

Connections

The EESLPD Office at UNC Charlotte Newsletter

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Strong Foundation, Creative Vision, and Sustainability

Who is the Early Educator Support, Licensure, and Professional Development (EESLPD) Office at UNC Charlotte?

We are, first, a family. We are a family who stands tall and proud on a strong foundation, built upon unyielding roots of knowledge, expertise, and passion. Our foundation was laid by the architects who first understood and voiced the importance and value of the learning and development of young children. Our walls were erected by the architects of the field of early childhood education. Architects who we continue to look to for their wisdom, strength, and to hold us accountable for the continuous care and support of the foundation they built.

We are, first, a family. A family whose foundation has been strategically built upon by a blueprint designed with a clear vision of creativity. Our vision is one that never loses sight of the great moral power of our foundation, yet is a mechanism of great ingenuity.

We are, first, a family. A family who knows no boundaries to their positive influence. A family who, with a strong foundation and creative vision, are confident in thinking progressively. We are forward-thinkers who share a collective responsibility for personal, professional, and programmatic growth and for humbly serving those who influence the lives of young children and their families.

To learn more about how our foundation, vision, and efforts toward sustainability converge, we invite you to explore our webpage further. Learn more about our support services by visiting the About Us tab. Take a moment to meet each of us by visiting the Staff Contact tab. For an in-depth dive into our framework, please take the time to browse the Resource Manual and the EESLPD Conceptual Framework.

With our warmest regards,

The EESLPD Office at UNC Charlotte

Authentic Assessment

Mueller (2003), explains that authentic, on-going assessments is “a form of assessment in which children are observed while working, playing and performing real world tasks that demonstrate meaningful application of essential knowledge and skills.” Teachers collect information about children in varied ways that document what children can do in settings where they are most comfortable, during normal routines and in play in the classroom. Assessment data should be gathered from many sources, including families, over time in children’s naturally occurring learning environments (Lambert, Kim & Burts, 2011).

The Power of Assessment defines assessment as a method of systematic process (cycle) of collecting and interpreting information in order to answer questions about children’s development and learning; and inform instruction. Dodge, et.al. (2004), states the key is to observe purposefully and plan for documentation that provides rich data. Teachers who collect documentation in various ways form a representative picture of children’s abilities and progress made (i.e. children’s work samples, observation, anecdotal notes, photos, video and audio recordings, and checklists. The more documentation you collect the “stronger and more valid your decisions will be” (2004).

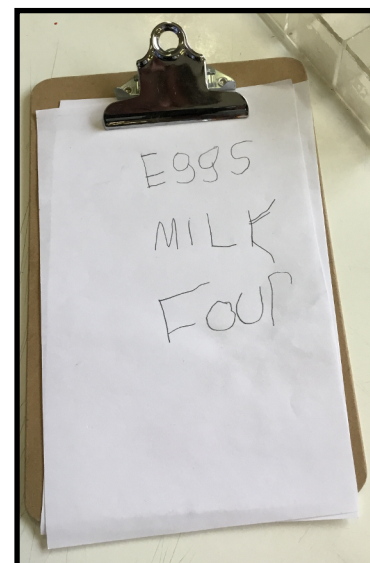
Assessment is a cycle and intentional implementation that takes time and practice. As mentors and evaluators, it is important to help early childhood educators reflect on their assessment practices. Teachers assess children throughout the day in the classroom oftentimes using research based methods; and may not even be aware of the times they are assessing. For example, a teacher may spontaneously scaffold an activity after it becomes clear that a child or group of children need more guidance in learning a specific skill. Although unplanned, the teacher has assessed the needs of the child(ren) and quickly modified guidance to provide next steps. As mentors and evaluators, we can help teachers break-down the steps in the assessment cycle process and guide them to become more intentional as they plan for collection, interpretation, and implementation of next steps.

Guiding questions to ask teachers *before* collecting data:

- What do children need to learn?
- What interests and engages children?
- What should be assessed (curriculum goals/objectives; expected developmentally appropriate outcomes; specific concerns; etc.)?
- What documents and information should be collected?
- Who should be assessed (individual/group)?
- How will the assessments be carried out?
- Will both teacher and co-teacher collect data?
- How much data/information is needed?
- In what different ways can you find out/collect the needed information?



In an eye doctor office set up in the classroom, the teacher planned a letter assessment where two children called out letters to their patient, marking what he/she knew.



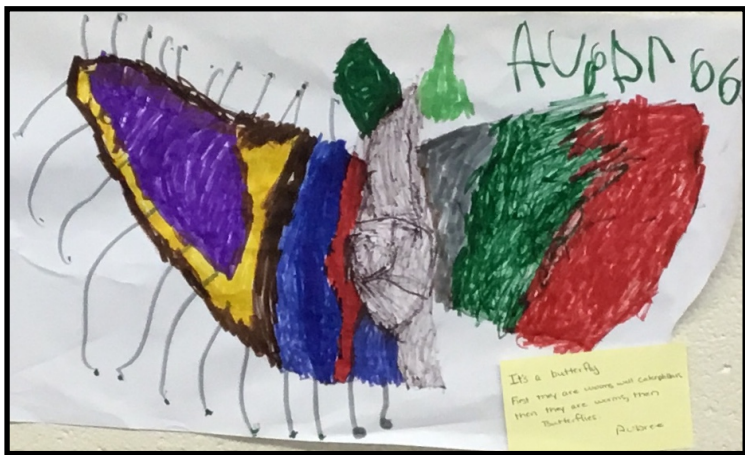
This child-made grocery list demonstrates invented spelling.

Mentor Minute (cont.)

Early childhood educators need to have a solid understanding of child development, know their children, and be informed about their curriculum in order to accurately interpret assessment data and plan for children's next steps and learning. NC Foundations for Early Learning and Development provides a rich resource and guide for teachers meeting the needs of children by aligning developmental steps the child is doing now with next steps and strategies to meet the needs of each child.

Guiding questions to ask teachers about interpreting and using the data to plan next steps:

- What can the children do and what do they know?
- What does the data/information tell you?
- What did you learn about each child from the data collected?
- How will you use the information you learned?
- How will your plans change?
- What strategies will you use?
- What are your next steps with this child or group of children?
- How might you note on your lesson plans your strategies for collecting data?
- How might you track or keep up with what happens as a result of your planning?



Children's drawings can tell a teacher what children know and *do not know* (i.e. Butterfly with numerous legs in drawing). What might be the teacher's next steps in planning for this child?

Children sorted rocks by size and were encouraged to count and draw the same number of rocks and write the number under each column.



Two children are paired together using a book to retell a favorite story in art.

Mentor Minute (cont.)

Information gathered outside of the school day is necessary in painting a full picture of what each child can do. Teachers should welcome and encourage input from families and the children themselves, so that both can play a crucial role in the authentic assessment process.

Guiding questions to ask teachers about involving children and families in assessment:

- In what ways can you seek input from with families?
- How can you support families in understanding and the relevance of assessment data?
- How might you promote ways for children to assess themselves or be involved in preparing for conferences with their families?

Knowing that learning that takes place at home can be an important supplement to classroom practices. As Early Childhood Educators, we know that a child's first teacher is their family.

Additional strategies for involving families in the assessment process:

- Ask families to involve their children in assessment by having them choose their favorite creations from school. Why is this their child's favorite creation (in the child's words)?
- During parent-teacher conferences, share only 2-3 main points related to the child's assessment information.
- Have children present their assessment portfolio information to their families during parent-teacher conferences (e.g., children showcase their favorite works, children explain what they learned, and children indicate what they liked best about the activity).
- Be strengths-based, positive and encouraging when discussing a child's assessment information with families, but be careful not to overshadow areas or skills that may need more focus and improvement.
- Be prepared to share at least 1-2 specific suggestions and/or activities to guide families when working at home with their children.



Drawings of a school bus over time that document children's learning. Asking families to bring in drawings created by child at home can help to reflect a fuller picture of learning.

References:

- Dichtelmiller, M. L. (2011). *The Power of Assessment: Transforming Teaching and Learning*
- Dodge, D.T. & Heroman, C & Charles, J & Majorca, J. (2004). *Beyond Outcomes: How Ongoing Assessment Supports Children's Learning and Leads to Meaningful Curriculum*
- Mueller, J. (2003). *Authentic Assessment in the Classroom and the Media Center*

Please be sure to also visit the [EESLPD Useful Resources](#) tab of our website to explore the Authentic Assessment section under Mentor/Evaluator Additional Resources

Special thanks to Heather Taylor whom served as a guest contributor to this month's Mentor Minute



Brooke Hough is a Mentor/Evaluator from Region 3 whom lives in Clemmons. She has worked with the EESLPD Office since September 2017. When asked what she likes most about her role, she says, "I love having the opportunity to visit many classrooms to support teachers. It is wonderful to experience the professional growth each individual teacher achieves. I enjoy collaboration, communication, and support I receive from my colleagues. I am truly grateful and feel blessed to be a part of the EESLPD team as I have learned and grown so much since joining."

When asked about her favorite children's book she expresses, "It's hard for me to narrow down an absolute favorite children's book but I love anything by Eric Carle."

She also shares, "I took piano for 12 years and used to play in the praise band at church. I have a son, Aden (5) and a daughter, Emerson (2) who keeps me busy these days. I feel very blessed to have been chosen to be their mother. "

COLLABORATOR CORNER

Adina Tompkins is the NC Pre-Kindergarten Coordinator at the Rockingham County Partnership for Children. She has partnered with the EESLPD Office for 3 years. She shares, "My favorite thing about working with the EESLPD is assisting teachers with their professional growth. I have observed first hand many of our teachers grow into 'powerhouse' Early Childhood leaders in the classroom, program and the community. It's a great feeling to be a part of this process!"

She declares that picking just one favorite children's book is difficult and adds, "It's so hard to choose just one! I have so many... it's a problem really! If I must choose one however, I will pick 'The Pout Pout Fish'. I have so many great memories of laying in my daughter's bed before she could read and sharing this book with her over and over. She loved the part when the fish says 'glub, glub!'"

About her hobbies outside of work, Adina shares, "Others may or may not know that I moonlight as a Professional Photographer and have my own business! Photography (very much like Early Childhood) has been a passion of mine from a young age. Also, I am a TV junkie! I love nothing better than to get in my PJs and binge watch great TV shows. I am currently watching Dawson's Creek (I didn't see it when it came on several years ago) and am #TeamPacey all the way! "



"Highlights from the Field"

Angela Wilson shares, "When K.W., an initial teacher in Guilford County, noticed that three children in her classroom were fascinated with dinosaurs, she capitalized on the opportunity to develop a 'mini study' for them. Over the course of about two weeks, she observed their play, listened to their conversations, and recorded some of their comments. Based on her observations, she began to gather a few materials to support the exploration of their interest. K.W. asked a battery of open-ended questions to determine what they already knew, and what they wanted to find out about dinosaurs. She reports that the children are intrinsically motivated, and taking ownership of their own learning experiences. Not only are the children actively pursuing their interest, they are much more focused and able to remain engaged for large blocks of time. K.W. continues to facilitate play by including the children's input in the planning process, providing new materials as needed, and embedding children and the teacher as well! I'm so proud of her! "



Giving a shout-out to our newest staff, Ashley Weber expresses, "A few weeks ago, I had the privilege of meeting four new brilliant, unique, and aspirational team members that we are lucky to have on board! Niki, Starr, Samantha, and Jamie each bring a special piece to help further complete our EESLPD puzzle family. I had the pleasure of meeting each of these ladies during the Meck Pre-K interview process with fellow Region 3 staff. Niki's talent for singing, Samantha's communicative nature, Jamie's calming aura, and Starr's inspiring spirit all bring something unique and special to our EESLPD family. Additionally, each of the women bring a broad and vast variety of expertise! Niki has experience with not only young children, but older elementary school students as well-bless her! Samantha's history in news broadcasting brings a unique element to the team that we have never had before. Jamie's work in the field of higher education brings a crucial adult learning aspect to our program. Lastly, Starr's established Pre-K classroom experience demonstrates her dedication to early childhood education. The knowledge and passion that these women hold for young children and helping teachers grow is truly amazing and I am eager to begin working with each of them. Welcome to the team, ladies! "

GETTING TO KNOW THEM BETTER

You've seen them dance, rap, and sing but there is much more to know about them. Please see below for additional information about our four newest staff. You will quickly see why they fit in with our team in so well.

Jamie Brown

I have been in the early childhood field for over 30 years and have had the privilege of working in many fulfilling roles. Prior to joining the EESLPD Office at UNC Charlotte, I served as a full-time faculty member and program director with the Child and Family Development Program. In addition to being a Mentor/Evaluator, I will continue to teach courses part-time. I have served in roles which included classroom teacher (infants-school age), college instructor, advisor, technical assistant, trainer, and program director of various programs. I have served on many professional committees and as a reviewer for Head Start and NAEYC's Accreditation of Degree Programs.

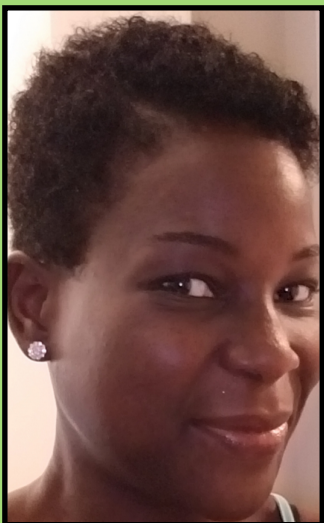


I earned both a bachelor's and master's degree in Early Childhood Education from Penn State and hold a current NC professional teaching license in Birth-Kindergarten and K-6.

I moved to NC in 2005 with my husband and two children to be closer to my husband's family, it came with the bonus of much nicer weather than Pennsylvania (especially in Winter). My husband is a Math Professor, my daughter is a Flight Attendant and my son will be graduating in May from Norwich University in Vermont with a degree in Cybersecurity and will be commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Air Force.

When not working I enjoy traveling (now made much cheaper with my daughter's job), photography, hiking, biking, and gardening, all with my family by my side.

Niki Sashington



Hello! My Name is Niki Sashington and I am excited to be one of four new Mentor/Evaluators to EESLPD. I live in the Concord Hills area with my husband Rayshion of 11 years and our daughter Raelin (8). In my spare time, I love watching sports and traveling. My husband is from Chicago so when I'm not watching local teams, I'm all involved with any sports teams from the Midwest. My daughter has realized that she's either a Panthers fan or a Bears fan.

I am a life long learner celebrating 20 years in education with most of those years in the Early Childhood field. I have had the opportunities to teach Pre-K in a child-care setting as well as within Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools. My leadership role beyond a classroom teacher has included being the Pre-K Principal Intern at Doable Oaks Pre-K Center, Literacy Coach with More at Four, and Education Coordinator for Early Head Start/Head Start.

Ginott states that " teachers are the decisive element in their classrooms and they create the climate." This quote has several parts and most of it has stayed near to the heart of my career. The quote has many impactful parts and is a tool for me when meeting teachers where they are. My goal and my hopes are that we can learn new perspectives together while developing a growth mindset.

GETTING TO KNOW THEM BETTER

Samantha Hines



I am Samantha Hines and thrilled to be a part of the EESLPD team. I am a new on-boarder with this team but I am not new to Early Childhood Education. I began my career at the University Child Development Center in the More at four Program in Huntersville. I was a teacher assistant. I became a licensed teacher and taught for 6 years in the Bright Beginnings program at Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (CMS), loving children and helping children learn..that was before I moved into a grant funded position that would allow me to love teachers and help them grow, develop and communicate their needs. This was a district position called Teacher in Residence. In that position I was able to train teachers in professional development through a Harvard University initiative called Tripod 7 C's where we taught teachers best practices and a framework for effective teaching. I was a facilitator for teacher-group meetings. I supported work in the Beginning Teacher Support Program for CMS. I sat on the Compensation Task Force and other

committees that serve teachers, also for CMS.

But ,I am most excited about the role I will play within the EESLPD to provide support for teachers and help teachers grow to reach their goals.

PS-My husband of 25 years still makes me laugh. Together we have a 17 year old daughter and we are the grandparents to her pet aussie doodle.

Starr Batts

Hello I'm Starr Batts. I am married to Lavar Batts Sr. who is a varsity boys basketball coach in Cabarrus County. We have been married nine years and have two wonderful children. Our oldest Lavar Batts Jr. is a sophomore at University of North Carolina Asheville on a basketball scholarship. Our daughter Li'Ara is in the seventh grade at Northwest Cabarrus Stem Middle School. There she participates in band and sports. She plays the flute and trombone. She was a member of the softball team and she is currently on the basketball team.

I've been in early childhood educations for 19 years. I love working with children and their families. My strengths as an educator are developing positive relationships, creating math & literacy activities and supporting children with challenging behaviors. I started out working with children with Life Span, Inc. I was part of the North Carolina Pre-K program for eleven years. When I started it was "More@Four." I was an assistant teacher for three years. I enrolled in the University of North Carolina at Charlotte and obtained my Birth-Kindergarten license. After obtaining my license I continued to teach for the NC Pre-K program. I am currently enrolled in the MAT program at UNC Charlotte and will be graduating in the spring of this year.



My goal is to obtain my master's degree and to also become certified in elementary education as well. I plan to use my knowledge and expertise to support teachers use of best practices in the classroom and offer advice to help them reach professional goals. I was a little apprehensive about leaving the classroom but being on this stage allows me to serve and reach more children while building positive relationships with teachers and colleagues.

Work Group Updates

Foundations Work Group

Mistie reports, the Foundations Work Group realized that the task of evaluating Foundations had many facets. After a few discussions, we decided that we should focus on the Guiding Principles of Foundations which address the fundamental ideals of the document. We have such diverse teachers, who use diverse curriculum, so it would be helpful to have a handout for educators highlighting each Guiding Principle, along with situational examples that show their application. It would also be helpful for our use as Mentors and Evaluators to have a resource for supporting teacher discussions based on the Guiding Principles. Group members have decided to begin collecting information and data to support both ideas and work towards examples by the next WebEx meeting at the end February.

Deep Dive Work Group

Erica reports, our DIVE team met via Zoom recently and discussed our next steps. Ashley and I created our first podcast and realized that the content was aimed more towards beginning year teachers. At that point we realized that our group would like to focus on teachers diving deeper into content and focus our podcast more on teachers going that extra mile. So far, we have discussed several deep topics for future podcasts. We have created two teams within our DIVE work group so that we can focus on two different podcast topics at once. One group is focusing on the topic of “Diversity” and the other group is focusing on the topic of “Being Intentional”. We plan to meet again in two week to discuss our progress amongst our two groups and then work on creating our podcast.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

February 2019

Feb. 11th

Region 2 (East) Team Meeting 10am-12pm at Alamance Partnership for Children

Feb. 12th

Region 2 (West) Team Meeting 10am-12pm at Smart Start of Forsyth County

Feb. 13th

Region 3 Team Meeting 11am-2pm at Concord Library

Feb. 14th

Region 1 Team Meeting 1pm-3pm at Buncombe Partnership for Children

Feb. 19th

**Communities of Practice (Group 1) 8am-9:30am
Communities of Practice (Group 2) 3pm-4:30pm**

Feb. 20th

**Observation 3 completed (SPI/LE licensed teachers)
Observation 2 completed (SPII licensed teachers)**

Feb. 21st

Communities of Practice (Group 3) 3:30pm-5pm

Feb. 22nd

Communities of Practice (Group 4) 9:30am-11am

Feb. 26th

Mid-year PDP Reviews completed (All teachers)

Feb. 27th

NC TEP Part 2 Training at Impact Alamance