANT CHILDREN TO UNDERSTAND THAT...

- WRITING OCCURS LEFT TO RIGHT AND TOP TO BOTTOM
- SPACE IS NEEDED BETWEEN LETTERS IN A WORD AND WORDS IN A SENTENCE
- PUNCTUATION MARKS ARE USED WITH LETTERS AND WORDS TO COMMUNICATE MEANING
- PREDICTABLE CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN SOUNDS AND LETTERS
- EACH LETTER HAS A CORRECT FORMATION

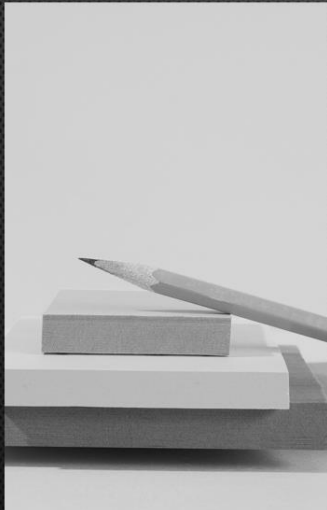
MODELING "MUSTS"

Children should be able to see you as you write

Say the words you write – narrate the process of writing a message

Show enthusiasm, enjoyment for writing while demonstrating the mechanics

Use writing meaningfully to convey its role in communicating thoughts, ideas, preferences, etc.



MODELED WRITING

- MORNING MESSAGE – PLAN FOR A MESSAGE DAILY
- CREATE LISTS WHEN DISCUSSING BOOKS OR ACTIVITIES
- CREATE GRAPHS TO ACCOMPANY LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND DOCUMENT LEARNING
- WRITE YOUR NAME IN A BIRTHDAY/HOLIDAY/GET WELL CARD AND PROVIDE TIME AND SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN TO “SIGN” THEIR NAME

Counting Collections & Math Activities



Counting Collections & Math Activities

Training Description

In this training, participants will gain a better understanding of the **math standards** and learning outcomes. This training session focuses on the use of Counting Collections as a tool for developing math skills; and an overview of additional early math skills. During this session, participants will have an opportunity to observe and practice counting activities.

Learning Outcome: Early learners develop foundational skills in learning and understanding counting, cardinality, written numerals, quantity, and comparison.

M.1.1	Demonstrate strong sense of counting
M.1.2	Demonstrate understanding of written numerals
M.1.3	Recognition of number relations
M.2.1	Exhibit understanding of mathematical structures
M.2.2	Demonstrate awareness of patterning
M.3.1	Demonstrate understanding of classifying
M.4.1	Understanding of spatial relationships
M.4.2	Exhibit ability to identify, describe, analyze, compare, and create shapes
M.5.1	Understand the concept of time
M.5.2	Understand measurement through description and comparison

Math Terms:

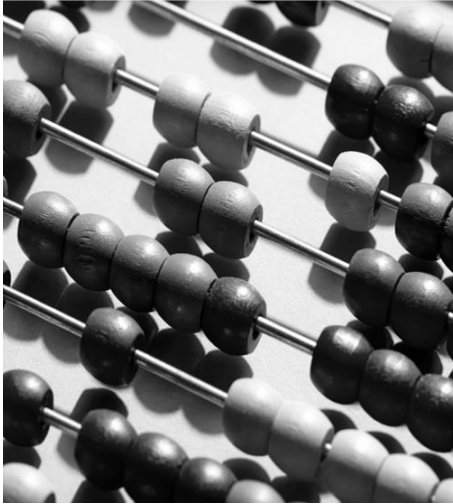
- **One-to-one correspondence (1:1)** – exactly one number from the counting sequence is assigned to each object in the collection (Franke et al., 2018). Children often touch or move an object while counting to develop this skill.
- **Subitize** – identify a quantity without counting
- **Cardinality** – the last number assigned to an object in a set represents the total quantity of the set (Franke et al., 2018).
- **Counting Sequence** – An ordered sequence of number names exists. Counting involves using the same sequence each time (starting with 1). To extend the sequence children must make sense of the patterns of the base 10 number system. (Franke et al., 2018).



Math Terms

- **Rote Counting:** memorized, recited counting
- **Rational Counting:** counting something to determine its quantity
- **Stable Order:** counting principle that number words must be said in the same sequence because they have a fixed meaning as a growing pattern (Haynes-Berry & Grandau, 2019).
- **Compose/Decompose:** combining and breaking apart sets from the original set

Learning to Count



Learning to count is a foundational skill for understanding mathematics. It rests on three principles.

1. There is an ordered sequence of number names
2. Counting involves assigning a number name to an object
3. The last number used in the counting sequence represents the total quantity of objects

Getting Started

Create collections of interesting items

- Items can be various sizes, textures, or colors
- Collections do not need to be expensive items (examples: large buttons, small toys, poker chips, pom-poms, etc.)
- Each collection needs to be a separate container (such as a Ziploc bag)
- Collections should be varied quantities (1 -10 to begin, but will increase as children's skills develop further)

Introduce the Concept

Children will need support understanding what to do with a collection.

- Introduce a collection in circle time and count the objects together
- Provide opportunities to count collections during small group time
- Keep meaningful collections in other centers to provide individualized support during play (ex: birthday candles in dramatic play)



Represent Counting

Add documentation for children to visually represent their counting

- Introduce in circle time and support during small group counting activities
- Possible items – pencil/paper, whiteboard/marker, math journals/crayons, chalkboards/chalk, etc.
- Begin with the collection itself – as skills progress add a written numeral to represent the quantity
- Display their counting representations in the classroom or create a counting book

Strategies for Representation

Focus on what children can do – their representation needs to be meaningful and achievable.

- Make lines or circles for each object
- Trace around the object
- Draw the object
- Use a dot marker (or sticker) to create a dot next to each object

Their representations will progress with repetition of the activity and increased motor skills



Extending the Activity

As children's counting skills progress:	Count larger collections
	Add written numerals
	Include estimations
	Begin subitizing
	Sort objects to create sets
	Use sets for emergent addition (later introducing symbols + =)
	Create patterns

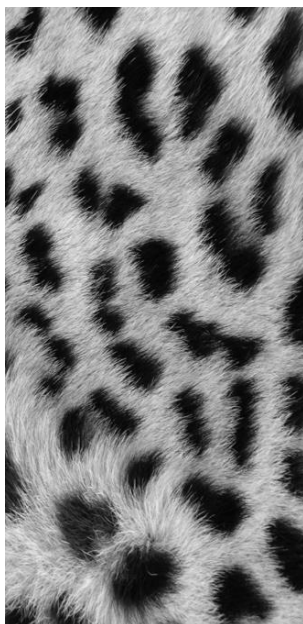
School-Home Connections

- Communicate counting activities and progress with families (include on calendars/newsletters or send pictures/videos in the Kaymbu communication app)
- Create a “math bag” activity – send a bag home with the child that contains a number card; have the child and their create a collection of items to send to school; the next day, provide an opportunity for the child to count their collection with peers during circle time



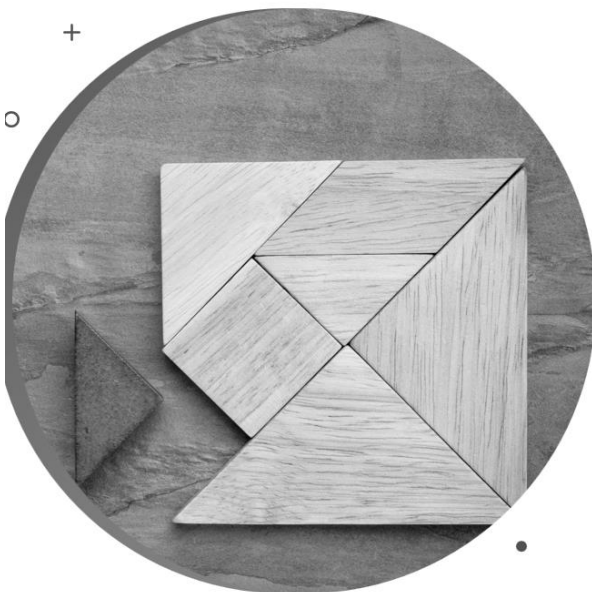
Math Concepts to Explore

- Patterning
- Shapes
- Spatial Relationships
- Measuring
- Number Sense



Patterns

- Explore various visual patterns (zebra stripes, butterfly wings, holiday sweaters, etc.)
- Create and extend simple ABAB patterns (as children progress increase the complexity to include ABBA, ABC, AABBA)
- Play with patterns of movement and sound (ex: clap, stomp, clap, stomp)
- Look at lifecycles as patterns (ex: egg, chick, hen)



Shapes

- Identify simple shapes (circle, square, triangle) – increase this skill to include more complex shapes (rectangle, octagon, 3D shapes) as children progress
- Match and sort shapes
- Put shapes together to create new shapes (such as 2 triangles to make a square) or patterns
- find shapes in the environment
- Compare shapes – what's different

Spatial Relationships

- Foster the development of spatial language (under, above, next to, first, yesterday, etc.)
- Support spatial representation – narrate movements, point out how things fit together, visually represent routines in the learning environment, obstacle courses
- Explore spatial transformations in play – fitting blocks together, puzzles, process art with shapes, STEM challenges



Measuring

- Use language that supports measurement (big, little, smaller, tall, wide, etc.)
- Compare objects in the learning environment – blocks, manipulatives, etc. – Which is bigger? How much?
- Make estimates – how many will fit?
- Introduce tools – measuring spoons/cups, appropriately-sized tape measure, meter stick



Number Sense

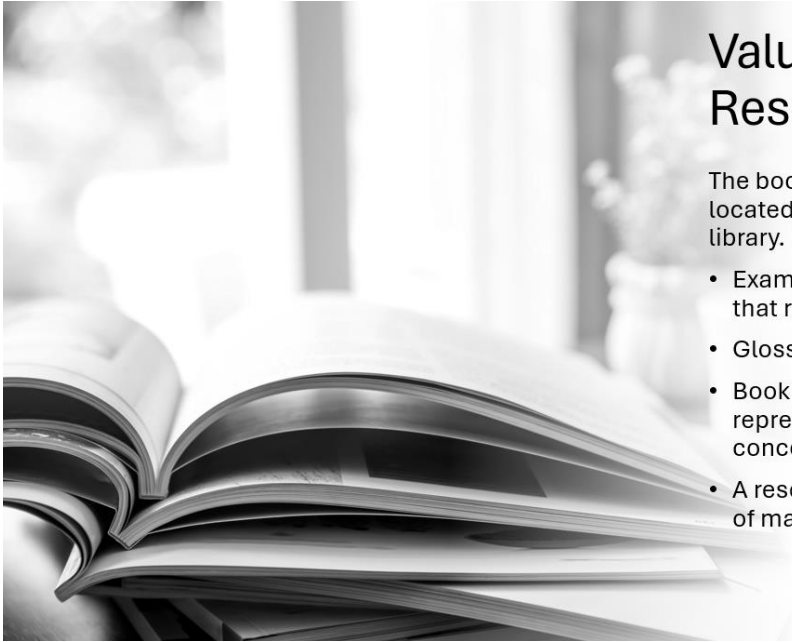
Number Sense refers to the ability to understand:

- Sets – how many, composing/decomposing/manipulating
- Comparing Quantities – more, less, the same
- Flexible Counting – by 2's, 5's, 10's or starting at a fixed quantity (ex: begin at 3 then continue 4, 5, 6...)
- Problem-solving – ex: “I have 8, I need 2 more to fill my frame”
“you need one more, so we can have the same”

Supporting Number Sense

- Use mathematical language in classroom conversation
- Children develop number sense through repeated explorations of mathematical concepts in play
- Embed math into the daily routines through teachable moments and intentionally-planned activities
- Be excited about math – approach it with the same enthusiasm as music, literacy, and art
- Read children's books that explore mathematical concepts





Valuable Resource

The book, *Where's the Math*, is located in our teacher resource library. It contains:

- Examples of specific math activities that relate to each concept
- Glossary of math terms
- Book list of children's books that represent various mathematical concepts for young children
- A resource list for further self-study of math in early childhood settings

Reference

Carpenter, T.P., Franke, M., Johnson, N.C., Turrou, A.C. & Wager, A.A. (2017). *Young Children's Mathematics: Cognitively Guided Instruction in Early Childhood Education*. Heinemann Publishers

Franke, M., Kazemi, E. & Turrou, A.C. (2018). *Choral Counting & Counting Collections: Transforming the PreK-5 Math Classroom*. Stenhouse Publishers.

Hynes-Berry, M. & Grandau, L. (2019). *Where's the Math?* National Association for the Education of Young Children

Play-Based Learning

PLAY-BASED LEARNING

SUPPORTING PLAY IN EARLY
CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
AND CARE SETTINGS



PLAY-BASED LEARNING

- Children naturally learn through play by engaging in and making sense of their world
- Play-based learning opportunities are teacher-facilitated, with teachers taking an active role as intentional planners, observers, and guides.
- Experiences should be enjoyable and process-oriented

WHY IS PLAY-BASED LEARNING IMPORTANT?

Through play children learn how to make sense of the world around them. Children use play to:

- Develop social skills
- Expand cognitive, critical-thinking, and problem-solving skills
- Mature emotionally
- Gain self-confidence

Play-Based Learning Activities

- Imaginative play
- Painting/process art
- Sensory play (playdough, sand, water, etc)
- Nature play
- Music & Movement
- Board games
- Object play (blocks, animals, magnets)



“Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children play IS serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood.”

-Fred Rogers

IMAGINATIVE PLAY

Children learn valuable problem-solving skills, cultivate social/emotional intelligence, develop communication/language skills and learn prosocial behaviors

Imaginative play can be a helpful component of the healing process for children who have experienced trauma

WAYS TO SUPPORT IMAGINATIVE PLAY

Provide adequate space(s) for imaginative play

Provide plenty of props

Include props/provocations in other centers (ex: construction vehicles and people in the block area)

Ensure children have plenty of time to engage in imaginative play

Make time for imaginative play in the daily schedule

Model cooperative play skills (such as assuming roles – “I’d love to order some food, are you the chef?”)

BOARD GAMES & CARD GAMES

Children develop valuable skills when engaging in board games and card games:

- Turn-taking
- Communication
- Focus/attention
- Mathematic concepts (counting, color matching, etc.)
- Following directions

TIPS FOR PLAYING GAMES

- Make sure the game is developmentally-appropriate for your children
- Modify the game if needed (reduce the amount of cards, etc.)
- Play with small groups
- Narrate your choices to help children better understand
- Anticipate emotional upset if there is a winning/losing situation and provide children with support and prosocial behaviors
- Always play the game with the children and model appropriate skills
- Have fun! Children learn more when they enjoy playing

IN THE BLOCK CENTER

When children play with blocks they develop:

- Fine motor skills
- Spatial reasoning
- Social skills
- Focus & Attention
- Language (particularly math-related terms)
- Problem-solving

ELEVATE LEARNING WITH BLOCKS

Provide adequate space for large and small building projects

Use trays, rugs, and other visual cues to designate building spaces

Ensure a variety of blocks are available (sizes, shapes, colors, etc.)

Add provocations such as people, manipulatives, vehicles, etc. to encourage extended play

Use math-related terms and open-ended questions when speaking with children – (ex: “wow! That is taller than mine” “What if we place this one on top?”)

Build with children. Narrate your choices and/or problem-solving solutions.

SENSORY PLAY

Sensory play is an essential component of daily schedules for young children. Through sensory play, children:

- Refine fine motor skills and improve dexterity
- Engage in calming techniques through sensory input
- Learn the concept of cause and effect
- Express creativity

TIPS FOR SENSORY PLAY

- Know your children's sensory preferences
- Provide individualized materials (bins, tools, and sensory medium)
- Periodically vary sensory mediums (playdough, sand, kinetic sand, flour, water, etc.)
- Allow children to quietly engage in sensory play – this should be a calming point in your daily routine
- Anticipate behaviors – if you know a specific child may become overstimulated and throw sand, sit near that child and engage them in conversation and support meaningful play



MUSIC & MOVEMENT

Music and movement is an engaging, playful way for children to learn and develop skills. Daily music and movement supports the development of:

- Working memory
- Personal preferences
- Communication and language
- Gross motor skills (including balance and coordination)
- Spatial awareness
- Sequence
- Emotional expression

SUPPORTING MUSIC & MOVEMENT

Select developmentally-appropriate music & movement activities

Always know your song and any embedded movements – be comfortable with it

Provide adequate space for children to safely move

Use shapes, chairs, or carpet squares to designate a “home base” for children to return their bodies to

Thoughtfully plan transitions to and from music & movement periods

Have all materials ready before beginning (wait times may result in unwanted behaviors)

Be enthusiastic – sing along and have fun with the activities; modeling prosocial behaviors

PROCESS ART

Through
process
art
children
learn and
develop:

Problem-solving skills

Concept of cause and effect

Artistic expression

Mathematical concepts

Language and communication skills

STEM concepts – inquiry, experimentation, and innovation

SUPPORTING PROCESS ART IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SETTINGS

Process art can be messy, it is imperative to anticipate challenges and set up the environment.

- Have adequate materials for children to engage in the activity
- Put down paper or plastic table clothes to protect furniture
- Have a designated space for completed artwork to dry
- Provide aprons or large shirts to protect clothing
- Stay with children prompting the process and offering support as needed
- Display artwork at children's eye-level and share the process with families in the communication app. Children should feel like they have engaged in a meaningful process.

OBSERVATIONAL ASSESSMENT

- Authentic means of monitoring play-based learning
- Plan for targeted observation (ex: selecting a day to observe social skills during play for every child or choosing specific days to observe specific children)
- Have a system for making observation (ex: post-it notes, small notebook, etc.) – know how and when you will write out observations
- Use observations to inform future lesson plans and develop individualized learning goals for children