

Evidence-based Teaching Strategies



The following information was presented by IU Early Childhood Center Director, Dr. Michael Conn-Powers, at the Indiana Association for the Education of Young Children Conference on April 10, 2015.

According to Jan Layzer (2010), four and five year old children from low income families are entering kindergarten 12-14 months below national norms in language development. These children NEED very high-quality early education programs, but are we providing what they need to be successful? The short answer is no. Research suggests that most programs simply do not cut it. Dr. Michael Conn-Powers suggests three reasons for this:

1. High quality child care does not always translate into high quality education. These programs were created with different purposes and different intended outcomes.
2. Current practices may be based more on widely held beliefs and philosophies and less on science.
3. Teachers may not be monitoring children's progress and making the necessary changes to their curriculum and teaching as needed.



WHAT DO WE MEAN BY HIGH-QUALITY EARLY EDUCATION?

Research shows that "high-quality" early education programs have the largest effects on child outcomes, but what exactly is high quality? Effective programs focus on children's learning, not development, and use curricula that are focused and intentional along with teacher-child interactions that are both emotionally supported and cognitively challenging (Yoshikawa et al., 2013).

MODEL PROGRAM

In his presentation at the 2015 Indiana Early Childhood Conference, Michael contrasted popular early childhood efforts with a program that has been shown to be effective—the Boston Public Schools early education program. As part of a city-wide initiative with major support from its Mayor's office, BPS invested in creating high quality early education classrooms that embrace many practices supported in the research. Some elements of this highly effective program include:

1. Strong focus on education and learning
2. Universal prekindergarten classrooms that included all children, not just targeted at-risk children
3. Developmentally focused and intensive curricula (covering both literacy and math subject matter)
4. Emphasis on high quality teacher-child interactions as demonstrated by its use of the CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System) and ELLCO (Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation)
5. Teachers are required to have a Bachelor's Degree to begin, and are required to acquire a Master's Degree within 5 years
6. Intensive, evidence-based professional development provided through several onsite instructional coaches with a ratio of one coach per 10 classrooms
7. Children's learning assessed continuously until second grade

References:

Yoshikawa, H. et al., 2013. Investing in our future: The evidence base on preschool education. Society for Research in Child Development.

Weiland, Christina, and Hirokazu Yoshikawa. "Impacts of a prekindergarten program on children's mathematics, language, literacy, executive function, and emotional skills." *Child Development* 84.6 (2013): 2112-2130.

Useful Tips for Providers:

Working with Children with Different Abilities



The following information was presented by IU Early Childhood Center Research Associates Katie Herron and Janet Ballard at the Indiana Association for the Education of Young Child Conference on April 10, 2015.

Including children with disabilities in child care settings provides a **beneficial outcome** for the child with a disability, the typically developing children in the classroom, and the center staff. Several simple modifications that can be made to child care settings to accommodate children with varying needs are listed below:

1. **Simple changes** can often be made to regular toys. For example, you can help a child who has difficulty with stacking rings by simply removing every other ring. For a child working on a simple shape sorter, cover two of the three holes and only give the one shape for them to try.
2. **Slight adjustments** in your child care environment may make the time that a child with special needs spends with you easier and more enjoyable for everyone. A quiet, private space for play may help an overactive child. A child with poor vision may benefit from an extra lamp in the play area.
3. Children with special needs are sometimes shy about playing with others. You can **show them how** by being a play partner yourself. You might play a game with the child or pretend to go shopping together. As the child becomes more comfortable, you can invite other children to join your play activity.
4. Avoid becoming too focused on a child's disability. **Treat each child as a whole person.** Provide activities that will support a child's strengths but also be willing to work on areas of need. Every child needs to feel successful and capable. For example, if a child can sit independently and enjoys playing for long periods of time but does not like being on his stomach, you can help him to work on getting up on his hands and knees. Do not just sit him with toys all around, but rather, have the other kids get on their stomachs to encourage the child. Peer modeling is an important part of learning.





HOW TO ENGAGE PARENTS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SETTINGS

The following information was presented by IU Early Childhood Center Research Associates Katie Herron and Janet Ballard at the Indiana Association for the Education of Young Child Conference on April 10, 2015.

Strengthen Family as child's Primary Educator

- Create a welcoming environment (bulletin boards, someone to greet families, diversity represented, designated family room)
- Make an effort to get to know families (outside of school if possible)
- Positive communication
- Communicate simple and quick activities that the parents can do at home that relate to what you are doing in the classroom
- Parent teacher conferences
- Discuss attendance and how important it is for their child's learning (provide classroom and individual incentives when necessary, car-pooling lists for parents, community referrals)

Support Family as Safe, Healthy, and Self-Sufficient Caregivers

- Know your families and their needs
- Know your community resources in order to provide individualization for families
- Have a computer available for families to use in a common space inside your center
- Create center newsletters with healthy recipes for families to utilize in their own homes
- Parent activity nights centered around healthy eating habits (make a healthy meal with parents)
- Create a community garden (the children can take care of the garden during the day and parents can benefit from the products)

Assist Family as Connected, Supported Members of the Community

- Parent groups
- Invite community groups to present to parents and/or children
- Support families in transition to Kindergarten (plan a tour of a local elementary school, allow children to meet their teacher for the next year)
- Invite Kindergarten teachers into your center
- Invite a government representative to talk with children and families
- Assist families in transitions between center programs and classrooms (Early Head Start to Head Start, Infant to Toddler Rooms)

Empower Family as Child Advocate and Leader

- Help families feel empowered by allowing them to feel successful (praise them when you notice something positive)
- Encourage parents to ask questions and thoroughly answer when they do
- Ask parents for their input about programmatic change and take their opinions seriously
- Remember that parents know their child best and respect their opinions regarding their learning and development
- Encourage families to ask medical professionals questions when they have concerns regarding their children
- Provide information regarding developmental milestones so parents are more informed when visiting medical professionals