

Connections

The EESLPD West Office Newsletter

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"Vulnerability is at the core,
the center, of meaningful
human experiences."

- BRENE BROWN

balanceintheburbs.com

Renewing a Commitment to Connections in the New Year

As a team, we talk a lot about the importance of self-reflection. Just as we want educators to reflect upon their practices and their growth, we too, must constantly reflect on who we are, who we are with others, and our own growth (Independence, Inter-dependence, and Continuous Improvement). In our work, we have daily interactions with a number of people...human experiences. I frequently reflect on my interactions, my stance, how I am with others, etc. and always wonder if I am my most authentic self during those interactions. Do I really allow those interactions to be morphed into something much more powerful, real connections? Connections are what we are in search of, right? Connections give us purpose and meaning and build strong relationships, which we need, to be successful in our professional roles. How do we know when we have a connection? How can we be successful in achieving connections over interactions?

I am not someone who can simply wonder or speculate and let something be. I dig until I feel satisfied and learn something, sometimes merely informational and sometimes transformational. So, after digging a bit, I came across the word "vulnerability" and the phrase, "vulnerability is at the core, the center, of meaningful human experiences. I was intrigued so wondered a little more and dug a little more.

I found a TED Talk, titled The Power of Vulnerability, presented by Brene Brown. Here is the link, if interested: https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability. Brown discusses vulnerability as a way of allowing ourselves to be seen, really seen and how vulnerability, while sometimes uncomfortable, is the birthplace of connections, powerful human connections. She further explains, "Those who do things wholeheartedly (vulnerably) have a sense of courage that allows them to be imperfect, they have the compassion to be kind to themselves first and then to others, and they have connections, as a result of that authenticity."

As we start a new year, 2018, I see value in reflecting on our own sense of vulnerability in the relationships that we have with ourselves, our colleagues, and the educators that we support. If we renew our commitment to powerful connections then we must embrace vulnerability. Embracing vulnerability allows each of us to fully experience the "learning zone" which will only enhance our time in the "performance zone."

Wishing you a year full of powerful connections!

Amanda

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Mentor Minute

Supporting teachers as they incorporate 21st Century skill building opportunities (Part 1 of 2)

21st Century Skills encompass a broad range of objectives. These skills can be broken-down into three types:

Learning Skills	Literacy Skills	Life Skills
Critical Thinking	Information Literacy	Flexibility
Creative Thinking	Media Literacy	Initiative
Collaborating	Technology Literacy	Social Skills
Communicating		Productivity
		Leadership

However, teachers are often unsure where to start when incorporating 21st Century concepts into daily classroom experiences. For this two-part *Mentor Minute*, ways to support teachers as they integrate both 21st Century learning skills and literacy skills will be highlighted in this issue while life skills will be explored further in the February issue.

To promote 21st Century skills, teachers should be encouraged to create optimal learning environments which emphasize inquiry, discovery, experimentation, and play. In-depth exploration of [NC Foundations for Early Learning and Development](#) will help guide teachers' understanding of how to develop these skills. As a teacher begins to consistently implement strategies from [NC Foundations for Early Learning and Development](#), learning will begin to move from teacher-directed to more child-led and 21st Century skills will naturally emerge. Some additional strategies that can help guide teachers include:

- Planning materials and learning experiences that provide opportunities for children to investigate and discover for themselves
- Providing a learning environment where children are free to try and fail
- Encouraging the use of materials and supplies in multiple areas in the room to promote problem-solving
- Encouraging and using open-ended questions by both teachers and children
- Providing multiple opportunities for children to reflect and document their learning in various ways
- Providing opportunities for team work and collaboration often in the classroom
- Exploring and developing Project Based Learning
- Planning authentic learning experiences (create a doctor's office, car repair shop, etc.) with children



Children work together and use materials in unique ways.



A child plans out and creates a structure using a blueprint. Then, explains the process to the teacher.

Mentor Minute (cont.)

21st Century Skills in the preschool classroom



Children create their own graphs from items collected at home.



Then, they explain their graphs to their teacher and peers.



A small group searches for a video about the inter-workings of a washing machine.



Children take apart and explore an old iron.

21st Century Skills resource links:

- [Using Blocks to Develop 21st Century Skills article from NAEYC's *Young Children*, March 2015](#)
- [The 21st Century Skills Early Learning Framework by Partnership for 21st Century Learning](#)
- [Illinois Early Learning Project](#)
- [21st Century Learning Module by the EESLPD Office at UNC Charlotte \(also found on our website\)](#)
- [Ramps and Pathways Developmentally Appropriate, Intellectually Rigorous, and Fun Physical Science by Betty Zan and Rosemary Geiken](#)

Please click on each item listed above for more information

*Special thanks to Lead Mentor, Martha Berry,
for contributions to the Mentor Minute.*



Jessica Ward has worked with the EESLPD Office since October of 2014. Before that, she was a partner with the TLU for several years. What she likes best about her work is being a part of a teacher's growth process and seeing how children become more engaged in learning as that growth occurs.

Her favorite children's book is *Margaret and Margarita* by Lynn Reiser because it is about a seemingly unlikely friendship and reminds us that at our core we are all the same.

Besides wearing several hats at UNC Charlotte, Jessica also enjoys singing in her car, hiking and traveling with her husband, Michael and making people laugh (including herself).

COLLABORATOR CORNER

Catherine Burke has partnered with the EESLPD Office since 2016. She expresses, "I love that EESLPD recognizes the strengths of its teachers and promotes the professionalism of early childhood educators in North Carolina. The team members that I've had a chance to work with from the western hub truly embody a parallel process of teacher support; that is, we interact with and encourage our teachers the same way we expect them to interact with and encourage their children. Everyone cares so deeply about their teachers, and wants to see them succeed in their careers!"

Her favorite children's book author is Todd Parr and she especially enjoys his book *It's Okay to Be Different*. Additionally, the Little House series holds a special place in her heart as she has great memories of reading those books as a child with her mom.

In addition to enjoying her work, Catherine shares, "I am married to my best friend Bill and we have a beautiful daughter together, Claire. Bill and I love to travel in the U.S. and hike as many mountains as we can! We visited nine national parks together in 2014!"





DID YOU KNOW?

Three new staff members have joined the DCDEE.

Janice Wright has been hired as an EESLPD Licensure Specialist.

Fran Minton and Jennifer Griffith have been hired as NC PreK Program Policy Consultants.

Welcome Janice, Fran, and Jennifer!

Website Scavenger Hunt



The first 5 people to email Jessica Ward (jward@uncc.edu) the answer to the question below will be entered to win a Starbucks gift card. The winner will be announced in February.

How many children are in the bottom left picture on the EESLPD Demonstration Sites tab of our website?

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

January 2018

Martin Luther King Jr Holiday (UNC Charlotte Staff)

January 15th

February 2018

Region 1 (Kyle) Team Meeting (WebEx)

February 7th -3:00pm-4:00pm

Region 3 (Malinda) Team Meeting (WebEx)

February 12th -3:00pm-5:00pm

Region 2 (Joanie) Team Meeting (Face-to-face/WebEx)

February 13th -10:00am-12:00pm

Region 4 (Stephanie) Team Meeting (WebEx)

February 15th -12:00pm-2:00pm

Observation 2 completed (Continuing-SPII licensed)

February 20th

Observation 3 completed (Initial-SPI /LE licensed)

February 20th

Mid-Year PDP reviews completed (All teachers)

February 26th

For more information about the EESLPD West Office at UNC Charlotte, please follow this link:

<https://ceme.uncc.edu/early-educator-support-licensure-and-professional-development-eeslpd-office>