

# Connections

The EESLPD Office at UNC Charlotte Newsletter

October 2018

Volume 2: Issue 1

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Welcome to the 2018-19 program year for the EESLPD Office at UNC Charlotte! It is hard to believe it is already mid-October and that our services are well under way for the year.

We were overjoyed to welcome six new staff to our team in September. In a very short period, they have witnessed and quickly become part of the amazing connections that are the staple of our work family. Regardless of how large our work family gets, the commitment to our relationships and the collective sense of value and purpose continue to bind us together. It is our understanding of the importance of human connection, trusting relationships, and meeting another individual where they are, without judgement, that sets us apart. This understanding allows us to thrive in an intimate and family like way, which then defines our ability to build solid and transformative relationships with the teachers we serve. In a 2017 interview with Forbes Magazine, Brené Brown explained the key to building a true belonging practice is maintaining our belief in inextricable human connection.

I define connection as the energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued; when they can give and receive without judgment; and when they derive sustenance and strength from the relationship.

(Brené Brown)

As you make initial connections with your teachers and provide support and strength to your colleagues, be mindful of the hopelessly intricate connection that we all have with each other as human beings. Please keep in mind the ruthless hurricane season that we have all just experienced, the devastation that many families continue to endure, and how these experiences, while unequivocally unfortunate, connect us to each other in an almost unexplainable, deep down, empathic kind of way. As you work to build or renew relationships, consider first, your human connection and what you can say and/or do to let them know that you care, that you understand, that you are interested, and that you are listening. Meet each individual exactly where they are with a willingness to accept that this may be constant worry over a family member who has lost their home and belongings, how they will pay for the roof repair from the fallen tree, or even how they will find money to refill the refrigerator following days without power. Allow your sense of compassion for a fellow human being to give them the hope, strength, and energy that they may need during that minute, day, or week. You may be what makes the difference in their day. Yours may be the listening ear or helping hand that provides them a few moments of respite. Your efforts in making connections models behavior that may empower teachers to make connections with their children and families. The multiplier effect of human connection is powerful and limitless.

Sending well wishes and continued strength to each of you and your families-

Amanda

We would like to welcome the following new Mentors/Evaluators to our team:

W  
E  
L  
C  
O  
M  
M  
E



**Mistie Cogbill**



**Mariel Gardner**



**Amy Jo Farrington**



**Tara Kidroske**



**Tammy Potts**



**Crystal Thomas**

**We are so thankful for the unique strengths and gifts each of you bring to this team!**

## Setting Up the Classroom Environment for Success

Welcome back to another new program year! As we think about the significance of the beginning of the year, we understand that teachers getting to know the children and their families, is key in setting up a classroom learning environment for a successful year. Becky Bailey shares that creating a “School Family” community early on “builds connections between families and schools, teachers and teachers, teachers and students, and students and students to ensure the optimal development of all.” Below are a few strategies and talking points to help us guide teachers in creating an environment for a successful school year!

### ***Routines/Rituals***

- Establishing both rituals and routines for children at the beginning of the year is a key factor in creating and maintaining a safe, nurturing, and positive classroom learning environment.
- Routine: a consistent, predictable factor in a daily schedule that is represented clearly through phrases, pictures, and words
- \*Examples: a classroom schedule; clean-up time
- Ritual: activities that connect a group through eye-contact, presence, and playfulness
- \*Examples: daily welcome/morning greeting; acknowledging birthdays through small celebrations; gathering songs/poems to bring the community together.
- Both routines and rituals not only help build a classroom community, but also prevent challenging behaviors and withdrawals.

Arrival	8:00
Bathroom & Wash Hands	8:00-8:05
Breakfast	8:05-8:30
Bathroom & Wash Hands	8:30-8:35
Outside	8:35-9:05
Transition Let's Talk About It Let's Find Out About It	9:05-9:10
Morning Meeting	9:10-9:25
Centers Clean up	9:25-9:40
Story Time	9:40-10:55
Music & Movement	10:55-11:00
Small Groups	11:00-11:20
Songs, Word Play and Letters	11:20-11:25
Lunch	11:25-11:45
Outside	11:45-12:00
Hands Wash	12:00-12:30
Quiet Time	12:30-1:00
End of the Centers	1:00-1:05
Dismissal	1:15-1:30
	1:30-2:25
	2:30

### ***Transitions***

- Transitions refer to a change to in the environment
- It's Important to plan for these transitional changes when creating a daily schedule to maintain an engaged learning environment for children
- Transitions can provide opportunities to gain information about children (interest and/or assessment-based)
- \*Examples: auditory; visual clues (such as posters); concrete object transition (carrying a blanket to their cubby as they prepare for the next activity); novelty/kinesthetic way transition (standing on one foot and hopping to line up)
- Being clear about classroom expectations during transition time can help keep children engaged as well as lessen behavioral challenges.



# Mentor Minute (cont.)

## School Family Community:

- It's important to make sure that both the children and their families know how important they are in this year's journey and throughout their educational experiences
- Positively reinforcing children's choices and behaviors and sharing these milestones with families will promote a sense of intrinsic motivation and accomplishment
- Assigning each child a classroom job promotes a sense of responsibility and community in the classroom
- Providing multiple opportunities for parents to volunteer both in and outside of the classroom (such as helping with small groups, being a guest reader, cutting items out at home, etc) will allow all parents to feel like a contributor
- Learning about the diversities of children and families to support the awareness of the cultures (perhaps suggest sending out an optional survey about a family's cultural background could be a great way to discover such information!)
- The elements within standard two, as well as our resource manual, are also great tools in helping teachers brainstorm ideas in which classroom community can be created and continue to flourish throughout the year!



### Below are some guiding questions you might ask teachers to think more about setting up the classroom environment for success:

- What are your expectations (dreams/hopes) for your classroom as you start a new year?
- What are some ways that you support children's success in building a "School Family"?
- How do you support your children in learning routines in the classroom? What routines during your class day seem the most successful and why do you think so?
- What are some ways that you create rituals in your classroom to support a positive learning environment and build classroom community?
- How do transitions support children's success in the classroom?
- How do you support children with differing needs during transitions?
- How can you use transition times as opportunities for collecting information on children's learning?
- What are some ways that you include families in their children's learning?
- How are children and their families different cultures included and celebrated in the classroom?

**Special thanks to Ashley Weber whom served as a guest contributor to this month's Mentor Minute**

# STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Erica Recchio is a Mentor/Evaluator whom works and lives in Region 3. She has been with the EESLPD office for 3 years. When asked what she likes best about her work, she expresses, "I really love watching teachers grow and seeing the effect that our program has on them. I love watching their students grow along with them. Seeing a child's eyes light up with excitement while learning from his teacher and peers makes my heart smile. Establishing strong connections with my teachers and colleagues is another great rewarding part of this job!"

Her favorite children's books are *I'm Gonna Like Me* by Jamie Lee Curtis and *The Kissing Hand* by Audrey Penn.

Erica also enjoys several activities outside of work. She shares, "I love to be involved in any type of sport activity. My favorite sport is field hockey and I went to Europe to play on a traveling team for a month after graduating college. I have two little boys under the age of two and count my blessings each & everyday! "



## COLLABORATOR CORNER

Nancy Hollis is the Site Administrator of The Learning Place at Thomasville Medical Center. She has partnered with the EESLPD for over 7 years and shares, "I like the support that the EESLPD gives to teachers that encourages them to become a better teacher. It is wonderful to watch a teacher grow and realize that she is competent." She further speaks on the enjoyment of working in the early childhood field by expressing, "I have been in my current position for 30 years. I also love my work as a practicum supervisor. I enjoy seeing students grow and become competent early childhood teachers."

Her favorite children's book is *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* as she explains, "it is wonderful to see non-readers learn a story and be able to tell it to others."





## DID YOU KNOW?

### THE EESLPD GOOGLE CALENDAR HAS BEEN CREATED

The EESLPD Office has created a Google Calendar with important due dates and event reminders. This calendar can merge with your personal Google calendar. If you have not requested access yet but would like it, please contact Jessica Ward at [jward@uncc.edu](mailto:jward@uncc.edu).

### THE EESLPD WEBSITE HAS BEEN UPDATED

The EESLPD Office has made several updates to our website and will continuously add resources. Please see below for more information:

- Added **North Carolina Educator Effectiveness (NCEES) tab** containing tip-sheets. Each tip-sheet guides users step-by-step (with screen-shots) through NCEES depending on role (Teacher, Mentor, Evaluator).
- Updated **EESLPD Mentor/Evaluator/Partner Useful Resources tab**. This tab contains suggested Organizational Tools used by other Mentors and Evaluators as well as Additional Resources including articles on various topics such as 21st Century Learning and Promoting Open-Ended Questions.
- Added **Additional Resources for Teachers tab**. This tab contains useful resources for teachers about a variety of topics pertaining to Teacher Leadership, Nurturing Environments, Developmentally and Age Appropriate Content, Intentional Teaching, and Reflection.

To explore the EESLPD website further, please click [here](#).