

Session #1 – Implementing preschool programs that meet the promise: Tools and methods to improve effectiveness

Maria Benejan, Director, Center for Universal Pre-K, Division of Continuing Education, Bank Street College of Education,
Ellen Frede, Ph.D., Assistant to the Commissioner, Office of Early Childhood Education, New Jersey Department of Education

A critical aspect of meeting the promise of preschool is conducting reflective program evaluation. Comprehensive program evaluation requires an iterative process of setting standards or objectives, measuring program components and outcomes and using the information to plan improvements which are then evaluated – starting the process again. Many tools exist to assist programs in developing and apply successful practices that have been validated by research. We will present examples of authoritative, useful, and defensible tools for assessing child progress, classroom characteristics and program practices and examples of how this information has been used to improve programs.

Session #2 – Transition to kindergarten: Linking children, schools, families and communities

Beverly Lynn, Executive Director, Newark Preschool Council, Inc., Head Start Program, Newark, NJ
Sara Rimm-Kaufman, Assistant Professor, Curry School of Education, University of Virginia
Susan K. Saravalli, Ph.D., Supervisor, Newark Public Schools, Office of Early Childhood, Newark, NJ
Moderator: Anna Lovejoy, Senior Policy Analyst, National Governor's Association Center for Best Practices, Washington, DC

The transition to kindergarten is a process that involves children as well as their schools, families, and communities. This session will describe new theory and research that considers children's transition to school in the context of the relationships that are affected by this process. Conceptualizing the transition as an almost two year period, a review of the research on family-school interactions during this sensitive period of time will be presented. Panelists will share a “how to” process on how to bring stakeholders together to develop, evaluate and modify a supportive transition plan. A portion of the session will focus on how to set measurable goals and objectives that can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the transition effort.

Session #3 – Health in schools: Putting programs into practice

John B. Brunetti, M.D., Director of Health and Nutrition, Manager Team II, Administration for Children's Services – Head Start
Ellen Kramer-Lambert, Esq., Executive Director, Healthcare Foundation of New Jersey

Session #4 – The “How To” of positive behavior support: Coach the teacher, support the family, teach the child

Amy Goerl, Director of Early Education, Keansburg, NJ
Kathleen Priestley, Supervisor of Early Childhood Education, Orange School District, Orange, NJ

This workshop will introduce The Teaching Pyramid: A Model for Supporting Social Competence and Preventing Challenging Behavior in Young Children. Further exploration will include proactive measures such as the environment, daily routines and developing authentic relationships. Participants will have an opportunity to analyze vignettes and determine the “function” or reason for the child's behavior. The group will develop a positive behavioral support plan that is feasible for implementing in any childhood classroom.

Session #5: The ABC's of starting a quality pre-school program

Joseph Della Fave, Executive Director, Ironbound Community Cooperation
Cynthia Rice, Senior Policy Analyst, Association for Children of New Jersey

How can a school district begin or expand an early learning program? Using lessons learned from New Jersey's court mandated Abbott program, this session will highlight key steps needed for creating a quality early childhood learning program.

Session #6 – Promoting school readiness in the 0-5 child: The parent-child relationship in the early years (should get by Friday)

Martha Edwards, Ph.D., Director, Center for the Developing Child and Family, Ackerman Institute for the Family
Melinda W. Green, Vice President, Children's Futures, New Jersey
Moderator: Marsha Gerdes, Director, School Readiness Specialist Program Early to Learn: Partners for School Readiness, The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA

Session #7- Early childhood education and family partnerships: Fostering positive social and emotional growth in young children

Marian Detelj, M.S.Ed., Director of Youth and Family Services, Lenox Hill Neighborhood House, New York, NY
Eve Robinson, Ms.Ed., Executive Director, Montclair Community Pre-K, Montclair, NJ
Moderator: Clay Yeager, President and CEO, Nurse-Family Partnership, Denver, CO

Strengthening families through early care and education addresses parental resilience; social connections; knowledge of parenting and child development; concrete support in times of need; and social and emotional competence of children. This session will offer insight into how an early childhood education infrastructure supports these crucial areas of early development, particularly each child's social and emotional development.